

**Factors influencing hiv/aids voluntary counseling and testing**  
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HIV/AIDS is the deadliest and fastest spreading of the sexually transmitted diseases. It poses a great threat to development prospects in developing countries because the vast majority of people living with HIV/AIDS are in the prime of their working lives. In Tanzania, twenty years after the first clinical evidence of AIDS, it has become the most devastating disease yet faced by humanity. A combination of approaches has been used in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country. Through advocacy there have been efforts to inform and motivate policy makers and communities at international, regional, national and local levels. Voluntary counseling and Testing has been one of the campaigns for the control of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania. Advocates of the voluntary counseling and testing argue that this method is a corner stone for early access to prevention as well as to care and support services. Literature indicates that many Tanzanians would like to undergo an HIV test in order to know their sero-statuses and take informed decisions with regard to coping with the situation. Despite this willingness to test, many of them however remain hesitant to fulfill their ambitions due to various reasons. The primary objectives of the study are threefold. First, to identify factors that influence HIV/AIDS voluntary counseling and testing. Second, to identify factors that makes people not to volunteer for HIV/AIDS counseling and testing. Third, to examine the extent to which socio- personal characteristics influence voluntary counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS. Using a sample of two wards (Kijitonyama and Manzese) in Kinondoni District, a structured questionnaire was administered to 147 respondents. The target population was all sexually active people in the two wards. This questionnaire was supplemented by focus group discussions and key informants interviews. The results reveal that the major factors that influenced people to volunteer for HIV counseling and testing are: getting strange illness, loss of one's siblings, drive to know one's HIV status, intention to get married and suspicious of one's partner. The factors that make people not to volunteer were as follows: "I don't have time", "I don't know where to go", "I am afraid of the results". "Afraid of stigma if I test HIV positive" and "no cure". These factors were seen to be crucial in influencing one's decision to volunteer for the HIV counseling and testing. The operational barriers for voluntary counseling and testing like stigma and afraid of results make people not to volunteer for HIV counseling and testing. This is because most people say

that to get tested is not a problem at all, the problem is the outcome of test results. Basing on the results above it is recommended that there is a need to undertake serious VCT campaigns. The normalization of HIV testing could increase the number of individuals living with HIV who know their statuses. Furthermore, effective messages need to be designed addressing all the issues identified in this study.