

Example of retention and success of students at a for profit colleges research pa...

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Research Methodology and Design

Introduction

Research method and Design is meant to provide more information on how the study of the research question will be conducted in order to achieve the stated research objectives. It entails gathering data, instrumentation, compilation, and analysis among other aspects that will ensure collection of objective, relevant and accurate facts . Several academic scholars and researchers have conducted predictive and descriptive studies with an aim of validating the true nature of various aspects of transformational change that is necessary in transforming both community and for-profit colleges in to enhance the quality of education. This study will build on the strengths of those researches and learn from the weakness of previous researches in the education sector. This paper focuses on the research methods and design that will be adopted and used for this study with the aim of achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions of this study.

Research Design

This study purposes to determine challenges/experiences that students encounter as they try to achieve their student's success and retention at for-profit colleges. This research further seeks to analyze those experiences that students encounter as they try to achieve their student's success and retention at for-profit colleges. To achieve this goal, both qualitative phenomenological research design and quantitative quasi-experimental research design will be used.

In Phenomenological research design, the researcher conducts a

comprehensive analysis of the sampled study participants. This research design will be important in describing and interpreting experiences of the study participants in order to appreciate the essence of those experiences as perceived by the study participants from their own prism . The choice of a phenomenological research design is informed by the fact that there are several ways in which a similar experience maybe interpreted resulting in diverse meanings of an experience by different participants. A qualitative phenomenological research design allows the study participants to share their experiences and perceptions in an unrestrained and investigative manner A phenomenological research design has always proven an effective research tool in bringing to the fore the people's perceptions and experiences from their perspective, therefore, challenging normative and structural assumptions. Therefore, in this study, a qualitative phenomenological design will allow the researcher to avoid the predictions on the expected results since the study will rely on the study participants' thoughts and perceptions in shaping the conclusion.

A pure phenomenological research design is only appropriate for researchers that are seeking to merely describe phenomena rather than explain the phenomena. The main purpose of using a qualitative phenomenological research design is not to evaluate the data collected during the study, but to allow the study participants to share their perceptions in an unrestrained and investigative manner . However, this research seeks to determine the challenges/experiences that students encounter as they try to achieve their student's success and retention at for-profit colleges as well as describe the challenges/experiences that students encounter as they try to achieve their

student's success and retention at for-profit colleges and the relationship between key variables. In this respect, a quasi-experimental research design will be used together with a qualitative phenomenological research design. A quasi-experimental design will be used in describing the correlation between the key variables under investigation. These key variables are school structure, student's success in various subjects from the exam scores and the graduation rates reported by each institution. Given the nature of the research, the researcher cannot have complete control over the treatment of study participants and hence cannot manipulate them. In addition, random assignment of study participants is equally difficult because the researcher will be dealing with human beings. Therefore, a true experimental design could not be applied in this research. The quantitative quasi-experimental design applied in this research purposes to investigate pre-post test, and the disparity between the pre-post test results in order to establish whether the college and retention results vary based on the structure of the schools. Therefore, a quasi-experimental quantitative design will be appropriate in attempting to predict the impact of for-profit colleges on quantifiable levels of academic success and graduation rates. A quantitative quasi-experimental research design uses the t-test and Chi-square tests in analyzing the variances between the pre-post test results. The sample will be obtained from various colleges in the U. S. A that includes both for-profit colleges and community colleges. This makes it difficult to describe the correlation that exists between a student's outcome and the school structure that the student is studying because of the statistically indispensable disparity between community colleges and the for-profit

colleges. Prior academic researches on this subject indicate that the variation in the evaluation results of students at the community college has a statistically significant disparity between a student's evaluation outcomes within a selected sample prior to the way the college structure is dealt with in this study. Usually, results from these studies indicate that the assessment based on the school structure, that is the community colleges and the for-profit colleges, could have had an impact due to the way skills and knowledge is achieved in these two types of colleges .

Target Population

A target population in a research is a group of individuals or objects with a common characteristic that is of interest to a researcher. Research is normally done for the benefit of the target population . In this context, the common characteristic of interest to the researcher is the first year experience. The study participants need to people who have lived and experienced the first-year experience in colleges in the U. S. A. Therefore, the target population for this study is all first-year students at colleges in the U. S. A and the students enrolled in a preliminary course or a sequence of courses. Although the researcher is interested in the retention and success of students at for profit colleges, information on community colleges is also important for comparison purposes.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A sample refers to a section of the target population. When the target population of interest to the researcher is so large, and the available resources are not sufficient for exhaustive study that requires a census, then

a sample is usually used . In this case, time and financial constraints will not allow for an extensive study considering the size of the population of interest to the researcher. Therefore, a sample will be used for this study. The sample size and sampling technique will be designed in such a way the selected sample to be used for the study will ensure valid, representative, precise and reliable data will be collected.

The selected sample size is small because a qualitative phenomenological research design was applied. A qualitative phenomenological research design involve in depth studies because the researcher obtain the experiences of the study participants in order to appreciate the essence of those experiences as perceived by the research participants in an unrestrained manner. With in mind, it may not be possible to use a large sample due to time constraint and the risk of compromising on the depth and detail of study participant responses. In addition, financial constraint informed the decision to use a small sample. Phone interviews are expensive due to telephony charges. It is even more expensive when using a qualitative phenomenological research design. This is because interviews tend to be very lengthy when using this kind of research design. However, despite the small sample size the sampling technique will ensure that the data collected from the study participants will be snap shot describing the demographic information of the entire population of interest.

