

TEN YEARS OF UNDERGRADUATE
PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCHES IN RIZAL
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY:
AN ANALYSIS FROM 2001 TO 2010

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Abstract

This archival research study primarily focuses on the ten (10) year undergraduate psychological researches conducted by the Department of Psychology, Rizal Technological University, from 2001 to 2010. It accounts for the progress of psychological researches being conducted by undergraduate students particularly in terms of (1) the demographics of research participants utilized in the study, (2) their methodological research design used in (i.e., research framework, research design and instruments), and (3) the trends/topics of psychological research. Two-hundred-and-three (203) undergraduate psychological researches were obtained and content analyzed based on the three important categories. As to participant demographics, the studies utilized a mix sample in terms of age and gender. Also, the majority of the studies made use of student population. As regards research design, the studies were likely inclined to employ a descriptive-exploratory research design that is quantitative in nature, their research framework based on a research paradigm resembling an I-P-O approach. As such, they yielded that the majority developed a researcher-constructed measure (scale or interview schedule) to collect the data

being investigated. On trends/topics of psychological researches, many of the studies slanted towards educational and industrial-organizational psychology. Recommendations are provided for a future discourse of undergraduate psychological research.

Introduction

Research is a process through which new knowledge is discovered (Salkind, 2006). It is a scientific investigation of phenomena which includes collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation of facts that relate man's thinking and link it with individual speculations with reality (Tria, 1999). The field of psychology explores human behavior and the mental processes that shape man's thinking. Hence, research is highly valuable since human behavior is changing and that it provides a scientific process of understanding human processes. The American Psychological Association (APA) affirms that one of the important functions a psychologist does is to conduct research. Smith (2000, as cited in Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011) and the APA (2007 as cited in Feldman, 2011) show that an approximate 28% to 30% of psychologists are located in academic settings, engaged in a combination of teaching, mentoring or helping students, and doing research in their area of interest.

In the curriculum of any Psychology program in the country, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) recommends a research course (Gines, 2006). Conducting psychological researches allows students to critically apply their knowledge in psychology by investigating psychological phenomenon through empirical investigations to help them validate truths among the psychological theories available.

To track the changes in psychological science, reviews on the nature of their scientific-ness is also warranted. The main option to review a current state of psychological science is based on its outputs such as those found in empirical journal articles and in unpublished theses and dissertations (Bernardo, 1992, 2002; Brouwers, Van Hemert, Breugelmans, Van de Vijver, 2004; Church & Katigbak, 2002; Clemente, 2011; Hechanova, 2006; Peña-Alampay, de la Cruz, & Liwag, 2003; Quinones-Vidal, Lopez-Garcia, Penaranda-Ortega, Tortosa-Gil, 2004; Richards, 2004; Saplala, 2009; Torres, 1988, 1997).

The present study focuses on the quality of the undergraduate psychology researches in the Department of Psychology of Rizal Technological University (RTU). Doing an archival research allows us to see what the undergraduate psychology students have been doing in effect, understand the thrust and project future direction of psychological researches in the Department. The proposal would also yield students' research interest in choosing their topics. In the process, the proposal would generate common themes, patterns and trends in the students' researches in studying psychological phenomena.

Objectives of the study

Purposely, the study sheds light on these problems:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the research participants, as described in the theses researches?
2. What research methodologies are used by the students in terms of (a) research design, (b) instruments, and (c) research framework?
3. Who are the research supervisors of these undergraduate psychological researches?
4. What general areas in psychology do these undergraduate psychological researches represent?

Methodology

Research Design

This study with an archival research design systematically observes the pattern of behavior among written records (Teh & Macapagal, 1999). It allows a researcher to reconstruct a pattern of behavior from a historical trend by selecting a particular time period (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). In particular the investigation centered on undergraduate theses of psychology students in RTU covering the year period from 2001 to 2010. Two-hundred-and-three (203) undergraduate psychology theses were sampled in this study archived in three repositories: the University Library, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Reading Center, and the Guidance and Counseling Center. Table 1 shows the number of thesis produced per year. In addition, inquiries among teachers supervising undergraduate psychology researches were also made.

