METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Methodology and research design are considered some of the most important aspects of a research study. This might be attributed to the fact that the research design and methodological approach undertaken tends to define the overall quality of results. Research design also tends to reveal important findings regarding validity and reliability of research results. In this section, the researcher will focus on elaborating on methods which were adopted for gathering both primary as well as secondary data. Further, the undertaken research approach, philosophy followed and research design undertaken will also be discussed in this section.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to an overall belief regarding the manner in which data about phenomenon being investigated is analyzed and utilized. The research philosophy is used as an overall guide that details out the approach followed by the entire research study. Three main research philosophies consist of positivism, realism and interpretivism (Jalal, 2017).

The philosophical theory of positivism suggests that positive knowledge is the resultant of natural phenomenon, their relations and properties. Adoption of this research philosophy enables the researcher to undertake a rational, logical and mathematical treatment so as to collect information that might be required for this research (Lee et al, 2016).

Philosophy of realism on the other hand indicates that reality is independent from perception of the human mind. Further, realism suggests that knowledge develops in a scientific manner and can be categorized into two major groups namely critical and direct (Gimernez-Espin et al, 2013).

Finally, interpretivist research philosophy is based on the assumption that reality might only be accessed through a variety of social constructs such as language, instruments, shared meanings and consciousness. Development of this philosophy was centred on critique of the positivist and other philosophical approaches to research (Gimernez-Espin et al, 2013).

Selected Approach and Justification

This research study has been conducted with the help of adopting a 'positivist' approach (Zhu et al, 2016). This might be attributed to the fact that it would be necessary to use participant experiences, facts and data collected from secondary literature so as to derive meaning. Under

these circumstances, the 'positivist' approach will help researchers in logically treating data collected and arriving at conclusions (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015).

Research approach

In line with literature based on conducting research studies, four main research approaches have been recognized. These include quantitative research, qualitative research, pragmatic research and participatory research (Denison et al, 2014).

Qualitative research studies are primarily exploratory in nature. In other words, this approach allows a researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of opinions, motivations and reasons for participant perceptions (Andersen & Moynihan, 2016). Further, the approach also allows a researcher to uncover important trends hidden in opinions and thoughts thereby digging deeper into the problem. Data for this research approach might be collected with the help of both structured as well as unstructured techniques (Zhu et al, 2016).

Quantitative studies on the other hand are used by researchers while trying to quantify problems with the help of numerical data (Choo, 2013). This approach allows the researcher to quantify behaviours, attitudes, opinions and other variables that might be used to generalize results from selected sample of population (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015). While undertaking this research approach however, it is necessary to make use of data that can be measured. Data collection methods in this case are far more structured as compared to those in qualitative techniques (Denison et al, 2014).

Pragmatic or mixed method research is used in cases where the researcher might be required to make use of both factual and measurable data and participant perceptions and opinions (Gimernez-Espin et al, 2013). While using pragmatic approach to conducting research, a researcher is granted the freedom to make use of methods that are best suited to the situation at hand (Choo, 2013). Therefore, a combination of different techniques might be used at the same time so as to obtain the best possible results (Andersen & Moynihan, 2016).

Finally, participatory research approach is usually adopted by the researcher with a political agenda in mind. In other words, this approach allows the researcher to give a voice to the group which the researcher might be representing (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015). While conducting this research, the researcher might be required to adopt a position which is not neutral in nature and contribute in terms of being an active participant of the group that he/ she wish to represent (Jalal, 2017).

Selected Approach and Justification

This research was carried out with the help of a qualitative approach. This might be attributed to the fact that the researcher needed to uncover patterns and themes in collected data. Further, the research required a logical interpretation of participant perspectives and conversion of their perspectives into meaningful data. Qualitative approach was most suitable under these circumstances (Zhu et al, 2016).

Secondary Data Collection

Databases used

Secondary data in this case refers to books and published journal articles which were used so as to inform the findings of this study. These were collected from a variety of databases including Academic Search, ScienceDirect, Springer, Elsevier and Academic OneFile. These databases were assessed via the university library and searched for books and articles with the help of keyword combinations mentioned in the following section.

Keywords Used

In an attempt to look for required academic literature, a variety of keywords were used. These included 'organization culture', 'organization performance', 'characteristics of culture', 'organization culture and performance', 'mission and organization performance', 'consistency and performance' and 'flexibility and performance'. These keywords were used in a variety of combinations so as to be able to derive maximum number of articles that might provide valuable evidence in context of this research study.

