CHAPTER IV

Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to investigate three research questions related to human resource management in the transport industry of Maharashtra. Three central questions were put in mind while designing the research methodology and process.

1. What are the major HRM issues and concerns in the transport industry of Maharashtra?
2. What are the major HRM functions and practices used by the human resource department with regard to the women bus conductors?
3. What are your future plans for HRM in transport industry?

The positioning of this research project was led by the state of existing research on the transport industry in India and in Maharashtra, as well as the issues identified in the literature on HRM in the transport industry more generally. The literature already presented is very less and highlights the emerging impacts of globalisation on gender equality in male dominated professions like transport industry, HRM strategies and the workforce which enacts them. In the Indian context, that global context includes the growing might of the Indian economy and the need to build and retain a skilled workforce. The researcher therefore made a decision to explore the broader aspect of women conductors about major HRM issues, emerging and current, and to encourage discussion of particular functions and practices in the context of those broader issues. In any business research, the common data collection methods include written surveys, closed-question structured interviews, document analysis etc. These tools are very frequently applied with an implicit or explicit perspective guiding the research, something first noted by Jones (1987) around twenty five years ago.

In this study, the focus was on asking a series of questions which were closed-ended and which the respondents could answer from the choices given in any way they wished. The researcher tried not to lead or guide the respondents when they found the questions difficult; to reduce certain responses either because they did not fit in with the general
view of other participants. In reporting the characteristics of the sample and the way in which the themes were extracted from the data, the researcher has tried to be clear, so that the reader can develop a good picture of those who generated the data.

4.2 Sample

At the time of the present research being conducted, there were around 1053 women bus conductors in the five states coming under western Maharashtra region. There were in total 53 Depots in this region. It was not possible to investigate all the depots due to the constraints of time and cost. As quoted by Sarantakos (2005), even in the cases where complete coverage is possible, it may not offer significant advantage over a sample survey; on the other hand, sampling is likely to produce comparatively better and reliable results in a short period of time. Qualitative inquiry is concerned with information richness and specifically focuses in depth on a relatively small sample which is selected skilfully and purposefully. The objective of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of some phenomenon as experienced or seen by a selected group of people (Morehouse and Maykut1994).

Zhu (2000) stated the larger the size of company, the more likely it is that formalised and complex HRM practices and policies will be adopted. Thus, this study focuses on large depots and expects to find more sophisticated HRM practices and policies. The data was collected in one stage only between July 2012 to December 2012.

4.3 Data collection method

An invitation letter (Appendix I), and agreement form (Appendix II) were sent to the Managers of each division in the five districts covered under Western Maharashtra. Several telephone calls were also made to each manager to seek participation and to arrange the time for making the bus conductors available at one time, as because of various travel duties the conductors are very rarely found together at one point of time.

4.3.1. The survey

Participants at each division of various depots were asked to complete a survey questionnaire of HRM practices covering their socio-economic status, recruitment, selection, training and development, welfare facilities and employment detail. Women bus conductors from all five districts filled out the survey at the scheduled appointment taken with the manager of that district divisional office. Most of them were able to
provide complete information but there were exceptions due to concerns about confidentiality or because the data were not available. The findings of the survey are detailed in chapter V. This survey data is mostly integrated into the findings from personal observation of the researcher. Flexible timing for filling the survey was given to the participants so that they could complete the survey at their own convenience. Some participants filled in the survey questionnaires immediately whereas some asked for more time and returned the filled questionnaire by hand later or by courier. In terms of the quality of data, it was found that that the former method is more favourable because the participants were able to get any queries cleared then and there and are able to provide clear data with the researcher’s guidance and explanation. Participants who filled in the survey questionnaire later by themselves left some open ended questions blank without explaining the specific reasons.

It is possible that some participants did not understand certain survey questions or doubted the meanings. This was suggested because when the researcher went through the survey questionnaires it was found that some participants were not clear about the meaning of certain questions. For instance, some of them did not understand the meaning of recruitment.

When analysing the data later, the researcher found a small number of discrepancies between the observed data and the survey data. For example, the researcher observed that most of them were very much dissatisfied with the entire system of HRM but the survey doesn’t reveal so much dissatisfaction.

4.3.3. Industry desk research

Before conducting a research, researchers should at least undertake some desk research. Desk research is nothing but the search for information that has already been collected for some other purpose. It provides wide information about that industry’s performance and certain characteristics and dynamics. It may contain some economic and industry statistics, white papers written on industry, and nationwide survey reports. This information is a portal that provides a tool and a method for understanding how an industry operates and make the researcher understand its potential development.
4.4 Sampling Design

The sample was a representative of any large population. The sample size was be calculated using Taro’s formula. Western Maharashtra is comprising of five districts viz. Sangli, Satara, Solapur, Kolhapur and Pune. The sample is selected from the women conductors working with Maharashtra State Transport Corporation depots of these five districts. The sample were selected using the following parameters set by the researcher:

1. Personal Profile of conductors such as age, educational qualification, caste, financial position, family background etc.
2. Workloads, environment at work, route, and night shift etc. factors are considered.
3. Geographical location is also considered for sample selection

**Stratified Cluster Sampling Method** is used for selection of sample.

Sampling frame is as shown below:

**Table No. 4.1 : Sampling Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Strata (District)</th>
<th>Clusters (Depots)</th>
<th>Sub Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Age wise, Health wise, Qualification wise, caste wise, financial position wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sangli</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Age wise, Health wise, Qualification wise, caste wise, financial position wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Satara</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Age wise, Health wise, Qualification wise, caste wise,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 : Data collection process

As indicated earlier, a one stage data collection process was adopted. The response rate was as per expectation. Many potential participants mentioned that they are not able to participate because they were not having time to answer. Some of them stated that English was not a comfortable language for them. In order to raise their interest and confidence, the researcher tried to explain the survey questions in their domestic language i.e. Marathi. The participants were free to response any HRM issues, concerns, and practices that they thought to be important from their own views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kolhapur</th>
<th></th>
<th>Age wise, Health wise, Qualification wise, caste wise, financial position wise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kolhapur</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solapur</th>
<th></th>
<th>Age wise, Health wise, Qualification wise, caste wise, financial position wise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solapur</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Data analysis

The data was processed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative analysis was done by statistical tools such as chi square, factor analysis etc. using SPSS. Quantitative method is used to generalize and identify prevalence from the data provided by the respondents.

4.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has detailed the research methodology, including sampling, data collection method, data collection process, and data analysis. The reasons for selecting research method were explained.

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