

Methods of Enquiry in Psychology

We know that [psychologists](#) study behaviours, mental processes, and experiences in different contexts but have you ever given thought that what methods psychologists use to understand these phenomena? Psychologists use a variety of research methods such as experiments, observation, interviews, case studies, surveys, etc. it is the methodology used that makes psychology a scientific endeavour. Let's further understand and explore these interesting and illuminating methods that make psychology a scientific endeavour. In this blog, you will find some of the most crucial notes on Methods of Enquiry in Psychology- [Class 11 Psychology](#)

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Methods of Enquiry in Psychology: Goals

Description

- The description requires recording a particular behaviour and describing it accurately so as to attain a comprehensive understanding of the same
- For example, morning habits may have a diverse range of behaviours like reading positive literature, meditation, exercise, journaling etc.

Prediction

- It is the second goal of psychological enquiry
- Here we attempt to understand the relationship between the behaviour we are describing with the other types of behaviour.

Explanation

- It is the third goal of psychological enquiry
- It attempts to explain the causal factors of behaviour and attain an understanding of the conditions in which the behaviour occurs or not.

Control

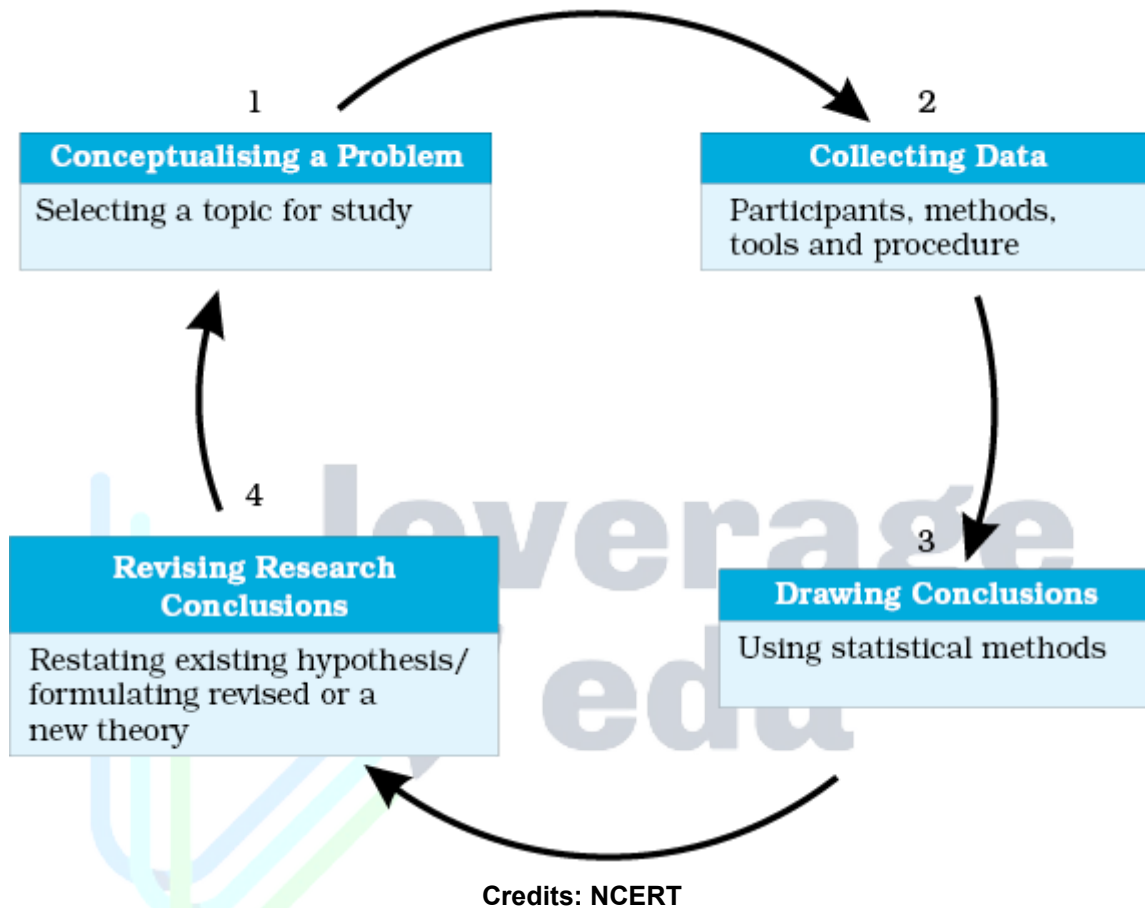
- It is the fourth goal of psychological inquiry
- It focuses on three things
 - Making a particular behaviour happen
 - Reducing it
 - Enhancing it

Application

- It is the fifth goal of psychological enquiry

- focuses on bringing out a positive change in people's lives

Steps in Conducting a Scientific Research



Conceptualizing a problem

- It is the first step of conducting a scientific research
- The researcher selects a topic for study which is done on basis of either review of past research, observations, personal experience

Identification of problem

- It is the second step of scientific research
- Development of a tentative statement about the topic takes place which is termed a hypothesis
- For example, " greater is the amount of time spent by children in playing violent video games, the greater is the degree of impatience and anger developed by them"

Collection of data

- This step focuses on developing a research design or blueprint of the entire study.

- Decisions are taken about the following
 - Participants in the study
 - Methods of study
 - Tools to be used in research
 - Procedure for data collection

Drawing conclusions

- The next step of scientific research is to analyse data through statistical procedures
- It can be achieved through measures of central tendency like mean, median, mode and graphical presentations like pie charts, bar diagram

Revising research conclusions

- The researcher revises the whole study and the hypothesis being taken is analysed thoroughly to see whether it stands true or not

Nature of Psychological Data

Demographic information

It includes personal information like name, age, gender, education, occupation etc.

