

Advantages and Disadvantages of Research Methods in Psychology

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Case Study/History AKA Clinical Study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good source of hypotheses • provides in-depth information • done on individuals • “Experiments of nature” shed light on situations/problems that are unethical or impractical to study in other ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual may not be representative or typical • difficult to know which subjective interpretation is best
<i>Naturalistic Observation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows description of behavior as it occurs in the natural environment • often useful in first stages of research program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows research little or no control of the situation • observations may be biased • does not allow firm conclusions on cause and effect
<i>Laboratory Observation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows more control than naturalistic observation • allows use of sophisticated equipment • allows researcher to manipulate a situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows researcher only limited control of the situation • observations may be biased • does not allow firm conclusions on cause and effect • behavior in the laboratory may differ from behavior in the natural environment
<i>Surveys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide large amount of information on large numbers of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if sample is nonrepresentative or biased, it may be impossible to generalize from the results • responses may be inaccurate or untrue
<i>Psychological Tests</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yield information on personality traits, emotional states, aptitudes, abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult to construct tests that are valid or reliable
<i>Correlational Studies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show whether two or more variables are related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not permit identification of cause and effect
<i>Experiment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows researcher to control the situation • permits researcher to identify cause and effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situation is artificial and results may not generalize well to the real world • sometimes difficult to avoid experimenter effects