7.9 Observational Techniques: Design, Sampling and Inter-Observer Reliability: 10-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Define naturalistic observation as a research method in psychology, giving its setting and a key feature that distinguishes it from controlled observation. Context: observing playground behaviour in a school.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 A pilot structured observation used time sampling with 30 second intervals and found very few occurrences of the target behaviour 'helping'. Suggest two modifications to the recording method to improve capture of helping behaviour and explain the expected benefit of each for data quality.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Define controlled observation in the context of observing parent and infant interactions in a lab playroom, and give one advantage of this design over naturalistic observation.

(Total for Question 3 is 1 mark)

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4 Describe one practical step a researcher can take to improve inter-observer reliability when two observers are coding classroom participation independently, before collecting the main data.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 7.9 Observational Techniques: Design, Sampling and Inter-Observer Reliability: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

observing behaviour in the subject's normal, everyday environment, for example watching children on a school playground oe — **B1**

no systematic manipulation or control of variables by the researcher, natural setting is key oe — **B1**

Answer: Observing behaviour in the subject's normal environment, for example watching a school playground, with no experimental control or manipulation.

Question 2

suggests a change such as switching to event sampling or lengthening observation windows rather than only 30 second snapshots oe — **M1**

explains expected benefit: event sampling records each instance of helping so rare but important acts are less likely to be missed oe — **A1**

second suggestion: reduce interval length or use continuous recording for periods of interest oe — **M1**

explains benefit of second suggestion: more continuous coverage increases likelihood of capturing brief helping acts and improves validity of frequency estimates oe — **A1**

Answer: Switch to event sampling so every instance of helping is recorded, and use continuous recording rather than 30 second snapshots; both approaches increase the chance of capturing rare, brief helping acts and so improve validity.

Question 3

controlled observation: observation conducted in a structured setting where some variables are standardised or manipulated, e.g. a lab playroom oe — **B1**

Answer: Controlled observation is conducted in a structured setting where aspects are standardised, for example a lab playroom; advantage: greater control increases reliability and easier replication.

Question 4

carry out a training session where observers practise coding on the same pilot video or live session and discuss disagreements oe — **M1**

explains how this improves reliability: shared practice and discussion increases consistency of interpretations and use of the coding scheme oe — **A1**

Answer: Run a training session using the same pilot video so observers practise coding and resolve ambiguities; this aligns interpretations and increases agreement when coding the real data.

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