SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST SERVICE WOMEN IN VIENTIANE CAPITAL, LAO PDR

THATSAPHONE SONGBANDITH

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2006

ISBN 974-04-7159-5
COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST SERVICE WOMEN IN VIENTIANE CAPITAL OF LAO PDR
THATSAPHONE SONGBANDITH 4737922 SHHS/M
M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)
THESIS ADVISORS: PENCHAN PRADUBMOOK-SHERER, Ph.D.; PIMPAWAN BOONMONGKON, Ph.D.; AND SUCHEELA TANCHAINAN. MA.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore the forms of sexual violence against service women, to find out the social, cultural and situational contextual factors under which sexual violence takes place to service women, to elaborate how they cope with sexual violence, and to explore the social and health consequences of sexual violence committed against them.

A cross sectional study using, socio-cultural, feminist and social support approaches, complemented by qualitative research methodology was conducted from July to October, 2005 at the small beer shops ‘Hunnoy’ in Vientiane Capital of Laos. I did face to face interviews using a structured outline with 16 service women (including focus group discussion with 2 to 4 service women), in-depth-interview with 8 service women, and three additional key informants with pimps/mama-san.

Based on the findings, out of 16, 12 respondents experienced both physical and emotional violence and sexual violence in particular. They faced several forms of sexual violence, such as being forcing to do all sexual activities, oral and anal sex, taking drugs for sexual desire and active, heavy and long sex, using plastic and electric penis or sex toys, inserting fingers, sadism, sex using small balls with the penises penny, and oil (Champathong). They were raped by individuals and gangs.

Sexual violence against service women was related to socio-cultural factor, a patriarchal system, gender inequality, which follows based on the personal resources, sexuality and sexual representation of service women that produced high stigmatization, and blaming of the victims by society.

It is recommended that information campaigns should be organized in order to raise awareness among risk groups on what can happen to them if they are offered a job away from their village. Those engaged in the sex industry should also be given information about the risk of alcohol and drug abuse, sexual diseases and HIV/AIDS infection and violence (physical, emotional and sexual) at the work place. It is necessary to build an integrated approach involving community network, legal system, policies, religious elements, NGOs and other community-based groups to implement equal gender empowerment. In order to prevent sexual violence and reduce its prevalence among service women, it is also essential that prevention efforts include education for these service women about their heightened risk of partner violence and strategies on how they might increase their safety. Efforts should include skills training such as problem solving, coping, and help-seeking. Service women need to be provided with alternative coping mechanisms and safety planning for risky situations.

KEY WORDS: SEXUAL VIOLENCE/ PATRIARCHY/ SERVICE WOMEN

133 p. ISBN 974-04-7159-5