Influence of Mindset on Study Observations

The mindset we possess has a profound effect on the world around us. While one might believe that scientific studies are unaffected by the researchers’ mindset, this is often not the case, as it commonly influences the observations made in the study. A mindset can be defined as a set of assumptions and beliefs held by a person or group which predetermines one’s responses to an interpretation of situations. In this essay we will explore 3 different examples of how mindset can influence observations made in the field of psychology.

First off, the set of assumptions someone holds often affect the meaning given to different words, which can therefore influence the observations made in a study. For example, if one was studying the intelligence of different animals, the researcher may have certain assumptions about what the meaning of intelligence includes. This may affect the types of observations made, as measures of intelligence which fit the assumptions in the mindset may be included or given greater weight, while other are neglected.

Furthermore, observations made while collecting data may be influenced by the set of beliefs one holds as they may perceive things in a way which aligns with them. For example, consider a study exploring gender differences in empathy between children involving direct observations in different settings. If the researchers held the belief that girls are more empathetic than boys, this could influence the observations made as one may recognize or more strongly pick up on the empathetic actions and behavior of the girl, even though the boy may be displaying the same behavior or other less obvious forms of empathy.

Finally, one’s mindset may guide the observations made while interpreting the data in a study. The set of beliefs a person holds may cause them to selectively interpret the data to look for a correlation or link explaining those beliefs. For example, if the researchers held the notion that obesity negatively affected one’s happiness, they may be influenced to observe for trends in the data which suggested a negative correlation between a participant’s weight and their happiness, in a study examining people’s mood and mental state. This mindset may lead us to observe the data in certain ways while ignoring other explanations.

The examples provided above illuminate a few ways someone’s mindset can influence observations made in a study, hopefully allowing one to account for these in the future.