Table 1. Number of Undergraduate Psychology Theses per Year.

Year	<i>F</i>	Percentage
2001	20	9.85%
2002	28	13.79%
2003	32	15.76%
2004	32	15.76%
2005	9	4.43%
2006	16	7.88%
2007	11	5.42%
2008	9	4.43%
2009	19	9.36%
2010	27	13.30%
Total	203	100%

Measure

A researcher-constructed questionnaire was developed to obtain important data for this study. Patterned after the study of Saplala (2008), it contains the following information: (a) sociodemographic profile of the participants (e.g., age, gender, civil status, and occupation), (b) the research framework, (c) the research design utilized, (d) the research instruments used to collect data, (e) the research advisers who supervised the thesis, and (f) the title of the thesis research. Student assistants (SAs) answered the survey first, before sending them to the various repositories. The task of collecting data was given to psychology students enrolled in Quantitative Research (from 1st Semester to 2nd Semester of AY 2010 until 2011) as part of their requirement in the course. The retrieved survey was validated by counterchecking the submitted data with those of the repositories to assert validity and to cross-check students' work.

Data Analysis

Many of the data gathered were analyzed using frequency and percentage. To analyze the themes/topics in psychology, three expert judges (teachers teaching psychology subjects with at least an M.A. degree in psychology and three years of experience handling major subjects) were sought to content analyze the titles of the undergraduate theses/researches. The process of expert validation was to categorize theses into sub-topics/areas and to provide an overall impressions in which field in psychology do the studies belong. For this study, only theses in the field of psychology were utilized. All analyses were conducted using the Microsoft™ Excel® program.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants in Undergraduate Psychology Thesis

Table 2 shows the various socio-demographic characteristics of participants reported in the undergraduate psychology thesis sampled (N=203) in this study. Four general themes were surveyed among the participants: (1) gender, (2) age group, (3) civil status, and (4) occupation. At the outset, it should be emphasized that the frequency (N) of the participants' socio-demographic profile may be a double-entry. Hence, there is an increase of observed frequencies, because one undergraduate psychology thesis may fall within two categories.

Table 2. Socio demographic Profile of Research Respondents Used

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Gender												
Male	2	3	21	15	0	0	0	0	3	8	52	20.72%
Female	2	4	22	16	0	0	0	2	3	8	57	22.71%
Gay/Lesbian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.40%
mixed	16	22	9	14	8	16	11	6	15	17	134	53.39%
not specified	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	7	2.79%
Total	20	30	53	46	9	16	11	9	21	36	251	100.00%
Age Group of the Respondents												
Children	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	6	2.58%
Adolescents	7	6	2	3	0	5	5	4	7	15	54	23.18%
Young Adults	6	1	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	7	19	8.15%
Middle Aged Adults	2	1	12	6	1	1	0	0	2	4	29	12.45%
Late Adults	2	2	13	10	0	0	0	1	3	1	32	13.73%
Mixed	6	19	14	11	6	8	4	3	4	6	81	34.76%
Not Specified	0	0	0	4	2	1	0	0	1	4	12	5.15%
Total	23	29	45	35	9	16	11	9	19	37	233	100.00%
Civil Status												
Single	6	7	9	16	2	9	2	2	9	11	73	30.29%
Married	2	2	9	10	1	0	1	0	2	1	28	11.62%
Separated/divorced	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	2.07%
Widowed	0	2	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	4.15%
Mixed	3	5	3	2	1	4	1	2	2	6	29	12.03%
Not Specified	10	15	20	13	6	3	7	5	7	10	96	39.83%
Total	21	32	46	46	10	16	11	9	20	30	241	100.00%
Occupation of the Respondents												
Student	11	15	13	14	4	9	9	6	14	21	116	56.31%
Blue Collar Job	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	8	3.88%
White Collar Job	5	4	2	5	0	2	0	1	1	1	21	10.19%
Unemployed	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	2.43%
Not Specified	4	9	12	12	3	4	2	2	2	6	56	27.18%
Total	20	30	33	32	8	15	11	9	20	28	206	100.00%

