Conflicting Thoughts in 'Sensitive Case Study Analysis' Case: Problems of Migrated Tea Plantation Women Labourers

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Abstract
    Many areas in the qualitative research filed that invite potential reaction viz. stress, sacredness and threats from people, community, institutions, researchers and participant's. Such issues, researchers' call it as "sensitive issues', When the researchers choose such sensitive research topics, which is circled around socio-cultural, psycho-social, managerial, individual or political scenarios, they have to face many ethical and administrative hurdles from the field of study. In this particular paper the researcher conducted a case study on issues of migrated plantation women laborers in tea estates of southern part of Idukki districts of Kerala, India. The issues of tea plantation labourers are quiet unique but rarely reported by the researchers or the media so far, though it is clearly visible to everyone and it is very sensitive to those who involved in it. By conducting this sensitive qualitative research, the researcher has multi faced objectives like, a) explore the issues of tea plantations labourers of one tea estate, b) understand the sensitivity issues of researchers, and c) correlate issues of qualitative research designs, with principles of ethics in appropriate data collection. The study discusses major dilemmas of a qualitative researcher and it envisages that the researcher must make use of conscious use of self and think outside the box rather than merely following the ethics and principle in- toto.

    Key Terms: Sensitivity, Ethics, Ethical research, Qualitative research, Ethical dilemma, migration, plantation laborers

INTRODUCTION

    Undertaking qualitative sensitive research is necessary if we are to enhance our understanding of the many and varying issues that affect people in today's society (Dickson-Swift et. al. 2006). Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning". By systematic he means "planned, ordered and public", following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. By empirical, he means that this type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. Inquiry into meaning says researchers try to understand how others make sense of their experience.

    Qualitative research represents the broad view that 'to understand human affairs it is insufficient to rely on quantitative surveys and statistics, and necessary instead, to delve deep into the subjective qualities that govern behaviour' (Holliday 2002, p. 7), with the common goal being to understand the meaning people make of their lives from their own perspective(Darlington and Scott, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural

environments. The researcher's interpretation of these experiences is usually described as an emic perspective (Field & Morse, 1992).

This particular research is based on a case study, which is contextualized in plantations of Munnar area of Idukki district, Kerala and the methodology is case analysis. The particular mission of this research papers is to conduct a case study and try to answer many research questions formulated.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the sensitive issues of plantation labourers, with specific reference to Munnar Tellar Tea estate, Idukki, Kerala?
2. How far the qualitative research design, principles and ethical code of conduct support in case study analysis?
3. Who shall be the winner in conducting a proper case study research; whether the researcher, design, principles or ethical code of conduct?
4. What are the most important considerations that to be well articulated when a researcher engaged in sensitive form of qualitative research?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
CASE STUDY

Yin (1984:23) defines the case study research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." In some case studies, an in-depth longitudinal examination of a single case or event is used. The longitudinal examination provides a systematic way of observing the events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results over a long period of time. For instance, studies on child language development can be conducted using this longitudinal case study method. Data collected through observations are recorded to ascertain the language development of a child. In another example, a researcher conducting a case study may examine the reading processes of only one subject over a period of time. In other words, a case study is a unique way of observing any natural phenomenon which exists in a set of data (Yin, 1984)

PURPOSE OF CASE STUDIES

Researchers can use case study methodology for many purposes:
1. to explore new areas and issues where little theory is available or measurement is unclear;
2. to describe a process or the effects of an event or an intervention, especially when such events affect many different parties; and
3. to explain a complex phenomenon (Linda T. K, 1997)

Case study research, through reports of past studies, allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues. It can be considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required. Recognized as a tool in many social science studies, the role of case study method in research becomes more prominent when issues with regard to education (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006), sociology (Grassel & Schirmer, 2006) and community based problems (Johnson, 2006), such as poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, illiteracy, etc. were raised. One of the reasons for the recognition of case study as a research method is that researchers were becoming more concerned about the limitations of quantitative methods in providing holistic and in-depth explanations of the social and behavioural problems in question. Through case study methods, a researcher is able to go beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions through the actor's perspective.

By including both quantitative and qualitative data, case study helps explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997).

