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Q5(d)

Distinguish between qualitative techniques of data collection with suitable examples from Indian society.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Research Methods and Analysis

Research Methods and Analysis: Qualitative and quantitative methods; Techniques of data collection; Variables, sampling, hypothesis, reliability and validity.

Core demand of the question

- Distinguish between qualitative techniques of data collection with suitable examples from Indian society
- Keep the distinction within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Qualitative techniques differ by scene, talk, and record.

- **Participant observation:** Srinivas-type village or workplace.
- **Interviews:** life-history and semi-structured, including SHG and farm talk.
- **Focus groups:** public argument, as in women's meetings.

Documents and oral history outlast the visit.

Introduction

Qualitative techniques collect meaning in words, scenes, and documents rather than only in preset items. They differ by how the researcher enters the field and how talk is produced. Indian examples make the distinction practical.

Body**Participant observation**

- The researcher shares a setting over time.
- Example: village caste dining, mill shop-floor, or a call-centre shift, in the lineage of M. N. Srinivas's field village.

Interview types

- **Unstructured life-history:** a woman SHG member's work and care, after Ann Oakley's lesson that the interview is a relation.
- **Semi-structured:** a farmer on debt, with a guide but not a closed form.

Focus group

- Group talk on a public theme, such as a panchayat women's meeting on sanitation.
- Interaction among members is data, not noise.

Documents and oral history

- Personal law papers, mill archives, or Partition memory.

- Example: reading a caste-association newsletter beside talk.

Distinction

- Observation sees practice. Interviews hear accounts. Groups show public argument. Documents outlast the visit.
- All still need reflexivity and consent.

Flow diagram

Qualitative collection -> Participant observation

Qualitative collection -> Life-history interview

Qualitative collection -> Focus group

Qualitative collection -> Documents oral history

Conclusion

Qualitative techniques are distinguished by entry, talk format, and record. Indian village, SHG, mill, and association files illustrate observation, interview, group, and document. They are complementary, not a single soft method.

Facts & figures

Srinivas

Intensive village fieldwork as an Indian model of observation.

Oakley

The interview as a social relation, not a neutral tap.

SHGs

A typical Indian site for group and life-history methods on women's work.

Oral history

Memory as data, used for Partition, mills, and movements.