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What is in it for me? Challenges Associated with Recruiting Participants for a Study Focusing on Informal Workers: A Reflection from Fieldwork Conducted in Nigeria

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Abstract

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Keywords

access gaining, automobile artisans, informal sector, Nigeria

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What is in it for me? Challenges Associated with Recruiting Participants for a Study Focusing on Informal Workers: A Reflection from Fieldwork Conducted in Nigeria

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This article presents the challenges a social scientist can encounter in studying workers in an informal sector. It is written from a doctoral researcher's perspective and draws on her fieldwork experience among informal automobile artisans in Osun State, Nigeria. The paper intends to share insights into navigating the challenges in conducting social inquiry among workers in the informal sector for fruitful outcomes. Particular attention is paid to some of the more common challenges researchers may encounter when conducting research in the informal sector. These challenges include project entry, participant recruitment, and retention. This article concludes with suggestions which researchers can use to study informal workers, especially in developing countries.

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Gaining access has been described as one of the most demanding research concerns for many qualitative researchers. According to Shenton and Hayter (2004, p. 223), a researcher's success in gaining access "will have a significant effect on the nature and quality of the data collected, on the insight into the organisation and its members that the investigator is able to gain, and, ultimately, on the trust worthiness of the findings." Yet, the explanation of the recruitment process (gaining access) is usually brief in most of the scholarly articles in social science research, especially among the informal workers. Moreover, most of the handbooks in social science research present sections on sampling (an aspect of the recruitment process) as if there is a world of people out there that are waiting to be interviewed; and all the researchers have to do is to make sure they select the most suitable of them.

However, this is not usually the case. This is because the recruitment of participants can be a time-consuming, frustrating, difficult and unpredictable process that demands creativity, persistence, flexibility, innovations, and emotional resilience (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015; McCormack et al., 2013; Saunders, 2012; Sixsmith et al., 2003; Thomas et al., 2007; Wigfall et al., 2013). The ingredients to gaining access to a research site, according to Kothari (1985) involve a combination of planning, perseverance, and luck. Kondowe and Booyens (2014), based on their own fieldwork experience, expanded these criteria by adding "energy"

and “commitment” to those ingredients. The listed ingredients are essential, particularly in research that has the study populations that might be hard-to-survey because they might be hard-to-find, hard-to-sample, hard-to-interview, hard-to-persuade, and hard-to-identify; while some target groups might have combinations of these typologies (Flanagan & Hancock, 2010; Robert et al., 2005; Stoecklin-Marois et al., 2011; Tourangeau et al., 2014).

The Nigerian informal automobile artisans, which are the central subjects of this study, fall into one or more of the categories above because of the very nature of their work and the informal context in which they operate. For instance, research among African entrepreneurs, particularly in the informal sector, are problematic as they are tricky to penetrate partly due to fear of exposure (e.g., for tax reasons) or general habit of keeping secrets (see (Nwankwo, 2005; Ojo, 2013). Moreover, the informal nature of their work makes them depend on daily income (they are self-employed), and they carry out their work activities manually because they do not have access to modern equipment. Hence, much time is spent on car repair work; this condition puts the artisans in a hard-to-interview category. Also, the artisans fall into hard-to-persuade category because of their low educational status that does not allow them to attach value to research. However, there is limited knowledge about the challenges a researcher might have in recruiting this category of workers for research. One is tempted to ask if there are no challenges in the recruitment process or because the majority of the studies are survey. In choosing respondents for quantitative study, random selection of participants is required to remove the potential influence of external variables and ensure generalizability of results. Whereas, subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants who can inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon are selected (Sargeant, 2012).

Furthermore, another reason for the lack of articles on the research process on this working population might be that despite the challenges researchers might have in recruiting participants, researchers may prioritize the publications of their findings over discussions of their method (Dana & Dana, 2005; Deane, Stevano, & Johnston, 2019; Rugkåsa & Canvin, 2011). The recruitment process, therefore, often seems to be an unproblematic and unimportant aspect of the research and is rarely fully unpacked and described in research articles (Deane, Wamoyi et al., 2019; Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). In order to address this gap in knowledge, this paper sets to discuss the challenges a researcher might encounter in recruiting artisans for a study, especially, a qualitative study.

