

Research Methodology Paper

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Research methods are a variety of techniques that people use when studying a give phenomenon. Research methods are well thought out and planned, scientific based and value neutral. This means that in order to have good research methods, a researcher must design the research in a way that maximizes the accuracy of the results. Research methodology is the framework used to study and compare different approaches of individual methods. Multicultural research, or sometimes called cross-cultural research, focuses on uncovering an individual's behaviors that are impacted primarily by cultural influences. It is designed to examine human behavior and test hypotheses about the influences of behavior and culture.

The ability to conduct multicultural research is becoming more of a challenge for researcher as the United States becomes more culturally diverse. For researchers to conduct competent research, they need to consider how culture may influence areas like definitions of concept and methodological issues. Researchers need to consider how things like sampling, recruiting participants, developing and/or translating the instruments, and disseminating findings are affected by culture, race and ethnicity. This paper will compare and contrast the variables of sampling and observation within multicultural and traditional research.

Definitions

Before a comparison of sampling and observation can be done, an understanding of what the individual variables are, needs to take place. According to Doordan (Doordan, 1998), sampling can be defined as the selection process to find a group of individuals from the entire population to participate in a research study. Observation can be defined as the process of data collection via a visual observation of people experiencing the phenomenon (Doordan, 1998). Traditional research focuses on conducting studies that are not concerned with cultural

influences. Multicultural research involves dealing with countries that have different languages, economies, social structures, behavior, and attitude patterns.

Comparison

When researchers conduct multicultural research, they need to involve data collection from a minimum of two cultural groups to ensure validity is achieved. It is generally agreed that researchers should use a minimum of three diverse cultures to create a study where meaningful comparisons are made, for, all studies that consist solely of single-pair comparisons are uninterpretable (Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998). Some multicultural studies are monocultural where comparisons are made between the study and data collected in previous studies by researchers.

Sampling studies should focus on using three cultural populations. The best form of sampling is random sampling. This is considered to be the “gold” standard because it “minimizes bias, error, and study findings can be generalized to other populations (Nokes & Nwakeze, 2006). Another useful sampling method is probability sampling. This form of samplings involves creating a random sample from a list of all the potential individuals in the target population. Probability sampling is considered to be the most efficient way to create this sampling. Probability sampling creates a means to give every individual in the target population an equal chance of being a participant in the study.

Observation is another research instrument that can be successful in multicultural research. It typically involves using descriptive studies of a culture using a methodology called ethnographic. Ethnographic methodology is a detailed study of a particular cultural group that describes the group’s cultural patterns and world views. A typical way to perform observational research is to have the researcher become enmeshed in the culture in order to conduct the

observation fieldwork in order to collect and analyze the data as it pertains to the culture context. Grounded theory is another form of observation method that allows researchers to observe participants in a social setting without requiring the researcher to be an active participant of the group. The participants may also not know they are being observed as well.

Issues with Multicultural Studies

There are some fundamental issues when performing multicultural research. Often there are cultural issues that prevent individuals from desiring to participate in research studies. Some of the issues that can complicate the recruitment of random sampling are immigration status, fear of officials and deportation, and language barriers (National Research Council, 1996). Also, if the individuals come from a country or culture where previous encounters with the law can lead to political persecution, they may fear people making inquiries, especially if they believe that the research is being conducted by the government (Chung & Bemak, 1997). Human behavior can change in the presence of a researcher especially if the researcher is enmeshed in the culture. The individual participants may or may not react in typical cultural ways so that the researcher or the study views them in a better light.

Observational methodologies have been the most promising techniques for the analysis of human behavior, capable of dealing with its complexity and variability (Anguera, 2003). Observation methods can be performed in many ways. It can be done through one-on-one interaction, large group observation in a social setting or by videotaping participants as they are being observed. Videotaping the participant's interactions can be a useful research technique, especially if the researcher is not of the culture that is being observed. This allows the researcher to revisit the encounter so that they can understand what the impact of culture is and also allows them to seek an expert in the culture to help interpret the observations. It can be very difficult

for an outsider of the culture to be an effective participant in the culture to perform an observation study. If the researcher is only viewed as a researcher and not part of the culture, the observational study can be skewed by the participant's responses depending on how they feel about the researcher. Many times, a researcher will need to rely on recorded cultural norms or previous research to determine if the behavior being observed is skewed or typical cultural norms.

Conclusion

Human behavior can be studied in either a traditional or multicultural research study. Multicultural research studies often are a more valuable process because it can spotlight issues that are present in a particular culture that may have been missed by traditional research studies. For a researcher to have a well-rounded study, it is imperative that they include multicultural research. As with all research, there are some implementation issues that need to be addressed when conducting multicultural research studies; however, if the problems encountered by researchers are addressed during the data can provide great insight into cultural influences in human behavior.

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