

Assess the strengths and limitations of using essay



Assess the strengths and limitations of using group interviews to investigate anti-school subcultures (20 marks). There are many practical strengths and limitations when using group interviews for researching anti-school subcultures.

The first strength is that it is a group of interviewees meaning that they are more confident especially with students who have similar characteristics with their peers in the interview because they are more comfortable which means they are not reluctant to answer the questions however this group idea may bring a limitation in terms of one of the students is likely to dominate the discussion and as a result the other interviewees may just agree with their points because if their opinions differ from the others, it may cause personal problems after the interview which means the interviewer will only get one person's opinion.

Another strength is that the interviewer is able to build rapport with the interviewees through an unstructured group interview which will allow the interviewer to research sensitive topics, this is important with the anti-school students as they will see the interviewer as a teacher (Bell 1981) if the rapport is not built up meaning they will not be truthful and will lie.

One of the practical weaknesses is the interviewer bias, this means the respondent will react differently by the interviewer physically and psychologically which means the students may interpret the questions or the interviewers' body language in the wrong way and may answer the questions in a different way. Another limitation is that group interviews are often time consuming as there is no structure meaning the students will ramble on

however this can be a strength as it gives the students time to phrase their answers carefully and for the interviewer to analyse the responses better (verstehen).

Another limitation is the cost of the interviewer and the training for them as they will need to deal with misbehaving students and to make it interesting as students usually have shorter attention spans than adults meaning they may lose concentration and will create distort responses. There are not many ethical strengths and weaknesses.

The first limitation is that the group of students have more power than the interviewer and may use this to possibly intimidate or even bully the interviewer which will disrupt or stop the interview. The main strength of this method is that there is not many weaknesses compared to other methods such as non-participant where there are ethical issues with observing younger children without consent so group interviews is usually very ethical.

From item B we can see the benefits and drawbacks of using unstructured group interviews and comparing it to non-participant observation, the group interviews give greater confidence for students when answering with their peers however peer pressure may distort responses as they are aware of what their peers think and as a result think similarly, the researcher also cannot see how the students actually behave in a normal manner which is where the non-participant is better.

The item also shows that the interviews are largely unstructured to create a relaxed atmosphere which is true and is proven by the work of William Labov (1973) where he proved that an informal unstructured style group interview <https://assignbuster.com/assess-the-strengths-and-limitations-of-using-essay/>

was successful as his interviewees spoke openly. From a theoretical point of view, the main issue with group interviews is that it lacks reliability meaning it is harder to repeat the experiment and the outcome is likely change each time this is because students are more likely than adults to change their original answer when the question is repeated because they think their original answer must be wrong.

The strength is that it is high in validity meaning it is close to reality and can be applied to real life situations as the interviewer is able to see the students in a natural state as a group and see how they interact with each other and giving more in-depth answers than a one to one interview. The method is qualitative meaning it provides in-depth knowledge, this is important as the students will see this as an opportunity to fully air their views because teachers are unlikely to listen to them so they will use their experiences to tell sensitive matters to the interviewer.

Since the method has a small sample group the researcher cannot make generalisations to the wider population because there is a vast amount of reasons for being part of the anti-school subculture and there are also different factors which affect their views such as their age, social class and where they live. A weakness of group interviews is that it is subjective meaning that it is not free from personal views and opinions of the researcher this is a problem because the researcher may dislike the students and this may change his personality towards them which in turn affects the depth of the response.

Interpretivists use this method as it is high in validity and they believe that sociology cannot be a natural science however interviews can be considered artificial because both parties know it is an interview meaning the responses may not be entirely truthful. To conclude, there are many strengths when researching anti-school subcultures using group interviews such as it is very ethical, brings varied responses from each interviewee and the responses are often in high details however the limitations are severe as it is not reliable and no generalisations can be made.

This method is appropriate if it was more informal, for researching the anti-school students as the researcher needs to be able to see them face to face, to see their body language. Other methods such as questionnaires and non-participant will not work as well as there is no relationship built up to research into a rather sensitive topic.