The literature that addresses recruitment includes discussions on the role that luck and opportunism play in the recruitment process as well as different ways in which participants can be sampled (Butera, 2006; Marland & Esselment, 2019; Saunders, 2012). The ways include snowball sampling, theoretical sampling, or through the social network; the strength and limitations of these approaches were also emphasized (Conti & O’Neil, 2007; Sixsmith et al., 2003; Wigfall et al., 2013). Moreover, Rugkåsa and Canvin (2011), addressed the importance of community gatekeepers as a way of accessing hard-to-reach populations. Eide and Allen (2005) emphasized the advantage of “being known” in the community. Furthermore, giving potential participants a clear and a concise overview of the project aims, the kind of questions that might be asked, why they have been approached and the degree to which the research might benefit from the participant’s unique insight might stimulate the interest of the participants and ensure the success of the interview process (Delaney, 2007; Goldstein, 2002; Harvey, 2011; Wigfall et al., 2013). At each point of the research process, each of the strategies suggested provided some leverage and familiarity with the contexts of the study.

Moreover, it was believed by researchers that these strategies can help build trust between the researchers and the target group of participants (Wigfall et al., 2013). As good as these strategies are, it has been argued that they have limitations. For example, the use of gatekeepers can block access to communities (Wigfall et al., 2013) especially, if the request

did not interest the gatekeepers for various reasons which include lack of perceived value of the research to the group and scepticism regarding the role of outsiders (Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2008). Also, “being known” in the research communities can contribute to multiple identities for the researcher which might influence the process of data collection (Aberese-Ako, 2017). Besides, “being known” could introduce some biases into the recruitment and possible responses from the participants; nonetheless, familiarity with the contexts helps in navigating and negotiating some community entry challenges.

Furthermore, since reflections on the experiences and practical concerns of researchers are not often standard practice, it remains largely invisible in the literature. In order to bridge this gap, this article, therefore, draws upon the fieldwork experiences of a doctoral researcher who conducted research with informal automobile artisans in Osun State, Nigeria. This article reflects on how the approach to the field entry, the topic of study, the use of qualitative approach, and contextual factors contributed to the willingness of the group to participate in the study. The following three sections provide the description of the terms “informal sector” and “informal automobile worker,” a brief overview of the study, researcher positionality, and identity.

Informal Sector and Informal Automobile Workers

The Nigeria informal sector provides employment opportunity for vast majority (90%) of the Nigerian population (Afolabi & Abereijo, 2017), in contrast to the formal sector that employs only 10% of working people. Also, the informal sector contributed about 65% of the country’s GDP in 2017 (Bank of Industry, 2018). The informal sector in Nigeria comprises cottage, micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises providing basic services in almost all economic sectors and locations in the country (Onokala & Banwo, 2015). The word “informal” as it refers to the workers does not make them illegal, but it denotes that their economic activities go beyond state regulation. The informal automobile artisans accounted for almost 40% of the informal businesses (Baba, 2010) in Nigeria. The workers also known as “artisans” are often referred to as “roadside mechanics” because their workshops are usually situated along the road especially in urban areas (Baba, 2010). The services being provided by these artisans include mechanical repairs, panel beating, vulcanizing, and painting. Moreover, almost all artisans are members of their respective trade associations; this factor facilitates the recruitment process. This is because the trade associations are self-regulated and have rules and regulations that are binding on members. Hence, recruiting from the trade association contributed to the successful recruitment process.

A Brief Overview of the Study

The aim of the doctoral project was to explore the informal automobile artisans’ risk perception, risk tolerance, and safety and health behavior. The study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed method design. This is a study design with an initial qualitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, with a final phase of data integration (Berman, 2017).

The research approach for this study is interpretive (ReviseSociology, 2015). This approach provides new insights into how and why people behave the way they do. Interpretivist scholars postulate that individuals are intricate and complex and respond to the same objective reality in different ways; and that they have their reasons for behaving the way they do (Chowdhury, 2014; Tuli, 2010). This is in contrast to a positivist approach that postulates that “society consists of social facts which exercise coercive control over individuals” (Durkheim, as cited by Thompson, 2015, n.p.) and that research has to discover the laws that govern human

behavior. However, because my research problem is to understand the risk perception and risk tolerance of the artisans and the potential effect of the perception on their safety and health behavior, it is my contention that an interpretive approach would help me best to unravel the research problem.

