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Observation

Observation, as the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observing. Observation data collection method is classified as a participatory study, because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are, while taking notes and/or recording.

Observation as a data collection method can be structured or unstructured. In structured or systematic observation, data collection is conducted using specific variables and according to a pre-defined schedule. Unstructured observation, on the other hand, is conducted in an open and free manner in a sense that there would be no pre-determined variables or objectives.

Advantages of observation data collection method include direct access to research phenomena, high levels of flexibility in terms of application and generating a permanent record of phenomena to be referred to later. At the same time, observation method is disadvantaged with longer time requirements, high levels of observer bias, and impact of observer on primary data, in a way that presence of observer may influence the behaviour of sample group elements.

It is important to note that observation data collection method may be associated with certain ethical issues. Fully informed consent of research participant(s) is one of the basic ethical considerations to be adhered to by researchers. At the same time, the behaviour of sample group members may change with negative implications on the level of research validity if they are notified about the presence of the observer.

This delicate matter needs to be addressed by consulting with dissertation supervisor, and commencing observation primary data collection process only after ethical aspects of the issue have been approved by the supervisor.

My e-book, [The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Dissertation in Business Studies: a step by step assistance](#) offers practical assistance to complete a dissertation with minimum or no stress. The e-book covers all stages of writing a dissertation starting from the selection to the research area to submitting the completed version of the work within the deadline. John Dudovskiy

