HIV VULNERABILITY AMONG MARRIED WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN SLUM AREAS OF PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

KONG SOPHEAP

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 2009

COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
HIV VULNERABILITY AMONG MARRIED WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN SLUM AREAS OF PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

KONG SOPHEAP 5038094 SHHS/M

M.A (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: NARTRUDEE DENDOUNG, M.A., SUPHOT DENDOUNG, Ph.D., VEENA SIRISOOK, Dr. P.H.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the experiences of HIV positive female migrant workers living in the slums of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This research also investigated patriarchal and capitalist factors that were involved in HIV transmission.

The study used a qualitative approach within socialist feminist theory. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select twelve (12) informants who were married female migrant workers ages 18-30. In-depth interviews and observation were also used. Data were collected during a period of three months from August to October, 2008.

It was found that the patriarchal capitalist structure had a strong relationship with the life of married women migrant workers as it contributed to them practicing unsafe sex, and this sometimes caused be infected by HIV. Men use their power as the head of household to control family resources including sexuality. Often, there is an exchange put forth by the man-money for sex. Marital rape exists in the family structure, and this leads women to be vulnerable to HIV infection. Women are economically dependent on their husbands. They have to follow social norms negotiate being a wife and a mother, and these norms can lead them to be vulnerable to HIV infection. Furthermore, there are limitations on access to sexual reproductive health services, and using condoms with a spouse is not convenient. In addition, the husband has more sexual freedom including extra-marital sexual relations.

The application of HIV intervention expansion programs targeting married women migrant workers is recommended. Empowering women in decision making by offering them resources and the right to protect themselves is crucial.

KEY WORDS: HIV/ VULNERABILITY/ MARRIED WOMEN/ MIGRANT WORKER/ SLUM AREA

145 pages.