

CHAPTER 3

Research methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed literature pertaining to the attitudes of PNs towards CTOPs. The current chapter focuses on the research methodology, which is discussed in terms of methods, population, sampling, research instrument, data collection and analysis procedures as they pertain to the present research. The chosen research design enabled the researcher to achieve the purpose and objectives of the study. The purpose of the study was to identify the attitudes of PNs towards CTOPs and why they had these attitudes.

The objectives of the study were to

- explore and describe PNs' attitudes towards CTOPs
- explore and describe the feelings of PNs towards CTOPs
- explore and describe the perceptions PNs have about the stigmatisation of CTOPs
- identify whether PNs working in TOP services encountered stigmatisation
- explore and describe support systems for individual PNs involved with providing TOP services
- explore and describe problems encountered within the delivery of TOP services
- recommend improvements for TOP services
- make recommendations for further research

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative, descriptive, explanatory study was used for the purpose of this study. A brief clarification of the methodological concepts follows.

3.2.1 Quantitative

The researcher used a quantitative design as a strategy to collect data that is in numeric form. Brink (1996:13) stated that this method is useful when numerical data is collected. According to Burns and Grove (1997:27), quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process to obtain numerical data. This method is also used to describe variables and determine the relationships between variables.

3.2.2 Descriptive

The study was descriptive in that the researcher collected detailed descriptions of the PNs' attitudes and feelings towards CTOPs and their reasons for maintaining these attitudes. The purpose of the descriptive design was to provide the opportunity to identify the variables within the phenomenon of interest (Burns & Grove 1997:251), namely PNs' attitudes towards CTOPs. Brink (1996:109) supported these authors by maintaining that descriptive research provides descriptions of variables in order to answer the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the attitudes and feelings of respondents. Frequency tables were constructed to summarise and portray the responses to specific items in the questionnaire (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:102).

Polit and Hungler (1997:439) stated that descriptive statistics are used to describe and synthesise data pertaining to attitudes and feelings of the PNs.

3.2.3 Exploratory

The exploratory research begins with the phenomenon of interest such as PNs' attitudes towards CTOPs and aims to investigate the full nature of the phenomenon (Polit & Hungler 1997:17). These authors further stated that exploratory research provides promising insights and attempts to offer understanding of the underlying causes of the nature of the phenomenon (Polit & Hungler 1997:18).

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

3.3.1 The study population

Polit and Hungler (1997:43) described the population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications. The population in this study comprised all the PNs working in public services in the Carletonville sub-district.

The number of PNs working in Carletonville sub-district totalled 34. Therefore, because of the limited population the researcher tried to study the whole population. However, the researcher ended up with 27 respondents who were willing to participate in the study and who could be accessed.

As all the available members of the population participated in the study, no sample was selected for this study.

3.3.2 Criteria for the inclusion of respondents

To ensure inclusion in the study population, respondents had to meet the following criteria:

- PNs that were registered with the SANC as midwives and were working in the Carletonville public health care services, including the Carletonville hospital.
- These PNs should be employees of the institutions where CTOPs were done.
- The respondents also included chief PNs who worked as managers at the identified institutions.
- The respondents included both PNs who performed CTOP services as well as those who did not. (This decision was based on the fact that only a few PNs were actually working in CTOP services but any PN could be requested to render such services at any time.)

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Research instrument

The researcher used a self-designed questionnaire for the purpose of data collection regarding attitudes of PNs towards TOPs in the Carletonville sub-district. The subjects completed the instrument by themselves (Brink 1996:154, Polit & Hungler 1997:335).

The advantages of using a questionnaire in this study included the following:

- Questionnaires were less expensive in terms of money and time than conducting interviews, as conducting personal interviews would require training and hiring of interviewers.
- The questionnaire format was standardised for all respondents.
- The respondent experienced a sense of anonymity and were more likely to provide honest answers, knowing that findings could not be linked to any specific PN, as might happen during interviews where the respondents might provide socially acceptable responses to please the researcher, whom they might know to be a professional nurse (Brink 1996:153).

The disadvantages of using a questionnaire in this study were as follows:

- The response rate might be low and respondents might fail to answer some of the questions because the researcher was not around to clarify some misunderstood questions (Brink 1996:153), nor to explore responses to obtain more detailed answers.
- The use of closed-ended questions might lead to important information being missed because closed-ended questions could not provide for the full variety of possible response options which might exist (De Vos 1998:161). Therefore, to address some of these disadvantages, a number of open-ended questions were included in order to allow the respondents to portray their unique opinions, views, perceptions and/or experiences in their own words.

3.4.2 Administration of the questionnaire

The researcher delivered the questionnaires personally to the identified institution. The researcher requested the authorities of each institution to provide names of contact persons who assisted with the distribution of the questionnaires as well as with the collection of the completed questionnaires from the respondents.