In terms of gender, 53% (n=134) utilized a mixed group of both male and female participants. It is followed by female participants utilized with 23% (n=57). The least utilized participants are the gay/lesbian population with 1% (n=1). Also, a number of these failed to identify the gender of their participants with 3% (n=7). As to the participants' age, mixed samples were reported with 35% (n=81), followed by adolescents with 23% (n=54), and lastly, by children with 3% (n=6). A number of these also failed to report the age group of their respondents with 5% (n=12). Regarding the civil status of the participants, 40% (n=96) of the studies failed to describe this. Those studies that had reported and surveyed the civil status, 30% (n=73) identified their samples as single, followed by a mixed group with 12% (n=29), and lastly, by separated/divorced individuals with 2% (n=5). Finally, as to participants' occupation, 56% (n=116) of the sampled thesis sampled students (both elementary, high school, and college) in their studies. It was followed by participants with white collar jobs, 10% (n=21), and by unemployed individuals, 2% (n=5). Notably, 27% (n=56) of the sampled theses did not specify the participants.

Table 3 shows the methodology used in the undergraduate psychology theses sampled in this study. Overall, 69% (n=150) utilized a descriptive-exploratory approach of research design, followed by survey within the quantitative approach with 20% (n=44). This finding suggested that the majority of the theses conducted by undergraduate psychology students were quantitative and descriptive in nature, as confirmed by Bernardo (1997). The practice of doing psychological research in the RTU Department of Psychology remains positivistic and empirical in nature.

Table 3. Research Methodology, Frameworks, and Instruments Used.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Research Methodology												
<i>Qualitative</i>												
Case Study	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.46%
Interview	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
<i>Quantitative</i>												
Survey	9	6	5	7	4	2	0	0	4	7	44	20.18%
Descriptive, exploratory	4	24	25	26	5	11	11	8	14	22	150	68.81%
Correlation	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	7	3.21%
<i>Mixed Method</i>	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	8	3.67%
<i>Cannot be classified</i>	0	0	4	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	8	3.67%
Total	19	31	37	36	10	16	11	9	19	30	218	100.00%
Research Instruments												
Researcher -Constructed	9	8	16	19	5	4	8	9	10	17	105	50.48%
Existing Interview Schedule	0	3	4	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	12	5.77%
Scales and Tests	9	17	11	11	2	8	0	0	8	8	74	35.58%
Combination	3	1	5	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	17	8.17%
Total	21	29	36	34	9	15	11	9	18	26	208	100.00%
Research Frameworks												
I-P-O	7	7	28	23	3	1	0	3	9	16	97	22.56%
Research Paradigm	13	18	13	18	6	12	4	4	10	15	113	26.28%
Conceptual Framework	5	12	12	13	3	8	11	8	12	7	91	21.16%
Theoretical Framework	14	15	25	17	4	5	1	1	8	13	103	23.95%
IV-DV	0	0	7	0	2	0	0	2	6	9	26	6.05%
Total	39	52	85	71	18	26	16	18	45	60	430	100.00%

Four themes were observed in the practice of using questionnaires: (1) researcher-constructed, (2) existing interview schedule, (3) scales and tests, and (4) combination of any of the three types mentioned. Overall, 51% (n=105) of the studies utilized researcher-constructed surveys, followed by 36% (n=74) of using scales and tests, while the use of existing interview schedule obtained the least with 6% (n=12). Eight percent (n=17) of the theses utilized a blending of the three former questionnaire types.

As shown in Table 3 above, the use of researcher-constructed surveys or scales predominates. However, the preponderance of such practice does not guarantee whether the measures/interview schedules adhere to the principles of a valid, reliable, and standardized measure (Kline, 2005).

Twenty-six percent (n=113) of the theses utilized a research paradigm approach, followed by a theoretical framework (n=103; 24%),

I-P-O ($n=97$; 23%), and a conceptual framework ($n=91$; 21%). Only 6% ($n=26$) used an IV-DV approach as their framework of their study. However, it was observed that when one mentioned the term “research paradigm”, it was confused with a theoretical and conceptual framework. Often, what was really shown in those theses was I-P-O as their main framework. While no consistent guidelines of how a research framework should be utilized in psychology, it was noted that the I-P-O approach was often preferred by the theses under study.

