PATRIARCHY AND BABY DELIVERY CARE AT HOME
BY HEALTH CENTER MIDWIVES
IN KAMPOT PROVINCE, CAMBODIA

CHEV MONY

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CHEV MONY 5037961 SHHS/M

M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: SUPHOT DENDOUNG, Ph.D., NARTRUEDEE DENDOUNG, M.A., ARAYAN TRANGARN, D.Sc.

ABSTRACT

This study uses a radical feminist perspective to study the relationship between patriarchy and Cambodian women’s experience of not delivering babies at the health center and using midwives from the health center for home delivery. It is a qualitative study of twelve mothers who delivered their last baby at home by health center midwives. Data were collected by in-depth interview during a period of four months from July to October 2008. This study was done in Kampot province, Cambodia.

The study demonstrates that in a patriarchal society, women are subordinate and taught to live for and serve the husband and parents in most spheres of life.

Males dominate and influence on women to seek for ANC and use home delivery was found in the patriarchal structure. Firstly, the women suffered direct oppression from the power of their husbands to seek for ANC and deliver a baby at home by using midwives from the health centers based on cultural beliefs about delivery at the home of the husband and the parents. Secondly, the women are economically dependent on their husband’s income to support her during ANC and delivering a baby at home. All women had delivery at home because of their husband’s decision and instruction. Furthermore, financial reasons and poor health factors provide power to husbands for decision making and to oppress women.

The recommendation is to empower women, potential mothers and both government midwives and traditional midwives to allow women to make their own decisions especially regarding childbirth without oppression.

KEY WORDS: HOME BABY DELIVERY / PATRIARCHY / OPPRESSION

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