

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

Programme: Bachelor of Arts (Third Year)

Subject: Psychology

Course Code: PSC109

Course Title: Psychological Research

Unit: 04

Module Name: Observation: Types

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Notes

There are three types of research approaches in psychology

1. Descriptive
2. Correlational
3. Experimental

Descriptive Research

Descriptive research serves the purpose of observing and recording behaviour and mental processes. Such research cannot establish cause-effect relationships.

Types

- Observation
- Surveys and Interviews
- Standardized tests
- Case studies

Observation: involves search for patterns and regularities in the natural world. It is the most widely used method of data collection. It is also a key research methods available to psychologists.

Types of observation:

1. CASUAL OBSERVATION

- Also called unstructured observation

- Involves collecting information from some environment of interest just by watching what goes on.
- Focus on limited range of behaviour
- Casual observation may lead to the construction of a record of what is observed
- **Casual** refers to the adoption of an open approach that allows data to be collected on any behavior of interest.
- Casual also refers to the absence of a definite sampling method
- Can be applied to a wide range of situations and research questions
- Useful in exploratory research
- Provides information regarding frequency of behavior, and essential background information to guide formation of tentative hypotheses
- **Two major weaknesses:**
- Lack of sampling strategy means there is no way to assess representativeness
- Observations subject to researcher bias

2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- Also known as field research or ethnography.
- Immersion of the researcher in the research milieu over a considerable period of time
- Goal is to obtain the full acceptance by the other participants and the degree of social invisibility
- Participant observations may consist of field notes, transcripts of interviews, quantitative measures
- Cyclical process of hypothesis formation, data collection, & analysis
- One benefit: facilitates collection of data that would otherwise be impossible to collect or access.
- Demanding way of conducting research.
- Roles of participant and researcher are to be simultaneously sustained
- Time consuming and costly
- Difficult to assess the influence of the researcher

3. SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION

- Also referred to as formal observation or structured observation
- Differs from participant observation in two ways:

1. The researcher is likely to be just a detached observer interacting directly with those being observed.
2. The process of data collection is organised through an observation system (a set of descriptions and definitions constructed before data collection begins)
 - The observation system has two main purposes:
 1. To structure data collection by directing the observer's attention towards one specific class of behaviour within the total scene.
 2. To define very precisely the categories into which behaviours of interest are divided for the purposes of data collection.
 - **Advantages:**
 1. It allows behaviour to be studied in much more detail than would be possible by alternative methods.
 2. It allows for data collection of quantitative data and consequently the statistical testing of hypotheses.