

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is a prerequisite in any research. It helps the researcher to look at the problem in an organized manner. Research is the primary tool used in virtually all areas of science to expand the frontiers of knowledge enhancing the posterity of the discipline. Among other things, by conducting research, researchers attempt to reduce the complexity of problems, discover the relationship between seemingly unrelated events, and ultimately improve the way of living. Although research studies are conducted in many diverse fields of science, the general goals and defining characteristics of research are typically the same across disciplines. Pelto and Pelto (1978) states that methodology denotes the 'logic-in-use' involved in selecting particular observational techniques, assessing their yield of data and relating the data to theoretical proposition. It refers to the structure of procedures and transformational rules whereby the scientist shifts information up and down this ladder of abstraction in order to produce and organize increased knowledge.

Methodology could be used to denote to hypothetical debate of the nature of social science and subsequent insinuations for the behavior of social research. In other words, Methodology may be used to designate analytical studies of problems. It may be 'often used in a narrow sense to refer to the methods, techniques or tools employed for the collection and processing of data. Verbal or mechanical procedures, or both, may be involved in the process of data collection and analysis (Vashun, 2005: 25).

According to Kerlinger (1986: 10), 'scientific research is a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of propositions about the presumed relationships

about various phenomena'. Bulmer (1977: 5) states: 'research, is primarily committed to establishing systematic, reliable and valid knowledge about the social world'.

Research is a very general term for an activity that involves finding out, in a more or less systematic way, things you did not know. A more academic interpretation is that research involves finding out about things that no one else knew either. It is about advancing the frontiers of knowledge. Research methods are the techniques one uses to do research. They represent the tools of the trade, and provide the researcher with ways to collect, sort and analyze information so that one can come to some conclusion. If one uses the right sort of methods for his particular type of research, then he be able to convince other people that his conclusions have some validity, and that the new knowledge that has been created is soundly based (Walliman, 2010).

Research means searching knowledge and finding applications of knowledge to make it information for common understanding of tools and figures. Research is defined as scientific and systematic study of specific information to investigate problem and amylase the situation. It is essentially a systematic enquiry seeking facts through objective verifiable methods in order to discover the relationship among them and to deduce from them broad principles or laws (Saravanvel, 2015: 1). The *Webster's International Dictionary* gives a very inclusive definition of research as 'a careful critical inquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles; diligent investigation in order to ascertain something'.

Research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypothesis or suggested solutions, collecting, organizing and evaluating data, making deductions and reading conclusions, and at proceeding cautiously testing the conclusion to decide whether they fit the formulating hypothesis.

There could be a few main objectives in conducting a research. They are:

- To discover new facts;
- To verify and test important facts;
- To analyze an event or process or phenomenon to identify the cause and effect relationship;

- To develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories to solve and understand scientific and nonscientific problems;
- To find solutions to scientific, nonscientific and social problems; and
- To overcome or solve the problems occurring in our everyday life.

Identity and social transition evoke in human thinking a thirst for knowing the causes of developments making further amendments for advancing in comprehensive understanding of the society and culture. It also safeguards the community feeling as perpetuation traditional cultural heritage through the continuity of knowledge. The factor of identity relates to the issues of 'we' and 'they' in a multi-ethnic situation and there are occasions when borrowing and sharing of cultural markers take place for maintenance of a community's existence.

3.1. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

It is a process used to collect information and data for the purpose of making business decisions. The methodology may include publication research, interviews, surveys and other research techniques, and could include both present and historical information. Understanding the difference between methods and methodology is of paramount importance (www.businessdictionary.com/definition/research-methodology.html retrieved on 29/08/2010). Method is simply a research tool, which is used by the researchers to collect data from the field. There are many methods that are applied on various occasions of the research to collect adequate data for the research. Methodology is the justification for using a particular research method.

In every research a methodology is followed in gathering the data. This study is basically qualitative in nature. Data have been collected through interview, observation, pilot study, questionnaire, etc. Field study was conducted in six phases and demographic data have been collected by visiting households personally by the researcher. Leaders of the community were contacted personally and sufficient data were collected on socio-economic and politico-cultural spheres of life. A lot of ethnographic details were

collected from Pnar individuals of adjoining villages and analyzed with the help of the supervisor after a thorough discussion with the supervisor.

