

CHAPTER 4

QUALITATIVE STUDY

With reference to the research methodology discussed in chapter 1, the goal of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative study conducted as part of this research. To achieve the goal of this chapter then, the objective of this study, as stated in chapter 1, needs to be considered. This objective is:

To explore the system psycho-dynamics manifesting at the weekly meetings of the Commercial Department's senior self-managed group in the Western Cape and to formulate hypotheses regarding the influence of these dynamics on the group's intragroup and intergroup relationships.

This chapter discusses the sample used in this research, the method of measurement chosen and the reasons for the choice of this particular method. The procedure for gathering information will also be dealt with, as well as the manner in which the information was processed.

4.1 THE SAMPLE

With reference to the research methodology presented in chapter 1, step 1 of the qualitative study, namely the selection of the sample, is discussed below.

The sample that was selected for this research is the senior self-managed group of the Commercial Department of a large bank in the Western Cape. The Commercial Department is part of the Business Division.

Below is a description of the organisational structure of the Commercial Department and how it relates to the larger Business Division. The senior self-managed group and the way it relates to the Commercial Department in the Western Cape are also discussed.

The Business Division has its head office in Johannesburg, where the divisional director and his executive management group are based, and it has a Commercial Department in each of the larger provinces of South Africa.

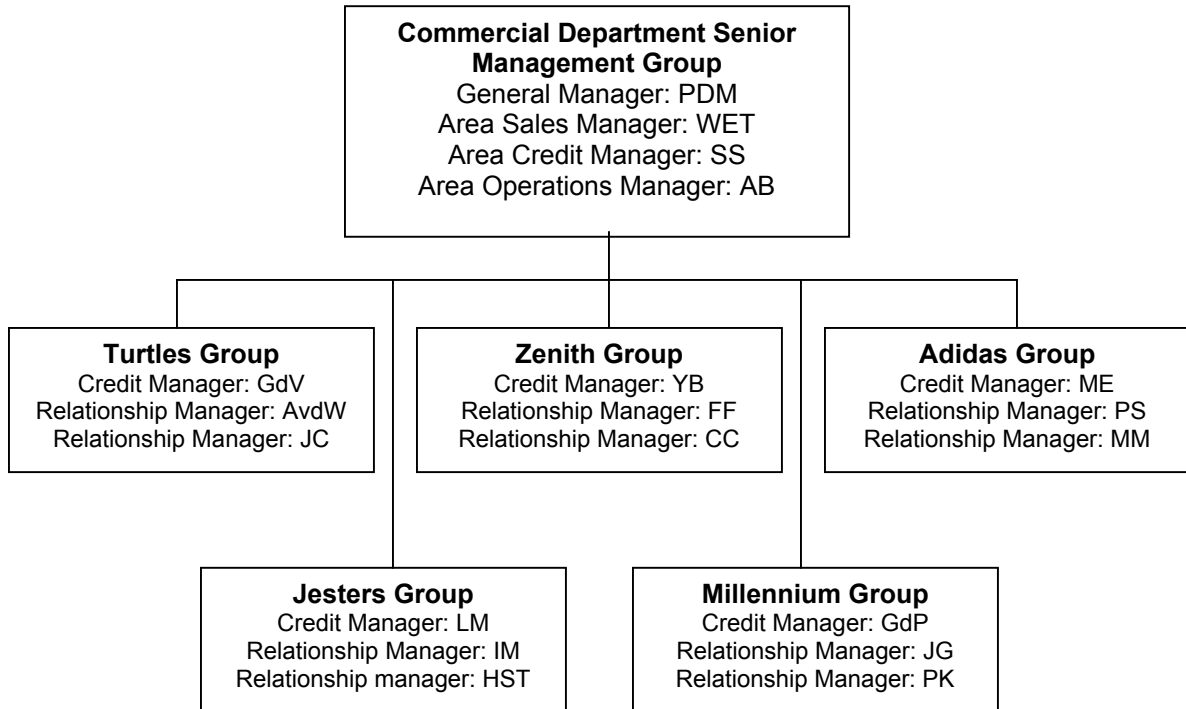
Approximately five years ago, the division structured its entire national operation into self-managed groups. In the Western Cape, there are nine self-managed groups. Four of these groups service large, unlisted businesses (these groups form the Portfolio Department) and five of these groups service medium-sized businesses (these groups form the Commercial Department). The Commercial Department is managed by a senior group known as the “senior self-managed group”. The focus of this study is on this senior self-managed group. The structure of the Commercial Department is represented below (Figure 4.1).

