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Controlled observations can lack validity due to the Hawthorne effect/demand characteristics. When participants know they are being watched they may act differently

Controlled observations are fairly quick to conduct which means that many observations can take place within a short amount of time. This means a large sample can be obtained resulting in the findings being representative and having the ability to be generalized to a large population

Controlled observations can be easily replicated by other researchers by using the same observation schedule. This means it is easy to test for reliability

The data obtained from structured observations is easier and quicker to analyze as it is quantitative (i.e. numerical) - making this a less time consuming method compared to naturalistic observations

likely to be carried out in a psychology laboratory

usually a structured observation

code behavior according to a previously agreed scale using a behavior schedule (i.e. conducting a structured observation)

Participants are randomly allocated to each independent variable group

Takes place in a laboratory

The researcher decides where the observation will take place, at what time, with which participants, in what circumstances and uses a standardised procedure

Recording of Data

Limitations

Strengths

Features

Strenaths source: McLeod, S. A. (2015). Observation Methods. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/observation.html controlled observation **Features** Author: Michael 3778 natural observation Limitations observation methods

participant observation

Limitations

Features

a variant of natural observations

the researcher joins in and becomes part of the group they are studying to get a deeper insight into their lives

It can be difficult to get time / privacy for recording. For example, with covert observations researchers can't take notes openly as this would blow their cover. This means they have to wait until they are alone and reply on their memory. This is a problem as they may forget details and are unlikely to remember direct quotations

If the researcher becomes too involved they may lose objectivity and become bias. There is always the danger that we will "see" what we expect (or want) to see. This is a problem as they could selectively report information instead of noting everything they observe. Thus reducing the validity of their data

Participant observations can be either cover or overt

Covert is where the study is carried out 'under cover'

Like case studies naturalistic observation is often used to generate new ideas. Because it gives the researcher the

enquiry not thought of before

natural surroundings

studies have greater ecological validity

the participants behave more like their normal life

Maybe they join a group of carry out a behavior

lacking the ability to be generalized to wider society

to be able to recognise aspects of a situation that are

psychologically significant and worth further attention

repeat the study in exactly the same way

relationships cannot be established

opportunity to study the total situation it often suggests avenues of

By being able to observe the flow of behavior in its own setting

The researcher simply records what they see in whatever way

involves studying the spontaneous behavior of participants in

The researcher interacts with participants during the study.

These observations are often conducted on a micro (small) scale and may lack a representative sample (biased in relation to age, gender, social class or ethnicity). This may result in the findings

Natural observations are less reliable as other variables cannot be controlled. This makes it difficult for another researcher to

A further disadvantage is that the researcher needs to be trained

With observations we do not have manipulations of variables (or

control over extraneous variables) which means cause and effect

The researcher's real identity and purpose are kept concealed from the group being studied. The researcher takes a false identity and role, usually posing as a genuine member of the group

overt is where the researcher reveals his or her true identity and purpose to the group and asks permission to observe