

1
2 **Evaluation of Socio-psychological factors that impede/promote**
3 **Voluntary Counseling Test (VCT) services among youths in**
4 **Anambra State**

5
6 **Keyword:** Social factors, psychological factors, impede VCT,
7 promote VCT

8
9 **ABSTRACT:**

10 The socio-psychological factors that impede/promote VCT services
11 among youths in Anambra State of Nigeria were evaluated. 400
12 youths were randomly selected using multi-stage method.
13 Questionnaire was used as the instrument. The split-half method
14 was used to test the reliability of the instrument with correlation
15 coefficient Of .85. The result showed that socio-psychological factors
16 that impede VCT as perceived by youths in Anambra State include
17 fear of stigma (mean score 2.8), fear of positive test result (mean
18 score 2.8), Abandonment and rejection (mean score 2.7), fear of lack
19 of care and support if test is positive (mean score 2.6) while those
20 factors identify to promote VCT include desire to know how to
21 remain uninfected (mean score 3.5). It was concluded that since
22 socio-psychological factors impede/promotes VCT as perceived by
23 the youths, public should be made to understood that going to
24 access VCT services does not mean that the individual is already
25 infected and want to confirm it in order to be receiving treatment
26 rather it mean going to acquire information that will help one

27 remain uninfected or reduce transmission of HIV and live healthy
28 life if found infected.

29

30 **Introduction:**

31 Human immune deficiency virus (HIV) counseling is the confidential
32 dialogue between individuals and their health care provider to help
33 clients examine their risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV
34 infection and to make informed decision based on information
35 available to them (Osman 2002). As stated by Centre for Disease
36 Control (2001) and WHO (2004), counseling was designed to help
37 persons interpret the meaning of negative and positive results, to
38 initiate and sustain behavior changes that reduce risk of becoming
39 infected and to assist HIV positive individuals in avoiding infecting
40 others. Maman and Mbiwambo (2001) opined that the overall
41 objective of VCT is preventive with emphasis on confidentiality and
42 voluntary. This includes individual decision, protecting the
43 individual's decision not to be tested or not to learn about the result
44 of the test. Because VCT has been confidential and non-
45 threatening, it has tended to attract those who might otherwise shy
46 away from HIV interventions.

47

48 Despite these benefits of VCT, many people especially young people
49 still do not access VCT services as supposed. This may be as a
50 result of factors which play detrimental role in the acceptance and
51 use of VCT services as posited by Gretachew, Isemuel and Beloimeh
52 (2002). Bronnon and Fiest (2000) opined that certain variables or

53 factors could influence compliance or adherence to preventive
54 measures and grouped these factors as socio-demographic, socio-
55 economic, socio-psychological, ethnicity and structural factors.

56

57 Evaluation and understanding the socio-psychological factors
58 associated with VCT utilization is important and timely since
59 identifying these factors may help in removing the barriers to
60 accessing VCT as well as promoting its use. Hence this study that
61 aimed at evaluation of socio-psychological factors that
62 impede/promote VCT services utilization among youths in Anambra
63 State of Nigeria.

64

65 **Methodology**

66 A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was used to
67 study the youths' knowledge of VCT in Anambra state of Nigeria
68 with youth population (15-29 years) of 1,307,637 (National
69 Population Commission (NPC) 2006).

70 Multistage, simple random and proportionate selection techniques
71 were used in selecting the subjects. This involved random selection
72 of two local governments from each of the three senatorial zones of
73 the state making a total of six (6) local government areas. The six
74 local government areas selected were Oyi, Ogbaru, Ihiala, Nnewi
75 North, Awka South and Idemili North. A community was selected
76 using simple random sampling from each of the selected local
77 government. The communities selected were Okpoko, Umunya,
78 Ihiala, Nnewi, Awka and Ogidi. The total population of youths in

79 these communities according to NPC (2006) is 137,074.
 80 Proportionate sampling was used to select a total of 400 youths that
 81 were used for the study.

82
 83 The instrument of data collection was questionnaire constructed by
 84 the researchers. The instrument was validated by two other people
 85 that specialized in test construction. Split-half method was used to
 86 test the reliability of the instrument and the correlation coefficient
 87 was 0.85. The researchers administered the instrument to the
 88 youth in various churches, football fields and in schools using
 89 random sampling and the number selected each location were
 90 based on the predetermined number. Permission to carry out the
 91 study was obtained from community leaders, church leaders and
 92 school principals verbally since there was no ethical committee in
 93 those communities. Individual informed consent were equally
 94 obtained from each participant. The data were analyzed using SPSS
 95 version 17.