After the formal registration in the Assam Don Bosco University a reconnoiter trip was made in the month of July 2014 along with the research supervisor, when incidentally the greatest annual festival of the Pnar, *Beh-dien-khlam*, was being performed. During this period the researcher collected demographic and ethnographic data and canvassed schedules through household survey. These were analyzed and updated with the help of the supervisor. After that visits to libraries were made at Shillong and Guwahati for understanding the previous researches on this theme. The library consultation provided an avenue for a comprehensive understanding over the subject matter. The first phase of the field study was done during March-April 2015 in the first village. Simultaneously analysis of collected data was in progress. The second phase of field study was done during November-December 2015 in the second village. During July-August 2016 the researcher spent time in collecting data from the third village. In addition to this, visit to the annual festival, *Beh-dien-khlam*, was done to understand the progressive development and changes, if any, that has taken place in between. The fourth village was studied during October-November 2016. This phase was followed by collection and up-dation of secondary data from various libraries and other academic institutions. The fifth and the last village was studied during July-August 2017, when again *Beh-dien-khlam* was studied. The whole data collected from the various sources were analyzed to find the identity and transformation of the people of the studied area with a developmental perspective. Incidentally in March 2018 one important event, the 'Monolith Festival', *Ka Pom Blang Iaw*, took place in Nartiang village, where one can see the largest agglomeration of megaliths in the state of Meghalaya in general and Jaintia Hills in particular. This festival occurs at a pace of almost two decades. The last one was held in 1997. During this five-day long festival goat, fowl and pigeon are sacrificed at different geographical cardinal points to appease the spirits and ancestors. During the entire span of research, the researcher had the opportunity of staying in Pnar dominated Jaintia Hills because of his professional institutional attachment. It provided an opportunity to interact with various people having varying socio-economic and politico-cultural backgrounds. The research allowed the researcher to explore the 'emic'

perspective through participant observation method in many cases since he was fully acquainted with the Pnar language, culture and customs.

3.2. PRIMARY DATA

Primary data means original data that have been collected specially for the purpose in mind. It means someone collected the data from the original source first hand. Data collected this way is called primary data. Basically, the study is qualitative in nature. The sources of primary data are: a) Observation, b) Documentary sources, c) Questionnaire, d) Interview, e) Survey, etc. Primary data refers to information that is generated to meet the specific requirements of the investigation at hand (Saravanel, 2015). The researcher has collected both qualitative and quantitative demographic data by using the method of observation, personal interview using structured questionnaire and household census schedules. This entails the collection of information to meet the precise data requirements of the investigation.

3.2.1. Observation

Observation, as the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observing. Observation method is classified as a participatory study because the researcher has to immerse himself in the setting where his respondents are present, while taking notes or recording events. Observation as a data collection method can be structured or unstructured. In structured or systematic observation, data collection is conducted using specific variables and according to a pre-defined schedule. Unstructured observation, on the other hand, is conducted in an open and free manner in a sense that there would be no pre-determined variables or objectives. Every research begins with observation. The initial period of the research was devoted to observation of the people and their customs and life patterns, which lead the researcher to study local language. While keeping the daily filed data on a day to day basis the researcher also made every effort to observe the practices very closely and analyzed the data systematically. Significant events of the

people of the studied area were recorded and sought the expertise interpretation whenever necessary. Various gadgets were used by the researcher to record the history, songs, dances, stories and other cultural practices of the studied population. It is also noted that the researcher participated in the famous annual *beh-dien-khlam* festival as a keen observer every year. People without any hesitation provided necessary information through recoded audios and videos for the benefit of this research. Thus, the researcher could collect primary source of data through his direct involvement with the people and observing them closely.

3.2.2. Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study conducted on a limited scale before the original studies are carried out in order to gain some primary information, on the basis of which the main project would be planned and formulated (Saravanel, 2015: 249). This study helps the researcher to understand the feasibility of his study and possibility of gathering adequate information for the study. The researcher visited the field several times before the initiation of actual search. During the reconnoiter trip a sample of 30 households was selected from two villages and data were collected from there. It helped the researcher to design the research methods and various techniques to collect data and conduct interviews. It also helped the researcher to look into the challenges and possibilities of the research. Redesigning the research methods, choosing the sample size and areas of study, selection of the interviewee, preparing the questionnaire and places of cultural and social importance were identified during the pilot study. The pilot study was an initial attempt into the systematic research. Therefore, it not only gave knowledge to the researcher but improved the self-confidence also. While analyzing the households of the pilot study the researcher gained a comparatively well understanding of the research area. The study results were further scrutinized with the help of experts especially with the research supervisor and the data were finally incorporated in to the main research. Pilot study motivated the researcher with inculcated seriousness and honesty. It also helped the researcher to acquire a general knowledge

about the problem which ultimately helped to know the nature and different aspects of the problem (ibid).

