

Reducing Stigma and Discrimination among Islamic Religious Officers Towards People Living with HIV/AIDS in Malaysia

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Abstract : Stigma and discrimination have become the main topic of discussion when dealing with HIV/AIDS issues. They affect the daily life of People Living With HIV(PLHIV), families, friends and people around them indirectly. This paper discusses the potential measurement in helping to reduce stigma and discrimination existence among Islamic Religious Officers towards PLHIV in Malaysia. These people have been trained with special programmes to tackle the HIV/AIDS issues by using a manual, namely as 'The Manual of Islam and HIV/AIDS', specifically designed by the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM). The objectives of the training programmes are to give the accurate information about HIV/AIDS and to suggest ways on how to handle the PLHIV issues in Islamic perspective. This research used quantitative methodology by survey. A pilot test had been done over thirty (30) trained Islamic Religious Officers in Malaysia. The findings have shown that the trainings have given a positive impact for them as they managed to acquire the knowledge of HIV/AIDS from both primer and authorized sources such as medical practitioners, Muslim chaplains and social workers. The knowledge they have acquired from the trainings has guided them in changing their perception, thus helping to reduce their own stigma and discrimination towards PLHIV. The training programmes have given them opportunities to practice what they have learned through several outreach sessions as they have had the opportunities to approach PLHIV directly.

Keywords : Islamic religious officers, people with HIV, stigma and discrimination, training programmes

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