

On Case studies

“Within psychology a case study refers to the in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a general statistical analysis. It is a method to narrow down a very broad topic of research into one single case, i.e., a person, setting, situation or event. For example, the broad topic of urban environmental quality may be studied in one particular neighborhood where the municipality has recently installed garbage bins to combat littering. Rather than employing a strict protocol and close-ended questions to study a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an exploratory, qualitative examination of a single situation or event: a case. Qualitative research uses words or other non-numerical indicators (such as images or drawings) as data. The main purpose of case studies and other types of qualitative research is to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. In a case study, people or events are studied in their own context, within naturally occurring settings, such as the home, play fields, the university and the street. These settings are “open systems” where conditions are continuously affected by interactions with the social, physical, historical and cultural context to give rise to process of ongoing change. “

(Steg, van den berg, and De Groot, 2012, pp 9-10)