

"PAKAPA-KAPA" AS AN APPROACH IN PHILIPPINE PSYCHOLOGY

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Pakapa-kapa is a suppositionless approach to social scientific investigation characterized by groping, searching and probing into an unsystematized mass of social and cultural data to be able to obtain order, meaning and directions for research. There are unobtrusive procedures for checking out the reliability and validity of data gathered through the *pakapa-kapa* approach. The problem of observer/investigator effect can be solved by having more than a single investigator study the same event or concept, and having more experienced field researchers do the research. Replicability can be achieved, as well, using this approach. In other words, the author was able to show the soundness and usefulness of *pakapa-kapa* as an approach in Philippine psychology.

The method of *pakapa-kapa* in Philippine Psychology may be defined as a suppositionless approach to social scientific investigations. As implied by the term itself, *pakapa-kapa* is an approach characterized by groping, searching, and probing into an unsystematized mass of social and cultural data to be able to obtain order, meaning, and directions for research.

Although the concept of *pakapa-kapa* is indigenous to Philippine society, in the sense that it is a method (or *pamamaraan*) used to describe production activities (*pagkapa ng isda sa tubig*), social relations (*kinakapa ang daan tungo sa mas mahusay na pakikipag-ugnayan sa isang grupo*), and individual activities (*pagkapa sa dilim*), we can find parallel concepts in the generic literature of social science. Thus, in his initial entry into primitive communities, the ethnomethodologist also is *kumakapa-kapa*. Eventually, however, the uncertainty and ambiguity of anthropological data become minimized as he explores, decodes, and tries to understand the symbols of social interaction existent in the group. The scientist is eventually able to group data into meaningful categories and to use these in further studies.

Pakapa-kapa, therefore, implies an exploration into cultural, social or psychological data without the chains of overriding theoretical frameworks borrowed from observations outside the focus of investigation. It can also be related to so-called unobtrusive techniques, because the actual procedures for collecting information may range from *pagmamasid*, *pagtatanung-tanong*, *pagsubok*, *pagdalaw*, *pakikilahok*, and *pakikisangkot*. Thus, simple observation, documentation, intervention and participation can all be used in this "groping" method.

As a non-experimental or uncontrollable procedure, *pakapa-kapa* shares with other field approaches the same criticisms levelled against them by scientific psychologists. Hence, reliability, validity and data contamination become crucial issues vis-a-vis *pakapa-kapa* as a method.

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Problem of Reliability and Validity

Reliability basically means repeatability of observations under the same/similar situational conditions. Validity, on the other hand, refers to the "truth" or accuracy of observations or measurements.

If we proceed from the elemental definitions of reliability and validity divest of their associated statistical operations, we can see that procedures can be set up to measure and to insure the reliability and validity of *pakapa-kapa* procedures. For example, in *pagmamasid* (similar to non-participant observation), one may test the reliability of observations or concept identification by repeating the observation several times and finding out whether the same conclusions emerge. This would be equivalent to a test-retest approach. Or in *pagtatanung-tanong*, two equivalent probe questions may be presented to informants to find out whether similar responses will be generated by some event or concept under study.

Similarly, validity of concept domains can be established through repeated samplings of different informants. The commonalities of lexical domain can then constitute the "construct." Criterion validity is also possible by manipulating situations (*pakikialam*) in such a way that the behavioral concomitants of a construct become probable. If, as predicted, a contrived situation repeatedly results in the same behavior, then the predictive or concurrent validity of a concept/variable would be established.

Obviously, if the methodology of science is at the level of *pakapa-kapa*, standardized measures of reliability and validity would be inadmissible. Nonetheless, nonstatistical measures can still be used. Essentially, as discussed, this involves unobtrusive procedures for checking out the reliability and validity of data — using equivalent or repeated probes and observations, cross-checking documents, sampling from as many informants as possible (singly or in panels/groups), and other similar approaches.

Observer/Investigator Effect

Since *pakapa-kapa* stimulates anthropological techniques, the problem of observer bias is also pre-eminent among its problems. One frequent criticism levelled against field observation is that documents often fail to indicate which aspects are interpretative and which are factual. In fact, in current interests on the psycho-history of psychological investigations (see *Annual Review of Psychology* 1978) it is pointed out that all theoretical systems strongly reflect the personal experiences and biases of the formulator. If this can be said of abstract nomological networks, it can be said even more of observations in the field.

Related to this is the other problem of data collection being affected by the person of the investigator himself. For example, the sex and status of the psychologist doing field work can lead to particular types of phenomena being generated artificially and temporarily. This would be akin to the experience of extension workers, whose presence in communities temporarily results in technology adoption, only to be revised or ignored upon his departure.

The problem can be solved in two ways. Interpretative bias can be minimized by having more than a single investigator study the same event/concept. In this way, several viewpoints can be brought to bear on the data to insure reliability and validity. Related to this, investigators must sufficiently imbibe the language, culture and values of the group being studied to optimize the accuracy and relevance of their interpretations.

The other aspect of observer bias — contaminating data — has been minimized by experienced field workers. What is usually done is to make extensive efforts to become identified as a member of the community rather than as a visitor. As an “insider,” as an ordinary member of the group, responses and events tailored to the investigator’s expectations become less probable.

Discovery and Identification of Concepts vs. Hypothesis-Testing

Considering the present involvement of Filipino psychologists in the task of indigenizing the science, *pakapa-kapa* is a welcome and warranted study approach. First, the presuppositionless approach results in putting aside, even if only momentarily, so-called “universal” concepts of psychology. Instead, *pakapa-kapa* leads to discovering cultural particularities. Second, *pakapa-kapa* enables the Filipino psychologist to be more creative in his tools and data base. With this approach, he is not tied down to experimental and other similar techniques. Neither is he hampered by the use of procedures which may locally be irrelevant, difficult to apply, or costly. Instead, *pakapa-kapa* works along traditionally accepted probe procedures.

Since our thesis is that Filipino psychology has, in the past, become sterile and irrelevant because of attempts to pattern it after a Western mold, *pakapa-kapa* — or the generation of a broad data base of concepts and behavior — is more warranted at this stage of our science than is hypothesis-testing. Our present concerns need to be focused on discovering and mapping out the important and relevant aspects of behavior that require research. When this “catalogue of variables” becomes available, only then will it become justified to test our hypotheses toward developing a theoretic base for Filipino psychology.

Replicability of Conclusions

Replicability of findings is important within the purview of a science which aspires to generalize its observations. Such replication is considered vital to the development of psychology and is almost always a standard expectation in experimental psychology.

In field research, replicability is also of equal importance for giving credence and importance to obtained concepts. Only in such a manner can we range the values, identify the variations of personality, and explicitly describe what are common or unusual in our culture.

As with the issue of reliability and validity, replicability can be undertaken with *pakapa-kapa*. For example, representative samples from the same ethnic community may be probed separately to find out whether a concept is linguistically translated in similar ways. Direct and systematic replications

can then be undertaken by sampling from essentially similar veins or across population sectors.

In conclusion, we see that *pakapa-kapa* has a place in psychology, in a science which recently undertook the burdensome task of re-examining its data, its theoretical biases and its orientation. *Pakapa-kapa* has a value in the effort to sieve through our mass of pseudoetic psychological information in the Philippines, and to find clear and untarnished directions for the study of Filipino behavior. Eventually, the concepts and variables identified through this probe procedure will give way to hypotheses, theories and explanations rooted in Filipino culture and society. Then, when that time comes, we may seek to employ the more powerful and universally accepted methods of psychologic science.