

The Change of HIV Stigma Attitude among Adult Males in Taiwan: 2009-2012

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Abstract

Public stigma of HIV/AIDS not only negatively affects patients' schooling, employment, receiving medical care and residential security but also indirectly deters those who perceiving risk for HIV infection from HIV testing and seeking treatment, which in turn increases the risk of continuing spread of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, it is urgent to grasp factors contributing to public's stigma towards HIV/AIDS and make efforts to de-stigmatize HIV infected persons.

The purpose of this study is to understand the recent shift in public stigma of AIDS in Taiwan and to examine factors contributing to AIDS stigma among males aged 15-59 years in Taiwan.

This research used data derived from "AIDS public survey" databases collected yearly by Taiwan CDC from 2009-2012. In addition to HIV stigma attitude scale, variables examined by this study included socio-demographic characteristics, HIV risk perceptions, and mass media message exposure. Data were analyzed by means of bivariate methods, multiple regression and trend analysis.

The major findings are: (1) age, occupation, HIV risk perceptions and exposure to mass media messages were significant predictors of AIDS stigma attitude, (2) while time (year) of survey was also a determinant in the regression analysis, it was found that AIDS stigma attitude increased steadily over the years up till 2012 when the increase began slowing down, (3) the youngest (15~19) and oldest (50~59), people with lower educational attainment, blue collar workers, housekeepers and the unemployed, and residents living in remote islands and the eastern parts of Taiwan were more likely to hold HIV/AIDS misconceptions and therefore biased risk perceptions.

In the past few years, the HIV/AIDS stigma carried by adult males in Taiwan has kept increasing steadily until 2012. Some segments of this population were particularly apt to be stigma holders. Tailored educational and communication programs should be developed to reduce their prejudicial attitudes and as a result gradually shape an overall supportive environment.

Keywords: AIDS stigma, prejudice, social distance, risk perceptions