

PRINCIPLE NATURE OF ETHNOGRAPHY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The research study highlights the principal nature of ethnography while considering it an essential product of anthropological research. Nevertheless, the study not only has a focus on ER whilst considering it an essence of anthropology but also carries importance for overall qualitative research field. It has mainly discussed the core definitions of ethnography, history, and background with respect to its relevance in anthropology. In the beginning, the researcher formulated the experimental question of what standard procedure must execute for conducting ethnography and how it could be found constructive in ethnographic research. The study has a basic purpose to build a guidance module for the ethnographers and researchers, especially in the domain of anthropology across social sciences. The researcher has employed SLR methodology to generate analysis on the sourced data in relevance to research question. The collection of data administered through retrieving sample of articles that was 21 and sourced via database i.e. googlescholar.com with the administration of SLR based sampling technique. The data was screened in a repeated manner for analysis purpose while building LS (Link strengths among articles) to end the research with striking conclusions. The study has brought forth the results about a number of steps for execution of ER (Ethnographic Research). The significant research findings have provided the pathways to learn the standard procedure of ethnography and identified gaps in the already conducted previous ethnographic research that can ultimately orient the researchers to be mindful in avoiding the production of ambiguous ethnographic research that are non-standard as per the demanding criteria of research in anthropology.

KEYWORDS: Ethnography; Product Evaluation; Qualitative Research; Ethnographic Procedures.

INTRODUCTION

Writing about a research method after its evaluation has significant turnarounds across social sciences especially in anthropology. Thus, through the writings about a research method, one can assess how to collect, record, and communicate between all the stakeholders of the research using that particular research method. An account of research methods can also instigate an interest in the target audience such as readers, researchers and others for conducting contradicting or similar types of research. Nevertheless, to write about anthropological research methods is a bold undertaking.

An ethnography is purely a qualitative research method where the researcher who has chosen it as a research method goes for direct interaction and participation with subjects of study in their natural settings. The key tools used for the execution of ethnography in research practices are interviews, surveys, and participant observations (Kaberry, 2016). However, ethnography is the manifestation of writing a textual context after conducting a long, complex process (Lloyd, 2000).

Nonetheless, building of ethnographic viewpoint and spectacles of beliefs about it depends fundamentally on in what design and orientation the research work has a conduct. It leads the

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ethnographer to enter the world every day. 'It encourages extracting the information about a community understudy in cultural contexts' (Moisander et al., 2020). Ethnography is principally a systematic way of studying people and cultures (Madden, 2022).

Ethnography aims to explore cultural mechanisms and poised to develop the in-depth understanding of cultural settings and its affiliated events. Whilst moving to discuss the role of the ethnographer as a researcher, it came to know that fundamentally, he has a key aspect to make the finest observations of the subject of a research study in an incredible way. The ethnographer presents the research study by structuring it into value-packed writings related to the particular cultural group being studied (Morgan-Trimmer & Wood, 2016).

The research problem of this study is to deal with identifying how the execution of whole process of ethnography undertakes for anthropological research. Ethnographic research methodology belongs to the social science discipline. Whereas ethnography is one of the major approaches to qualitative research and 'is a multi-method research' (Penn, 2001). It can be titled based on its nature. Sometimes it is called 'thick description' (Hoey, 2014). Ethnography as a research methodology deals with studying and 'describing a culture of a group or group of individuals' (Draper, 2015).

Ethnography is a 'challenging methodology' as it describes a society and its culture in the best possible, most complicated, and most challenging way (Gelling, 2014). An ethnographer is himself following a complex design of research inquiry in which he has to be involved in participant observation and interaction with the target community to draw a whole picture of their real-life scenario. Ethnography is prevalently recognized as Cultural Anthropology for many years. Research-based on ethnography plays a vital role in 'assembling cultural information of a target population that's why it is also referred to as Cultural ethnography (Binford, 2019).

