PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM
IN MALE HIV NON-DISCLOSURE PATTERN:
A CASE STUDY IN MARRIED MEN, PHNOM PENH,
CAMBODIA

KHM SOTHEARY

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KHIM SOTHEARY 4938051 SHHS/M

M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

THESIS ADVISORS: NARTRUEDEE DENGDOUNG, M.A.; SUPHOT DENGDOUNG, Ph.D.; ARAYAN TRANGARN, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the process of husbands who intended to keep their HIV positive status from their wives. The socialist feminist perspective was used to explore the penetration of capitalism and patriarchy within Cambodian society as the cause of husbands keeping their HIV positive status a secret from their wives. A qualitative technique with ten case studies of married men who were living with HIV was conducted within a four month period in Phnom Penh city, Cambodia.

This study showed that, in some cases, husbands intended to keep their seropositivity a secret for a shorter period of time while some intended to keep it a secret for a longer period of time. However, all of them exercised power to oppress their wives throughout the whole process. This power was fed by capitalist and patriarchal ideas. Prior to disclosure, the husbands made their wives seek treatment for them and remind them of their appointment times at the hospital concerning their medicine. Also, they continued having sex with their wives without the use of condoms to avoid their wife’s suspicion. Their reasons for keeping their positive status from their wives included the following: they considered themselves to be the breadwinner; they wanted to have sex with their wives; they wanted to have a baby; they knew their wives wanted a baby; they knew their parents wanted a baby and so on. After disclosure, the husbands maintained their power by asking their wives to take care of them, by continuing to have sex with their wives, and by unintentionally and intentionally forcing their wives to work to support the family.

Because of capitalist and patriarchal ideology, the consequences of non-disclosure lead to innocent wives becoming victims of HIV. Gender mainstreaming should be inserted into all relevant institutions such as school, health care systems etc. for the purpose of changing patriarchal ideology. Men should be responsible for their sexual activities. If they know they have engaged in unsafe sex or unprotected sex, they should seek HIV blood testing and refrain from sex with their wives pending the results of their blood test. Women, in order to have the power to negotiate with men, should be empowered to have their own career and know their own reproductive rights.

KEY WORDS: HIV NON-DISCLOSURE/ GENDER RELATIONS/ MARRIAGE/ PATRIARCHY/ CAPITALISM

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