SENSITIVE ISSUES AND CASES

Over the past few decades there has been increasing research interest in "sensitive" social issues such as sexuality, child abuse and death that are emotion laden or inspire feelings of dread or awe (Farberow 1963). In addition, as the community has become aware of the impacts of domestic violence, partner abuse and societal/family breakdown attempts have been made to investigate the experiences of people in these situations. The aim has been to gain increased understanding and awareness of the impact of the experience of "sensitive" issues on people's lives.

Sieber and Stanley (1988:49) define 'socially sensitive' research as, 'studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research. Lee (1993:4) puts forward another definition of sensitive research that encompasses the topic, the consequences, the situation and any number of other issues that may arise by saying that sensitive research is 'research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it'.

THREATS IN SENSITIVE TOPICS

Lee (1993) proposes that sensitive research can be seen as threatening in three broad areas. The first of these areas is 'intrusive threat', which deals with areas that are 'private, stressful or sacred' (Lee, 1993:4). The second type of threat is 'threat of sanction', which relates to studies of deviance and involves the possibility that research may reveal information that is stigmatizing or incriminating in some way. The third type of threat that may be imposed by sensitive research is a 'political threat'. This refers to the 'vested interests' of the powerful in society and in these situations researchers may trespass into areas that involve some sort of social conflict.

Studying "sensitive" topics creates both methodological and technical issues for the researcher. The issues may include (1) conceptualization of the topic, (2) defining and accessing the sample, (3) mistrust, concealment and dissimulation between the researcher and participants, and (4) safety (LEE 1993).

The threat of sanction can also be a problem for some participants in sensitive research as the participants may fear 'exploitation or derogation' by taking part in the study (Lee 1993:33). This is a significant attention for researchers studying sensitive subjects who do not wish to exploit the community, for example, migrants, ethnic minority groups or low-income groups.

The notion of vulnerable subjects within qualitative ethnographic research traditions has been widely documented (Liamputtong, 2007). Kontos and Naglie's (2006) application of the performance paradigm to the care of Alzheimer's sufferers, Campbell's (2002) critique of the emotional impact of researching rape, Enosh and Buchbinder's (2005) focus on narrative styles within domestic violence research and Jacobsen's (2005) exploration of the potential for a very broad inclusion in the category 'vulnerable' within social research, are recent examples. Less saliently vulnerable subjects are those identified by the researcher to be at low risk of negative effects from research participation but, because of the unpredictable nature of much qualitative research, these too can be adversely affected by the conduct of research (Watts, 2006).

Sword (1999) develops this theme to argue that much qualitative research is personal work, with the researcher having a vested interest in the research topic that will inevitably influence the data produced. The sense that 'detached concern' (Fox, 2006: 944) is either realistic or necessary for the

effective conduct of sensitive research has been widely debated (Fox, 2006; Rager, 2005; Dickson-Swift et al, 2007) and it is the contention of this piece that emotion work may constitute what Katz and Mishler (2003: 35) describe as 'one of the many ways to do qualitative research' in the field of medicine and health care. Although there is potential for significant emotional distress for all parties engaged in the various domains of sensitive research, this does not necessarily lead to damage and, as Corbin and Morse (2003) argue, it is the skill and ethical awareness of the researcher that may be pivotal in yielding benefits to both the researcher and participants from the process.

PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS

Lacey (1998) points to the fact that, unlike research in the health and medical fields, social research remains largely ethically deregulated. The debate over the ethics of social research has developed significantly over the past three decades or so. In an early review Bulmer argued that the long-running debate over covert research (see Erikson 1967, Douglas 1976, Denzin 1982, Bulmer 1982, Ramcharan 1988) brought Ô... out most clearly some of the principles which guide the conduct of social research (Bulmer 1982, p. 247). These include principles such as Informed consent; safeguarding Privacy as well as assuring Confidentiality and/or Anonymity; not accessing the field in deceptive or fraudulent ways; Preventing harm for the subjects arising out of research. These principles have appeared widely in a series of codes of ethics published by recognised associations over the years (e.g. British Sociological Society 1993) and in academic literature on social research (e.g. Eisner 1991, House 1993).

