

Thai Muslims' Perception on AIDS

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Muslim is the biggest ethnic group in Thailand. Since the unique of their way of life that is so different from most Thai, their way of thinking toward anything are interesting. The objective of this research is to study the opinion of Thai Muslim toward AIDS, HIV infected person/HIV patient and AIDS prevention campaign. The data used in this paper is a part of AIDS and Thai Muslim project supported by Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. That project conducted the fieldwork and took the same sample in the south of Thailand as The Contraceptive Prevalence Survey, 1996. The sample is 15-49 year-old-southern Muslim. Percentage analysis is used to describe the findings of the study.

The findings indicated that Most thai Muslims agreed that God sent AIDS to blame anyone who had bad sexual behaviors. AIDS directly relevant to had dishonesty to spouse and pre/out-marital sex. So they believed that being honest to spouse and celibacy before marriage is enough to avoid from AIDS.

Most of them agreed that most HIV infected persons had bad behaviours. However, they paid sympathy to infected persons, though there is a difference between those infected by unintended cause and by behaviours that Muslims can not accepted (prostitute service use or drug use). Muslim men and Muslims lived in urban area are more likely to be able to live with AIDS than women and one who lived in rural area respectively.

Most of respondents also agreed that AIDS education in Muslim community and school, both ordinary system school and religion school is necessary. And religion education help to cope with AIDS problem. However, about 1/4 of them disagreed to discuss AIDS issue in public and around 1/3 saw that Friday preach should not touch on AIDS. Moreover, half of them disagreed to talk about AIDS in masjid. Most of them thought that AIDS could be prevented by prostitute prohibition and prostitute service use was not accepted regardless of marital status. More than half of them accepted that polygamy in Muslim community prevented men from out-marital sex and from AIDS

problem. Most of them had negative attitude toward contraceptive practice and condom as they are considered as religious taboo. However, they seemed to accept condom use in case AIDS problem happened in Muslim community and most of them agreed with condom use supporting in AIDS prevention campaign.

The findings of the study indicate us that while AIDS is beginning in Muslim community, most Muslims have still looked at AIDS as issue that is not appropriate to discuss in public or place they gather like masjid. The perception might obstruct to accept AIDS education. So, AIDS prevention campaign should pay more attention to Thai Muslim community.