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What is meant by case study meaning

Verywell / Colleen Tighe A case study is an in-depth study of one person, group, or event. In a case study, nearly every aspect of the subject's life and history is analyzed to seek patterns and causes of behavior. Case studies can be used in a variety of fields including psychology, medicine, education, anthropology, political science, and social work. The hope is that learning gained from studying one case can be generalized to many others. Unfortunately, case studies tend to be highly subjective and it is sometimes difficult to generalize results to a larger population. While case studies focus on a single individual or group, they follow a format that is similar to other types of psychology writing. If you are writing a case study, it is important to follow the rules of APA format. A case study can have both strengths and weaknesses. Researchers must consider these pros and cons before deciding if this type of study is appropriate for their needs. One of the greatest advantages of a case study is that it allows researchers to investigate things that are often difficult to impossible to replicate in a lab. Some other benefits of a case study: Allows researchers to collect a great deal of informationGives researchers the chance to collect information on rare or unusual casesAllows researchers to develop hypotheses that can be explored in experimental research On the negative side, a case study: Cannot necessarily be generalized to the larger populationCannot demonstrate cause and effectMay not be scientifically rigorousCan lead to bias Researchers may choose to perform a case study if they are interested in exploring a unique or recently discovered phenomenon. The insights gained from such research can then help the researchers develop additional ideas and study questions that might then be explored in future studies. There have been a number of notable case studies in the history of psychology. Much of Freud's work and theories were developed through the use of individual case studies. Some great examples of case studies in psychology include: Anna O: Anna O. was a pseudonym of a woman named Bertha Pappenheim, a patient of a physician named Josef Breuer. While she was never a patient of Freud's, Freud and Breuer discussed her case extensively. The woman was experiencing symptoms of a condition that was then known as hysteria and found that talking about her problems helped relieve her symptoms. Her case played an important part in the development of talk therapy as an approach to mental health treatment. Phineas Gage: Phineas Gage was a railroad employee who experienced a terrible accident in which an explosion sent a metal rod through his skull, damaging important portions of his brain. Gage recovered from his accident but was left with serious changes in both personality and behavior. Genie: Genie was a young girl subjected to horrific abuse and isolation. The case study of Genie allowed researchers to study whether language could be taught even after critical periods for language development had been missed. Her case also served as an example of how scientific research may interfere with treatment and lead to further abuse of vulnerable individuals. Such cases demonstrate how case research can be used to study things that researchers could not replicate in experimental settings. In Genie's case, her horrific abuse had denied her the opportunity to learn language at critical points in her development. This is clearly not something that researchers could ethically replicate, but conducting a case study on Genie allowed researchers the chance to study phenomena that are otherwise impossible to reproduce. There are a few different types of case studies that psychologists and other researchers might utilize: Collective case studies: These involve studying a group of individuals. Researchers might study a group of people in a certain setting or look at an entire community of people. Descriptive case studies: These involve starting with a descriptive theory. The subjects are then observed and the information gathered is compared to the pre-existing theory. Explanatory case studies: These are often used to do causal investigations. In other words, researchers are interested in looking at factors that may have actually caused certain things to occur. Exploratory case studies: These are sometimes used as a prelude to further, more in-depth research. This allows researchers to gather more information before developing their research questions and hypotheses. Instrumental case studies: These occur when the individual or group allows researchers to understand more than what is initially obvious to observers. Intrinsic case studies: This type of case study is when the researcher has a personal interest in the case. Jean Piaget's observations of his own children are good examples of how an intrinsic case study can contribute to the development of a psychological theory. The type of case study that is used depends on the unique characteristics of the situation as well as the case itself. There are also different methods that can be used to conduct a case study, including prospective and retrospective case study methods. Prospective case study methods are those in which an individual or group of people is observed in order to determine outcomes. For example, a group of individuals might be watched over an extended period of time to observe the progression of a particular disease. Retrospective case study methods involve looking at historical information. For example, researchers might start with an outcome, such as a disease, and then work their way backward to look at information about the individual's life to determine risk factors that may have contributed to the onset of the illness. There are a number of different sources and methods that researchers can use to gather information about an individual or group. Six major sources that have been identified by researchers are: Archival records: Census records, survey records, and name lists are examples of archival records. Direct observation: This strategy involves observing the subject, often in a natural setting. While an individual observer is sometimes used, it is more common to utilize a group of observers. Documents: Letters, newspaper articles, administrative records, etc., are the types of documents often used as sources. Interviews: Interviews are one of the most important methods for gathering information in case studies. An interview can involve structured survey questions or more open-ended questions. Participant observation: When the researcher serves as a participant in events and observes the actions and outcomes, it is called participant observation. Physical artifacts: Tools, objects, instruments, and other artifacts are often observed during a direct observation of the subject. This section will have the following structure and content: Background information: The first section of your paper will present your client's background. Include factors such as age, gender, work, health status, family mental health history, family and social relationships, drug and alcohol history, life difficulties, goals, and coping skills and weaknesses. Description of the presenting problem: In the next section of your case study, you will describe the problem or symptoms that the client presented with. Describe any physical, emotional, or sensory symptoms reported by the client. Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions related to the symptoms should also be noted. Any screening or diagnostic assessments that are used should also be described in detail and all scores reported. Your diagnosis: Provide your diagnosis and give the appropriate Diagnostic and Statistical Manual code. Explain how you reached your diagnosis, how the client's symptoms fit the diagnostic criteria for the disorder(s), or any possible difficulties in reaching a diagnosis. This portion of the paper will address the chosen treatment for the condition. This might also include the theoretical basis for the chosen treatment or any other evidence that might exist to support why this approach was chosen. Cognitive behavioral approach: Explain how a cognitive behavioral therapist would approach treatment. Offer background information on cognitive behavioral therapy and describe the treatment sessions, client response, and outcome of this type of treatment. Make note of any difficulties or successes encountered by your client during treatment. Humanistic approach: Describe a humanistic approach that could be used to treat your client, such as client-centered therapy. Provide information on the type of treatment you chose, the client's reaction to the treatment, and the end result of this approach. Explain why the treatment was successful or unsuccessful. Psychoanalytic approach: Describe how a psychoanalytic therapist would view the client's problem. Provide some background on the psychoanalytic approach and cite relevant references. Explain how psychoanalytic therapy would be used to treat the client, how the client would respond to therapy, and the effectiveness of this treatment approach. Pharmacological approach: If treatment primarily involves the use of medications, explain which medications were used and why. Provide background on the effectiveness of these medications and how monotherapy may compare with an approach that combines medications with therapy or other treatments. This section of a case study should also include information about the treatment goals, process, and outcomes. When you are writing a case study, you should also include a section where you discuss the case study itself, including the strengths and limitations of the study. You should note how the findings of your case study might support previous research. In your discussion section, you should also describe some of the implications of your case study. What ideas or findings might require further exploration? How might researchers go about exploring some of these questions in additional studies? Here are a few additional pointers to keep in mind when formatting your case study: Never refer to the subject of your case study as "the client." Instead, their name or a pseudonym. Read examples of case studies to gain an idea about the style and format. Remember to use APA format when citing references. Case studies can be a useful research tool, but they need to be used wisely. In many cases, they are best utilized in situations where conducting an experiment would be difficult or impossible. They are helpful for looking at unique situations and allow researchers to gather a great deal of information about a specific individual or group of people. If you have been directed to write a case study for a psychology course, be sure to check with your instructor for any specific guidelines that you are required to follow. If you are writing your case study for professional publication, be sure to check with the publisher for their specific guidelines for submitting a case study.

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