Capron (1989) said that any kind of research should be guided by the **principles of respect for people, beneficence, and justice**. In a qualitative research study this principle is honored by informed consent, which means making a reasonable balance between over-informing and under-informing (Kvale, 1996). It also means that participants exercise their rights as autonomous persons to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate in the study. Consent has been referred to as a negotiation of trust, and it requires continuous renegotiation (Field & Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Munhall, 1988). A second ethical principle closely linked with research is **beneficence**—doing good for others and preventing harm. Beneficence in some situations may be taken to the extreme as paternalism. A paternalistic approach indicates the denial of autonomy and freedom of choice. **Confidentiality and anonymity** can be breached by legal requirements such as when researchers' data are subpoenaed for legal purposes. If legal reporting is required, such as cases of child or elder abuse, participants should be informed that this information would be excluded from confidentiality and anonymity. Despite the need for confidentiality, qualitative research requires confirmability, that is, documentation of all activities included in a research study. This audit trail is there for other researchers to follow (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Capron (1989) said that practical problems arise when researchers try to implement the **principle of justice**.

ETHICAL DILEMMA

It has long been acknowledged that, when studying non-mainstream groups in society such as the marginalized and the stigmatized, researchers must tailor their data collection methods to both the sensitivity of the research topic and the vulnerability of research subjects (Goffman, 1963; Hobbs, 2002; Lee, 1993).

'Ethics' can be defined as 'set of moral principles and rules of conduct': ethics in research, as one author has put it, relates to 'the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair' (Sieber, 1993, p.14). In qualitative studies, researchers rely heavily on collecting data through interviews, observations, written materials, and audiovisual material. While in the field, researchers should negotiate **access to participants to collect data**; thus the quality of social interactions between researchers and the participants may facilitate

or inhibit access to information. Once access to the field has been granted and the first steps of data collection are taken, researchers may experience ethical dilemmas that may not have been anticipated in the research plan (Field & Morse, 1992). Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining and describing people and their natural environments. Embedded in qualitative research are the **concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants**. The desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience (Ramos, 1989).

STUDY DESIGN

Many researchers of sensitive topics choose a qualitative design using the in-depth interview as their preferred method of data collection (Lee, 1993; Liamputtong, 2007). There is a range of issues that arise when qualitative interviewing is used by researchers investigating sensitive topics. One of the main issues raised is that these interviews are often stressful for both the researcher and the interviewee (Alty & Rodham, 1998; Burr, 1995; Campbell, 2002; Dunn, 1991; Gilbert, 2001b).

In-depth interviews can be done on a one-off basis or they can involve a more longitudinal design. Some authors feel that sensitive research should be characterized by a one-off nature (Brannen, 1988); others feel that this is inappropriate and that we should first work at building rapport and a relationship with the potential participant through more than one interview (Oakley, 1981). Interviews became sites for persons telling their stories to empathic listeners whose projects were framed as having both personal and political emancipatory potential (Gergen, 2001). Brinkman and Kvale (2005) noted that intimate and caring exchanges became widely accepted as the appropriate ideal style of interviewing for research. Furthermore, interviewers were framed as the instruments through which this could be realized (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). It followed that attention was primarily directed at what researchers said and did. This attention on researchers was also reflected in discussions of participation. The extent to which participants were participating in knowledge making was often construed as a function of what researchers' activities afforded (Macran & Ross, 2002).

While this particular research followed participant observation with qualitative interview process inorder to touch the sensitive issues of migrated plantation labourers and understand the level of problems they were facing. The methods being used are a mix of participant observation and informal (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 139) and guided (Mishler, 1986) conversations with users of the thrice-weekly drop-in sessions but more of informal. Because these interactions are not interviews in the accepted sense, audio-recording of these is neither possible nor appropriate, particularly given the public space in which they occur and the associated ethical concern of confidentiality. Also, some of the data is drawn not from conversations between participants and the researcher, but from listening to talk between family members and from watching their body language.

Concerns, however, about ethical rigour in the design and conduct of this research have, as the research has got underway, centered on the issue of informed consent and have been experienced as far from straight forward. Asking individual participants to sign consent forms, as one way of acknowledging the researcher aspect of the author's presence, has not felt very meaningful. Instead, a brief outline statement of research interests has been made available at the sessions and, as part of interaction with new users of the service, taking care to refer to research as well as volunteer features of the researcher's role, has contributed to ethical conduct. The researcher made use of "conscious use of self" as appropriate design to do the case analysis.

