

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter is going to justify and outline the methodology that has been used in this study. It will start with research philosophy and research theory. Then research strategy and research methods will be identified. In the next part, it will justify research authenticity and samples. Before discussing the ethical issues it will justify research tools that were used in this research. In the last part it will discuss the data analysis method.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

This research was done from a subjective perspective in order to explore the three research questions, which are compared with hourly pay whether employees who work for the food company think piece rate is fair and the impacts of pay by piece rate on the relationship between production speed and work quality as well as whether employees think pay by piece rate could enhance their commitment to the food company. In this research, the employees and owners who participated in the interviews were the social actors. Moreover, the consequences of this research were based on the interview answers. In other words, this research results were from the respondents' point of view and how they think the world is. Therefore, According to Saunders et al. (2009), this study was based on subjectivism rather than objectivism.

According to Robson (1994), positivism is a method that people research the nature of science, while interpretivism is a method that people study the distinction between each person. This study adopt interpretivism philosophy, this is due to I interviewed stuffs who are in the food firm, which reflected their own ideas of different people.

#### **3.2 Research Theory**

This dissertation discuss in which way does pay for piece rate influence employees' performance, which is a new theory rather than an old theory. Thus, this research adopt inductive approach.

There are some merits of inductive approach. According to Coleman and Briggs (2002), based on opening questions, researchers could get in-depth information. What is more, it is useful for researches to use inductive approach in small company (Fogelman, 2002). While, Coleman and Briggs (2002) argue that the consequence of inductive method is too subjective.

### **3.3 Research strategy**

When it comes to research strategies, qualitative research strategy has been adopted in this study. There are two core reasons why qualitative research has been used rather than quantitative research. Firstly, there was no existing data for the small food company. Therefore, quantitative research could not be used in this study. Secondly, the research probed the impacts of piece rate pay on performance, which means the research was an exploratory study. That is to say, the study needed information from different individuals' point of view about whether pay affects their performances. In other words, numbers cannot be used to explore the nature of the research questions. This study chose, therefore, qualitative research strategy.

### **3.4 Research Methods**

According to Fogelman (2002), surveys and case study are the core methods of qualitative research. While, in this study, it was convenient for me to gain all the answers from a small firm and all the answers are real ideas of people who are in the company. In addition, interviewees provided some unimagined information. This dissertation, therefore, adopted case study.

However, there is a main limitation of case study, which is the result of case study cannot represent all companies (Saunders et al, 2009). For instance, the conclusion of the food firm only represent this firm, which cannot use in other companies.

### **3.5 Research Authenticity**

According to Bryman (2012), some criteria such as validity, reliability and trustworthiness need to be taken into account, in order to guarantee and evaluate the quality of this study. Validity means the quality of the study estimated. Reliability means whether the conclusion of the research is reliable. There are four main types of validity. These are measurement validity, internal validity, external validity and ecological validity (Fogelman, 2002).

While, due to the consequence of the study only represents itself, which cannot represent other companies, and not all the researchers explore the real social world (Liu, 2012). Liu (2012), therefore, argue that trustworthiness is the best criteria of qualitative research criteria.

This research was a case study so the results of this case study can only stand for the food company itself, which means the results cannot be used in any other food companies. That is to say, the transfer-ability in this study is reduced whereas the credibility is increased. In addition, the data of this case study were conducted from the people who are in the food company. In other words, all interview answers were

the reflections of the participants for this company. In this situation, the results were subjective, which means this research has less conformability. Also, this research is less dependable because the results of the study cannot be applied for other situations apart from the current situation.

In order to keep the trustworthiness of this research, consent forms were signed (see Appendix 1) by participants before the interviews were conducted and the respondents had been told they were not being forced to participate in the interview. Moreover, pilot interviews were conducted. More specifically, one employee who has less than three months experience, one employee who has more than three months experience in the food company and one owner were interviewed beforehand in order to get some feedbacks for the interview questions from those three people. That is to say, the interview questions were adjusted before all the participants were interviewed.

### **3.6 Samples**

According to Fogelman (2002), sampling is choosing a proportion of people who could represent a large group of people. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the main sorts of sampling (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) also pointed out that quantitative research is likely to adopt probability sampling, while qualitative research such as case study trends to adopt non-probability sampling. The problem of adopting non-probability sampling is the size of non-probability sampling is small, which cannot be generalized (Bryman, 2012).

A non-probability sampling has been used in this research. This is because the research only chose twenty respondents who are in a small firm and the results of the research are justified. The sample was divided into three groups, which were the employees who work less than three months in the catering firm, employees who work more than three months in the small food company and the owners of the firm. The sample was divided into three different groups because as previously mentioned the payment system in the small food company is different for different employees. More specifically, employees who have less than three months working experience are paid by time rate. However, employees who have worked in the food company are paid by piece rate. It, therefore, is better to explore pay from three different perspectives whether pay for piece rate is fair compared to previous time rate.