Research conduction undertaken to devise significant findings related to the main research problem of the study. The discussion on the primary research question of this research was to investigate ethnography, its systematic procedure, and its importance in research to come up with a valuable conclusion. Ethnography as a methodology of research has examined through different spectacles with a perspective of considering it as a sharpening tool of research skills and as an engine for accelerating logical reasoning in the mind of ethnographers for studying various social phenomena.

This research would be found valuable and will stand for minimizing the confusion of researchers when they immerse in the research journey while critically building analysis and adopting ethnography as a research methodology. Hence this would be found significant to alert the target audience of the research especially ethnographers to learn how to enhance their knowledge and skills to match themselves well with the ethnographic research they conduct.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social research act as a platform for generating a number of professions and bolstering many important policy decisions. Furthermore, Winch (2015) has affirmed that it helps the man to study himself and his surroundings. It is the source of collecting facts and figures and building an understanding of humanity. Even beyond the attention-seeking and quality-packed endeavors of social research, it further has valuable missions and visions.

Research methods have been growing and developing in exciting ways. This growth is manifest through interdisciplinary conversations, experiences, new technologies, and the need for time. MacPhail (2015) has added in this aspect that 'the world is filled with too much data all around and it is well quoted in the title reflecting the main theme of the research study as "Data, data, everywhere" that led the man as a researcher to think to explore and retrieve this data.

In today's world, we are living with multiple challenges, and these need to be recorded by a specific research method in data-gathering process. Not limited to the challenges for the source of data, human is also a source of extensive data. With time, technology is bolstering and anonymity as a concept is losing its meaning. The sets of data that need to be measured and recorded or should be considered notable and known by us can be recorded in the form of photographs, music, lyrics, personal histories, train schedules as well as the measurement of temperatures and many more. Nonetheless, this type of sourced data does not have any value until it is arranged and available in a well-organized form for interpretation.

Ladson (2003) has illustrated that the basic conception lying beyond the rapid and massive growth of research methods is to be managing larger pools of diversified data. However, the diversity

of research methods encompasses and endorses the same fundamental research principles, tactics, and techniques. Ethnography is one of the dimensions of the qualitative research approaches that has various significant applications and characteristics that made them use most theoretical and interpretive structures for elaborating on the facts and phenomena and the derived meanings through participants of ethnographic research.

Alase (2017) is of the view that ‘the qualitative research methods are majorly employed to contribute to the exploratory research problems. Qualitative research-based study seeks context variables, the ideas of people in regards to the subject of study, and the form of stories that come out during the study for the explanation of the whole concerned mechanism by giving it a structure of a theory or a model. Qualitative research are only the source that provides a platform for new trends, relationship modules, and the association between various important factors that can never be emerged while seeking support from quantitative research ends.

Mohajan (2018) has quoted that qualitative research seeks to map the qualitative attributes of people or ‘human behavior’ that are reflected directly in the form of their practices and by directly interacting with them. However, it is not as quite easy to know about someone’s gender, class, and race. It has a proper mechanism to be followed to approach real findings. In this research study, the research has a major purpose to study ethnography and highlight its principal nature as the purest qualitative research method.

METHODOLOGY

This research has purely based on qualitative research approach. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) administration led to analysis of the study. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a particular method of qualitative research that subjects the research to various processes of identification, evaluation, and summarization of each of the constructed themes of the research with respect to samples of collected literature. For SLR conduction, the inclusion of literature in the sample is employed purposefully.

The collection of data then induces the administration of methodological analysis. The main thrust of SLR is the construction of a broader view with respect to the primary research question and then coming up with the literature’s summary (Mariano et al., 2017). The data have been sourced from the digital source i.e. link.springer.com. For reviewing the research studies, all the themes constructed prior to employing the methodology were inserted as keywords to access the true representative sample of the current study. The method for analysis of collected data was also based on SLR. It helped the researcher to scan all the collected pieces of information, filter them and then come up with the unique findings and results.