3.2.3. Interview

Interview is one of the powerful tools for data collection in social science research. It is meant for collecting materials extensively and intensively. There are various types of interviews in social science research such as: personal interview, group interview and telephone interview. The present researcher used personal interview and group interview for collecting materials for his study.

3.2.3.1. Focus Group Interview

To collect adequate data for the research, the researcher conducted focus group interview with various sections of the people based on their age, occupation, qualification, political role, social status, etc. Focus group interview is a form of qualitative research consisting of interviews in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focus_group retrieved on 29/08/2018). It is a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. Focus group research is used to develop or improve products or services. The main purpose of focus group interview in social science research is to provide data to enhance, change or create a concept among the people.

The researcher conducted few group interviews in the field. Since the research is aimed at the study of the identity and social change coupled with the developmental perspectives, the researcher conducted the interview separately for the youth, elderly men and women and the school going children. The researcher also interviewed the youth studying in the cities and who are left behind at homes due to lack of finance and facilities. It provided wide range of opportunities for the researcher to know the situation

they are in and their knowledge with the regard to the studied topic. Though the education drastically changed the social situation, yet the contribution for the social / communal development stands below the average. The leaders of the community and religion were interviewed in-depth for getting the information with regard to the transition the society facing today. Since the researcher is an outsider, he stayed with the people to build rapport and this paved the way for sharing without fear and favour. Familiarity with the people gave the researcher easy access to the families and he could participate social ceremonies as far as possible. The main objectives of interview is the exchange of ideas and experiences, eliciting of information to a very wide range of data in which the interviewee may wish to rehearse his past, define his present and canvass his future possibilities (Saravanel, 2015: 305-306). Being a part in their discussions and a silent observer in their ceremonies gave adequate boost and encouragement for the researcher to be a part in canvassing their future possibilities.

3.2.3.2. Semi-Structured Interview/Personal Interview

Depth interviews are one-to-one encounters in which the interviewer makes use of an unstructured or semi-structured set of issues / topics to guide the discussion. A single individual is interviewed at a time. It is a qualitative research technique which is used to conduct intensive individual interviews where numbers of respondents are less and research is focused on a specific product, technique, situation or objective (www.fao.org/docrep/w3241e/w3241e06.htm retrieved on 29/08/2018). The researcher prepared well-defined questions on the socio-economic attributes of the studied people and interviewed the persons concerned to get a better insight. It gave a clearer perception of the people with regard to their beliefs, rituals, rubrics, rites of passage and customary laws, etc. The researcher conducted the personal interview with the leaders of the studied community like area leaders (*Daloi*), village leader (*Rangbah shnong*), village priest (*Lyngdoh*), assistant area leaders, *Wasan* and *Patan*, and others. This type of interview led the researcher to the abyss of knowledge that are traditionally handed over to them, who preserve it with greater respect and least alteration. Wisdoms of ancestors and wits

of the forefathers were extracted from them by the researcher through this form of interview.

Table 3.1

Studied Villages and Places for Study

| Sl. No. | Village | Number of respondents | Designation | Remarks |
|---------|-------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|
| 01 | Mynkre | 8 | Village Head, Village Secretary, Villagers. | Studied village. |
| 02 | Jarain | 10 | Village Head, Village Secretary, Oldest man, Oldest woman, Villagers, Village School Teacher, Village Priest, Two unemployed youth, Two employed youth, VDP Members. | Studied village. |
| 03 | Mynsoo | 10 | Village Head, Village Secretary, Oldest man, Oldest woman, Village School Teacher, Village Priest, VDP Members, Villagers. | Studied village. |
| 04 | Pynthor | 15 | Village Lyngdoh, Village Head, Village School Teacher, VDP Members, Villagers. | Studied village. |
| 05 | Nongkhyllep | 05 | Village Head, Three unemployed youth, Villagers. | Studied village. |
| 06 | Iongshiwiat | 08 | Villagers, School Teacher, Village Secretary, Village Women Association. | Studied village. |