THE CASE

I am Sali, a 30 years old plantation woman worker, staying at the privately owned, Thellar Tea Estate*, in Munnar. My Native is Idukki, one of the high range district of Kerala state. My husband is Mr.

Verghese, a regularized plantation worker in the Thellar Tea Estate. We have two daughters, the elder one is studying in 5th standard and the younger one is just a one-year baby. My six members' family, with my parents, is staying in the permanent staff quarter of the Thellar estate.

Many years back, my father also Mr.Verghese had come here, in search of a job. During those days, the Thellar Tea Estate was facing acute shortage of workers for plantation labours. Though, the management recruited many workers from Teni, Thirunelveli, Thengashi like places in the Tamil Nadu state, still, the plantation labour required more workers. Since the tea plantations in Munnar were facing acute shortage of workers, my father easily got plantation work in Thellar Tea Estate. Moreover, the plantation management was ready to provide the basic facilities like food, shelter, cloths and a reasonable wage to the workers to ensure their comfortable and continuous stay in the tea plantation job. Frankly speaking, we don't have much property in our native place at Idukki in Kerala. My father sold whatever assets he had at Kerala and migrated to Thellar Tea Estate as soon as he got a job and small staff quarter for his permanent settlement. The only difficulty we had to face during those days was the chilling climate of the tea plantations.

I would like to appreciate my work and tell you that work was joy to plantation workers in those days, when they were migrated here. Waking up in the morning, walking long distance in the chilled climate with other workers, by sharing each other's pleasure and pains, going to filed and engage in their work collectively. We were enjoyed the climate and the work climate, since it gives a peace of mind and happiness in the work. A better living condition, a better wage and a better work environment thus were given us a pleasurable emotional state to us. We were accustomed to the chilling climate and enjoyed the nature of work.

Let me brief you about our work. Morning 8 O' clock we have to reach at field. To reach there in time we all have to wake up at 5 O' clock in the morning. It is my responsibility to prepare the food for the entire family. Since my mother in law is suffering from acute asthma, I have to specifically take care her food and health also. My husband has to reach at field at around 7.30 in the morning. Since the field is 4-5 kilometers away from the staff quarters, I have to leave at 7.00 in the morning. My nature of work is to collect the tender leaves of the tea plant ('Kilunth Nullal') from the field. I have to collect 18 kilos of tender leave every day from the field. For additional collection of leaves, incentives are given. For additional collection of tender leaves beyond 18 Kg, the management fixes 50 ps/Kg as incentives. Since money is a motivational factor for daily sustenance, we used to collect 25-30 kgs of leaves every day. My husband and myself are getting better income from the plantation work.

As I have already mentioned, the past management was so keen in making provision for all the welfare, health facilities and financial assistance to the labourers. The management believes that the healthy worker is very important for day-to-day plantation work. The management has given raincoats and woolen clothes to the workers for rainy season. They have given assistance to employees by making provision of 50 Rs for collection of food grains from the ration shop. Though, some time we had to face delay in the payment but management made the part payment to take care of the family needs. The management was prompt in giving incentives to the additional work. There is no unnecessary hassle between workers and management there is a trust on the part of labourers towards the management. The union practices are constructive and supportive to the management. The management is so considerate to the workers as they are committed to work and shown their integrity to the organisation. They have given assistance in the education of the children. Company started a crèche near by the quarters and appointed some supervisory ladies to look after the children of workers. The management is giving free food and milk to the children in the crèche. They used to provide company vehicle to take the sick workers to the hospitals, in the emergency. For the permanent worker they initiated the provident fund also. The workers are having high trust and

confidence in the management. People can share their pain and pleasure to the management since there is congenial relationship exists between workers and management.

