

**THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS IN THE DAI  
COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY IN YUNNAN, CHINA**

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**ABSTRACT**

HIV/AIDS is increasing rapidly in the Dai community in China where HIV/AIDS was initially found in and spread quickly among intravenous drug users. To better understand the issue of HIV/AIDS in the Dai community, the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS have been studied through socio-cultural contexts by exploring the forms and extent of the stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS as well as influencing factors.

The data of this study was derived from an ethnographic study conducted in one typical Dai community in Yunnan province. By visiting and interviewing 26 families, and observing the daily life of people, the study shows that the stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS underlies the pre-existing prejudices and practices toward drug abusers.

In the community, drug abusers are not only punished with written and unwritten social regulations but also rejected from “normal” life because of immoral behavior. Although drug users are stigmatized as the population suspected of being HIV/AIDS carriers, drug users who acquire HIV are not further stigmatized because of this. On the contrary, in the phase of AIDS, those patients receive great health care from relatives, family members and doctors because HIV/AIDS is perceived as less fearful than drug abuse, also because of a consciousness of the need to be kind to any patient. Under these positive conditions, internalized responses to HIV/AIDS are also likely to be positive.

In conclusion, we must note that the stigmatization may be developed or manifested differently within other socio-cultural contexts. HIV/AIDS prevention and control strategies should try to alleviate the stigmatization by taking into account pre-existing stigmatization toward high risk groups.

**KEY WORDS: STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION / PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS / DRUG USER / DAI PEOPLE / CHINA**

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