This department has been in existence since the inception of the Business Division in 1992. At the time, the more successful bank managers were removed from the branch network and asked to join the Business Division. The stated, overall objective of the division is to increase its profitability, so that it can offer a superior return to shareholders. As such, in the Western Cape, the Commercial Department is tasked with servicing, and selling to, a defined portfolio of existing clients so that these clients will increase their product usage ratio.

Each of the self-managed groups within the department comprises six individual group members. Three of these individuals are managerial level staff members (two relationship managers and one credit manager) and three group members are

at a non-managerial level (two manager's assistants and one administrator). As this study is concerned with the managerial level staff only, the relationship and credit manager roles are presented below.

Figure 4.1 *Diagrammatic representation of the Commercial Department*



4.1.1. The relationship manager's role

The relationship manager's focus is on sales and customer service. Each relationship manager is responsible for approximately sixty to seventy existing clients in addition to which relationship managers are required to source new clients (at least one per month). Their duties include the following:

- a) maintaining relationships and calling programmes with existing clients so as to ensure complete client satisfaction
- b) identifying new clients and growing market share

- c) responsibility for secondary management of risk in partnership with the credit manager

4.1.2 Credit manager's role

The credit manager's main responsibility is the management of credit risk to the department and to the bank. They are responsible for granting or declining clients' (those clients that the relationship managers service) requests for finance. Their duties include the following:

- a) monitoring and managing all credit risk in respect of clients within the group's portfolio
- b) assessing all finance applications from clients (to be either granted or declined)
- c) controlling client overdrafts and ensuring that they remain within agreed limits
- d) management of staff within the group (the managers' assistants and the administrator)

4.1.3 Descriptive profile of the senior self-managed group

The following is a descriptive profile of the senior self-managed group and its members, including an overview of the group's composition and a synoptic list of the group's members. Their positions, length of service in the department, their ages, races, genders, educational backgrounds and their previous work histories are summarised (refer to Appendix 1). The aim is to provide an overview of the group and of those members who were involved in this research.

4.1.3.1 Group composition

The group comprises a total of thirty-three managers. Nineteen managers of these fall within the Commercial Department. Of the nineteen, four of these are senior

managers (PDM, WET, SS and AB) who are responsible for the overall running of the department in the Western Cape. PDM is the general manager, WET is the area sales manager, SS is the area credit manager and AB is the area administration manager. The rest of the nineteen comprise five credit managers and ten relationship managers. The group meetings are attended by all nineteen of these managers as well as an additional fourteen significant others, also of managerial rank, from related, stakeholder departments, who do not, however, fall under the Commercial Department. However, as the nineteen Commercial Department managers depend on these fourteen for various inputs, they are included in the sample.

4.1.3.2 Description of group members

The following details will be presented below: the tenure of the various group members, the range of their ages, the race and gender mix of the group, their educational levels and range of experience.

a) Tenure

Tenure ranges in the group from 1 to 39 years, with the average length of service being just under 14 years. Ten of the group members have been with the organisation for over twenty years, seven for between 10 and 20 years, and another seven for between 5 and 10 years and the remaining ten have been with the organisation for less than 5 years.

b) Age

The ages of the group members range from 28 to 59 years. Eight of the group members are aged between 50 and 59; twelve of them are aged between 40 and 49; eleven are between the ages of 30 and 39 and only three members are under the age of 30. The average age of the group members is 42 years.

c) Race

Thirty-three members of the group are white and one is coloured. There are no black or Asian members of the group. Thus, the sample lacks racial representivity given that the majority of the group members are white.

d) Gender

Nine of the group members are female and twenty-five are male. Thus, the vast majority of the group members are male and, as with c) above, this causes the sample to lack representivity.

e) Education

Of the thirty-three group members, one member has a Std. 8 and nine members have a Matric with no further qualifications. Eight members have diplomas, seven of these are from the Institute of Bankers and one from the ILPA. Seven members have undergraduate degrees, five of these are Bachelor of Commerce degrees and two are Bachelor of Arts Degrees. Nine members have postgraduate degrees,

one of which is an MBA; one member is a Chartered Accountant, one has an M. Tech, one a BA Honours degree and four have B. Com Honours degrees.

f) Experience

Thirty-two of the group members have only ever worked in a financial institution, one person has worked in the retail industry prior to joining the bank and one has worked in the insurance industry.

