

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

**DETERMINANTS OF SCREENING FOR  
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND  
HUMAN IMMUNE DEFICIENCY VIRUS (STIs / HIV)  
AMONG 14-24 YEAR OLD YOUTHS IN  
THIKA DISTRICT OF RURAL KENYA**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS DEGREE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

**HARUN M. KIMANI – MPH STUDENT**

REG. No. IPH/PGH/20/2000

**MOI UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE**

April 2006

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25 May 2006

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## Abstract

### **Determinants of screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections and Human Immune Deficiency Virus (STIs/HIV) among 14-24 year old youths in Thika District of rural Kenya**

**Background:** Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) for HIV has been introduced in various areas of Kenya. The program has the aim of getting the target population to know their HIV status. This is expected to lead to behavior change in order to reduce the infection rates. Most new HIV infections occur in sexually active young people of below 25 years of age. Among the youth in the target population there are certain factors that determine their willingness to undergo an HIV test.

**Objectives:** The aim of the study was to isolate determinants of testing for STIs/HIV in the adolescents and young adults between the age of 14-24 years in a rural community in Kenya. The specific objectives included determining the level of willingness to be tested for HIV in the youth 14-24 years of age in the study population. To study the social demographic characteristics, sex behaviour and practices of the respondents. To determine the knowledge levels on STIs/HIV. To determine the policy advocated for screening for HIV.

**Study methodology:** The study was cross-section survey that compared characteristics of those willing to be tested for HIV with those not willing to be tested. The study subjects were youths aged 14-24 years in Kirwara Location of Gatanga Division of Thika District in rural Kenya. Kirwara Location was purposively selected because Thika District is one of the most severely affected by HIV/AIDS in Kenya with prevalence rate of 25%. A VCT center has been established in the local health center. Consent to participate in the study was obtained from the participants or their legal guardians. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 10.0. Cross tabulation of dependent variable on independent variables was done. Logistic regression analysis was done to adjust for confounding factors.

**Results:** Willingness to be tested for HIV was at 80%. Knowledge that HIV can be transmitted by unsafe blood transfusion and knowledge about rare STIs like chlamydia, had statistically significant negative correlation with willingness to volunteer for HIV testing. Transmission model where HIV transmission methods were fitted showed statistically significant association to willingness to volunteer for HIV testing. The respondents who knew that HIV is transmitted by a prick with contaminated sharp objects and from mother to child were six times more likely to volunteer for HIV testing compared to that who did not know. Any respondent who had sex with more than one sexual partner was three times more likely to volunteer for HIV testing compared to one who had not. This finding was statistically significant  $p < 0.05$ .

**Conclusions and recommendations:** There existed a large number of willing to be tested youth who had not been reached for testing by the VCT program. Major health campaigns should be carried out to reach the many youth willing to be HIV tested in this population. HIV prevention programs should include imparting the knowledge associated with increased willingness to volunteer for HIV testing. The attributes of the health workers and the ability of the youth to understand the VCT message need to be assessed for its effect on willingness to volunteer for HIV testing.