



PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

Frances Chumney, PhD



TRANSCRIPT:

This is Dr. Chumney with a very brief overview of the most common purposes served by program evaluation research.

CONTENT OUTLINE

- Continuum of Program Evaluation Purposes
- Studies of Program Adequacy
- Studies of Program Plausibility
- Studies of Program Probability

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION



TRANSCRIPT:

Generally speaking, the purposes of evaluation research can be grouped into three broad categories which form a sort of continuum. These three broad categories of purpose are the examination of a program's adequacy, plausibility, or probability. This presentation will briefly describe each of these evaluation purposes.

EVALUATION PURPOSES

- Purpose → Research Design
 - ❖ Type of data collected
 - ❖ Methods of data collection
 - Single vs. Multiple Groups
 - Convenience vs. Randomly Assigned Groups
 - ❖ Composition of sample(s)
 - ❖ Analysis of data

- Research Design → Inference & Confidence

ADEQUACY

PLAUSIBILITY

PROBABILITY

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION



TRANSCRIPT:

The purpose of an evaluation study influences all the elements of the research design, including the type of data that are collection, how the data are collected, who the data are collected from or about, and how those data are analyzed. Ultimately, all of these characteristics of research design – when taken together – affect the kinds of inferences that can be drawn from the results of the study. Inference is important because it is part of the foundation which allows us to have confidence in our observed effects and overall evaluative conclusions.

The three most common purposes of an evaluation study (adequacy, plausibility, and probability) form a sort of continuum anchored by adequacy and probability research on either end of the continuum, and plausibility research falling somewhere between those two extremes.

ADEQUACY

- Motivation(s) for evaluation:
 - ❖ Are goals of program being met?
 - ❖ Are activities performed according to implementation schedule?
 - ❖ Are observed changes in the expected direction?
 - ❖ Are observed changes of the expected size?

- Evaluative standard/criteria:
 - ❖ Predetermined criteria
 - ❖ Absolute value
 - ❖ Incremental (change) value

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION



TRANSCRIPT:

The first purpose of evaluation I am going to describe is adequacy. The overall objective of an evaluation of the adequacy of a program is to determine whether the goals of the program are being met. This can be motivated by questions regarding the goals themselves, the schedule for the implementation of program activities, and exploring whether the changes that were expected are being observed to occur as they were predicted with regard to their direction and size or magnitude.

An adequacy study does not require a comparison group. Data are collected and compared to predetermined criteria. These standards or criteria can be either an absolute value of an outcome or the change observed for an outcome. In the case of examining the change that has occurred, data must be collected pre- and post- intervention or program participation, but a control group still is not required.

PLAUSIBILITY

- Motivation(s) for evaluation:
 - ❖ Are goals of program being met after controlling for extraneous influences?
 - ❖ Does the intervention group perform “better” than a control group?

- Requires a control/comparison group

- Evaluative standard/criteria:
 - ❖ Predetermined criteria
 - ❖ Absolute value
 - ❖ Incremental (change) value
 - ❖ Between-groups changes

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION



TRANSCRIPT:

The second purpose of evaluation I am going to describe is plausibility. The overall objective of an evaluation of the plausibility of a program is to determine whether a program is having the intended effects. This is similar to an adequacy study, except that a plausibility study includes a comparison or control group. A plausibility study can be motivated by questions regarding the effects of the program or changes in program participants after the effects of other, unrelated variables are accounted for. This is why a comparison or control group is necessary. A plausibility study assumes that any changes observed in the control group are representative of similar changes that would have been observed for the intervention group if those participants had not been receiving the intervention. The effects of the intervention, then, are those that are observed above and beyond changes observed in the control group that are attributed to factors not directly related to the program.

In a plausibility study, all the same data can be collected and compared to the same standards as those described for an adequacy study. In addition, a plausibility study allows for comparisons between groups; specifically, a comparison of the treatment or intervention group to a control group.

PROBABILITY

- Motivation(s) for evaluation:
 - ❖ What is the effect of the program?
 - ❖ Does the intervention group perform “better” than a control group?

- Requires **random assignment** to intervention & control groups

- Evaluative standard/criteria:
 - ❖ Predetermined criteria
 - ❖ Absolute value
 - ❖ Incremental (change) value
 - ❖ Between-groups changes

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION



TRANSCRIPT:

The third purpose of evaluation I am going to describe is probability. The overall objective of an evaluation of the probability of a program is to determine the true effects of a program by conducting a plausibility study with the added property of being implemented using a randomized control trial design. A randomized control design means that individuals are randomly assigned to either the intervention or control group before implementation of the program begins.

In a probability study, all the same data can be collected and compared to the same standards as those described for a plausibility study. Because participants have been randomly assigned to either the treatment or control groups, the researcher has increased confidence that the observed changes and group differences are a result of the program and not some other extraneous variables or pre-existing group differences.