



DEVELOPING FIELD WORK COMPONENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Nilesh Thakre

Asst. Prof. in Psychology, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

Abstract

In the psychology field work have immense importance. A field experiment applies the scientific method to experimentally examine an intervention in the real world rather than in the laboratory. The use of experiments in the lab and the field has a long history in the natural and life sciences. Social psychology has a history of field experiments, including work by pioneering figures Philip Zimbardo, Kurt Lewin and Stanley Milgram. This paper examines various psychology field work components useful for developing curriculum for lifelong learning. As well as paper also emphasizes the need for hands-on reflective experiences for deeper understanding of the complexities of human behaviour. The benefits, advantages and limitations of undergoing field study by learners are also discussed.

Keywords: field experiments, psychology, lifelong learning

Introduction

The use of experiments in the lab and the field has a long history in the natural and life sciences. The development of field work component in psychology for lifelong learning curriculum will enable students to gain hands-on reflective experience and a deeper understanding of the complexities of human behaviour. As well as field study will provide them opportunities to connect their theoretical understanding to practicably applying knowledge of psychology to the real world. Psychology and specifically social psychology has a long history of field experiments which includes the work of Philip Zimbardo, and Kurt Lewin. In the field of psychology different type of research methods are used to investigate a problem. The most popular among them is laboratory experiment. However, use of experimental method for lifelong learning curriculum has some limitations. These limitations can be overcome by using field based methods, which proved useful for social psychologist and anthropologist.

Experimental Method

An experiment in psychology is the only research method that can claim a cause and effect relationship between two variables. It is valuable source of information because it allows us to make causal statements. In a simple experiment an experimenter find effect of treatment on a given behaviour or mental characteristic by randomly assigning some participants to get the treatment and other participants to not receive the treatment. The experimental method is thus a controlled procedure involving the manipulation of an independent variable (IV) in order to observe or measure its effect on a dependent variable (DV). The experimental method is particularly popular within the biological, cognitive and behaviourist in psychologist or branches of psychology.

Field Experiment

The field experiment is a most suitable method of study for understanding complex human behaviour in a naturalistic setting. A field experiment is an experiment that is conducted in 'the field'. That is, in a real world situation. A field experiment applies the scientific method

to experimentally examine an intervention in the real world rather than in the lab. Field experiments, like lab experiments, generally randomize subjects into treatment and control groups and compare outcomes between these groups. A field experiment is still an experiment: the IV is manipulated to see the effect on the DV, as many controls as possible, seeking a cause and effect relationship. However, in field experiments the participants are not aware about their participation in an experiment.

Disadvantages

1. Less control over extraneous variables (i.e. other things that could affect the results other than the IV).
2. Less replicable than Lab experiments (i.e. harder to repeat because every set of participants' everyday environment will be slightly different).
3. However, in field experiments it is much harder to control confounding variables and they are usually time consuming and expensive to conduct.
4. In field experiments it is not usually possible to gain informed consent from the participants and it is difficult to debrief the participants.
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The main advantages are:

1. The greatest advantage of field experiments over laboratory experiments is that they are less artificial, and suffer less from factors such as demand characteristics, evaluation apprehension, and the implacable experimenter.

Quasi-Experiments

Quasi-experiments fall short of true experiments either because the experimenter has not manipulated the independent variable or because the participants are not allocated at random to conditions. There are numerous hypotheses in psychology that can only be studied by means of quasi-experiments rather than true experiments. For example, suppose that we are interested in studying the effects of divorce on young children. We could do this by comparing children whose parents had divorced with those whose parents were still married. There would, of course, be no possibility of allocating children at



random to the divorced or non-divorced parent groups! Studies in which pre-existing groups are compared often qualify as quasi-experiments. Examples of such quasi-experiments would be comparing the learning performance of males and females, or comparing the social behaviour of introverted and extraverted individuals.

Natural Experiments

Natural experiments are quasi-experiments involving some naturally occurring event. An example of a natural experiment is a study by Williams (1986) on the effects of television on aggressive behaviour in Canadian children aged between 6 and 11 years. Advantages of natural experiments include the possibility that the participants will not be aware they are taking part in an experiment and the opportunity to study the effects of very stressful events. Limitations include problems of interpreting the findings due to a lack of randomization or to the use of complex independent variables.

Correlation Study

Correlation designs are inferior to experimental designs, because they do not permit inferences about causality. However, many issues can only be studied by assessing correlations or associations between variables. It is often possible to obtain large amounts of data very rapidly in correlation studies. The problems of interpretation are much reduced if there is no correlation or association between two variables.

Naturalistic Observation

Naturalistic observation involves the use of methods designed to assess behaviour without the experimenter interfering in any way. Methods of data collection include event sampling, time sampling, and point sampling. (**Time sampling:** Observations may be made at regular time intervals and coded. **Event sampling:** Keep a tally chart of each time a type of behaviour occurs. **Point sampling:** Focus on one individual at a time for set period of time.)

The data recording and interpretation or coding should be distinguished. Naturalistic observation can provide rich and full information from people who are unaware that they are being observed. However, the experimenter has essentially no control over the situation, the participants are often aware they are being observed, and there can be problems with the reliability and validity of measurement.

The field study components for lifelong learning can include helping individual in various ways such as, dealing with daily stress and anxiety, providing counselling to people in work setting and even in hospitals, offering therapy to school children, helping teenagers with eating disorders. Lifelong learning practicum can be undertaken at schools, work settings, for drug and alcohol treatment programs, mental health clinics, schools, health settings, child welfare agencies, aging services, and community agencies. Lifelong learners can understand psychology based issues by using one or combination of field study method such as:

1. Work with a special education classroom as an assistant. Learn about the field of school psychology.

2. Work with children in groups and one-to-one to learn positive communication and coping skills. Work with a school psychologist on a school site.
3. An effective lifelong learner in the college counselling centre setting is able to evaluate, diagnose, and provide treatment for a range of life and emotional issues.
4. Engage in assessment of student problems and emotional status, provide crisis intervention, individual and group counselling, make referrals for medical and psychiatric services and engage in consultation with friends, family and other caregivers on campus.
5. identify factors that affect how people cope with acute and chronic illness, pain and loss, and the demands of everyday life, so that we can help them, and others, to cope better and reduce the risks of stress-related illness
6. identify factors that influence people's lifestyles and what motivates certain health-related behaviours such as smoking, dietary change and exercise

Conclusion

By using some of these psychological field based methods learning will occur in realistic setting. It will enable lifelong learners to relate theory to practice. They will have experience of taking responsibility to deal with critical situation of day-to-day life. In addition to this, they can engage in education and prevention activities as well as activities designed to create a more caring and emotionally responsive environment. On the basis of outcome of field study experiments they can conduct workshops and presentations on topics such as stress management, depression, and relationship communication.

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