Method

The process of collecting secondary data for this research began with short-listing databases that would be used. This was followed by listing out various combinations of keywords that needed to be deployed in order to derive credible academic resources. A total of 1953 articles could be short-listed by using the above mentioned keywords in databases that had been identified. Articles were then scanned based on their titles and 546 relevant looking articles were selected for further screening. This was followed by screening articles on the basis of their abstracts. In order to do this, abstract of each and every article which had been previously selected was read. Following this stage of screening, the researcher was left with 94 articles. Attempts were then made so as to download these articles and scan them further. Full texts of these articles (as many as the researcher was able to obtain) were read and compared and

contrasted against established criteria of inclusion and exclusion. A final list of 25 articles was included in this research.

Following diagram provides a visual representation of the entire research process.

Tool

This research was conducted with the help of two major tools: telephonic interviews and questionnaires. Both these tools were deployed so as to collect primary data from research participants. In order to practically deploy these tools and collect information with the help of these tools, the researcher shortlisted a total of 42 manufacturing firms operational across UK. This was followed by establishing contact with management officials in each of these firms and requesting them to participate in this research. At this stage, the researcher personally contacted officials in each and every one of the shortlisted firm and tried explaining the research objective and process in detail. The researcher specified that the research would be conducted with the help of both mentioned tools.

The researcher however only got a positive reply from three of all firms (Unilever, Glaxo Smith Kline and Astra Zeneca) which were contacted. Others either did not show an interest in talking to the researcher or denied participation after listening to a detailed brief of the research objectives and the tools that the research intends to use for the purpose of data collection.

Two separate consent forms (one for obtaining consent for filling out questionnaires and the other for participation in telephonic interviews) were designed and mailed to management officials of three firms which had agreed to participate in the research. As it would have been unethical to request for individual employee credentials and mail consent forms individually, contacted management officials were requested to distribute consent forms among their employees and other management officials who might be interested in participating. Employees and management officials were then provided with the choice of either mailing signed consent forms straight to the researcher or sending them back through the mediating management official.

Signed consent forms were received via both channels. The researcher however ensured that personal details of participants who had chosen to mail the researcher directly were treated confidentially and were never disclosed. Two separate sets of questionnaires (employee version and management version) were designed and mailed to the contacted person in each of the

three firms. They were then requested to distribute them forward. Interested employees and management officials were again given the option to return completed questionnaires either directly or through the contacted management official. Once again, completed questionnaires were received through both channels.

After receiving completed questionnaires, employees and officials who had given their consent for telephonic interviews were contacted in person. They were requested to provide a time when they would be most comfortable to interact with the researcher. The researcher then contacted these individuals again on the time provided by them so as to proceed with the telephonic interview. Each interview lasted for a total of 30-45 minutes in duration. The researcher took notes during the interview and the proceedings were also recorded by using a voice recorder.

Data Storage and Handling

The researcher had received completed questionnaires via two different channels: directly and through management officials who had been contacted in three participating organizations. Researcher also had access to interview recordings of research participants and had transcribed data while speaking to them. The researcher completely recognized that sensitivity of information that he had access to and ensured secure storage. Since results of questionnaires and transcribed notes were stored in researcher's computer, the same was kept password protected at all times. Similarly, the voice recorder was kept locked in the researcher's university locker at all times. The researcher further ensured that collected data was used only for the purpose of this research and was destroyed immediately after completion of the research.

Sampling Strategy

This research was conducted with the help of a convenience sampling approach. In other words, participants were recruited based on their ease of access. In other words, all participants who agreed to be a part of this research were recruited in the same. This strategy was preferred over a random sampling strategy as the aspect of permission (for trying to approach employees in a particular firm) and consent was important. The researcher could not randomly select participants from any of the participating firms.

Sample Size

Sample size for this research is 154 participants. This includes 30 management officials and 124 employees in total. A few employees had provided their consent earlier but chose to withdraw from this research at a later stage. Few other employees only provided their consent for filling out questionnaires and not for participating in telephonic interviews. These participants were not contacted again by the researcher. Only 10 employees provided their consent for telephonic interview (7 of these were employees and only 3 were management officials).

Data Analysis

Data collected by the researcher was analyzed with the help of thematic analysis techniques. This technique was most suited for analyzing data in this case as the researcher was required to interpret information from perspectives and experiences of participating members. SPSS could have been used for interpreting numerical data that was collected. The analysis technique however was beyond the researcher's expertise. Numerical information was therefore interpreted with the help of plotting graphs and charts.

Conclusion

This section elaborated on the manner in which both primary as well as secondary data was collected. Secondary data collection involved screening of books and published articles in journals accessed via academic databases. On the other hand, primary data was collected with the help of questionnaires and telephonic interviews. Thematic analysis techniques were used so as to analyze data collected. During the research process, data was safely stored in the researcher's computer which was kept password protected at all times.