Table No. 1. Steps for the administration of SLR

| Sr# | Steps executed by SLR methodology | SLR Methodology Procedures |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1- | Research question | How the whole process of ethnography is managed or administered to accomplish the anthropological research? |
| 2- | Sampling | From the population of all the relevant researches on the themes, sample have been drawn, purposefully by SLR. The sample of literature have been sourced via the database: link.springer.com . |
| 3- | Evaluating collected literature work | The sample of the research papers have been evaluated and examined retrieved from link.springer.com . Then whatever the sample have been drawn, narrowing down of sample have been employed and then only the most relevant literature to the topic are furthermore selected and then the final sample has been derived. |
| 4- | Summarization and data synthesis | All the selected relevant research papers are then studied and analyzed to summarize the findings according to the research question. |
| 5- | Interpretations | Interpretation and finalization of findings |

SAMPLING

For SLR methodology exertion, the most significant step is the sampling of selected literature of study for review on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Henceforth, inclusion and exclusion of articles for sample selection has been done on the basis of title evaluation through finding the **Link source**, Content evaluation, Chronological ordering of articles and finalizing the sample. Of the 1000 pieces of articles retrieved from the data source: link.springer.com.

Steps for the Acquisition of Sample of the Study:

Narrowing down the sample, has been conducted by researcher for the acquisition of model sample of study by skimming the articles by several categories given as:

1- Title evaluation

The 35 articles got finalized after the filtration process executed by the researcher with respect to title relevance in finding Link source as shown in the table below:

Table 2. The Sampling of articles through Title evaluation

| | Articles Title | Publication Title | Authors |
|-----|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Three Clowns of Ethnography: Geertz, Levi-Strauss, and Derrida | Dialectical Anthropology | Brian McCormack |
| 2. | Ethnography and ethnocide: A case study of the Yanomami | Dialectical Anthropology | Jeffrey Rifkin |
| 3. | Response to Review of Northern Passage: Ethnography and Apprenticeship Among the Subarctic Dene | Human Ecology | Robert Jarvenpa |
| 4. | On the writing of ethnography | Dialectical Anthropology | Vincent Crapanzano |
| 5. | James S. Bielo, Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Bible Study | Review of Religious Research | Hillary Kaell |
| 6. | Contested Etiology and Fragile Castles: An Ethnography of Cancer Risk and Cancer Research in Two Parts | Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry | Iman Roushdy-Hammady |
| 7. | Review of Noah Salomon, For Love of the Prophet: an Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State | Contemporary Islam | Ian VanderMeulen |
| 8. | Susan A. Crate: Cows, Kin, and Globalization. An Ethnography of Sustainability | Human Ecology | Marius Warg Næss |
| 9. | Commentary: Towards a Clinical Ethnography | Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry | Richard A. Gordon |
| 10. | The Brain Collections of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Turin: Re-Evaluation and Scientific Investigation | Human Evolution | D. Minaldi E. Rabino Massa |
| 11. | Joining Ethnography and History in Cultural Competence Training | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Michael Knipper |
| 12. | An Ethnography of Nonadherence: Culture, Poverty, and Tuberculosis in Urban Bolivia | Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry | Jeremy A. Greene |
| 13. | From Lay Depression Narratives to Secular Ritual Healing: An Online Ethnography of Mental Health Forums | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Domonkos Sik |
| 14. | Behind the Statistics: The Ethnography of Suicide in Palestine | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Nadia Dabbagh |
| 15. | Ethnography or Self-cultural Anthropology?: Reflections on Writing About Ourselves | Dialectical Anthropology | Sonia Ryang |
| 16. | Ethnography as storytelling | Dialectical Anthropology | Steven Webster |
| 17. | Visual anthropology and multivocal | Dialectical | Joseph Jay |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| | ethnography: A dialogical approach to Japanese preschool class size | Anthropology | Tobin |
| 18. | An Ethnography of Dementia | Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry | Roma Chatterji |
| 19. | Dialogue and fiction in ethnography | Dialectical Anthropology | Steven Webster |
| 20. | An Ethnography of Teaching Archaeology | Archaeologies | Talia Shay |
| 21. | Archaeological ethnography: Conversations around Kruger National Park | Archaeologies | Lynn Meskell |
| 22. | Ethnography, storytelling and the fiction of Toshio Mori | Dialectical Anthropology | Malve von Hassell Ph.D. |
| 23. | Foregrounding the Family: An Ethnography of How Families Make Decisions About Hebrew School | | Ilana M. Horwitz |
| 24. | Ethnography of a social border: The case of an American retirement community in Mexico | Contemporary Jewry Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology | Eleanore M. Stokes |
| 25. | Review Essay: Recent Ethnography on Contemporary Muslims | Contemporary Islam | Daniel Martin Varisco |
| 26. | Ethnography and the Making of Modern Health Professionals | | Vincanne Adams Sharon R. Kaufman |
| 27. | Objects of Memory: The Ethnography and Archaeology of Heirlooms | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory | Katina T. Lillios |
| 28. | Ethnography and ethnocide: A case study of the Yanomami | Dialectical Anthropology | Jeffrey Rifkin |
| 29. | Residential Mobility and Ceramic Exchange: Ethnography and Archaeological Implications | Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory | Jeffrey Rifkin |
| 30. | On the ethnographic touch | Dialectical Anthropology | Margaret E. Beck |
| 31. | Ethnographic Observations on the Role of Domestic Dogs in the Lowland Tropics of Belize with Emphasis on Crop Protection and Subsistence Hunting | | Dan Rose |
| 32. | Explanation and individual lives: A reconsideration of life writing in anthropology | Human Ecology | Luis Pacheco-Cobos Bruce Winterhalder |
| 33. | The flaneur, the street photographer and ethnographic practice | Dialectical Anthropology | Kenneth Little |
| 35. | Review Essay: Islam in Pakistan | Contemporary Jewry | Judith L. Goldstein |
| | | Contemporary Islam | Chad Haines |

