

## ***Study Materials for 4rth SEM (Paper-ANTACOR10T)***

### ***Unit - III - Tools and Technique of Data Collection***

#### **Case Study**

Case studies are in-depth investigations of a single person, group, event or community. Typically, data are gathered from a variety of sources and by using several different methods like Interviews and Observations. This is the technique where a informant is allowed to share his own experience in reference to the recent past. In this type of investigation, a large number of concrete cases are collected and analyzed in order to draw a conclusion. The technique has proved its worthiness in collecting data on particular topic, particularly for the cases like Birth, Marriage and Death. It is the most convenient way of data collection.

The case study research method originated in clinical medicine (the case history, i.e. the patient's personal history). In psychology, case studies are often confined to the study of a particular individual. The information is mainly biographical and relates to events in the individual's past (i.e. retrospective), as well as to significant events which are currently occurring in his or her everyday life. The case study is not itself a research method, but researchers select methods of data collection and analysis that will generate material suitable for case studies.

Case studies are widely used in psychology and amongst the best known were the ones carried out by Sigmund Freud, who (1909a, 1909b) conducted very detailed investigations into the private lives of his patients in an attempt to both understand and help them overcome their illnesses. Even today case histories are one of the main methods of investigation in [abnormal psychology](#) and psychiatry. This makes it clear that the case study is a method that should only be used by a psychologist, therapist or psychiatrist, i.e. someone with a professional qualification.

The procedure used in a case study means that the researcher provides a description of the behavior. This comes from interviews and other sources, such as observation. The client also reports detail of events from his or her point of view. The researcher then writes up the information from both sources above as the case study, and interprets the information.

The research may also continue for an extended period of time, so processes and developments can be studied as they happen.

Amongst the sources of data the psychologist is likely to turn to when carrying out a case study are [observations](#) of a person's daily routine, [unstructured interviews](#) with the participant herself (and with people who know her), diaries, personal notes (e.g. letters, photographs, notes) or official document (e.g. case notes, clinical notes, appraisal reports).

The case study method often involves simply observing what happens to, or reconstructing 'the case history' of a single participant or group of individuals (such as a school class or a specific social group), i.e. the [idiographic approach](#).

The [interview](#) is also an extremely effective procedure for obtaining information about an individual, and it may be used to collect comments from the person's friends, parents, employer, workmates and others who have a good knowledge of the person, as well as to obtain facts from the person him or herself.

Most of this information is likely to be [qualitative](#) (i.e. verbal description rather than measurement) but the psychologist might collect numerical data as well. The data collected can be analyzed using different theories (e.g. grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis, text interpretation, e.g. thematic coding).

Interpreting the information means the researcher decides what to include or leave out. A good case study should always make clear which information is the factual description and which is an inference or the opinion of the researcher. The method is therefore important for psychologists who adopt a [holistic](#) point of view (i.e. [humanistic psychologists](#)).

## **Strengths of Case Studies**

- Provides detailed (rich qualitative) information.
- Provides insight for further research.
- Permitting investigation of otherwise impractical (or unethical) situations.

Case studies allow a researcher to investigate a topic in far more detail than might be possible if they were trying to deal with a large number of research participants (nomothetic approach) with

the aim of 'averaging'. Because of their in-depth, multi-sided approach case studies often shed light on aspects of human thinking and behavior that would be unethical or impractical to study in other ways.

Case studies are often used in exploratory research. They can help us generate new ideas (that might be tested by other methods). They are an important way of illustrating theories and can help show how different aspects of a person's life are related to each other.

### **Limitations of Case Studies**

- Can't generalize the results to the wider population.
- Researchers' own subjective feeling may influence the case study (researcher bias).
- Difficult to replicate.
- Time-consuming.

Because a case study deals with only one person/event/group we can never be sure whether the conclusions drawn from this particular case apply elsewhere. The results of the study are not generalizable because we can never know whether the case we have investigated is representative of the wider body of "similar" instances. As they are based on the analysis of qualitative (i.e. descriptive) data a lot depends on the interpretation the psychologist places on the information.



### ***Characteristic features of Case Studies:***

- A case study is a research methodology that has commonly used in social sciences.
- A case study is a research strategy and an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context.
- Case studies are based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group or event to explore the causes of underlying principles.
- A case study is a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a person, group or event.

- A case study research can be single or multiple case studies, includes quantitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions.
- Case studies are analysis of persons, groups, events, decisions, periods, policies, institutions or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods.