

Steps of Observation

1. **Planning:** At this stage, the observer must define the specific activities to be observed. The units of behaviour to be observed must be decided. The nature of the groups of the subjects to be observed, the scope and length of the observation, the tools to be used during observation should be determined at this stage.
2. **Execution:** At this stage, real work of observation is done. The observer should be proper arrangement of the specific conditions for the observing subjects. He should assume the proper physical position for observing the behaviour. He has to also handle the recording instruments properly.
3. **Recording:** Recording of the observation may be done at the time of observation or soon after the observation is over. The observer may record it in writing or he may use some electronic medium like tape recorder, camera, one way vision screen etc.
4. **Interpretation:** When the observer has interpreted his data, it becomes easier for him to draw various generalizations. This step must be done without any biasness or influence of personal attitudes and values of the observer.

Advantages of Observation

1. Observation is probably the most specific and the simplest method of data collection. It does not require much technical knowledge.
2. Observation is one of the main bases of formulating hypothesis. It is with the help of observation, the investigator come to know about their habits, likes, dislikes. Problems, perception etc.
3. In observation, the observer can directly check the accuracy from the observe situation/fields. He can apply various devices to test the reliability of their behaviour. The data collected through observation is more reliable than these interview or questionnaire.
4. Observation is an objective and universal method used in all sciences as it is very easily accepted and followed.
5. Observation is the only appropriate tool for certain cases. It can deal with phenomena which are not capable of giving verbal information about their behaviour, feeling and activities.
6. Observation is not haphazard or unplanned. It is a systematic method.

Disadvantages of Observation

1. There are many personal behaviours or secret activities which are not open for observation.
2. Observation is a highly technical job. Two persons may judge the same phenomena differently. One person may find something meaningful and useful from a situation but the other may find nothing from it.
3. In this method, the personal bias, personal view or looking at things in a particular view often creates for making generalization.
4. Observation is a time taking process. It sometimes reduces the interest of both observer and observed to continue their observational process.
5. Observation is a costly affair. It requires high cost, plenty of time and hard effort.
6. The lack of competence of the observer may hamper validity and reliability of observation.

References

Foundation of Education by Dr. Phunu Das Sarma and Dr. Sadhana Goswami.