2- Articles sampling via Content evaluation

The 15 articles got finalized after subjecting the 35 articles for content evaluation. For content evaluation, relevancy of articles to address the experimental question is checked.

Table No. 3 Articles sampling via Content evaluation:

| Sr# | Articles Title | Publication Title | Authors |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Three Clowns of Ethnography: Geertz, Levi-Strauss, and Derrida | Dialectical Anthropology | Brian McCormack |
| 2. | On the writing of ethnography | Dialectical Anthropology | Vincent Crapanzano |
| 3. | Joining Ethnography and History in Cultural Competence Training | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Michael Knipper |

| | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 4. | An Ethnography of Nonadherence: Culture, Poverty, and Tuberculosis in Urban Bolivia | Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry | Jeremy A. Greene |
| 5. | From Lay Depression Narratives to Secular Ritual Healing: An Online Ethnography of Mental Health Forums | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Domonkos Sik |
| 6. | Behind the Statistics: The Ethnography of Suicide in Palestine | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Nadia Dabbagh |
| 7. | Ethnography or Self-cultural Anthropology?: Reflections on Writing About Ourselves | Dialectical Anthropology | Sonia Ryang Steven |
| 8. | Ethnography as storytelling | Dialectical Anthropology | Webster |
| 9. | Visual anthropology and multivocal ethnography: A dialogical approach to Japanese preschool class size | Dialectical Anthropology | Joseph Jay Tobin |
| 10. | Ethnography, storytelling and the fiction of Toshio Mori | Dialectical Anthropology | Malve von Hassell Ph.D. |
| 11. | Foregrounding the Family: An Ethnography of How Families Make Decisions About Hebrew School | Contemporary Jewry | Ilana M. Horwitz |
| 12. | Review Essay: Recent Ethnography on Contemporary Muslims | Contemporary Islam | Daniel Martin Varisco |
| 13. | Ethnography and the Making of Modern Health Professionals | Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry | Vincanne Adams Sharon R. Kaufman |
| 14. | On the ethnographic touch | Dialectical Anthropology | Dan Rose |
| 15. | The flaneur, the street photographer and ethnographic practice | Contemporary Jewry | Judith L. Goldstein |

3- Chronological Arrangement of articles

The third step to acquire the true sample is to arranging the articles in chronological order for further processing it to inclusion and exclusion criteria of publication years.

