

Q-methodology as an innovative means of promoting human rights and social justice by engaging social workers in research on their organisational policy and practice

Johanna O' Shea
PhD Candidate

Title: Probation risk of harm assessments and related sentencing issues considered within a human rights framework.

Context to Research

The Research Process

The Results

Why use it in public service research with social workers

Background Research

Research into Probation
Practice in NI

Unique situation of PBNI

Previous Experience of
undertaking research

Search for optimal
research method

The Research Process

Developing a series of statements

The Pilot Study

Forced distribution
v free distribution

Used mixed method -
ranking exercise and
conversation

My Research Project

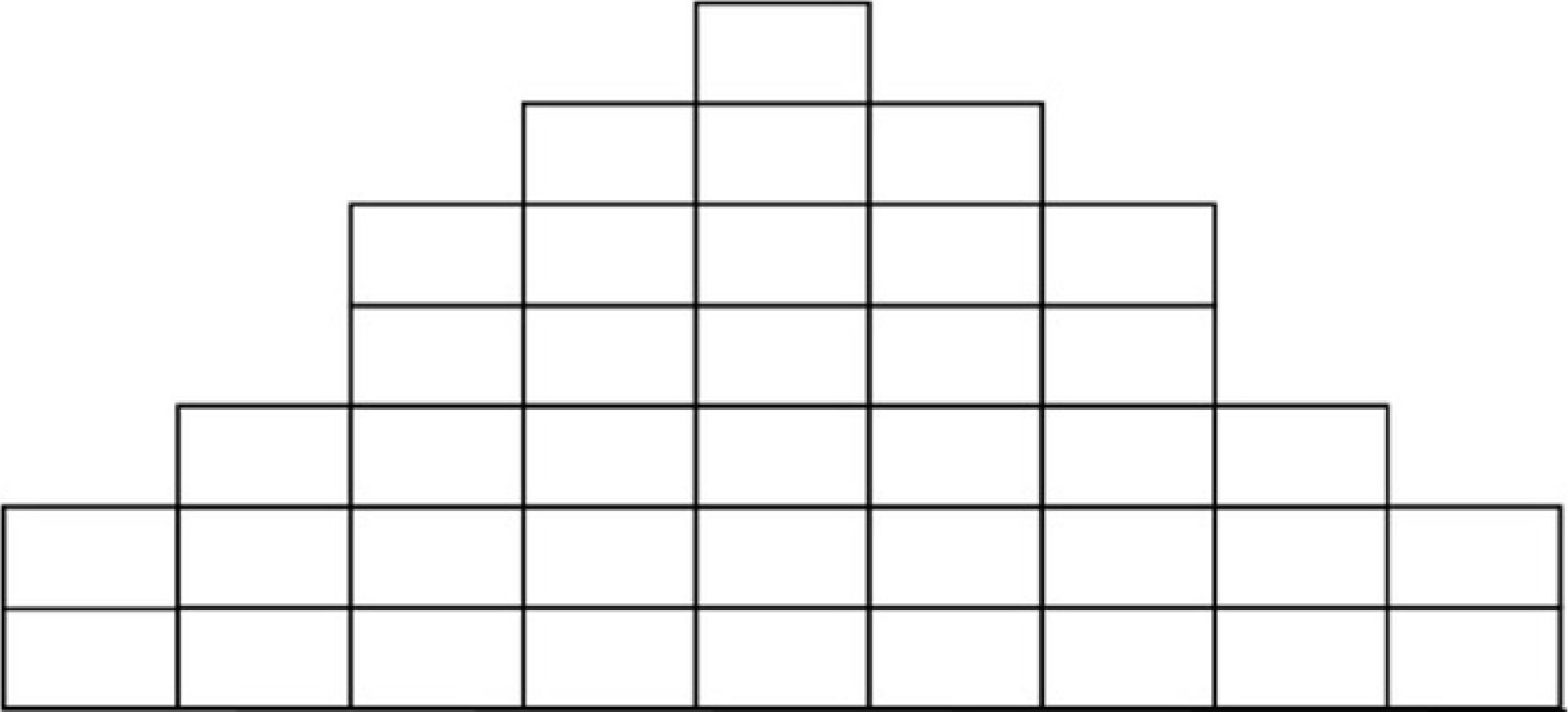
33 Q sort interviews -
venue

39 statements related to risk
of harm (dangerousness)
policy and how this was
shaping practice

A. Risk Assessment and
Management using External
Controls

B. The Perception of the Probation
Officer Role in Risk Assessment
and Management

C. The place of Human
Rights in Probation Practice



-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

TEND TO DISAGREE

TEND TO AGREE

Data Analysis

Centroid Factor Analysis
using Varimax Rotation


Analysis of Variance using PQ
Method software

3 Types account for 28/33
sorts i.e. 85% of sorts and
52% of Variance


A= 22% B= 17% C=12%

Decision to use 3 factor
solution rather than 2
factor solution





Correlations Between Factor Scores	1	2	3
1	1.0000	0.2229	0.5263
2	0.2229	1.0000	0.4858
3	0.5263	0.4858	1.0000