The researcher allowed the respondents to complete the questionnaires at convenient venues and to return the completed questionnaires within two days of receipt to the contact person. An appointment was made for collecting the questionnaires, within 48 hours after delivery, saving time as suggested by De Vos (1998:155)

3.4.3 Format of the questionnaire

Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter which identified the person undertaking the research and providing a brief description of the purpose of the study. The name, address and telephone number of the researcher appeared on the cover letter (De Vos 1998:157) so that respondents could contact the researcher should they wish to do so for whatever reason.

The sections of the questionnaire were as follows:

Section A of the questionnaire comprised questions relating to biographic data, including

- age
- religion
- marital status
- position held in the institution
- number of children
- number of grand children
- whether the respondent was a registered midwife

Section B of the questionnaire comprised questions relating to attitudes, feelings and perceptions of PNs towards CTOPs.

Section C of the questionnaire comprised questions relating to the support the PNs received from their colleagues, managers and communities.

Section D of the questionnaire comprised questions relating to PNs' knowledge about the CTOP Act.

Section E to the questionnaire comprised questions relating to the PNs perceptions of the stigmatisation of TOPs.

Section F of the questionnaire comprised questions relating to the availability of resources to render CTOP services in the Carletonville sub-district.

Section G of the questionnaire comprised open-ended questions relating to PNs' perceptions, attitudes, views and opinions towards CTOPs.

The researcher made appointments with the authorities of the Carletonville sub-district. A contact person, who assisted the researcher with the distribution as well as the collection of completed questionnaires from PNs who participated in the study, was identified.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.5.1 Reliability of the instrument

The questionnaires were administered to PNs in clinics and public hospitals that did not form part of the research institutions during pretesting of the questionnaire.

Reliability refers to the degree to which the instrument can be depended upon to yield consistent results (Brink 1996:171). For the reliability of the questionnaire, a group of PNs from the clinics and hospitals were requested to review, validate and verify the interpretations of the questions in the questionnaire. This group of ten PNs were not included in the final data collection.

3.5.2 Validity of the instrument

According to Brink (1996:167), validity refers to whether an instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure, given the context in which it is applied. The questionnaire was given to two independent experts and a statistician at Unisa to evaluate it for face and content validity as well as for conceptual clarity and investigative bias.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher paid consideration to the following ethical issues pertaining to the study so as to reassure the respondents that the information would be treated anonymously and confidentially.

3.6.1 Informed consent

The respondents were informed in writing that participation was voluntary. The respondents had the right to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time (Burns & Grove 1997:200). The purpose of the study, data collection method and the participation needed from the respondents were explained.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

According to Burns and Grove (1997:204), confidentiality refers to the researcher's management of private information shared by the respondents. No respondent could be linked to any particular completed questionnaire. The respondents were assured that the information would be used for the purpose of this research and would be made available to them if they requested it. The information from the completed questionnaires would be used to generate frequencies and percentages to be discussed in a research report only. No person will be identified in the research report.

3.6.3 Anonymity

Anonymity implies that the information collected cannot be linked, even by the researcher, to a particular respondent (Polit & Hungler 1995:139). Neither the respondent's name, nor institution's

name, was required on the questionnaire. In spite of the fact that no names were entered on any questionnaire, the completed questionnaires were kept under lock and key. Only the researcher and statistician had access to the completed questionnaires. Once the research report had been completed, the researcher would destroy all the completed questionnaires.

3.6.4 Permission to conduct the study

Permission to conduct the study was requested in writing from authorities of the institution where the study was conducted. Annexure A contains the requests for permission and annexure B contains copies of letters granting permission to conduct the study.

3.6.5 Benefits

The respondents were informed that they would not receive any remuneration for participating in the study. The results could benefit each participating institution to improve the level of support received by PNs working in TOP services from management, colleagues and the community (Burns & Grove 1997:208).

3.7 PRETESTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The researcher evaluated the instrument for validity and reliability by pretesting the instrument. According to Polit and Hungler (1997:257), a pretest is a trial run to determine whether the instrument is clearly worded and free from major biases and whether it solicits the type of information envisioned.

The only way to know whether the questions were understandable to the respondents was to pre-test them in a similar population (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber 1990:353). The questionnaires were administered to five PNs working in clinics in public hospitals which did not participate in the research project. No major problems were experienced by the five PNs who participated in the pretest. As they were all PNs, they were familiar with the terminology used in the questionnaire. However, a number of questions remained unanswered but no reasons were given for failing to answer these questions. Thus the researcher expected that the respondents to the final study might also leave a number of questions unanswered.

3.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data was coded and analysed with the assistance of the supervisor, joint supervisor and a statistician.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methodology adopted to study the attitudes and feelings of PNs in Carletonville sub-district towards CTOPs. The study design, population and sampling procedures were described. The data collection instrument and collection of data were described. Chapter 4 will present the analysis and discussion of data obtained from the questionnaires completed by PNs in the identified institutions.