

Have you ever wondered about what you could figure out about someone just by simply observing them? Many people don't realize but you can tell a lot about a person or animal just by observing them in their natural environment as that is when they reveal their authentic self. This is where naturalistic observation shines in psychology. Naturalistic observation is a research method in psychology that records the behavior of a subject in their natural environment without manipulation. Even though criticized, Naturalistic observation unlike a controlled environment allows for psychologists to gain more insight into authentic social behaviors of humans that cannot be replicated in lab environments which is crucial for psychological research.

Naturalistic observation helps researchers study and analyze different behaviors/interactions that are very difficult and sometimes even impossible to recreate in artificial settings. Experiences like how people act in public situations or how dynamics play out in work environments. The advantage that natural settings have is the ability to give situations that are unscripted and very often unpredictable giving researchers access to behaviors and interactions that are realistic to what you would see in real life. For example, analyzing how a group of teens talk and interact at a lunch table can show real group dynamics that a controlled environment couldn't.

Naturalistic observation allows for researchers to use what they have learned and apply it more directly into the real world which makes naturalistic observation a strong research method for connecting studies with human experiences.

Another important strength that naturalistic observation has is that it helps to remove and bias or influence in the studies. In artificially produced settings by researchers because of the fact that the people who are participating in the studies are aware that they are apart of an experiment/study their behaviors and actions will shift for that experiment and this is actually called the Hawthorne effect which is a phenomenon on which people change their behaviors when they know they are being watched. Naturalistic observation allows for studies to take place without the person's knowledge that they are being watched and this allows for data to be more genuine and authentic than in artificial settings. This allows for studies to be more reliable because its chances of being influenced by other factors is lowered. For example, observing kids in a playground environment without them realizing allows for their actions on the playground such as kindness, sharing or even conflicts to be a lot more genuine then if they were to be placed into an artificial lab setting under pressure. Naturalistic observation allows for a more clear path into genuine

actions and behaviors which makes it a very strong tool for psychological research.

Even with all of its strengths, like many methods naturalistic observation does have limitations and weaknesses that researchers should not overlook when using this research method. The main limitation of naturalistic observation is its lack of a controlled outside variable which makes it harder for researchers to really determine sometimes the exact cause of certain behaviors and reactions. When the subject is in an environment that is not controlled it allows for different factors to influence their behavior which can hinder or make it difficult for researchers to figure out the exact cause and effect of an experiment. Another limitation of naturalistic observation is that it can lead to concerns about how ethical it is. This is because since the participants aren't aware of being observed, questions about privacy and consent are a big thing. One more limitation of naturalistic observation is bias which can be caused if the research unintentionally mistakes the participants behaviors and reactions in a way that only proves their expectations. Even though naturalistic observation provides researchers with authentic data and results. These limitations show that just like any other research method may not always be 100%

reliable just by itself and it's best to be used with other research methods for better results.

In conclusion, naturalistic observation really stands out as such a valuable and important research method in psychology due to the fact that it allows for researchers to be able to see and observe genuine and authentic human behavior in uncontrolled and real world situations. Even though it comes with some challenges such as lack of control or ethical concerns, you can't take away just how important it is to collect authentic interactions and behaviors in people which makes it such a strong research method in understanding human and social behavior/dynamics.

Psychologists can balance naturalistic observation strengths and limitations and use it to connect their data a lot more directly to real life situations making the research method meaningful and applicable.