Table No. 4 Articles Sampling through chronological sequencing

| Sr# | Articles Title | Publication Year |
|-----|--|------------------|
| 1- | On the writing of ethnography | 1977 |
| 2- | Ethnography as storytelling | 1983 |
| 3- | On the ethnographic touch | 1987 |
| 4- | Visual anthropology and multivocal ethnography: A dialogical approach to Japanese preschool class size | 1988 |
| 5- | Ethnography, storytelling and the fiction of Toshio Mori | 1994 |
| 6- | Three Clowns of Ethnography: Geertz, Levi-Strauss, and Derrida | 1999 |
| 7- | Ethnography or Self-cultural Anthropology?: Reflections on Writing About Ourselves | 2000 |
| 8- | An Ethnography of Nonadherence: Culture, Poverty, and Tuberculosis in Urban Bolivia | 2004 |
| 9- | The flaneur, the street photographer and ethnographic practice | 2008 |
| 10- | Ethnography and the Making of Modern Health Professionals | 2011 |
| 11- | Behind the Statistics: The Ethnography of Suicide in Palestine | 2012 |
| 12- | Joining Ethnography and History in Cultural Competence Training | 2013 |
| 13- | Review Essay: Recent Ethnography on Contemporary Muslims | 2015 |
| 14- | Foregrounding the Family: An Ethnography of How Families Make Decisions About Hebrew School | 2019 |

- 15- From Lay Depression Narratives to Secular Ritual Healing: An Online Ethnography of Mental Health Forums 2021

4- Finalizing sample of articles

The finalization of articles for the true representative sample is done through excluding the articles before 2000 and including all article lying in between 2000 to 2022.

Table No. 5 Finalizing sample of articles from the years in between 2000-2022

| Sr# | Articles Title | Publication Year |
|-----|---|------------------|
| 1. | An Ethnography of Nonadherence: Culture, Poverty, and Tuberculosis in Urban Bolivia | 2004 |
| 2. | The flaneur, the street photographer and ethnographic practice | 2008 |
| 3. | Ethnography and the Making of Modern Health Professionals | 2011 |
| 4. | Behind the Statistics: The Ethnography of Suicide in Palestine | 2012 |
| 5. | Joining Ethnography and History in Cultural Competence Training | 2013 |
| 6. | Review Essay: Recent Ethnography on Contemporary Muslims | 2015 |
| 7. | Foregrounding the Family: An Ethnography of How Families Make Decisions About Hebrew School | 2019 |
| 8. | From Lay Depression Narratives to Secular Ritual Healing: An Online Ethnography of Mental Health Forums | 2021 |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section has included the results and findings of the study based on SLR (Systematic Literature Review) and results are derived through LS (Link Strength) with respect to literature and the main concern of the study. The Systematic Literature Review have been employed through the identification of LS (Link Strength) of research papers and major themes for this research study. The systematic review of the literature has been executed in a successful way with the help of each of the keywords that strengthen the link between current research and precious relevant research studies. The finalized sample of article is studied, and the experimental question of this research has an address by evaluating the core dimensions and values of each of the article.

Each article gives a new dimension of ethnographic research by its reflecting on the way of its conduction in a different way. Whilst analyzing the results retrieved from the article titled as “An Ethnography of Non-adherence: Culture, Poverty, and Tuberculosis in Urban Bolivia”, it is found that applied ethnography is employed in this research to acquire the findings. It helped and positioned the researcher to get access of studying the cultural and structural parameters to record the experience of illness among patients of Aymara in urban areas. It is also revealed through the study, that not another epidemiological approaches could bring forth better results as ethnography did by putting forth all the sensitive and enriched data on urban street level from the subjects of study.

