

Critical Reflection Worksheet: Biases and Assumptions in Applied Research

Module ECAS7009: Applied Research in Psychology

Topic: Reflexivity and Researcher Bias

Purpose: To critically examine personal biases, assumptions, and positionality in the context of applied psychological research.

Section 1: Understanding Bias and Reflexivity

Key Constructs:

- Reflexivity (Finlay, 2002): The process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the research relationship, and the research context.
- Positionality: The recognition of how one's social and cultural background influences one's perspective and approach to research.
- Confirmation Bias: The tendency to search for, interpret, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs.
- Implicit Bias: Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect understanding, actions, and decisions.

Prompt:

Reflect on how these constructs might influence your approach to applied psychological research.

Section 2: Personal Reflection

Instructions: Answer the following questions with honesty and depth. Use examples from your academic, professional, or personal experiences.

1. What assumptions do you hold about the populations or topics you are researching?
2. How might your background (e.g., education, culture, personal experiences) shape your interpretation of data or interactions with participants?
3. Have you ever encountered a situation where your assumptions were challenged during research or practice? What did you learn?
4. What strategies can you use to identify and mitigate your own biases during the research process?

Section 3: Application to Research Design

Scenario-Based Reflection:

Imagine you are designing a study on mental health service access among minority ethnic communities.

1. What potential biases might influence your choice of research questions, methods, or interpretation of findings?
2. How would you ensure your research design is inclusive and ethically sound?
3. What role does reflexivity play in maintaining research integrity in this context?

Section 4: Theoretical Integration

Task: Choose one of the following theories and explain how it can help you understand and address bias in applied research.

- Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
- Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)
- Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)
- Constructivist Epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Prompt:

- Summarise the theory.
- Apply it to a research context you are familiar with.
- Reflect on how it challenges or supports your assumptions.

Section 5: Action Plan

Final Task: Based on your reflections, outline a personal action plan for maintaining reflexivity and minimising bias in your future research.

- What practices will you adopt?
- How will you document your reflexive process?
- Who or what will you use as a sounding board for challenging your assumptions?