Data Type and Source

This study will entirely rely on both primary and secondary. Primary data refers to data that is collected directly from the study participants

specifically for a given study. On the other hand, secondary data refers to data that was collected by somebody else other than the researcher. Data regarding the students' experiences and their perceptions of the challenges they face as they work towards completing their college education will be collected from sampled study participants from colleges in the U. S. A. Data on school structure, student's success in various subjects from the exam scores and the graduation rates reported by each institution will be obtained from secondary sources maintained by the respective schools.

Research Instruments

For a study to be conducted consistently and validly, it is important to use research instruments that will meet the requirements of the research questions and research objectives. In order to obtain an in depth understanding of the challenges/experiences that students encounter as they try to achieve their student's success and retention at for-profit colleges, data will be collected from participants using open-ended questions via a personal semi-structured cell-phone interview. Open ended questions allow the study participants to provide detailed and in depth answers in an unrestrained environment. Closed ended questions will be inappropriate because they will limit the respondents to the choices provided thus they will not provide the detailed answers that are expected for this study. However, closed ended questions will also be used, although to a small extent, to collect data that will facilitate quantitative data analysis. The closed ended questions make it easier to code the responses to facilitate statistical analysis. The decision to use personal semi-structured phone interviews was

informed by the need to create a rapport with the study participants.

Establishing of a good level of empathy and rapport is critical in gaining in depth information especially on this subject of the researchers' interest in which the study participants have a strong personal stake. In addition, phone interviews, unlike questionnaires, allow the researcher to probe for further explanations and answers when it is necessary. Face-to-face interviews are inappropriate because it will be expensive due to the need to travel to the exact location of each study participant in order to interview them.

Questionnaires are inappropriate because they lack that personal touch.

Therefore, students may not be willing to disclose information on the fear that they will be reprimanded or penalized by giving their honest and real opinions.

Pilot Study

Prior to the collection of data that will be used for this study; a comprehensive pilot project will be conducted to ascertain the validity of collection instruments. The designed phone interviews will be tested by interviewing a randomly selected sample, outside the study sample, of 3 respondents. Correction of the errors within the data collection instruments will be made, and in the process new data collection instruments that will enable better collection of data which are valid and representative will be identified. This is referred to as internal validity of a study. It is important for the production of consistent, valid and reliable wave of data. In addition, the pilot study will facilitate the identification of any ambiguous and unclear

questions during the interview. The interview questions will be modified it as per the results of the pilot test.

Data Collection and Recording

The collection of data involved both qualitative and quantitative methods since both qualitative and quantitative data will be required in answering the research questions for this study during data analysis. Data relevant to this study will be collected and recorded primarily using tape recordings. Tape recording will be appropriate since the researcher intends to collect a large volume of in depth data within a given time framework of a phone interview. The researcher will also use interview scripts and jottings to supplement the tape recordings.

Data Analysis

Both qualitative phenomenological research design and quantitative quasi-experimental research designs will be used in this study. Therefore, both research designs will influence how data will be analysed.

The researcher will read through the interview scripts and listen to the tape recordings in order to get a feel of what the study participants are saying and to identify the key themes and issues that will arise from each interview. The points will then be aggregated and organized using mind-maps. The resulting list will then be used as a set of points in interrogating the texts and summarizing them. From each interview, statements that indicate the study participant's experience of the phenomena will be identified and then meaningful units will be formed from the identified statements with the aid of verbatim language from the respective study participant as illustrations.

During analysis, description of what was experienced will be separated from how it was experienced. In addition, the researcher will also integrate his own experience with those of the study participants. Lastly, a general description of the experience meaning will be constructed. Composite as well as individual descriptions will be written to indicate how the experiences that will be obtained fit with the meaning that will be derived.

A quantitative quasi-experimental research design is normally used in describing the correlation between variables and in predicting the expected results. The quantitative quasi-experimental design will be applied in this study purposes to investigate pre-post tests, and the disparity between the pre-post test results in establishing whether the college and retention results vary based on the structure of the schools. A quasi-experimental quantitative design will also be appropriate in attempting to predict the impact of for-profit colleges on quantifiable levels of academic success and graduation rates. To this end, this study will use this study will use the t-tests and the Chi-square tests in analyzing the variance between the pre-post test results. The quantitative quasi-experimental research design in this study will be used to compare the students' success and their retention at the community colleges and the for-profit colleges. Therefore, in this study the independent variable will be the school structure. The dependent variables that will be used are the student's success in various subjects from the exam scores and the graduation rates reported by each institution. Data collected from the personal interviews will also be analyzed, summarized, and interpreted with the aid of descriptive statistical techniques such as tables, bar graphs and simple percentage.

Ethical Consideration

This study will be conducted with the permission of the Institution Review Board (IRB) of each the participating colleges to interview students to get the information and data needed to facilitate the writing of the research.

Institutional Review Boards have the responsibility of ensuring that the welfare and rights of the people in a given institution are observed. The institutional review board also has the task of planning and overseeing research conducted in their respective institutions. IRBs must approve any research study that is done by their college.

Participation in this study by the study participants and the selected colleges will be on a voluntary basis. Coercion into the study will be prohibited, and the study participants will be free to withdraw anytime during the study period. If a question sounded prohibitive to a study participant, or seemed to be contrary to the beliefs of any study participants they will be left unanswered during the interview. The study participants will be informed on the purpose of the study and how information collected was useful. The identity of the study participants will remain confidential and will not be disclosed anywhere in the study. During analysis of data care was be taken in order to avoid misrepresentation of the data collected.

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