Acuña (2000) states that in utilizing research frameworks, both theoretical and conceptual frameworks are the same in nature. The former pertains to utilizing theories and hypothesis, while the latter to applying the former.

Out of the 203 undergraduate psychology theses sampled in this study, 156 were supervised by psychology major advisers; the remaining 47 studies by non-psychology major advisers. Notably, of the 156 studies that were supervised by psychology major advisers, Dr. Crema T. Basuil did so 43% ($n=88$) of the theses sampled in this study, followed by Dr. Elena T. Paragas with 14% ($n=28$).

Two-hundred-and-thirteen (213) codings of field in psychology were assigned to the 203 undergraduate theses sampled in this study. Interestingly, a study may be coded in more than one category; hence, observed topics exceeded in number. As shown in Table 4 below, 62% ($n=132$) of the undergraduate researches were coded under the field of educational psychology. The second and third fields focused on industrial-organizational psychology with 13% ($n=27$) and developmental psychology with 11% ($n=23$). Social psychology and abnormal psychology were observed to have an adaptive mutation type of change either categorized in other fields as well as coded by the expert validators. Least areas observed were in the field of psychological

assessment, Filipino psychology, personality psychology, cognitive psychology, and counseling psychology.

Table 4. Major Topics of Psychological Researches

	<i>F</i>	PERCENTAGE
Educational Psychology	132	62.03%
Industrial-Organizational Psychology	27	12.74%
Developmental Psychology	23	10.85%
Consumer Psychology	7	3.07%
Family Psychology	7	3.07%
Abnormal Psychology	6	2.59%
Social Psychology	4	1.65%
Psychological Assessment	2	0.71%
Filipino Psychology	2	0.94%
Personality Psychology	2	0.94%
Forensic Psychology	1	0.47%
Counseling Psychology	1	0.47%
Physiological Psychology	1	0.24%
Cognitive Psychology	1	0.24%
Total	212	100.00%

Conclusion

In sum, the majority of the studies' participants were a mixed sample in terms of gender, but as regards age, more were adolescents or early adults sample in the college setting. As to research design, the primary research framework used was the research paradigm with a strong graphical representation of an I-P-O framework. Many of these studies were quantitative in nature-descriptive-exploratory and used a

great deal of researcher-constructed measures (scales or interview schedule). In adviser student researcher Drs. Basuil and Paragas supervised the majority of the theses sampled in this study. Lastly, on the general topics covered in these studies, the majority belonged to three categories: educational psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, and developmental psychology.

One of the challenges faced by doing this archival research was the lack of consistent documentation of researches being conducted. The inappropriate archiving of the theses was reflected in several periods in which only a few were analyzed. Since the particular socio-demographics of research participants was a Not Specified category, there ought to be strict evaluation of such area considering that both Chapters 3 (Methodology section) and 4 (Results section), often describe the pertinent demographic characteristics of the research participants. Therefore, an unspecified category should be foreseen in this area.

In research design, researches tended to be traditional in nature, their framework based on an I-P-O framework, and the seeming interchangeable usage of the terms Research Paradigm, Conceptual Framework, and Theoretical Framework.

The studies' research designs were descriptive-exploratory in nature within the quantitative approach. Moreover, these studies used the survey and correlational approach. It was observable that the majority of undergraduate psychological researches utilized a researcher-constructed measure, enough to make us raise the issue of reliability of such measure. Also can they be valid in describing a psychological phenomenon? Instead of researching the relation of these behaviors with others, the research direction should be slanted toward developing an instrument to measure the behavior instead. The practice of undergraduate psychological researches alarmingly inclined to be positivistic and

empirical, given the fact that the curriculum of the Psychology also teaches Qualitative approach on research. Favorably, the limited ability of students to apply qualitative designs only shows how the subject fails to invite them in delving into a deeper narrative approach of behavior. Finally, it can be observed that the general areas of psychology represented by the researches veered toward educational psychology, another alarming observation, considering that the program of psychology of the RTU specializes in the Industrial-Organizational (IO) Psychology, degree. Admittedly, this disadvantageous practice does not cultivate students' competency in their specialized degree, much less auger well to the vision-goal of the University.