The size of this research sample was small. More specifically, only 20 respondents from a population of 41 people participated in the research. However, in case some people would not want to participate in the research it was good to choose 20 people from the food company rather than all the people. The size of the research sample, therefore, was a small one. Consequently, the results of this study cannot be

generalized due to the small sample size.

### **3.7 Research Tools**

Interview is the most popular approach in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). This is due to respondents' ideas are reflected by all the questions that they are interviewed. Interviewees could offer more in-depth information. What is more, the results which are answered by respondents are valid. In other words, interviewer could collect answers from respondents' facial expression (Bryman, 2012).

This research adopt three interviews. The first one is for new employees who work longer than three month (Appendix 2). The second one is for workers who work less than three months (Appendix 3). The third one is for managers of the food firm (Appendix 4).

There are some disadvantage of interviews. First of all, it is time consuming (Bryman, 2012). For instance, it took a long time to translate all the interviewees' answers from Chinese to English. In addition, interviews are not objective (Fogelman, 2002) due to the results are only respect the respondents' perspective, which is subjective. Thirdly, the consequences of the interviews only represent the food company which interviewed.

What is more, all the interviewees were in China, it would cost a lot if went back to China, therefore, this dissertation also adopt telephone interviews.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

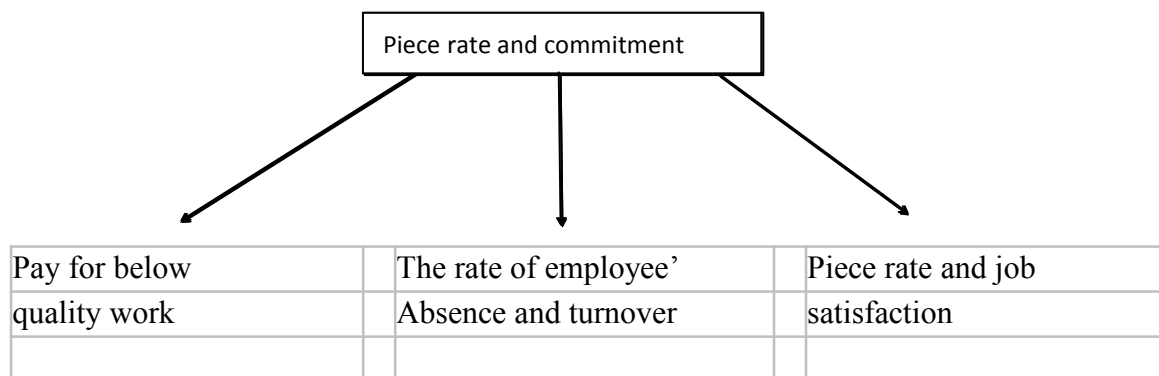
There is no one perfect research method. In other words, every research method more or less has ethical issues (Cai, 2013). Researchers, therefore, need to consider the ethical issues when conducting research (Bryman, 2012). More specifically, the interviewers need to keep all the things secret in order to keep interviewees safe. Fogelman (2002) pointed out that the best way of keeping respondents safe is be anonymous for all the interviews. Under this situation, the respondents could offer real answers. In order to keep their position, otherwise, they only say good things to the researcher.

In order to reduce ethical issues, therefore, three things were done before the interviews were conducted. Firstly, I had introduced myself and explained the purpose of this interview. Secondly, informed consent forms were completed with all respondents. In the informed consent form, employees have been told that they had been chosen randomly and they had the right to refuse answers to any interview question, which means employees would not be compelled to participate in the

interview. Thirdly, the participants were promised that the interviewer would be the only person who knew the answers that they gave and they would be anonymous.

### 3.9 Method of Data Analysis

There are two main sorts of data analysis method. The first one is manually analyzing data such as grounded theory. The second one is analyzing data with the computer's help such as NVivo (Bryman, 2012). NVivo has been adopted in this research. This is because NVivo, as a computer-aid, could help researchers reduce manual work. In the first stage of using NVivo, nodes were created. There are two types of nodes. The first one is tree node which means nodes are organized in a hierarchy like a tree. The second one is free node, which does not have layers (Bryman, 2012). Tree node was used in the research. For example,



Tree nodes had been founded before coding was conducted (Bryman, 2012). On the screen researcher could see a coding strip before drag the highlighted content to the nodes.

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and justified why this study adopted subjective and interpretivism philosophy. In addition, qualitative case study research methods and the limitations of the food company case study have been discussed. This chapter also has identified the research methods and research authenticity as well as interview research tool. In addition, the limitations of semi-structured interviews that adopted in this study have been discussed. Moreover, ethical issues and the samples of this study have been identified. Finally, it has analyzed NVivo as a method of data analysis.