

**B.A.PART-III(SOCIOLOGY)**  
**Paper-III(Methods of Social Research)**

<b>Topic-</b> Characteristics of Observation <b>College-</b> MMC,P.U(Department of Sociology)	<b>By- Dr. Archana kumara</b> <b>Email id-</b> archnakumari706@gmail.com
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**OBSERVATION**

➤ **Introduction:**

Data collection is one of the crucial stages in social research Unlike in pure research, tools of data collection have to be constructed in social research. Some of the important tools of data collection are observation, interview, Questionnaire & schedule. Our Knowledge about the universe begins with observation, practically all human beings are involved in observation We observe things that happen around us While on street, in market, at home, at the work place we are constantly involved in observation.

But all these cannot be called scientific observations. Observation becomes scientific only when the following characteristics prevail.

**1. Observation is a Systematic Method:**

Observation is not haphazard or unplanned. The length of the observation periods, the interval between them, the number of observations, the area or situation of observation and various techniques used for observation are carefully planned. Often there are systematic managements for controlling the situation if special factors are to be studied, for example study of honest behaviour, sportsman spirit, leadership qualities etc.

**2. Observation is Specific:**

It is not just looking around for general aspects of human behaviour. Rather it is directed at those specific aspects of total situation which are assumed to be significant from the stand point of the purpose of the study. The layman may frequently overlook what is crucial while observing an event or phenomenon, but the scientific observer should look for some definite things which suit his purpose of study so as to economies his time, money and effort for observation.

**3. Observation is Objective:**

Observation should be objective and free from bias as far as possible. It should generally be guided by a hypothesis. The observer must maintain ethical neutrality. He must consider hypothesis as something to be tested. But at the same time he must maintain a flexible attitude, so that he can deviate from his original plan when such deviation appears inevitable.

#### **4. Observation is Quantitative:**

Although many important phenomena cannot be quantified, it becomes almost an imperative to use some means for quantifying observations in order to increase their precision and to facilitate their analysis. Even the quality should be converted into quantity, because qualitative data is subjective and quantitative one is objective and can further be interpreted in objective manner.

#### **5. Observation is an Affair of Eyes:**

P.V. Young remarks that observation is a systematic and deliberate study through eye. An observer gathers the data which he has seen in his own eyes. Collecting information through eyes is probably the most trustworthy technique of data collection in social research.

#### **6. Definite Aim:**

Observation must have some definite aims and objectives. It should be clearly defined before the beginning of the actual observation process. Without the proper aims and objectives observation will be unsystematic and expensive.

#### **7. The Record of Observation is Made Immediately:**

During the observation period it is very difficult on the part of the observer to remember each and every element of observation. He may forget much important information. If we rely on memory the factor of forgetting will enter and affect the data of observation. Therefore the observer should record all important information's as soon as the observation is completed.

#### **8. Observation is Verifiable:**

Observation result can be checked and verified. Observation must be verified with usual criteria of reliability, validity and usability. It may be possible to check the findings of the observation by comparing the results of different observers by repeating the study.

#### **➤ The Diverse Situations in which Observation can be Used -**

The various situations in which observation as a method can be used are given below:

- 1) When you are trying to understand an ongoing process or situation. Through Observation, you can monitor or watch a process or situation that you are evaluating as it occurs.
- 2) When you are gathering data on individual behaviours or interactions between people.
- 3) Observation allows you to watch peoples' behaviours and interactions directly, or watch for the results of behaviours or interactions.
- 4) When you need to know about a physical setting, that is a setting or environment where something takes place can help increase understanding of the event, activity, or situation you are evaluating. For example, you can observe whether a classroom or training facility is conducive to learning.

5) When data collection from individuals is not a realistic option. If respondents are unwilling or unable to provide data through questionnaires or interviews, Observation is a method that requires little from the individuals from whom you need data.

➤ **CONCLUSION:**

The literature on Observation reveals that it is a very complex, challenging, and creative method. Observation method differs from other methods in that it requires the researcher to have more specialised training on how to observe, what and how to record the data, how to enter the field and leave it, and how to remain detached and involved at the same time. The fact that the researcher may have to assume one or more roles is unique to observational studies. There are, however, some similarities to other research methods such as the need to plan the overall project, review the literature, and determine who will be studied and when and where the Observation will take place. Finally, the uses of one's senses, as well as other data collection techniques, make Observation a more holistic type of research that allows the researcher to gain a better understanding of insiders from their own perspective.