

Topics Covered

1. Seasonality Diagram (Seasonal Calendar)
2. Perceptual Mapping
3. Comparison Table + Exam Practice Q&A

SECTION 1: SEASONALITY DIAGRAM

1. Seasonality Diagram

Also known as: Seasonal Calendar or Seasonal Analysis

1.1 What Is a Seasonality Diagram?

A seasonality diagram is a participatory visual tool used in social work research — especially in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) — to map out when specific events, activities, or problems occur throughout a year. It works like a chart or grid where months run across the top and different topics (such as illness, income, or rainfall) run down the side. By filling in this grid together with community members, a social worker can see the timing and intensity of problems clearly.

Simple Definition (Write This in Your Exam)

A seasonality diagram is a visual participatory tool that shows patterns of events, activities, and problems across the 12 months of a year. It is a core method in PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) that helps social workers understand when people face the most hardship, so that interventions can be timed correctly.

1.2 Core Purpose in Social Work Research

There are three main reasons why social workers use this tool:

1. **Purpose 1:** Identifying Vulnerability

The diagram highlights which months are the most stressful for a community — times of extreme poverty, hunger, heavy workloads, or widespread illness. Once a social worker knows when vulnerability peaks, they can focus resources and attention on those specific months.

2. **Purpose 2:** Planning Interventions

By knowing the timing of problems, social workers can plan their programs to arrive **BEFORE** the problem gets worse. For example, if malnutrition is highest in July, then

nutritional support should reach the community in June — not after the crisis has already hit.

3. **Purpose 3:** Understanding Livelihoods

The diagram acts as a complete activity profile of a community. It shows when people plant crops, when they harvest, when they take on debt, when income is low, and when labour is most in demand. This gives social workers a full picture of how the community survives through the year.

1.3 How to Construct a Seasonality Diagram

The diagram is created on the ground or on paper through a participatory process — meaning the community members themselves help build it. Here are the four steps:

Step 1	Define the Timeframe Draw the horizontal axis (top row) with all 12 months of the year — January to December — or with local season names like Dry Season, Rainy Season, Harvest Season, etc.
Step 2	Select Variables On the vertical axis (left column), list the topics or variables you want to study. Common examples include: rainfall, income, debt, workload, illness, food availability, school fee payments, and migration.
Step 3	Collect Data Participatorily Community members — including those who cannot read or write — use local materials like seeds, stones, sticks, or pebbles to fill in the grid. More stones in a cell means more of that variable in that month. For example, 5 stones in the "illness" row under "June" means illness is very high in June.
Step 4	Analyze and Interpret After the grid is filled in, the group discusses what they see. Questions like "Why does child malnutrition peak in July?" or "When is the best time for health training?" are explored. This discussion often produces the most valuable insights of the whole exercise.

1.4 Types of Data Captured

The seasonality diagram captures two types of data at the same time:

Qualitative Data Insights that come from the group discussion — cultural practices, social norms, personal experiences of hardship, and reasons behind the	Quantitative Data The visual magnitudes shown by the seeds or stones. More stones = higher value (e.g., higher income, higher illness rate). Fewer stones = lower value. This
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seasonal patterns.

gives a numerical picture without needing formal data.

1.5 Examples of Usage

- **Health & Nutrition:** Mapping the peak months of diseases like malaria or cholera, or identifying when food shortages are most severe, so that health camps and food programs can be scheduled in advance.
- **Livelihood Security:** Showing agricultural cycles — when farmers plant, when they harvest, when labour is in demand — to understand income patterns and plan livelihood support programs.
- **Resource Allocation:** Identifying the months when debt is at its highest (e.g., before harvest) or when school fees fall due, so that financial support programs can be timed to reduce stress.

1.6 Key Benefits

- **Accessible** Accessible and Non-Threatening: Even community members who cannot read or write can fully participate, because the tool uses physical objects (seeds, stones, sticks) instead of written forms.
- **Visual** Visual Analysis: Complex patterns across a full year become simple and clear at a glance. Everyone in the room can see the picture instantly.
- **Discussion** Encourages Discussion: The process of building the diagram together generates conversation. This group discussion often reveals deeper insights — causes, feelings, local knowledge — that are more valuable than the diagram itself.