4.1.3.3 The group's meetings

The group meets every second Friday morning for two hours to share information and to provide feedback on task-related progress. It was determined that the researcher should videotape three of these meetings in order to record six hours of material relating to the group's behaviour in meetings. The researcher felt that six hours of such material would be sufficient for this research.

This concludes step 1 of the qualitative study.

4.2 THE METHOD OF MEASUREMENT

With reference to the research methodology in chapter 1, step 2 of the qualitative study, the discussion of the method of measurement and of the reasons for the choice of this method will now be presented.

4.2.1 Choice of the method of measurement

In line with the objectives of this study, it was decided to make use of the technique of observation and video recording as the method of measurement. Observation and recording allow the researcher to study both the verbal and the nonverbal behaviour of the group and thus to draw valid inferences regarding the behaviour. Kerlinger (1986, p. 48) states that film and tape records "can help to achieve very high reliability".

4.2.2 Objective of the method of measurement

The objective of the method of measurement is to examine the system psychodynamics manifesting at the weekly meetings of the Commercial Department's senior self-managed group and then to formulate hypotheses regarding the influence of these dynamics on the group's intragroup and intergroup relationships. The nature of this research is such that the information cannot be quantified. As a result of the psycho-dynamic stance of the research, the method of measurement needs to "measure" or "tap into" the complex unconscious behaviour, thoughts, feelings and assumptions of the group. Therefore the objective of the method of measurement is to gather examples of the group's behaviour *as it happens* so that the researcher can draw inferences about the complex, unconscious processes underlying the behaviour of the group.

4.2.3 Rationale of the method of measurement

The rationale of the method of measurement is to record both the audio and the visual aspects of the group's behaviour, as they naturally occur in the here and now. By recording and then transcribing to text and analysing such text as well as

studying the video recorded material of the group's behaviour, the researcher was able to revisit the behaviour of the group in order to analyse various aspects of the group's behaviour. This enabled the researcher to explore the system psychodynamics manifesting in the group and then to hypothesise about the influence of these dynamics on the intergroup and intra group relationships.

4.2.4 Administration of the method of measurement

In administering the method of measurement the following steps were followed:

Step 1: The researcher arrived early at the venue for each meeting. She arranged the video recording equipment without interfering with the placement of the furniture or the lighting in the room. She sat at the back of the room and waits for the group to assemble.

Step 2: Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting the researcher switched on the video camera and began recording as group members started arriving. She allowed the video recorder to run until the meeting adjourned.

Step 3: At the end of the meeting the researcher switched off the video camera and removed and labelled the tape according to the date and time of the meeting.

4.2.5 Data processing and analysis

In processing and analysing the data, the following steps were followed.

Step 1: The researcher watched the videotaped recordings of each of the three meetings.

Step 2: The researcher transcribed to text the contents of the video recordings, including in the transcription of both the verbal and the non-verbal behavioural exchanges.

Step 3: The recorded material was reviewed and the transcripts read and reread by the researcher a number of times.

Step 4: During this process the researcher noted various recurring patterns in the group's behaviour such as where group members sat, who tended to speak to whom, who tended to speak before and after whom, what the group members wore, what they said, the structure of the meeting, who arrived early and who arrived late, what jokes were made, what time the meeting began and adjourned and the body language of the group members.

Step 5: These recurring patterns of behaviour were then analysed and grouped together into interrelated themes and subthemes. This was done according to the theory presented in chapter 2, drawing on the research presented in chapter 3.

Step 6: These recurring themes and subthemes were then interpreted according to the Tavistock Model (Riach, 1979) and evidence from the transcribed recorded material was also presented as supporting evidence for the psycho-dynamics manifesting in the group.

Step 7: Hypotheses regarding the influence of these system psycho-dynamics on the intragroup and intergroup relationships were then formulated.

4.2.6 Interpretation of the data

The data gathered were interpreted according to the Tavistock Model. Obholzer and Roberts (1994) state that the model draws on a number of interwoven strands of theory and allows the exploration of the interaction between “conscious and unconscious dynamics” (p. 9). It holds that groups have “not only directly observable structures and functions, but also an unconscious life comparable to that described by psychoanalysis in an individual” (Mosse, 1994, p. 1). Groups are seen as social systems with an unconscious life to be studied psychoanalytically, which provides opportunities for the study of intragroup processes in the “here and now” as they occur (Rioch, 1979, p. 53). Cilliers and Koortzen (2000) say that the Tavistock Model permits the study of behaviour that is happening “under the surface” (p. 1) and that it draws on both psychoanalytic and social psychological perspectives and attempts to effect change where structure and unconscious functions overlap (Mosse, 1994, p. 1).