Specifically, face-face in-depth interviews and observation were used as data collection methods in the qualitative phase. In-depth interviews were conducted with 22 executives of the various associations, 17 master artisans, and 4 apprentices. The interview is semi-structured, it allowed flexibility to get fresh, and surprising perspectives from the participants about their risk perception, risk tolerance, and safety and health behavior. Moreover, 8 workplaces (2 workplaces for each working group) were observed. The use of observation enabled me to understand and capture the workplace environment and the activities that go on there, including the artisans' work practices. The quantitative phase involved interviewers administered questionnaires on 632 respondents. The quantitative study helped me to uncover relationships that exist between the artisans' physical working conditions and their health problems on one hand, and the potential relationship between their risk perception, risk tolerance and safety behavior on the other hand (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

Study Setting

Three urban cities, Ile-Ife, Iwo, and Osogbo in Osun State, Nigeria were purposively selected for the study. The rationale for this selection is because the automobile artisans in this state do not work in organized locations like automobile artisans in big cities like Ibadan and Lagos (Oyo State and Lagos State respectively). Osun State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria with her capital in Osogbo. The three towns, Ile-Ife, Iwo, and Osogbo represent the three administrative zones in the State, that is, Osun East, Osun West, and Osun Central senatorial districts respectively.

Researcher Positionality

Positionality refers to the position of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study, and there can be alteration to this position throughout the process of conducting research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Greene, 2014; Trowler, 2011). A researcher can take up different positions in research; it could be *an insider* or *an outsider* position or in-between depending on the study context. For instance, my position in this research puts me as an insider as well as an outsider researcher. As a Yoruba woman, I shared the same cultural background with my participants. Moreover, I had worked as an informal worker in various sections of the informal economy for over two decades before getting employment as a faculty member at a University. These positions put me in the role of an insider. Insider research is the research done in one's own social group or society (Chavez, 2008; Greene, 2014; Naples, 2003), the researcher shares the language and experiential base with the study participants (Asselin, 2003). Although one of the benefits of being an insider researcher is acceptability and easy access to the study participants, the initial "rejection" I got from the first set of artisans I approached proves it otherwise. The initial rejection put me in a position of "outsider" (researcher that researched the group of which he/she is not a member). Moreover, the difference in our socio-demographic status reinforced this position: a female University lecturer versus male artisans. Thus, this supports Merriam et al. (2001) assertion that positionality is determined by where the researcher stands in relation to the other.

Positioning My Identity

In many early career researchers' (Ph.D. and post-doctoral researchers) work, the issue of identity (a construct of positionality) usually takes the central aspect (Aberese-Ako, 2017; Bourke, 2014; Castelló et al., 2020; McAlpine et al., 2014). My experience gave credence to Harvey (2011, p. 86) assertion that the "identity of a researcher is influenced with the process of carrying out research." Though, sharing the same cultural background with my study participants positions me as an *insider* researcher whereas coming from another social stratum places me as an *outsider* researcher. These multiple positions/identities led to the different experiences I had in the process of interacting with my research participants. The experience includes acceptance, rejection, trust, distrust, and resentment. Thus, this raises the question: why was my identity so complex among the informal workers?

Vignoles (2017, p. 14) argued that "the processes by which individuals regulate their personal identities are inextricably linked to the practices by which societies and groups regulate their members." He further explained that understanding identity as both personal and social reveals the crucial role of identity dynamics in mediating the relation between individual and society. Social researcher identity can be influenced by various personal and contextual processes within and beyond the research group. Thus, the researcher can have multiple identities during the research (Aberese-Ako, 2017; Bourke, 2014). These identities are considered an important resource in gaining entry to the research environment and developing and maintaining relationships with the potential study participants (Lavis, 2010).

I was 50 years old when I started my fieldwork; I struggled on which identity to take—a student or a researcher? Dryden (2013) posits that it is reasonable for qualitative researchers to question their identity (who am I?). This is important because the identity intersects with the paradigm from which the researcher conducts research (Roger et al., 2018). At that age, introducing myself as a student will stir suspicion in the mind of the artisans. Even though, a younger student is more likely to receive support from the workers because they will feel they are helping the student to succeed in school. More so, as the majority of them have children in school. In my own case, I decided to take on an identity of a researcher having in mind the suggestion of Dickson-Swift et al. (2007), as cited by Priscilla (2017, p. 6) that "researchers must be aware of how their identity disclosure has a strong influence on the study's process." In essence, researchers must reflect on the identity to take when planning the research. The personal characteristic of the researcher (such as age) is an important factor to consider in deciding on what identity to take in research planning.