Let me tell you, the entire crisis started as soon as the change of leadership happened five years back. The past leaders and management have changed. The new management and leadership have taken up the estate. The plight of the laborers started when the changeover of ownership happened. The new management communicated to the workers that the organisation is facing severe financial crisis of rupees 5 corers because of the too much of welfare provisions and benefits being given to the workers, by the past management. They informed the workers their difficulty to increase their payment, in the coming 7 years to curb the financial out lay. To curb the financial liability, it is intimated by the management to the workers that that the organisation will have to go for downsizing. They announced the decision to go for voluntary retirement scheme to the permanent employees. To the temporary workers, they asked to leave the company within a period of 5 months. They also have taken decision to cut down current welfare facilities in the coming years. Management asked the workers to collect more kilos of tea leaves every day and they increased the working hours. They asked the workers to work more to secure their job in future. The change of leadership has thus inculcated 'change of belief' among workers and they feel insecure about their work and future.

Management rescheduled the working time from morning 7 O' clock to 3 O' Clock. Labourers have to leave their home to work at around 6.30 in the morning. The workers have to reach in time on the field. They reduced the wages of the latecomers. Management tightened the work supervision. The informal sharing and social interaction are not entertained in the field. The supervisors started using abusive languages on workers in their task performance. The rebel labourers are sent to distant places, in order to give punishment massage to the other workers. The family members working together are separated in the work, to avoid unnecessary interaction at work. They increased the minimum collection of tea leave from 18 kg to 25 Kg. The casual leave, sickness leaves etc. like available leaves have been barred. No consideration is given in work to the members having illness. Moreover, culture of giving raincoats and woolen clothes in the rainy season to the workers is scrapped.

The management has taken several additional steps to curb the excess financial outlay. These can be detailed as follows.

- Weekly 50 Rs for the ration allowance is stopped
- Reduced the present wage from 80 rupees per day to 53 rupees per day
- Incentive system is stopped
- Delayed payment to the workers
- Delayed bonus
- Running crèche for the workers children is stopped
- Voluntary retirement scheme is announced
- Union activities is totally denied
- Educational assistance to the worker's children stopped
- Women education not entertained
- Those families where three members have employment in the plantation are asked to reduce it to two members
- Company vehicles are not allowed to take the sick labourers to the hospital
- Work is prominent than welfare

I would like to tell you some strange incidents happened against the workers, widely supported by the present management.

- The management sought the help of 'goondas' to evacuate the plantation workers from the staff quarters
- Union leaders are silent to the management actions
- Women laborers are sexually harassed at work
- New recruitment is happening even after downsizing
- Discrimination in the wages of male and female workers
- Stringent disciplinary measures
- Power supply is reduced for the laborer's quarters.

Let me share, how the change of leadership has created fear and anxiety among workers in the plantation. The change of leadership and the attitude of management have developed deep insecurity among the workers. The delayed payment of their wages has severely affected worker's existential needs. Many time workers have to borrow money from moneylenders to meet their basic needs. The education of the workers' children is now at stake. The sickness status of the estate labourers is going up. Since the work pressure is heavy and there is no return, many workers have decided to quit their jobs. Specifically, those who migrated from distant places are the victims of these stringent measures taken by the management. Neither have they got a house in their native nor here in the estate. Their job is insecure and future of their family is at stake. The union leaders show their indirect support to the management in many steps taken by them. There is high dilution of the trust and confidence which the workers have in the union leadership. The workers feel insecure, as there is no social and economic support to meet their existential needs either from the management or from the union organisation.

The workers believe that all the steps management has taken aims to implement their own whims and fancies. They wanted to appoint their own labourers. All the work pressure thus created is to evacuate the present labourers from the plantation and thereby appoint new labourers. They still believe that the company is running with profit

I would like to tell you about our concern. Look upon the workers of the tea plantations. We oozed our sweat and blood to the organisation to which we work for. In return, company is creating severe hardships to our day-to-day life. We don't have any one in our native places. Where will we go if management knocks out us from here? How will our children study? What about our sick parents and relatives? How do we protect them? How do we take care of our children? We don't know what to do…No job, no wage and thereby no life to the plantation labourers.

