

Observation Method

Observation is a very powerful tool of psychological enquiry.

It is an effective method of describing behaviour. In our daily life, we remain busy with observing numerous things

throughout the day. Many times we do not take notice of what we are seeing or what we have seen. We see but we do not observe. We

remain aware of only few things that we see daily.

Have you experienced such a thing? You may also have experienced that if you carefully observe a person or event for some time, you come to know many interesting things about the person or the event.

A scientific observation differs from day-to-day

Observation in many respects.
These are:

(a) Selection: Psychologists do not observe all the behaviours that they encounter. Rather, they select a particular behaviour for observation. For example, you may be interested to know how children studying in class XI spend their time in school. Two things are possible at this stage. As a researcher, you might think that you have a fairly good idea about what happens in school. You might prepare a list of activities and go to the school with a view to finding out their occurrences. Alternatively, you might think that you do not know what happens in the school and, by your observation you would like to discover it.

(b) Recording: While observing, a

researcher records the selected behaviour using different means, such as marking tallies for the already identified behaviours whenever they occur, taking notes describing each activity in greater detail using shorthand or symbols, photographs, video recording, etc.

(C) Analysis of Data: After the observations have been made, psychologists analyse whatever they have recorded with a view to derive some meaning out of it.

It is important to know that making good observation is a skill. A good observer knows what s/he is looking for, whom s/he wants to observe, when and where the observation needs to be made, in what form the observation will be recorded, and what methods will be used to analyse the observed behaviour.