96
 97 **Results**
 98 **Table 1:** Socio-psychological factors that impede/promote VCT
 99 among youths in Anambra state

Question	Responses	SA Freq.	A Freq	D Freq	SD Freq	- X
Socio- psychologica l factors that	Fear of	115	129	105	48	2. 8
	stigma/discriminatio n Abandonment and	112	128	92	65	

impede VCT	rejection.					2.
	Lack of care and support if test result is positive.	91	121	131	54	7
	Fear of a positive test result.	133	120	85	58	2. 6
	Don't feel I can contract HIV infection	93	100	129	75	2.
	Fear of disclosure of result.	73	153	107	14	8
	Fear of people finding out.	94	142	113	48	2. 5
	Not of age	31	45	143	178	2. 6
						2. 7
	Average %	93 (23%)	117 (30%)	113 (28%)	74 (19%)	2.6
Question 2	Responses	SA Freq	A Freq	D Freq	SD Freq	- X
Socio-	Desire to know HIV	261	116	19	1	3.

psychological factors that promote VCT	status					6
	To obtain counseling	227	146	19	5	
	Availability of support services	115	173	83	26	3.5
	Lack of stigma & Discrimination	117	162	82	36	2.9
						2.9
	Average %	180 (45%))	149 (38%))	51 (13%))	68 (17%))	3.2

100 SA=strongly agree, A=agree, D=disagree , SD=strongly disagree

101 Table 1 shows that youths had average of 93 (23%) respondents, for
102 strongly agreed that 117 (30%) responses for agreed, giving and
103 average total of 210(53%) positive responses to socio-psychological
104 factors that hinder VCT while a total of 187(47%) responses
105 represent negative responses to socio-psychological factors that
106 hinder VCT. As per individual socio-psychological factors that
107 hinder VCT, fear of stigma/discrimination had the highest mean
108 score of 2.8 indicating a positive response, likewise fear of a positive
109 result with mean score of 2.8. Abandonment/rejection and fear of

110 people finding out had mean scores of 2.7 respectively. Fear of lack
111 of support if result is positive and fear of disclosure of result had
112 mean scores of 2.6 respectively, all indicating positive responses.
113 Not of age had a mean score of 1.8 indicating a negative response.
114 For socio-psychologic factors that promote VCT, desire to know HIV
115 status had 261 strongly agreed responses, 116 agreed while 19
116 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed to the item. Their responses to
117 the item yielded a mean score of 3.6 indicating a positive response.

118
119 To obtain counseling on how to remain uninfected had 227 strongly
120 agreed responses, 146 agreed responses, while 19 disagreed and 5
121 respondents strongly disagreed to the item. A mean score of 3.5 was
122 got from the responses also indicating a positive response.

123
124 Availability of support services had 115 strongly agreed responses,
125 173 agreed responses, 83 respondents disagreed and 26 strongly
126 disagreed. This gave a mean score of 2.9 positive responses. For
127 lack of stigma/discrimination, 117 respondents strongly agreed to
128 the item, 162 just agreed, 2 disagreed and 36 strongly disagreed. A
129 mean score of 2.9 positive responses was got. The table above
130 further shows that youth had an average of 180 (45%) and
131 149(38%) responses representing positive responses to socio-
132 psychological factor that promote VCT, while a total of 119 (30%)
133 responses represent negative responses to socio-psychological
134 factors that promote VCT.

135

136 **Discussion**

137 The socio-psychological factors that impede VCT as perceived by
138 youths in Anambra State include.

- 139 • Fear of stigma (means score 2.8)
- 140 • Fear of a positive test result (mean score 2.8)
- 141 • Abandonment and rejection (mean score 2.7)
- 142 • Fear of lack of care and support if test is positive (mean score
143 2.6)
- 144 • Lack of perception of being at risk (mean score 2.5)
- 145 • Fear of disclosure of result (mean score 2.6)
- 146 • Fear of people finding out that they went for HIV counseling
147 and test (mean score 2.7)

148
149 Fear of stigma/discrimination and fear of a positive test result were
150 discovered in many studies like Onabanjo (2004), Illiyasu (2006),
151 Mulugeta (2003) Zerihun (2003), Mcphail (2008) Lazare et al (2009)
152 and Na et al (2009) as major reasons for people to avoid VCT.
153 HIV/AIDS is still a stigmatizing condition in many communities
154 probably because it has got no cure and a positive test result often
155 indicates HIV infection hence the fear. Also some years back, many
156 HIV infected persons experienced rejection/abandonment, many
157 lacked care and support and were left to die as observed by Asian
158 Pacific Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (2004). This fear still
159 abounds in the heart of many youths today and this might be
160 reason why they would not want to be going for VCT regularly and
161 are afraid of disclosure of test result. However with the discovery of

162 antiretroviral drugs and with constant supply, this fear is expected
163 to reduce and may disappear completely with time and more people
164 will be accessing VCT more regularly without fear of anything.

165
166 Desire to know HIV status (mean score 3.6). This finding was seen
167 in many studies as previously discussed as youth's main reason for
168 accessing VCT services.

169 Obtain counseling on how to remain uninfected has a mean score
170 3.5 and there is saying that "knowledge is power". When one is
171 equipped with the right knowledge, he/she is be able to make right
172 decisions/choice and live a more health life and this is what HIV
173 pre test and post test counseling services intend to help people
174 achieve.

175

176 **Conclusion**

177 Socio-psychological factors like stigma, fear of positive test result,
178 abandonment and rejection as well as fear of disclosure were
179 identified by youths as factors that may impede their response to
180 VCT while factors that promote youth response to VCT services
181 include desire to know their HIV status and to know how to remain
182 uninfected.

183

184 **Recommendation**

185 It was recommended that parents/guardians should be made to
186 understand that VCT is a preventive health measure. It helps for
187 early detection of HIV infection and early initiation of treatment.

188 The services are free hence they should encourage their youths to
189 access the professional services in order to be equipped with the
190 right information that will help them to avoid contracting HIV
191 infection. This will go a long way in reducing youths sexual risk
192 behaviors which often expose them to STIs including HIV.

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