Negotiating My Identity

The first set of artisans (4 artisans each from the 3 study locations) I met were suspicious of my intention despite all my explanations. They made the excuse of being busy on the customer's car that needed to be completed quickly. My intention at this stage was to get information about the number of the artisans in each study location so that I will be able to have an accurate number of my study population since there is no official document that I can consult. None of them was ready to offer any information. They were suspicious of my intention thinking I am a government representative; thus, they saw me as an *outsider*, even though I shared the same cultural background as them. To overcome this obstacle, I contacted via mobile phone one of the automobile artisans who had attended a training program at my Institute at the University. An appointment was made with him and the reason for the visit was clearly explained as being purely academic. He advised that I should go to the trade association chairman to get all the information I needed; he gave me the number of his chairman. Hence, using known contact can facilitate the project entry and recruitment process.

My Visit to the Chairmen

My first visit was with one of the trade association chairmen in Ile-Ife, the man was in his 50s (the experience I had with him was actually similar to what I had with other chairmen). I introduced myself to him showing my staff identity card. I explained that my interest was spurred through my experience as a poultry farmer before I got employment into the University; a job I did for over a decade. I explained that my experience as an informal worker and now as an academic made me realize the neglect that informal workers go through both in practice and policy with regards to occupational health and safety; in spite of the numerous occupational hazards we face on daily basis. I explained the study design which includes feedback of the research outcome to the participants; this aspect is supposed to be an avenue where the relevant stakeholders will discuss the possible ways for reducing occupational health problems (OHP) in the sector. This explanation situated me as an “*insider*” because I can relate with their experiences.

However, after my explanations, the chairman seemed not to be convinced of my sincerity as he asked, “What is in it for us?” This question rang throughout the qualitative part of the study. For example, another executive member from another profession said:

Yes, I know it is a research which is going to get you promotion; the promotion is going to be a benefit for you and your family, but what will be the reward of those of us that gave the information? Just bring money if you want me to give you any information, whatever you get later can be for you and your family.

In other words, they reinstate the fact that my interest in the research was for my professional advancement which has nothing to do with them. I responded by affirming his observation that the research is going to earn me a promotion. However, more importantly, the research result will help the informal automobile artisans (both the present and future generations) to minimize OHPs in the sector. My explanation to the chairman puts me as *insider* researcher while the question “what is in it for us” puts me as an *outsider* researcher. Hence, I am an *in-between* researcher. Methodologically, this position facilitates my acceptance by the artisans as well as enhances my objective status as a researcher. Also, a study design that includes post-field meeting will convince the participants about what the researcher is doing with the information gathered.

Another issue that came up during my interaction with the chairmen is the trust issue. Despite my explanations, they still doubted my sincerity. This also reinforced my *in-between* status. Several factors were responsible for this mistrust. First, researchers were seen as self-centered people who will use the information from them to get money from the government without giving the participants their share. The participants likened researchers to the politicians who will only come to the artisans when they need their votes and vanished after winning the election; one of them said, “We have lost faith in the government and researchers; we are wary of failed promises.” Apparently, researchers had made promises to them in the past about the benefit of the research in order to get information from the group without fulfilling those promises. These failed promises have built mistrust towards researchers over the years.

Secondly, the researcher was seen as an *outsider* who cannot be trusted; this brings resentment towards the researcher. For example, another executive said they are aware of the hazards in their work, so they do not need any *outsider* to put them through. This view was expressed by another chairman (who was in his 60s) thus: “We know the hazards in our work already, and we are doing something about them, we did not need any intervention from researchers...someone cannot use book knowledge to deceive us.” This expression also

showed issues of power relation in research as discussed by Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009). The participants see themselves as “real expert” because they are the ones involved in doing the job.

Lastly, there is fear that the findings of the study might be used for tax purposes especially, my question about the numerical strength of the association. The fear seems to be borne out of mistrust. Generally, the chairmen/executives of the various associations linked research with government activities. Unfortunately, the study was conducted at a time the State government was seeking internally generated revenue and at a time, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) was alleging the vulcanizers as the major cause of road accidents due to the way they repair tires. Consequently, the researcher was seen as a government representative (*an outsider*) who wanted to collect information for the government, even though, I can relate with them as a former informal worker and as a Yoruba woman (*an insider*).

