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Methodologies Those are Appropriate to Exploring Sexual Behaviors in Thai Society

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The AIDS epidemic has guided researchers to establish significant relations between sexual behaviors, health, and illnesses. Thai health research team is also interested in the study of risky sexual behaviors and their determinants in order to understand the transmission dynamics of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Consequently, sexual behaviors have been numerous actively studied in both quantitative and qualitative research. However, the high privacy level of sexual behaviors in Thailand and the sensitive nature of sex issues in Thai society make it extremely difficult to identify what extent the data reflect reality. The data about sexual behaviors in Thailand may be underreported and prone to information bias. As a result, methods that more thoroughly explore risky sexual behaviors in Thai culture should eliminate those biases. Some methodological aspects those are applicable in conducting research regarding Thai's sexual behaviors are explored.

Research Design: Cross-sectional research that involved the collection of data at one point in time is the most popular design to exploring sexual behaviors

among Thai people. Although cross-sectional design is economical and easy to manage, it might not be appropriate to determine sexual behaviors because sexual behaviors are time-related phenomena. Therefore, prospective monitoring of behaviors changes over time may be achieved through longitudinal investigations or serial surveying. In addition, qualitative studies addressed the lack of background knowledge have made significant contributions to the studies of social context.

Sampling Consideration: Random sampling is classified as probability method that is the best technique for providing an unbiased representative sample of a target population because each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. However, random sampling has limitations in sexual behavior research because random sampling can be impossible to carry out, particularly when there is a vulnerable target population such as men who have sex with men (MSM), commercial sex workers (CSWs), or injection drug users. Therefore, volunteer sampling, venue-day-time sampling (VDTs), and snowball sampling are alternative methods that

are used in sexual behavior research. Volunteer sampling consists of participants becoming part of a study because they volunteered when asked or responded to an advertisement. Therefore, the type of participants who volunteer may not be representative of the target population for a number of reasons. For example, they are more compliant, more motivated to take part in studies than those randomly recruited from the general population, so samples of volunteers should generally be treated with suspicion. VDTs establish a set of venues where hard-to-reach populations congregate, from which individuals are sampled on various days of the week and times of the day. Snowball sampling is a special non-probability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. While this technique can dramatically lower research costs, it comes at the expense of introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a good cross-section from the population. Snowball sampling can be used if the population is not easy to contact. In sum, probability sampling including random sampling is the most accurate sampling method for representing the general population. As mentioned above, random sampling may have some limitations for the rare population, so volunteer, VDTs, and snowball methods in qualitative design may be accurate in exploring new knowledge in this kind of population.

Anonymous Self-Administered Questionnaires: Regardless of whether a sexuality researcher employs single questions or multiple-item scales,

respondents' sexual behaviors and attitudes are considered sensitive information. Therefore, sexual behavior is most commonly studied using self-administered questionnaires and recall of behaviors across some retrospective time frame. Although self-administered questionnaires might be more objective measurements because of their aspects of anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality, several studies reported some limitations, including underreporting data in sexual behavior research. Another strategy that is appropriate for sexual behavior research is the combination of self-reported and interview techniques. The combination of the two methods has been used in many of the large surveys and combines the benefits of face-to-face interviewing with the privacy of self-administered questionnaires for more sensitive questions.

Risky sexual behavior is a largely private activity, subject to varying degrees of social, cultural, religious, moral and legal norms, and constraints. Therefore, reliable data on sexual behaviors remain difficult to collect. An improvement for sexual behavior research methods would be to minimize measurement errors, which may be introduced by participation bias, recall and comprehension problems, and respondents' willingness to report sensitive issues. Due to the limitations of self-administered questionnaires, computer-assisted techniques should be further studied for reducing measurement error. Appropriate research models, which combine qualitative and quantitative methods, have to be developed in order to provide a high quality of validity and reliable data on sexual lifestyles. However, cost-effective and robust strategies should be a focus.