

Key Vocabulary for Observations

Term	Translation	Meaning
Observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded.
Structured observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded in predefined behavioural categories on a checklist. Behaviour is recorded quantitatively, usually using tallies.
Unstructured observation		A study in which all behaviour seen is recorded. This is usually done qualitatively.
Naturalistic observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded in a real world environment.
Controlled observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded in an artificial environment which has been set up by the researcher.
Covert observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded but the participant is unaware that they are being watched.
Overt observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded and the participant knows that they are being watched.
Participant observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded by an observer who becomes involved with the activities of the participants. He is likely to sit or stand amongst them.
Non-participant observation		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded by an observer who remains separate from the participants he is observing.
Event sampling		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded using a predefined behavioural checklist for the whole observational period. E.g. recording for 2 hours straight.
Time sampling		A study in which behaviour is watched and recorded at intervals using a predefined behavioural checklist. E.g. recording behaviour for the first minute of every five over a twenty minute period.
Inter-rater reliability		The extent to which two or more observers record the same behaviours in the same way. Inter-rater reliability is also known as inter-observer reliability and is a measure of agreement.
Coding frames		A way to record more specific behaviour within behavioural categories. It can also be used to tabulate qualitative data, thus turning it into quantitative data.
Behavioural categories		Types of behaviour which appear at the top of a behavioural checklist.
Observer bias		When a researcher sees and records behaviour in a way that is in line with his own expectations

Observer effect		When participants change their behaviour (act unnaturally) because they know that they are being watched
Behavioural checklist		A tally chart in which behaviour is recorded in a structured observation