My gender may have been another major factor responsible for the mistrust I experienced from the respondents. Nigeria is a patriarchal society where females are not accorded the same social status as male, although that is changing gradually (Allanana, 2013). The automobile artisanal work is a male-dominated profession (Sambo et al., 2012) as all the artisans interviewed were male. The presence of female researcher could have been awkward for them especially as there is a gender imbalance in Nigerian academia (Olaogun et al., 2015). One of the artisans whom I approached in Iwo was silent for about 30 seconds in amazement. Then he said, “You, a woman, what are you looking for that you cannot remain in your husband’s house!” He was apparently surprised to see me. This issue necessitates employing a male research assistant throughout the data collection process.

Approaching the Participants

I got the contact of other participants to be interviewed from the chairmen, this facilitated my acceptance. This is because the chairmen are highly revered among the members. However, one experience stood out for me in one of the interviews. I had opposition at the beginning of the interview from a man that called himself the son of the study participant (he was almost violent). He said we will not conduct the interview with the man unless other association members are around; even though the participant had given his consent. Perhaps, the son was concerned about the reaction of other members of the association towards the information that the father will give us. He also opposed the use of a voice recorder. I was able to calm him down and explained to him that the design of the study is different from what he is suggesting. I explained that this is not focus group discussion (FGD) because what we intend to achieve with the study is different from what FGD will offer. I also explained that the voice recorder was to enable us capture everything that the father will tell us as we cannot remember or write everything down verbatim. Besides, the recorder will not be replayed to anyone else. All other interviews went well as all the participants readily gave their consent. I was also able to observe some workplaces and work practices using a digital video camera. Since almost all the artisans belong to their respective trade associations, I enjoyed the full participation of the participants throughout the data collection process (both qualitative and quantitative). Even though I informed the participants that they are free to opt out any time they feel like doing so, none of them opted out. This enabled me to have representative data for my study.

In order to appreciate all the participants for the time they sacrificed for the interview, they were given hand wash liquid soap and a towel. The interview took an average of one and half hours that they might have used to make more money for themselves. Apart from appreciating the participant for their time, the gift was to communicate the practice of hand washing to them, especially as the study was about occupational health and safety. I silently

hope they will inculcate the habit even after the study. Also, the gesture communicates immediate benefit from the study to the participants.

Gaining Access and Retention

In retrospect, two major factors were responsible for my ultimate acceptance by the chairmen of the four trade associations. The first one was my story about my experience as a poultry farmer. I was able to convince them about my sincere concern on the issue of occupational health and safety in the informal sector. I told them I was there to learn from them, to hear their own story about the OHS challenges they have as a group; thereby acknowledging that knowledge is created by both the researcher and the researched (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). I told them this is important as little is known about OHS issues in Nigeria's informal automobile sector from the worker's perception. Telling their own story will bring to limelight their challenges on one hand, which can influence the policy in their favor. On the other hand, discussing their challenges could help them reflect on their practices and make them realized what they could further do to minimize occupational health problems. This particular objective was achieved because during the interviews many of them voiced out that the interview was an eye-opener for them and that they have seen the area in which they need to put more effort; especially in the area of enforcing the use of personal protective equipment among the members.

The second factor is the explanation about the study design which includes the presentation of the results to the participants at the group level with other relevant stakeholders (such as medical doctors, representatives from Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Occupational health and safety professionals). Though, this explanation does not guarantee absolute trust in me, it produced a desire to take a risk with me somehow. They expressed their desire to give me benefit of doubt since they do not know which effort will bring their long-awaited desire; that is government intervention in the sector. They told me their anticipated desire for government intervention in the sector which they could not get because nobody is willing to be their voice. Apparently, they decided to cooperate because of their desire to express themselves on the subject of the research and be heard through the researcher in anticipation of receiving some form of benefit whether immediate or in nearest future. Bringing relevant stakeholders, especially the policymakers, into the dissemination of research outcome in developing countries might help them (the policymakers) know the reality of the problem, thereby producing a desire to solve the identified problems. This is because policymakers lack the political will to translate scientific research findings into useful policies in these countries (Nuwayid, 2004).

However, the desire to be heard brought about conflict in the issue of confidentiality because I had earlier promised that whatever information they shared with me will be protected. They do not understand why it should be confidential since they want their voice to be heard. I had to explain that their thoughts will be presented as a group and not as individuals; this is to protect the identity of the individual and to encourage the individual to be honest with his thought.

