

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The terms and methods associated with social survey are applied to a wide variety of investigations, ranging from market research to opinion polls, as well as innumerable investigations sponsored by government and universities. The purpose of survey research, too, is equally wide. It may be designed to secure more information about a social fact or a sociological theory, or it may deal with investigating a “cause-effect relationship” of a phenomenon. Its contents, however, are usually concerned with demographic characteristics, the social environment, the activities, opinions and attitudes of some group of people, and interpersonal group dynamics. The main methods of data collection in social surveys are observation, mail questionnaire, and personal interview. In this study, the questionnaire method was used.

3.1 The Research Instrument

The questionnaire was used in this study simply because it was convenient and pertinent to the research objective. It was convenient because it can be easily administered on the Principal and the teachers in the survey sample. It was pertinent because it could secure invaluable information, especially from the teachers regarding their perceptions and expectations on dimensions of interpersonal relationships.

One of the main concerns of a questionnaire survey is related to the issue of poor response rate. This issue, however, did not arise in this case as the private education institution of higher learning surveyed comprised only 30 teaching staff, out of which 27 responded. The Principal responded to a separate questionnaire.

Items compiled in the research instrument (see Appendix A), categorised as Questionnaire for the Principal and Questionnaire for Teachers (seven pages each), were developed from two basic sources: the researcher's personal observation, and several published works by Davis (1987, 1998) and Martin-Lucchesi (1990). Basically, the models of Davis and Martin-Lucchesi advocated two sections with a total of 23 questions that cover matters on (a) human relations and (b) performance of duties.

Out of the 23 questions listed in the Davis model, only relevant questions from the human relations section were selected and adapted for the survey instrument. The respondents were required to rank their responses in order of importance, using a 4-point rating scale, with 1 as "least important" and 4 as "most important". In other circumstances, they are required to rank items indicating their degree of involvement: 1 as "no involvement" and 4 as "major involvement". The purpose of this survey was to determine the relative importance of the Principal's interpersonal relationships with her teachers. This was established through the responses of both the Principal and her teachers to two sets of similar seven questions, one each for the Principal and one for the teachers.

3.2 Research Questions

The questionnaire is divided into 2 sections. Section A attempts to gather information regarding the following:

- The level of importance of a given list of areas of responsibilities of the Principal.
- The relative difficulty of the Principal in ranking the importance of the responsibilities.
- The degree of importance of the Principal's human relations activities.
- The amount of time (actual and perceived) the Principal spends on human relations matters.
- The amount of time the Principal prefers to spend on human relations matters.
- The major hindrances that obstruct the Principal's conduct of activities related to human relations in the college.

Section B gathers information regarding the following aspects of the respondents:

- Age.
- Sex.
- Race.
- Marital Status.
- Highest Qualification.
- Work Consultation.
- Work Experience.

3.3 Population and Sample

A private institution of higher learning in Petaling Jaya was selected for this study on the basis of convenience, especially in terms of accessibility to the owners of the college and the relative ease in securing permission to circulate the questionnaire through the Principal to her staff. The questionnaire was administered on the Principal and the staff on April 10, 1999. Of the 30 teaching staff, 27 responded to the questionnaire survey. The sample response, comprising both male and female teachers, represents 90 per cent of the total population. The Principal was given a separate questionnaire based on the same areas of study.

3.4 Method of Analysis

The information and data secured from the questionnaires were processed and analysed, using simple statistics that deal with percentages only. The data were presented in tables, charts, and figures. From the findings, conclusions were arrived at and recommendations made.