

Observation

Observation can be described as a process of data collection in which the units/ events/ phenomena/ individuals witnessed first hand. A researcher, for example, can observe employees at work, children interacting with each other, people belonging to certain community and so on. This is one of the prominent methods that is used to collect data in qualitative research.

Types of Observation There are various types of observation; these are discussed as follows:

1) Participant observation: As the name suggests, in participant observation, the observer participates along with other participants in the activities/events/ phenomena being studied so that he/ she is able to gather firsthand information and interpret it effectively. Thus, the researcher is actively involved in activities carried out by the participants.

2) Non-participant observation: In this observation the researcher/ observer will not participate along with the participants in the activities/ events/ phenomena being studied. Thus, the observer will observe the participants passively. An example of non-participant observation would be observing children's interaction during playtime using a one way mirror or television camera. Some of the advantages of this type include, objectivity and ability to be neutral.

3) Structured observation: In this observation, the researcher/ observer has clear guidelines about what to observe. This in a way is helpful as the observer is prepared and knows what exactly, he/ she needs to observe. This type adequately guides the observation process though it is not as flexible as unstructured observation.

4) Unstructured observation: In this observation, the guidelines and principles as stated under structured observation are not available.

Though the structured observation could be more systematic, unstructured observation provides a kind of freedom to observe the units/ events/ individuals/ phenomena and so on without the pressure of any conceptual guidelines or framework. It also needs to be noted that more often than not, an observation is semi structured, that is a combination of structured and unstructured observation is employed.

5)Controlled Observation: it is a research method for studying behavior in a carefully controlled and structured environment. The researcher sets specific conditions, variables, and procedures to systematically observe and measure behavior, allowing for greater control and comparison of different conditions or groups.

6)Naturalistic Observation; it is a research method in which the researcher studies behavior in its natural setting without intervention or manipulation. It involves observing and recording behavior as it naturally occurs, providing insights into real-life behaviors and interactions in their natural context.