Discussion and Conclusion

Gaining access is key in any research work as it enables a researcher to gain valuable information. Many studies have provided some useful insights into "getting in" in order to gain information, the literature on qualitative methods in the informal sector of the developing countries has not yet provided an extensive discernment of this subject. Thus, this article has discussed a range of lessons related to gaining access, recruiting, and winning the trust of

informal automobile artisans in a (doctoral) research project on occupational health and safety management. Also, issues related to my positionality/identity as a researcher was discussed. This is essential because oftentimes, the researcher's positionality is discussed in relation to qualitative research (Berger, 2015; Bourke, 2014; Chammas, 2020; Greene, 2014). Generally, it is assumed that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is much more intimate and direct within qualitative research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Woods, 2019). Hence, this article indicated methodological issues central to any research project that are often overlooked by researchers.

The researcher must first reflect on his/her position in relation to the study participants during the research process as this will enable him/her to negotiate his/her identity in the research process. This resonates with Woods (2019) suggestion that reflecting on the position to take in research is a good reflection process for all researchers because project, participants, or situation may change how the researchers are considered as "insiders" or "outsiders" within the research. Scholars have identified relevant researchers' positioning such as background, age, gender, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, and emotional responses to participants (Berger, 2015; Bourke, 2014; Greene, 2014; Johnson et al., 2020; Palaganas et al., 2017): My ethnic background positioned me in the *Insider* category, this facilitates my understanding of nuanced explanations given by the participants on their perceptions and behavior during the analysis process. However, this position did not secure my access to the participants.

Furthermore, my past experience as an informal worker placed me in-between *insider/outsider* position. The *insider* identity allows me to relate with the experiences of the participants, yet the artisans do not see me as one of them (automobile artisan) which positioned me as an *outsider*. My other personal characteristics such as gender, age, and social strata (academic) also positioned me as an *outsider*. Hence, looking back, I can say that my identity as an *outsider* necessitates the use of gatekeepers in accessing the group.

The use of the trade association executives as gatekeepers was very helpful not only in gaining access to the participants but also in sustaining their interest and their participation through the data collection process. This was possible because almost all the artisans belong to their respective trade associations and the executives have power over the workers. Scholars have reported the advantage of using gatekeepers in gaining access to participants in social research (Rugkåsa & Canvin, 2011). Also, in order to avoid the limitation of using gatekeepers such as blocking access to the participants (Wigfall et al., 2013), the researcher must have a clear objective of the study and be able to communicate such to the gatekeepers effectively. Effective communication also involves giving adequate answers to their questions and allaying their fears on any negative thought they might have concerning the outcome of the research. Importantly, the researcher must be able to explain and be honest about the benefit of the research to the gatekeepers and the participants; this is in order to explain *what is in the research* to them. This is also relevant to the researchers working among the hard-to-persuade and hard-to-interview population group.

Furthermore, this study highlighted the concern of study participants on research. The fact that most researchers will not give feedback on the outcome of research is important factor discouraging interest in research as this study has shown. Therefore, researchers must be willing to share the findings of the research with the study group. This will build trust in researchers and future researches.

The importance of researcher taking contextual issues into consideration while planning research is also pointed out in the article. The socio-political situation of the country at the time of data collection almost frustrated the process, but for the clear explanation of the objectives and purpose of the study to the gatekeepers. Hence, researchers must have adequate knowledge of the political situation of the study environment in order to have successful research in the

area. This will help the researcher to know what to and what not to say when recruiting study sample.

Since access is a prerequisite; a precondition for a research to be conducted (Burgess, 1984), this study offers useful advice on how to successfully enter the informal sector in a developing economy setting for interview and observation. It also provides useful ideas to both experienced qualitative researchers and novices conducting their first study. Furthermore, the study offers some practical implications to researchers, especially qualitative researchers. First, a study design that includes feedback on research outcomes will be beneficial to the recruitment process. Second, the use of gatekeepers is beneficial in recruiting informal workers for research in developing countries. Third, relating with the experience of the researched will enhance the researcher's acceptance and facilitate the research process. Lastly, novice researchers should pay particular attention to his/her personal characteristics (such as age, experience, and gender) in planning project entry and designing a research strategy for a study.

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