You might have heard the strikes in the plantation that went on smoothly in the last few months. Let me tell you that, the strike in the plantation is more situational than intentional. In order to prevent management action against the workers, the plantation labourers of the Thellar Tea Estate united together one day and some of the workers emerged as leaders from within. They called one-day strike against the management pointing out the issues at work. But the management continued their reluctance further. The workers started one week strike. The workers are of the belief that, there is nothing to lose from this strike, rather there are some hopes of having some gains. In a 'do or die' situation there is no choice left with the workers but to fight against the management. The difference in the nature of strike here is that strike is done not for the luxurious needs but for getting the existential needs. We got the result we expected. When management realized the fact that the production is getting affected because of strike, they loosened their stand against the labourers, though with severe antagonistic attitudes. The groups thus formed prevented further recruitment in the company. It blocked the company's move against the downsizing. Through negotiation, they ensured the fair wages to the plantation workers. They made an agreement with the management for

the incentive system, and several other basic needs. Though management doesn't roll back majority of their stringent measures, they have shown their changes in their treatment and understanding
Let me ask you few questions…. Why the management compelled workers to go for agitation to get things done? Is 'strike' the only weapon to get justice here in this country for the workers? How do people in the country look upon labour laws? Do the workers get any better living condition with the labour laws existing for the plantations? Who cares for the plantation workers? Is all management staff here to fight with workers? Is this the real function of management? Is there any hope to the plantation labourers from the government side? Leaving her several question aside….Sali ends up her 'story of agitation' here….!!

SENSITIVITY IN DATA COLLECTION

Response from the participant
- The plantation worker was not ready to cooperate with investigator or sharing information about themselves.
- Absolute Reluctance
- Silence
- Crying

Observation
- There was strange fear in their eyes.
- Tension and anxiety
- Estrangement
- Shown her complete reluctance to open up, building any kind of rapport.

Sensitivity Issue
- Participant is a female worker.
- Investigator is a male member.
- Participant shown her complete unwillingness to have any rapport.

Ethical issue
- Cannot compel the respondent
- Cannot creep into the privacy of the respondent
- No consent from the respondent

Ethical Dilemma
- After knowing clearly that there are issues related to plantation women labourers how the researcher would ignore these issues and leave the study.
- Inorder to collect the information do I break the ethical principles?
- Principle of nonjudgmental attitude.
- Principle of 'accept the person as he/she is.'
- Purposeful expression of feelings
- Controlled emotional involvement

Strategy Used
- Started living with plantation labourers with the support of Forest staff members
- Develop the rapport with the family members once again.
- Gain the confidence of the plantation workers

DISCUSSION

Qualitative research a form of methodical experiential inquiry that provides insight into an issue, or a situation or a phenomenon.

Case study methodology is one among the method followed by the investigators to explore various deep rooted meaning of phenomena under study. Case study research excels at fetching investigators to an understanding of a multifaceted issue or a phenomenon and a comprehensive situational analysis of number of incidents, conditions and events and their interrelationships. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

Conducting case study is not an easy task. When the researcher starts the process, he/she has to face many hurdles during data collection phase. Major difficulty lies on the principles and ethical code of conduct. Much time the researcher has to break the principles to be followed and code of conduct to be strictly adhered with. In qualitative studies, researchers rely heavily on collecting data through interviews, observations, written materials, and audiovisual material. While in the field, researchers should negotiate access to participants to collect data; thus the quality of social interactions between researchers and the participants may facilitate or inhibit access to information. Once access to the field has been granted and the first steps of data collection are taken, researchers may experience ethical dilemmas that may not have been anticipated in the research plan (Field & Morse, 1992). The qualitative studies develops extreme form of stress to the investigator, when he/she almost follow the principles of ethics in research process. Basically the principle of ethics pertains to doing well and abstains from doing harm to others. While the researchers dilemma is that, having come to realize the issues pertaining to a community, people or object, gathering proof to substantiate it following the principles of ethics. The kind of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is delicate, different and never matched to issues in any other form of research.

It is clearly pointed by past researchers that the qualitative studies usually have to face many hurdles. Ramos (1989) in this context clearly indicates three types of problems that may affect qualitative studies include the research / participant relationship, the researcher's subjective interpretations of data, and the design itself. To what extent the researcher tries to build up the relationship between the participants which is termed as rapport building that determines the beginning of any the qualitative study. The participants will open up only when they feel absolute confidence over the researcher and the environment.

Sieber and Stanley (1988:49) define 'socially sensitive' research as, 'studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research. It is well pointed out by Lee (1993), that studying "sensitive" topics creates both methodological and technical issues for the researcher. The issues may include (1) conceptualization of the topic, (2) defining and accessing the sample, (3) mistrust, concealment and dissimulation between the researcher and participants, and (4) safety (Lee 1993).