	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Confounded	Not significant
28/33 sorts = 85%	13 sorts	12 sorts	3 sorts	4 sorts	1 sort
Sort Nos.	7,10,11,13,14,17,19, 23,25,26, 27,28,31	1,2,3,4,5,8, 20,21,24, 29, 30, 32	15,16, 22	6,9,12, 33	18
Explained variance	22%	17%	12%		
Eigenvalues Of Rotated Factors	$22 \times (39/100) = 8.58$	$17 \times (39/100) = 6.63$	$12 \times (39/100) = 4.68$		
Humphrey's Rule Twice SE= 0.30 Unrotated loadings	0.62	0.58	0.17		
Humphrey's Rule Twice SE= 0.30 Rotated loadings	0.59	0.57	0.35		

Results and Presentation

Factor 1 Risk assessment and risk management policies and procedures in the current organisational culture are necessary and are largely compatible with relationship based social work.

Factor 2: Good probation practice is relationship-based which builds on people's strengths and internal controls and this is required to provide an acceptable balance with risk assessment and risk management policies and procedures.

Factor 3: A rights-based approach to practice is key to ensuring good social work practice which balances care and control in risk assessment and risk management.

The Benefits of Using Q in public service research

Allows time to build
rapport

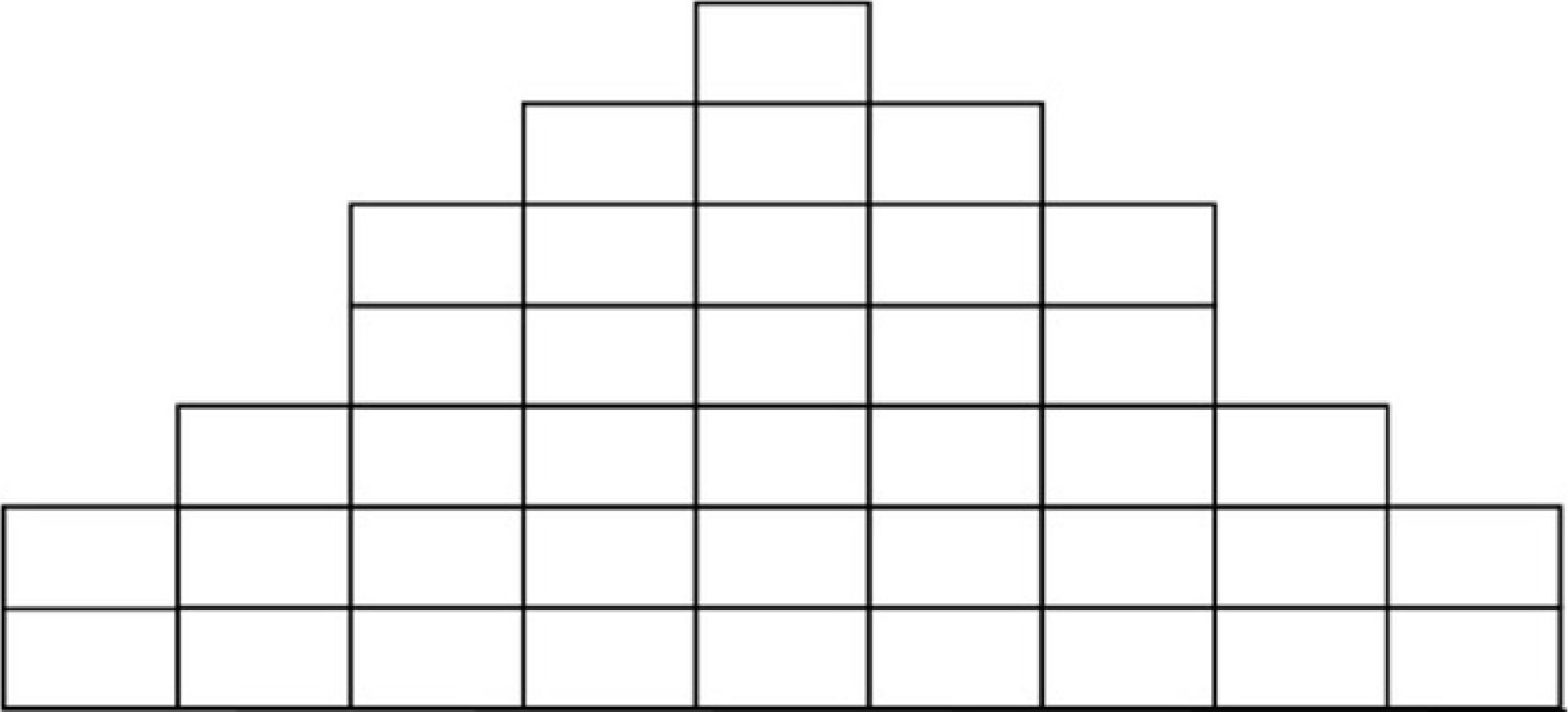
Participant has maximum
control to prioritise their
answers

**Participants reported
enjoying the process**

The Benefits of Using Q in public service research

**Participants can
choose moderate
rather than
absolute
viewpoints**

**The outer
extremes of
the curve
generated a lot
of discussion**



-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

TEND TO DISAGREE

TEND TO AGREE

Thank you for listening!



Any questions?