Physical information

Includes information about ecological conditions, housing conditions, size of rooms, facilities available at home, in the neighbourhood, in the school etc.

Psychological information

The information focuses on areas like intelligence, personality, interests etc.

Different Methods of Enquiry in Psychology

Observation

- It is a very powerful method of psychological enquiry
- It involves the selection of a particular behaviour, recording the selected behaviour using symbols, photographs and analysis of the recorded behaviour

Merits

- enables the researcher to study people and their behaviour.
- Can provide in-depth information about behaviour to be observed

Demerits

- It is time-consuming
- It can be labour-intensive at times
- Poor method for establishing cause and effect relationship.

Experimental method

- Experiments are generally conducted to establish cause-and-effect relationships between two or more variables in a controlled setting.
- Independent variables are manipulated and their effects are measured on the dependent variable.

Merits

- The optimal method for establishing cause and effect relationship between two or more variables
- The extraneous variables can be controlled thus, no scope for an alternative explanation

Demerits

- The experimenter's bias may affect the
- The authenticity of the experiment

Correlational research

- The strength and direction of the relationship between two variables are represented by a number, termed the correlation coefficient
- Its value may range from +1.0 through 0.0 to -1.0

Merits

- Correlation helps in the prediction between the given variables
- Can examine issues that cannot be studied ethically or practically in experiments

Demerits

- Fails to establish cause and effect relationship between variables

Survey research

- It came into existence to study opinions, attitudes, and social facts by use of techniques such as questionnaires, interviews, etc.

Merits

- A properly selected representative sample may yield an accurate result
- It is flexible and adaptable to individual situations
- Information can be gathered quickly and efficiently

Demerits

- Unrepresentative samples may yield misleading results
- Interviewer bias and social desirability bias may distort the findings
- Inaccurate information may be obtained at times

Case study

- It is an in-depth study of a particular case.
- It employs multiple methods for collecting information such as interviews, observations and psychological tests from a variety of respondents who in some way or the other might be associated with the case and can provide useful information.

Merits

- Provides rich descriptive information
- Helps in an in-depth study of a rare phenomenon.

Demerits

- Fails to establish a cause-and-effect relationship
- It may be subject to the biases of the researcher.

Psychological Testing

- A psychological test is a standardized and objective instrument that is used to assess an individual's standing in relation to others on some mental or behavioural characteristics
- The construction of a test is a systematic process and involves certain steps. It involves a detailed analysis of items and an estimation of their reliability, validity, and norms.
 - Reliability refers to the consistency of scores obtained by an individual on the same test on two different occasions
 - Validity refers to the question, "does the test measure what it claims to measure?"
 - Norms help in making a test standardised. Norm is referred to as the average performance of the group.

Analysis of Data

Quantitative Method

Psychological tests, interviews, questionnaires contain a series of close-ended questions and the probable response to these questions are given in a scaled manner and that clearly illustrates the strength and magnitude of the response.

Qualitative Method

Human experiences are very complex. This complexity is lost when one elicits information from a respondent on the basis of a question.

Limitations in Methods of Enquiry in Psychology

Lack of true zero point

Psychological measurements lack an absolute zero point.

For example, even after scoring zero on a vocabulary test, it can't be said that the respondent has zero knowledge of vocabulary.

Relative nature of psychological tools

The nature of psychological tools is relative not absolute and they are developed keeping in view the important features of a particular context.

Subjective interpretation of qualitative data

The interpretation of the qualitative data used in the research is characterized by the subjective interpretation which means that it varies from individual to individual.

Ethical Issues with Methods of Enquiry in Psychology

Informed consent

The principle of informed consent states that potential participants must understand what will happen in the experiment and to them during the study so that they are able to make an informed decision about their participation in the study.

Confidentiality of data source

Participants of the study have the right to privacy and the researcher must safeguard the privacy of the participants by keeping the information provided by them confidential.

Voluntary participation

As per this principle, the participants must have the freedom to decide whether to participate in the study or not.

Debriefing

Once the study is over, the participants are provided with the necessary information to complete their understanding of the research. The researcher should make efforts to remove any sort of anxiety which may have taken place as a result of the experiment

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FAQs

Q1.what are the ethical guidelines that a psychologist needs to follow while conducting a psychological enquiry?

The relationship between the client and the therapist requires a lot of trusts, empathy, and non-judgemental behaviour, and keeping that in mind the ethical guidelines to be kept in consideration are informed consent, the confidentiality of data source, voluntary participation, and debriefing.

Dr Ram is going to observe and record children's play behaviour at a nursery school without attempting to influence or control the behaviour. Elucidate the process, merits and demerits of the method discussed.

The method used by Dr Ram is the observation method. In this method, the to be observed is selected, recorded and then analysed properly to draw relevant conclusions. The advantage of this method is that phenomena can be observed in real-time but the disadvantage is it can be time-consuming at times.

Explain the nature of psychological data

The psychological data basically comprises of demographic information, psychological and physical information

What are the goals of psychological enquiry?

The goals of psychological enquiry are description, prediction, explanation, control and application.

Describe the various steps involved in conducting a scientific enquiry

Scientific inquiry is a lengthy and detailed process that involves conceptualizing a problem, identification of the problem, collecting data, drawing conclusions, and revising research conclusions.