The model assumes that a group is a social system that exists within an environment and has a structure that is intended to assist with the effective discharge of its primary task. That is, when a researcher is using the Tavistock as the interpretive consultancy stance he or she must understand the group’s description of itself and its structure but must also be able to observe what actually happens regardless of what is described, and must then be able to reflect upon the significance of what has been discerned (Mosse, 1994). Thus, the model is influenced by and makes use of tools and theories from social psychology and from psychoanalysis and the researcher using the Tavistock interpretive stance is the instrument by means of which unconscious processes in groups are explored and interpreted. This work includes a consideration of behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, fantasies, core anxieties, social defenses, patterns of relationships and collaboration and how these influence task performance. Next, the researcher

works with the way in which unwanted feelings are split off and projected onto particular groups and individuals that carry them (Cilliers, 2002).

All the themes that emerge in the recorded material are supported by evidence taken from the video recorded material. In line with the literature review (presented in chapters 2 and 3), as well as the psycho-dynamic paradigm and the nature of qualitative research, these themes are interpreted by looking for central elements as well as elements that have a deep unconscious and emotional significance. These themes are then presented as ways in which group dynamics are manifested in management meetings. In addition, based on this information, a hypothesis will be formulated regarding the influence of these dynamics on the intragroup and intergroup relationships. Suggestions will also be made regarding further research into these areas.

4.2.7 Reliability

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research has inevitable biases, prejudices and stereotypical perspectives that an individual brings into the research situation. Such biases may impact on the reliability of behaviour observation as well as the ways in which the researcher interprets this behaviour as the overt expression of the underlying and unconscious system psycho-dynamics manifested in the group.

The reliability of behaviour observation is often described as “agreement among observers” (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 488). Kerlinger (1986) points out that film and tape records can assist in achieving very high reliability. He cautions though that agreement among observers can have potential defects. However, if observers share a common understanding of what is to be observed and if they have an

operational definition of the various constructs being measured, then some degree of reliability is ensured.

In this study, reliability was ensured by making videotape recordings of the behaviour of the group as it happens. This ensured that the behaviour was reliably recorded, and that what was recorded was exactly what happened. Reliability was also ensured by agreement among observers. The recorded material was shown to an expert in the Tavistock interpretive stance who has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the system psycho-dynamics manifesting in groups. The results of the research were also shown to the expert and discussed in detail.

The presence of the researcher at the meetings may have had an influence on the reliability of the method. However the fact that the researcher is well known to the group being studied, and the fact that the researcher made herself as inconspicuous as possible at the meetings, thus allowing the meetings to proceed spontaneously and naturally, served to minimise the effect on the reliability of the method.

4.2.8 Validity

Kerlinger (1986) makes the point that “on the surface, nothing seems more natural when observing behaviour than to believe we are measuring what we say we are measuring” (p. 488). However, when an interpretative burden is placed on the observer, validity may suffer. The greater the burden of interpretation, the greater the validity problem may be. However, if the variables being measured by an observational procedure are embedded in a theoretical framework, thus ensuring construct validity, then the validity problem is minimised. In the case of this research, the constructs being measured are embedded within the psycho-dynamic

stance with theoretical underpinnings from psychoanalysis and Bion's (1961) theory of group dynamics. Thus, although a heavy interpretive burden was placed on the researcher, construct validity was ensured by using behaviour observation and video recording as well as sharing the material and results with an expert in the Tavistock interpretive stance.

4.3 DATA GATHERING

With reference to the research methodology, step 3 of the qualitative research will now be discussed.

With regard to gathering data for this research, the following steps were taken.

Step 1: A month prior to the commencement of the measurement, permission to videotape a series of three management meetings was obtained from PDM, the general manager and from WET, the area sales manager. Both of these managers chair the bi-weekly meetings.

Step 2: One week prior to the commencement of the measurement, the area manager explained to the various group members that the research would be conducted and that three management meetings would be videotaped over a period of six weeks.

