

**SOCIO-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF WRITERS  
IN REGARD TO THE PORTRAYALS OF HIV/AIDS  
IN MYANMAR WRITINGS**

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**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**

**2007**

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SUCHEELA TANCHAINAN, M.A.**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study were to explore HIV/AIDS related portrayals that deviate from health promotion messages in Myanmar writings and to understand why they were portrayed in these ways.

The study was conducted in Yangon, the former capital of Myanmar. A qualitative research design was employed with content analysis of the writings, in-depth interviews and key-informant interviews. Four pieces of writings published within 2002-2005 that portrayed deviated HIV/AIDS related messages were selected as samples with maximum variation: a novel, a magazine long story, a translated magazine article, and a storyline for a video were selected. Except for the magazine article which is non-fiction, the pieces were fiction. The four writers of the selected texts were recruited for in-depth interviews and another two writers were recruited as key informants.

More than one form of deviated messages was found in a single piece of writing. Of the three types of deviated message, the “misleading” type was the only one found. Misleading messages mostly relate to stigma, discrimination and risk assessment. They included the negative images of HIV/AIDS and people with HIV, and their hopelessness and the stigma towards them, the infinitesimal risks such as transmission through blades and exposure of excrement to the wound, the practice of involuntary non-confidential way of testing, and the complete lack of mentioning condoms when portraying sexual relationship between HIV positive- and negative persons.

Deviated messages were portrayed as a result of the writers’ management to attract an audience and to overcome the limitations from the requirements of censors, work partners, and norms and discourses. The writers’ goals to be a prestigious person and the perceived image of “a torch” that brings advantages to their audience made them select HIV/AIDS as a subject, and aim to have their writings reach the audience as much as possible. This required the writers to produce “attractive” pieces of writings and thus they tried to attract the audience by different means. Their ways of attracting audience such as selecting “unbelievable events”, using flat characters and dramatizing etc. deviated HIV/AIDS related messages and thus undermined the writers’ will to give correct messages to their audience. Moreover, the requirements of the censorship policies, work partners, and norms and discourses limited the writers to have a narrow range of options in deciding story and the content, and thus exacerbated the deviation by confining the content to non-taboo subjects such as transmission from blades and excrement.

**KEY WORDS: HIV/AIDS / DEVIATED HIV/AIDS RELATED MESSAGES  
AND PORTRAYALS / MYNMAR / WRITERS’ IMAGE /  
SOCIO-CULTURAL CONDITIONS**

177 P.