

RIKON
DIFFERENTTHINKSBETTER

Direct Observation



Direct Observation

Direct observation is a qualitative research technique that can be used to document activities, behaviour, or a physical setting. For this approach the researcher is often independent and resultantly may obtain more reliable information than through interviews. The technique is recommended when direct information is required; understanding of ongoing behaviours, processes, situations, or events is sought; there is physical evidence that can be observed; and other data collection procedures are not possible or appropriate. The approach is classified depending on whether subjects are aware that they are being observed (overt or covert) and, the level to which the observation activity is structured (predefined objectives or discovery).

Using 'Direct Observation'

Step 1: Preparing: The research question is clarified and the observer plans their approach so as to ensure the correct details are focused upon. The extent to which the observer is involved is decided too. Their role may range from a full participant to a completely independent spectator.

Step 2: Observing: Effort is made when capturing detail to discern what elements are relevant. The objective is to gain a complete picture and avoid bias.

Step 3: Note-taking: Observations are recorded through a predetermined method that can include checklists, or be entirely unstructured. Details of the location and context are noted.

Step 4: Processing the results: The results are interpreted with the objective of minimising bias. Often this activity is undertaken within a group context. To validate collected observations, the observations may be repeated or other subjects observed.

Instructions for Use

1. Clarify the research question and plan the approach to ensure that focus is directed toward the correct details. Decide the extent to which the observer will be involved.

2. Conduct the observation with a focus on noticing the details identified as important in the previous step. The objective is to gain a complete picture and to avoid bias.

3. Take notes and record observations using any appropriate method. This can include unstructured note-taking or the use of a checklist. Record details regarding the location and context.

4. Analyse the notes and observations to interpret their meaning. The objective is to minimise bias. To confirm their validity, observations can be repeated or other subjects observed.



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