On sensitive issues based studies, it will be difficult for the researcher to develop rapport with the participant. The sensitivity of the issue makes the participant away from the exposures due to anxiety, tension, sacredness, thinking about the after effects etc. The safety of the researcher and that of the participant is in problem in sensitive research. The researcher is exposed to all kinds of threats since there are observers to curb the situation and let the status quo to be maintained. The case discussed in this paper is a very much sensitive issue. The public and the villagers are totally silent on this issue, even when all are aware about the atrocities against the plantation workers. It is very clearly mentioned by the participant that there are many observers from the company management side and they try to block all

kind of external intervention in settling down this issues. In such threat full condition collecting information, especially from a women worker, whom are more vulnerable to the wrath of the company management, is a herculean task to the investigator.

During such situation, if the researcher introduces himself/herself as an investigator of the issue, pertaining to a community, especially in which the participant is a member, it would take long period to develop rapport and interpersonal relationship with the respondent. Many times the researcher has to show his/her patience to develop good interpersonal relationship with the participant. Add on it, the most significant hurdle the researcher may face here in this juncture is the principles and ethics to be followed during data collection.

Researchers are expected to obtain informed consent from all those who are directly involved in research or in the vicinity of research. This principle adheres to a larger issue of respect to the participants so that they are not coerced into participation and have access to relevant information prior to the consent. The principle is also concerned with offering respect and protection to research participants through assurance of confidentiality of information shared and anonymity by not revealing the identity of the individuals and institutions involved. It is expects that the researchers should provide the participants with an outline of the risks and benefits involved to the participants in the study. The principle of reciprocity requires that the researchers consider actively ways through which participants could be compensated for their time and effort (Anjum Halai, 2006).

The issue of 'participant consent' is to be well debated. Gathering "participant consent", will be impractical for a researcher, who deals with a sensitive case study topic. If the investigator or tried to do that the probability of rapport building and the scope for doing a case will be a mirage. The participants need to be informed through informal way of interaction rather than formal way of intimation. Additional supportive options need to be pooled on such participants with whom the data collection will be tough enough to implement. On such situation the researcher's conscious use of self-matters than any guiding principles and ethical equations. It is well indicated by Anjum Halai, (2006) that the consent which is informed and voluntary is an ideal! Given the evolutionary nature of this research, and the inherent politics in participatory research, we strive to work towards the ideal, through several approaches. One approach is to recognize that consent is not a one off event to be undertaken at the start of a project, rather it is a process and needs to be negotiated throughout the course of the project. Consent will be sought through formal procedures such as consent forms and through informal conversations.

Further It is guided that the researcher should not ask questions which are personal, creep into the absolute privacy of the participant, should not hurt him//her, getting the consent, non-judgmental attitude, controlled emotional involvement, purposeful expression of feeling, accept the person as he/she is, individualization etc. If an investigator keeps all these principles and ethical code of conduct in his mind and follows it strictly, it will be very difficult to get a right response from the participant.

In this particular phase the respondents were not ready to interact with the researcher. In order to get along with the community and understand the real issues, the researcher has to sought the support from the Forest Department. The researcher has disclosed all the details related to the study to the Forest Department. Considering the nature of issues and the subjective wellbeing, the Forest Department allowed the researcher to get a small accommodation near to the community planation workers settlement. The plantation workers were seen the researchers with the Forest Department officials and thought that the researcher belong to the Forest Department. Disclosure of the purpose to the community may leak out the information and the researcher safety in the locality may not be obtained. Even though, to follow the principle, the researcher has to disclose the identity only after developing better rapport with the participant. The researcher has to make use of 'conscious use of self' rather than governing principles to do the study in appropriate way. By taking such bold stand by the researcher, it is to be understood that

