

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**AN EVALUATION OF HEALTH INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS OF
YOUTHS AT GUYU VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE IN GWANDA**

BY

THOMAS MATINGWINA

(N005 2800B)

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe has the lowest life expectancy in the world. The prevalence of HIV and AIDS has made matters worse, with an estimated 1.8 million people, mostly youths, living with HIV and AIDS. Studies reveal that the success of health intervention programmes depend on the health information literacy of the recipients of such programmes. However, little is known about the youths' ability to access, understand and effectively use health information in Zimbabwe. A review of literature shows that although competency in health information literacy is important at individual, societal and national level, it is impeded by factors such as the digital divide, and the abundance and complexity of health information. This study focused on the youths because a school-based survey that was carried out in Bulawayo by the World Health Organisation in 2003 revealed that most youths are exposed to scores of health related dangers. This study used a combined method technique, whereby youths were not only asked to make self-reports, but also to complete two tests. The respondents were randomly selected from the centre to fill the questionnaire and to participate in the tests. The study revealed that the most youths have a problem with accessing, reading, understanding, evaluating and effectively using health information. The results demonstrate that information professionals, health educators, policy makers and the community at large should make a joint effort to improve the skills of the youths. Information professionals should act as change agents and work with other stakeholders in the health sectors in initiate health information literacy campaigns. Emphasis should be on simplification of complex health information, translation of health information, and development of an effective and efficient national health information infrastructure (NHII).