

Chapter 2

Exercise 1. Evaluation of Research: Practical Dilemmas

Directions: Read the excerpt on “evaluation of a pregnancy prevention program” in this chapter and answer the following questions.

Questions:

1. What is the research question? What are the comparison groups?
Did students who were offered pregnancy-prevention services differ in their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors compared to students not offered these services?
2. What are the main findings?
Boys offered the pregnancy-prevention services used the clinic as freely as did girls of the same age. Also, increased and prompt attendance at the clinic and increased use of effective contraception methods reduced pregnancy levels. Furthermore, the younger sexually active teens developed knowledge and behavior patterns usually associated with older teens.
3. Is it harmful to collect student information about sexuality and contraception attitudes and behaviors? Briefly discuss at least one advantage and one disadvantage relevant to the pregnancy prevention program.
Advantages are that the data suggest school-based clinics lower pregnancy rates in this school and postponed coitus, which might be of interest to other schools. Disadvantages are additional costs that likely would involve the school (time, personnel) and potential concerns from parents and the community about the collection of sensitive and sometimes controversial information from students.
4. Explain the benefits of informed consent for this study. Are there disadvantages? Why or why not?
Students should mention benefits provided by the Belmont Report. They also should briefly discuss how ethical issues must be weighed

carefully in social research, and that permission is required from an IRB prior to the study.

Exercise 2. Skills Building: Writing Research Questions for Quantitative Research

Directions: Choose a social science topic. You may use one of the topics discussed in this chapter (exclude topics from an excerpt), or select one of your own.

1. Write your topic here (e.g. children's behavior problems, ages 3-5).
2. Write a one-sentence research question for a *descriptive study*.
3. List the information needed to study the topic for a *descriptive study* and how it might be obtained (e.g., *types of behavior problems for children, ages 3-5. Data from observations of children, or from questionnaires completed by children's preschool teacher*).
4. Write a one-sentence research question for an *explanatory study*. Use the "if-then" format.
5. List the information needed to study the topic for an *explanatory study* and how it might be obtained (e.g., *types of behaviors for each child ages 3-5 in the study, obtained from parent or teacher reports; and job type for each child's mother from telephone interviews*).

Students should show they understand the differences between the two types of studies, and correctly state appropriate research questions for each type. Also, check that they provide the correct information and identify the "cause" and "effect" variables in their discussion of explanatory research.

Note: Students might need to be reminded in advance that two pieces of information are needed for an explanatory (causal) study: the "cause" and the "effect." In the example, "job type of mother" is considered to be the cause of "child's behavior problems," which is the effect. The idea is to study whether the mother's type of job has an effect on her children's behavior.