the objective is to gather information about a community and it is not to harm the community at large. The atrocities about the company management to be exposed and it would be possible only through the support and evidence of primary data rather than secondary reports. Several times the researcher has to go with indirect and informal means of interaction and interrelationship to gather primary information from the participant that may not fulfill the requirement of adherence of principle and ethics. It is clearly mentioned by Field & Morse (19920 that the purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments. The researcher's interpretation of these experiences is usually described as an emic perspective. Especially in the case of sensitive qualitative research topic that adopted in this case study every information coming from multifaceted sources need to be observed and gathered into. The information which gathered from the secondary sources further has to be cross checked with primary interaction with the respondent. The researchers are the primary instruments of research and develop relationship with research participants so that "emic" insights may be gleaned in the social phenomenon being studied. In this context, leaving the respondent 'as he/she' stand is not adoptable to the researcher. Many allied principle that to be followed like the principle of acceptance, principle of nonjudgmental attitude, principle of individualization, etc., cannot be applied into here in the case of sensitive issues. Inorder to interpret the event in an objective way integrating participant information, the researcher's has to move away from compartmentalized way of pre-guided and determined data collection methods, principles and ethics, which may not suitable enough to produce authenticated information on sensitive issues, especially when the researcher make use of case study methodology.

The strategies followed in this case study approach are purely informal, but time consuming. Inorder to gain the accountability of the information, it is better, the researcher has to move with patience and time rather than directly getting "NO" answer from the respondent. Even though, the researcher tried to apply many of the principles, within the stipulated frame work and with due consideration to the environment in which the data gathered, like Assure 100% confidentiality, confirmability and anonymity to the information.

If the investigator moves with all the stipulated ethical principles, the study would not have integrated sensitive information directly from the informant. More important for the qualitative researcher in this context is the use of absolute common sense, viz., conscious use of self, contextually, assessing the situation, from where the data need to be collected, understanding the sensitivity of the topic and the environment, rather than strictly adhere with the ethical principles. The thought process of the researchers should go far beyond the ethics, principles and design. Researchers always should move with their common sense which is usually termed as "Conscious Use of Self", rather than principles. The principles and code of conduct are general guidelines. Many sensitive issues are such that the researchers may not adopt any of the principles which is pointed out by the past researchers. Let the researchers win always in dealing case study methodology rather principles or participants of qualitative designs.

IMPLICATIONS

The study on sensitive case analysis discusses effective approaches of case study analysis in correlation with design, principles and ethical stands of a researcher. The case study approach and analysis followed by the researcher indicates that the researchers have to go beyond designs, participant's ethics and principles. These factors should not limit the researcher to see the problem in precise manner and gather data in an objective and reliable form. This suggestion doesn't mean that the researcher should always ignore the principles and ethics. Rather researchers always have to follow the principles and ethical code of conduct where ever it may possible. However, in case of 'sensitive issues' the researchers

need to be more conscious and should make use of their 'common sense', which is the 'sixth sense', where the principles of qualitative research and the code of conduct never works with. The researchers should always think "outside box" to get appropriate result in 'qualitative case study analyses.' If one doesn't make use of his/her "sixth sense", no principle or design can support them in getting quality result and on the contrary, it would be extent more harm than safety to the researcher and the participant.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this qualitative research paper is to make a debate on whether the principles and ethics which is widely followed by the qualitative researchers need to be followed in 'sensitive case study' analysis. It is inferred from the above case analysis and discussion that in 'sensitive' case study approaches the investigator should follow 'longitudinal mode' of research. More important thing the investigators should concentrate is the possible gathering of all secondary information initially and understands the environmental scenario of the case or issue, where he/she is supposed to be exposed. During this framework, the researcher can evaluate the relevance of all ethical and moral principles which can be incorporate in the case study approach and its possible outcome to conduct the research. Where ever possible, principles and ethics of qualitative study design to be followed in conducting sensitive case study research. On the contrary, if the researchers are having ample confidence that the principles, ethics and design may not work with certain clients, community etc., then he/she should make use of "Conscious Use of Self" to gather the primary information from the respondents. In 'case study' approach, the situation and the environment matters rather than design and principles. Finest qualitative research goes with researcher's objective monitoring and evaluation of case environment and selection of appropriate tools and technique available in qualitative research. The case researcher should cent percent aware of the sensitive nature of the issues, during the adoption of ethical or unethical practice in data collection and interpretation phase. Its is again and again pointed out here in this context that 'Let the researcher always win than ethics, design and principle.'

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