Key Exam Point to Remember

When writing about the seasonality diagram in your exam, always mention three things: (1) It is a PRA tool, (2) it captures both qualitative and quantitative data, and (3) the group discussion during construction is often more valuable than the final diagram. These points show depth of understanding.

SECTION 2: PERCEPTUAL MAPPING

2. Perceptual Mapping

Adapted from marketing research for use in social work practice

2.1 What Is Perceptual Mapping?

Perceptual mapping is a visual participatory tool that was originally used in marketing but has been adapted for social work. It creates a two-dimensional graph — with an X-axis and a Y-axis — where services, situations, or options are plotted based on how people perceive them. The position of each item on the map shows its strengths and weaknesses according to community members or clients.

Simple Definition (Write This in Your Exam)

Perceptual mapping is a two-dimensional visual tool used in social work to understand how clients and community members perceive services, relationships, or social situations. It was adapted from marketing research. By plotting different services on a graph based on two chosen attributes (e.g., accessibility and quality), it helps social workers identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement.

2.2 Key Uses in Social Work

Perceptual mapping is used in four important areas of social work:

Use 1: Mental Health Service Evaluation

Mental health services (like hospital units, NGO counselling centres, helplines, and community clinics) are plotted on a map using dimensions like "low cost vs. high cost" and "high autonomy vs. low autonomy." This shows which services clients trust, which feel inaccessible, and which are perceived as helpful or harmful.

Use 2: Community Mapping and Needs Assessment

Used in community work to understand how residents perceive different areas or services in their locality — for example, how safe different neighbourhoods feel, how accessible local health facilities are, and what the quality of life is like across different zones. This helps social workers target their efforts to the most neglected areas.

Use 3: Client Empowerment and Assessment

Used as a visual aid to help individual clients express their subjective feelings about their life, relationships, or treatment progress. Because the client places items on the map themselves, they feel empowered and ownership of the process. It turns invisible inner feelings into a visible, workable picture.

4. Use 4: Conflict Resolution

In community planning processes, perceptual mapping helps different groups of people see where their views agree and where they differ. This makes it easier to find common ground and negotiate new positions without conflict.

2.3 How to Create a Perceptual Map (4 Steps)

Step 1	Define Attributes (the Two Axes) Choose the two most important dimensions for your study. These become the X-axis and Y-axis of the map. For example: X-axis = "Low Accessibility ↔ High Accessibility" and Y-axis = "Low Quality ↔ High Quality". Choosing the right axes is the most critical step — if the axes are wrong, the whole map gives misleading results.
Step 2	Gather Data Use surveys, focus group discussions, or interviews to collect information about how participants rate each service or option on both dimensions. For example, ask: "On a scale of 1–10, how accessible is this hospital to you?" and "How would you rate the quality of care?"
Step 3	Plot on the Map Draw the 2D graph with the two axes and then place each service, neighbourhood, or option at the correct position on the map based on the collected ratings. Items that score high on both axes go in the top-right corner; items that score low on both go in the bottom-left.
Step 4	Analyze Positions Look for CLUSTERS (services placed close together = seen as similar by the community) and GAPS (empty spaces on the map = unmet needs where no service currently exists). The white space is where new interventions should be designed.

2.4 Key Terms — Clusters and White Space

These two terms are extremely important for your exam. Make sure you can define both clearly.

Cluster When multiple services or options land close together on the map, they form a cluster. This means the community sees them as similar or equal. <i>Example: If a helpline and an NGO counselling service both land in the bottom-left corner, people see both as low-cost but also low-quality.</i>	White Space / Gap An empty area on the perceptual map where no service is currently positioned. This is the most important finding — it represents an unmet need. <i>Example: If the top-right corner (high quality + highly accessible) is empty, it means no service currently meets that combination of needs.</i>
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2.5 Benefits of Perceptual Mapping

- **Visualizes Subjective Data** Visualizes Subjective Data: Turns invisible feelings, opinions, and perceptions into a visible, tangible graph that can be analysed and acted upon. Abstract feelings become concrete data.
- **Identifies Gaps** Identifies White Space: Directly reveals gaps in service provision — areas where community needs are not being met by any existing service. This is the most powerful output of the tool.
- **Tracks Change** Tracks Change Over Time: The same map can be created before and after an intervention to measure whether perceptions have shifted. For example, if a new health service is launched, a follow-up map shows whether people now perceive it differently.