AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN VIETNAM'S PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY: THE CASE OF HIV INFECTION AMONG COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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ABSTRACT

The focus of prevention of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam was neglecting the role of
gender in its aim. Gender issue related to power in sexuality is relatively a new concept
realm in terms of conducting a study in Vietnam. Thus, this study describes the
gender relationships and emphasizes gender factors which contribute towards the most
significant elements in contracting HIV infection among women.

Vietnam’s social context of patriarchal ideology is still influential for everyday
life. Therefore, this ideological system plays a major role in the creation of gender
inequality in the society. The data derived from the study has strongly indicated that
men's power was a dominant factor which aided to determine vulnerability to HIV
among women, especially in heterosexuality. The men's power in heterosexuality
becomes prominent mainly due to the women’s lack of ability in negotiating with male partners to have safe sex. Therefore, it seems that there is no alternative for women to enjoy gender equality when they are not empowered by various movements and actions to release themselves from patriarchal confinement.

In the development of national policies, women’s issues must be considered with much weighted. A successful outcome would not be derived if gender inequality is still ignored since the consequences are inconsiderable.