Title: Youth receptiveness towards voluntary counselling and testing services in Magomeni Division, Dar-Es- Salaam, Tanzania.

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Abstract: The HIV/AIDS situation in Tanzania continues to pose a grave challenge to the government and the people as well. Voluntary Counseling and Testing of HIV/AIDS is one of the interventions which have demonstrated remarkable impact in facilitating behavior change for HIV/AIDS prevention. Over the past 20 years, VeT services have helped millions of people to learn their HIV status and make informed decisions for their health and general wellbeing. The objectives of the study were to: establish the level of awareness of VCT services among the youth, with a view of assessing of their perception towards the services. The study also sought to establish of the extent of use of the services, and identify factors which influence the use of the services. The study was guided by the Health Belief Model and the Social Action theory in its data collection and analysis. Despite the availability of VeT services in Tanzania- mostly offered for free to the population, utilization of the services remains considerably low especially among the youth, thus there is a need to understand why youth are not utilizing the services effectively. A descriptive cross-sectional study survey design was adopted and data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Key findings show that, there is very high level of awareness of VeT services among the youth (98%), with 91.5% re-affirming that they understood the meaning of VeT. The study further demonstrated a positive perception towards the VeT services, with 96.4% of the respondents saying they considered the service necessary and having the potential to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, and 95.5% mentioned that it is important for the youth to use the services. 52.2% of the respondents mentioned having used the services. Out of these, 38.2% used VCT centres within their locality, while 61.8% accessed the services elsewhere. Moreover, only 10.8% indicated their willingness to take the HIV test at the time of the study. Stigma and fear of positive results were major inhibiting factors for service uptake. In this case more education is needed to address the stigma and denial. Study showed factors influencing the usage of the services include: general knowledge of services and gender, while age and class level were not factors influencing usage of VeT service among the youth in the Division. The study recommends that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare should put youth-friendly services that would most likely stimulate demand for, and utilization of services among youth.