Recommendations

Setting aside the difficulties met in obtaining data for this study, it is recommended that a repository for all the undergraduate theses/research in psychology be put up. Although copies of the students' researches are kept with their respective research supervisors or at the University Library or Reading Center, the Department should also keep an archive of these researches.

Socio-demographic variables of research participants are vital, so they should be completely presented in the researches. While it is a valuable question that must be proposed in the thesis proposal of the research, the pertinent details of research participants need to be placed in the Methods section of the paper dealing with a sub topic on Research Participants, congruent to the APA's Publication Manual Style (APA; 2009).

Third, researchers have to be consciously aware that there is no distinctive characteristic when one discusses a theoretical and a conceptual framework: hence, no preference on which of the two should

either be used as a label or sub topic in a research study. What appears more substantial is that students are able to support their conceptualization of variables with a cogent theoretical background that is well articulated in the text of their manuscripts, instead of showing a graphic representation such as the I-P-O framework.

Moreover, there is a strong reliance on having a research paradigm that is empirical-positivistic and quantitative. As recommendation, teachers and advisers supervising students should encourage the use of a qualitative, or even mixed-methods approach to psychological behaviors. This variety benefits the students to practice both course subjects, Quantitative and Qualitative Research. It allows them to creatively utilize various methods in psychology to grasp the highly nuanced measures of human behaviors. It also serves as an index as to how far a student critically answers a question using more sophisticated method. More importantly, teachers teaching both courses should provide outcome-based papers that enhance students' critical understanding of the methods themselves.

Lastly, the more difficult challenge is to actually answer whether the RTU Psychology Department has its own identity as regards the researches being conducted by its students. If one would simply look at the findings, it is readily obvious that educational psychology appears the constant pattern. However, if one would ask: "Is educational psychology a conscious decision of the department to be its competent area"? If yes, then, courses in the B.S. Psychology program should be geared towards rearing students in the educational psychology field. This can be assured by providing more subjects related to this area such as Learning, Perception, and Cognitive Psychology as major subjects. Although the current curriculum of the B.S. Psychology offers both Educational Psychology and Cognitive Psychology as major subjects, there should be

an innate practice that all course subjects stress how they could be applied in the educational psychological field. For example, in teaching abnormal psychology, the slant may be directed on what and how to relate disorders to learning.

Otherwise, there should be a conscious decision within the faculty members as to what should be researched on. The Department as well needs to encourage a research theme that is programmed within several years in order to track improvement on the topics being investigated. More pointedly, the theme of research should be novel enough, which other college/universities are not doing so as to pioneer a psychological field in the country. For instance, given the fact that the University is a Technological University, studies in psychology should center on the areas of engineering and sciences, in particular about learning and motivation of engineering and science students in their academic performance. To make the field more relevant is to do action-oriented research in which developed technologies and its influence on human users are investigated. A case in point is the study conducted by Estuar (2003) regarding the understanding of the texting culture of the Filipino youth. This study is social psychology in nature, but delves into the influence of technology (i.e., texting or short messaging system) into human welfare.

Finally, it is suggested that a systematic and appropriate process of research assignment be done during the Thesis Proposal. To illustrate, the teacher handling this subject should orient students about the profiles of the faculty members and their research interests. Providing students with the awareness of what the research competencies of the faculty members can help them develop questions and interest that may suit with their advisers; thus allowing for a more convenient relationship towards finishing the thesis substantively.

The 10 year period of undergraduate psychological researches in the RTU Psychology Department shows that the majority of researches are oriented to the educational psychological field, a type of behavior constant all throughout the years covered from 2001 to 2010. The emphasis on educational psychology is supported by the type of population used by these researches usually the learning academic population. Although research sophistication has yet to be achieved, greater activities are quantitative and descriptive in nature. In the 21st century wherein a voice (Bernardo, 2002) is important for psychologists to converse in a globalizing world, sophistication in research should be improved by setting achievable goals, by having a research theme set by the department and faculty members, by making research an experiential learning for students, by encouraging both faculty and students to present their papers in scientific form, and by publishing in a scientific, peer-reviewed journal, specializing in the particular field of psychology.

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Undergraduate Thesis

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