The second article is evaluated that is titled as “The flaneur, the street photographer and ethnographic practice” and gave results by the interpretations of researcher that in the study, the researcher used ethnographic research method as an artifact of time and space and found the method unique while depicting the picture of all aspects of study by photography. The next sample article titled as “Ethnography and the Making of Modern Health Professionals” is evaluated by researched and she has drawn the results ethnography give a methodological insight and serve as unique approach in medical science and practices along with its nature of being a social scientific method.

The article titled as “Behind the Statistics: The Ethnography of Suicide in Palestine” has conducted ethnographic research and employed ethnography as research methodology to analyze the suicide as a social phenomenon. This methodology helped to conduct the detail examination of case studies with multiple spectacles of research including political, cultural, economic views. This practice illustrated all the suicidal actions undertaken in Palestine with a broader eye view. Nonetheless, the ethnography chosen as a methodology uncovered the multitude of stories of suicidal cases.

The fifth article titled as “Joining Ethnography and History in Cultural Competence Training” used ethnographic research to put forth or develop the most sophisticated type of understandings of

culture. This could lead him to inform the target audience as students belonging to medical sciences that adherence to only scientific methods could lead them to fail and not present the results in scientific manner well unless they go for ethnographical research. The third last article titled as “Review Essay: Recent Ethnography on Contemporary Muslims” have employed the ethnographic research methodology to establish a broader view on contemporary Muslim society by collecting the data through tracking books to administer a review on them. The participant observation tool was utilized for the continuation of research that is the essence of toolbox of anthropology always.

The next article of sample that entails the title as “Foregrounding the Family: An Ethnography of How Families Make Decisions About Hebrew School” encompass the details that clearly demonstrate the adopted methodology as ethnography that helped the researcher of this study to decipher the clear picture of families and their practices to take decisions about Jewish commitments and Hebrew School on a broader level. The last article titled as “From Lay Depression Narratives to Secular Ritual Healing: An Online Ethnography of Mental Health Forums” of the sample is analyzed and interpreted to draw results. The results showed that this article has used an online ethnography’s typology as a methodology to cover up as much data relevant to field of study that was Mental Health. It helped the researcher to analyze the social and cultural dimensions of mental health of respondents of study by participant observation technique. This gave a chance to the researcher give an epistemological reflection by immersing in the community through online platforms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions are made while portraying the nature of ethnography and henceforth, it is concluded that it is the science or art that tells how to describe a culture or a group of people and a way of systematic recording of human cultures. It led to studying a particular community or group while recording the everyday practices, activities, and processes take place in community in their natural settings. It positions the researcher to immerse oneself into a culture to observe and describe patterns of living in a particular group or community. Moreover, it aims to explore cultural mechanisms and poised to have the deepest understanding of cultural settings and their affiliated events. As a term, it emerged from anthropology across social sciences. Many adaptations were made in the ways of practicing ethnography with time and are reflected from the results of study. It has been adopted with a core purpose of doing cultural interpretation, studying cultural patterns or processes of a community, finding the inner workings of social setting. It is mostly prevalent in using participant observation as a method of data collection but in reality, it is a way of working for anthropologists. It mainly involves observation of doings, watching, listening, and responding in own way of practice. Nonetheless, it is a faithful, and clear portrayal of people’s lives.

The researcher has made recommendation for conducting the ethnographic research by following a standard procedure or steps. Though, it is recommended that whilst administering the ethnographic research, the researcher should orient him/herself to conduct the research in a sequential way or in a specific manner. The order of steps starts from selecting a community or group of individuals, developing a focus or question for study, setting up a time to observe community, holding several visits on field multiple times, composing thorough field notes and returning to reflect on them often, interacting with individuals within the community, seeking interviews or conducting surveys, organizing, analyzing the findings and generating a report. This could lead the researcher to draw the value-packed and fruitful findings that reflect the core values and visions of research as per the designed research module.

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