Step 3: The researcher confirmed with the area sales manager exactly which meetings she would videotape. Three meetings were selected based on the researcher's availability and what was deemed convenient for the group. It was also thought that the behaviour manifested at three meetings would be significantly representative of the actual behaviour of the group. The meetings were conducted

every second Friday morning over a period of six weeks. All three of the meetings began promptly at 07h00 and each meeting adjourned at approximately 09h00 or soon afterwards. The meetings were attended by most of the nineteen Commercial Department managers as well as the fourteen significant others from various stakeholder departments. The meetings were chaired by WET, the area sales manager, with PDM providing much input in the first and the third meetings. PDM did not attend the second meeting. No agenda was distributed prior to the meetings and no minutes of the meetings were taken.

Step 4: Before meetings one and three, the researcher arrived early at the venue – 10 minutes prior to the start of each meeting. However, for meeting two the researcher arrived five minutes after the start of the meeting. Upon arrival at each of the meetings, the researcher arranged the video recording equipment and placed herself at the back of the room without interfering with the placement of the furniture or the lighting in the room.

Step 5: In the case of meetings one and three, the researcher started the videotape recording as soon as the various group members began arriving for the meeting. In the case of meeting two, when the researcher was five minutes late, she began recording as soon as she arrived at the meeting. This was, however, after the various group members had already arrived and taken their seats. The researcher continued to record each meeting until the meeting was adjourned. However, towards the end of meeting one, PDM requested that the camera be switched off for a short period of time so that he could share some confidential information with the group.

Step 6: At the end of each meeting, when the meeting was adjourned, the researcher switched off the video camera. She labelled each tape according to the

date of the meeting and she recorded the exact times at which each meeting began and adjourned.

This concludes step 3 of the qualitative research.

4.4 INFORMATION PROCESSING

With reference to the research methodology discussed in chapter 1, step 4 of the qualitative research, information processing will now be discussed.

Step 1: The researcher took the video recorded material to her home where she watched the videotaped recordings of each of the three meetings. She watched each recording twice.

Step 2: The researcher then transcribed to text the verbal contents of the video recordings. She then viewed the recordings a third time and added the non-verbal behaviour to the verbal contents of the transcribed text. This included noting where people sat, how they fidgeted, whether they looked at the camera or looked away, what they wore, features relating to their body language, who left and entered the meetings at certain times and who was present at and absent from the meetings. (The transcripts and floor plans of the meetings are seen as raw material for analysis. As such, these are not included in this manuscript. They are available from the researcher if an examiner should need to peruse their contents.)

Step 3: The researcher then reread the transcripts a number of times and made notes regarding the patterns of behaviour that emerged. She focused on behaviours such as who spoke after or before whom, what was said or communicated at the meetings, how various group members responded to each

other, body language, the seating of members around the boardroom table or in the aisle.

Step 4: These patterns and interrelated elements in the transcribed material were then grouped together by the researcher. The groupings were based on the theory and research discussed in chapters 2 and 3. These groupings were then formulated into themes and subthemes. These themes and subthemes represent groupings of the system psycho-dynamics which manifested in the group.

Step 5: Each theme and subtheme was discussed and presented as the results of this research. Included in the discussion of themes and subthemes were verbatim and non-verbal evidence supporting the existence of the themes and subthemes.

Step 6: The themes and subthemes were then interpreted according to the psycho-dynamic stance and the Tavistock approach to group behaviour. The meeting from which the evidence was gathered as well as the page number in the transcribed text were also noted.

Step 7: Hypotheses regarding the influence of these system psycho-dynamics on the intragroup and intergroup relationships were then formulated.

Step 8: Conclusions were then drawn regarding the nature of this research and recommendations were made for further research to be conducted on these themes. Issues relating to self-managed teams were presented, as were issues relating to the field of Industrial Psychology. The particular bank and senior self-managed group structure were also discussed.

This concludes step 4 of the qualitative study

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter steps 1 to 4 of phase 2 of the qualitative study were discussed. The sample was presented incorporating a descriptive profile of the group, including their demographics. Also included in the discussion of the sample was a description of the group members incorporating summaries of length of service, age, race, gender, and previous work history.

A discussion of the method of measurement was then undertaken, incorporating such elements as choice, objective, rationale, administration, analysis, interpretation, reliability and validity of the method of measurement. Finally, the way in which information was gathered and then processed was also presented.

The next chapter of this research presents the results of the qualitative study.