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|----|--|-----------|--|--|
| 07 | Brichyrnot | 2 | Village Head, Village Secretary. | These places were studied for getting additional information on the community under study. |
| 08 | Jowai | 10 | Leaders of the <i>Seinraj</i> . | |
| 09 | Lum Myrli | 3 | Village Head, Village Secretary, Members of the Council. | |
| 10 | Lumshnong | 5 | Village Head, Village Secretary, Secretary of village education committee, Village Teacher, VDP members. | |
| | Total 06 villages and 04 places | 76 | | |

3.2.4. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. After going through the various literatures on questionnaire preparation the researcher prepared schedules and presented these to the research guide for his observation. He approved two schedules one for collection of information about the household and the other dealing with the socio-cultural and politico-economic life of the people of the studied area. This was used in the second and third phase of field study. The first schedule was filled by visiting each family by the researcher, while the second schedule was given to literate / educated people for filling and illiterate and undereducated were approached by the researcher. The first schedule dealt with the household information and demographic characteristics of the household members like name, age, marital status, qualification, religion, type of family, village, tribe and clan etc.

The second schedule had eleven sections and the data were collected from all the villages. The first section of the second schedule dealt with the basic amenities like housing, drinking water, toilet, electricity, vehicle, etc. while in the second section the

researcher got a clear picture about the agriculture, farming, land, crops, livelihood, livestock of the people studied. The third section dealt with health and hygiene. Through the fifth, sixth and seven sections the researcher got adequate information with regard to household income sources and savings. In the next two sections emphasis were given to social participation, community-based organization and availability of government schemes. The last section gave information on migration and social transition.

Apart from these two schedules a third one was prepared for focus interview/in-depth personal interview to collect socio-cultural data with special reference to rites of passage and social transition.

3.2.5. Census and Survey Methods

This method is used for collecting data on population, households, etc. Through the census sheet the researcher collected information with regard to the name, age, sex, relation with the head of family, education, status, occupation, income, ownership and religion. In the survey methods data have been collected on basic amenities, agriculture / land / crops, health, household income sources, savings, borrowings, community-based organizations, availability of government schemes, social participation, migration, etc. Apart from these two formats the researcher prepared another questionnaire to collect information with regard to the religious practices and transition that the studied community faced in the dimensions of time and space.

3.2.6. Ethnographic Survey

Ethnographic Survey is the systematic study of people and cultures. It is designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnography>). The researcher made use of all the available data to collect information about the subject studied. Apart from the field notes, audio records of interview, photographs, maps,

artifacts, monoliths, voice recordings, video recordings of the cultural events and rites of passage were used to extract information from the population studied.

3.2.7. Ethno-Historical Method

Ethno-history is the study of cultures and indigenous peoples' customs by examining historical records as well as other sources of information on their lives and history. Ethno-history uses both historical and ethnographic data as its foundation. Ethno-history is the study of cultures and customs of the indigenous people' by examining historical records as well as other sources of information on their lives and history (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnohistory>). This method is adopted by the researcher to collect traditional and modern cultures of the studied population. It helped the researcher to understand the past history of the people. Religious practices, rituals and rubrics, are the reminiscences of the history of the people.

3.2.8. The Conversational Method

Among the various methods the conversational method occupies important role is collecting data from the field. The conversational method is a means of gathering knowledge found within indigenous research. The conversational method is of significance to indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an indigenous paradigm and perspective that has a relevance to the study. (www.fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/online-journal/Kovach_pp40.pdf retrieved on 5/05/2015). To get a comprehensive view about the tribe the researcher interviewed young and old, men and women for collecting data. Since oral tradition plays an important role in the social science research, the researcher spent ample time in listening and recording the stories and cultural history of the studied population. The researcher made use of voice recorder, when permitted, and recorded cultural celebrations through video camera to get accurate information of the celebration.

3.3. SECONDARY SOURCES

Secondary data refers to data that are collected by someone other than the user. Common sources of secondary data for social science include censuses, information collected by government departments, organizational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes. It also includes the books periodicals and other published materials to which the researcher has access to.

The researcher looked into many secondary sources to find the identity of the Pnar of Meghalaya. Books from different libraries, census records, various government gazettes, and academic publications, both published and unpublished literatures were referred. The researcher visited the various libraries in the Northeast like North Eastern Institute of Culture and Religion, Anthropological Survey of India, Shillong, Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai, Council of Social Science Research, Northeastern Regional Centre, Shillong, Kristu Jyoti Mahavidyalaya, Sason, Otto Hopfenmuller Library, Shillong, North-Eastern Hill University Library, Shillong. Relevant records and information were gathered from books, documents, records, research journals, newspapers, and census records, published and unpublished documents.