

**FACTORS INFLUENCING UPTAKE OF VOLUNTARY HIV COUNSELLING AND
TESTING (VCT) SERVICES AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS IN SOROTI
DISTRICT, UGANDA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Voluntary HIV counseling and testing is important because it is an entry point to other HIV services and an opportunity for individuals to learn their HIV status, correct knowledge, and gain accurate risk perceptions, thereby encouraging safer behaviour. This study was to establish factors that influence VCT uptake by adolescents (15-24years) in Soroti district. It was a quantitative study that targeted a cross-section of student respondents from several secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Soroti district, Uganda. In addition a limited number of teachers and health care VCT providers were also interviewed. Primary data were obtained by use of a quantitative self-administered questionnaire. Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate levels of analysis were performed using STATA 10.

The study found that overall; HIV testing among the respondents was 21.2%. Sex, religion, residence, perceived risk, level of education, willingness to test for HIV, waiting time and overall satisfaction with HIV services were the only statistically significant variables at both bivariate and multivariate levels of analysis. Females, students from other regions, Protestants, year two students, students who were willing to test and those who perceived a greater risk of HIV were found to be more likely to test for HIV. On the other hand, satisfaction with waiting time and overall services were found to be more likely to influence students to receive HIV test results.

It can be concluded that while a large number of students were aware of VCT, the knowledge did not translate into a high proportion of young people testing for HIV. The main reason cited for the limited HIV testing among young people was fear of positive results. It is recommended that these concerns be addressed through sound adolescent-friendly and viable IEC and counseling strategies. There is also need to emphasize the benefits of VCT so as to help the students internalize the risks of HIV.