

1: Educational research - Wikipedia

Accessible, contemporary, and thoughtful, Fundamentals of Educational Research helps readers become intelligent consumers of educational research and introduces basic research principles to those who may eventually use research in their work. Principles for conducting research and criteria for evaluating its overall credibility are presented in.

Usually assures high participation rate Generalization possible to similar subjects Difficult to generalize to other subjects Less representative of an identified population Results dependent on unique characteristics of the sample Purposive 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of convenience Adds credibility to qualitative research Assures receipt of needed information 1, 2, and 3 of convenience Quota 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of convenience More representative of population than convenience or purposive 1, 2, and 3 of convenience Usually more time consuming than convenience or purposive Volunteers are commonly used in research because the availability of subjects is often limited by time and resources. There have been thousands of studies with teachers who volunteer their classes for research. Much research on school-age children requires written permission from parents, and this necessity can result in a biased sample. Chances are good that parents who are relatively involved would be most likely to agree to be in the study, affecting a description of the nature of parental involvement for "all" students. Sample Size An important consideration in judging the credibility of research is the size of the sample. Most researchers use general rules of thumb in their studies, such as having at least 30 subjects for correlational research, and at least 15 subjects in each group in an experiment. In surveys that sample a population, often a very small percentage of the population must be sampled, for example, less than 5 or even 1 percent. Of course if the survey sample is too small, it is likely that the results obtained cannot characterize the population. Formal statistical techniques can be applied to determine the number of subjects needed, but in most educational studies these techniques are not used. In educational research a major consideration with sample size is concluding that a study with a relatively small sample that found no difference or no relationship is true. For example, suppose that you are studying the relationship between creativity and intelligence and, with a sample of 20 students, found that there was no relationship. Is it reasonable to conclude that in reality there is no relationship? Probably not, since a probable reason for not finding a relationship is because such a small sample was used. In addition to the small number of subjects, it is likely that there may not be many differences in either creativity or intelligence, and without such differences it is impossible to find that the two variables are related. That is, with a larger sample that has different creativity and intelligence scores, a relationship may exist. This problem, interpreting results that show no difference or relationship with small samples, is subtle but very important in educational research since so many studies have small samples. As we will see in Chapter 9, it is also possible to misinterpret what is reported as a "significant" difference or relationship with a very large sample. Also, a sample that is not properly drawn from the population is misleading, no matter what the size. Subject Motivation Sometimes subjects will be motivated to respond in certain ways. Clues for this phenomenon will be found in the description of how the subjects were selected. For example, if a researcher was interested in studying the effectiveness of computer simulations in teaching science, one approach to the problem would be to interview teachers who used computer simulations. The researcher might even want to select only those science teachers who had used the simulations more than two years. It is not hard to understand that the selected teachers, because they had been using the simulations, would be motivated to respond favorably toward them. Psychology students may be motivated to give inaccurate responses in studies conducted by their psychology professor if they do not like the professor, or they may respond more favorably if they want to help a professor they like. Sampling Bias In selecting a sample from a population there is always some degree of sampling error. This error is the discrepancy between the true value of a variable for the population and the value that is calculated from the sample, and it is expected and precisely estimated as part of sampling. A different type of error is due to sampling bias, a type of sampling error that is controlled or influenced by the researcher to result in misleading findings. Occasionally researchers will deliberately skew the sampling. The most obvious deliberate bias is selecting only those subjects that will respond in a particular way to support a point or result.

For instance, if a researcher is measuring the values of college students and wants to show that the students are concerned about helping others and being involved in community service, bias would result if the researcher deliberately selected students in education or social work and ignored majors that might not be so altruistically oriented. Selecting friends or colleagues may also result in a biased sample. An even more flagrant type of bias occurs when a researcher discards some subjects because they have not responded as planned or keeps adding subjects until the desired result is obtained. Sampling bias also occurs nondeliberately, often because of inadequate knowledge of what is required to obtain an unbiased sample and the motivation to "prove" a desired result or point of view. In qualitative studies the researcher needs to be particularly careful about possible unintended bias if sampling changes during the study. Bias can also result from selecting subjects from different populations and assigning them to different groups for an experiment or comparison. Suppose a researcher used graduate sociology students to receive a treatment in an experiment and graduate psychology students as a control group. Even if the samples were selected randomly from each population, differences in the populations, and consequently samples, in attitudes, values, knowledge, and other variables could explain why certain results were obtained. The subjects in the study should be clearly described, and the description should be specific and detailed.

2: Fundamentals of Educational Research by James H. McMillan

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