



ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

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Cite This Article: P. Jaganathan & Dr. A. Magalingam, "Ethnographic Research", International Journal of Applied and Advanced Scientific Research, Volume 3, Issue 1, Page Number 430-434, 2018.

Abstract:

Research method is mainly classified into two categories, one is Qualitative method and another one is Quantitative method. The Qualitative methods are divided into Case Study, Ethnography, Field Study, Grounded Theory, Narrative Research and Phenomenological. Observation, Participation, Interview, Site Document and Group Discussion are the data collection methods of Ethnographic research.

Key Words: Ethnography, Ethnographic Research, Field Study, Observation, Participation, Interview, Group Discussion and Site Document.

Introduction:

The term ethnography has come to be equated with virtually any qualitative research project where the intent is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice. This is sometimes referred to as "thick description" - a term attributed to the anthropologist Clifford Geertz writing on the idea of an interpretive theory of culture in the early 1970s. The use of the term "qualitative" is meant to distinguish this kind of social science research from more "quantitative" or statistically oriented research. The two approaches, i.e., quantitative and qualitative, while often complementary, ultimately have different aims. So we discuss about the ethnography and its research Methods.

Meaning of Ethnography:

- Ethnography is the study of culture. It is from the Greek "ethno," meaning folk or culture, and "grapho," meaning writing. Historically, it has meant simply "writing about culture," although today there are other ways to tell ethnographic stories, including audio, video, and even graphic novels. Ethnography's history as a method is one of long term, academic commitment. It is no wonder it is difficult to apply in the private sector because it was designed for the university.
- Ethnography is about telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story.
- Ethnography gives voice to people in their own local context, typically relying on verbatim quotations and a "thick" description of events.
- The story is told through the eyes of local people as they pursue their daily lives in their own communities.
- The ethnographer adopts a cultural lens to interpret observed behavior, ensuring that the behaviors are placed in a culturally relevant and meaningful context.
- The ethnographer is focused on the predictable, daily patterns of human thought and behavior.
- Ethnography is thus both a research method and a product, typically a written text.
- Ethnography is a qualitative research method which involves a detailed study of a particular cultural group. The word ethnography comes from Greek words Ethnos meaning people and Graphe in meaning writing. That is why Ethnography is also known as "culture writing".

Definition of Ethnography:

- Ethnography is one of many approaches that can be found within social research today. Furthermore, the label is not used in an entirely standard fashion; its meaning can vary. A consequence of this is that there is considerable overlap with other labels, such as 'qualitative inquiry', 'fieldwork', 'interpretive method', and 'case study', these also having fuzzy semantic boundaries. In fact, there is no sharp distinction even between ethnography and the study of individual life histories, as the example of 'auto/ethnography' shows; this referring to an individual researcher's study of his or her own life and its context. (Reed - Danahay 1997, 2001; Holman Jones 2005).
- There is also the challenging case of 'virtual ethnography', whose data may be restricted entirely to what can be downloaded from the internet. Markham 1998, 2005; Hine 2000; Mann and Stewart 2000).
- Researcher has selected ethnography because it is both a process and a product. Morgan, 1988; Pelto & Pelto, 1978).
- Ethnography is the - study of a culture or cultures that a group of people share (Van Maanen, 1995, p. 4; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 151).
- Present researcher has also chosen an ethnographic study for easy engagement with the people to obtain intensive data. (Denzin, 1997; Holt & Sparkes, 2001; Wolcott, 1999).

- Ethnographic research deals with an in-depth qualitative investigation of a group that shares a common culture. Creswell (2005),
- Ethnographic research can also be called naturalistic, because it seeks to describe and understand the natural social world as it really is, in all its richness and detail. This goal is - best achieved when an ethnographer is fluent in the local language and spends enough time in the setting to know how people live, what they say about themselves and what they actually do, and what they value. Armstrong, 2008
- As a method, it is usually meant to refer to the - process of participant observation by a single investigator who immerses himself or herself in the group for a long period of time (often one or more years), gradually establishing trust and experiencing the social world as do the participants Madden, 2010, p.16.

The History of Ethnography:

Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting. It is premised on the view that the central aim of the social sciences is to understand people's actions and their experiences of the world, and the ways in which their motivated actions arise from and reflect back on these experiences. Once this is the central aim, knowledge of the social world is acquired from intimate familiarity with it, and ethnography is central as a method because it involves this intimate familiarity with day-to-day practice and the meanings of social action. To access social meanings, observe behavior and work closely with informants and perhaps participate in the field with them, several methods of data collection tend to be used in ethnography, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, personal documents and discourse analyses of natural language. As such, ethnography has a distinguished career in the social sciences. There have been 'travellers tales' for centuries, going back even to antiquity, which count as a form of ethnographic research in that they purported to represent some aspect of social reality (in this case, a country, group or culture) on the basis of close acquaintance with and observation of it, although often they reflected the cultural and political prejudices of their own society.

Ethnography begins properly only with the twentieth century and two entirely independent intellectual developments, one British, the other North American. The first was the emergence of the classical tradition of social anthropology in Britain, with people like Malinowski, Boas, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard. That most were British or worked in Britain (with the obvious exception of Boas) can be explained because of the close association between social anthropology and British colonialism. And while social anthropology might no longer be the handmaiden of colonialism, its origins were tied to the needs of the British Empire to understand the cultures and groups it was seeking to rule once the period of colonial conquest was completed and assimilation in the 'British family of nations' was possible. This explains why it emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century rather than in the heyday of colonial conquest in the nineteenth century. These anthropologists pioneered an approach that involved close acquaintance with preindustrial groups and cultures by close immersion and observation.

The second development was the work of the Chicago School in sociology, which used observational techniques to explore groups on the margins of urban industrial society in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. With the occasional exception, the focus was on the dispossessed, the marginal and the strange, a focus Erving Goffman later came to characterize as an attempt to address 'the standpoint of the hip outsider rather than the dull insider'. They bequeathed sociology with important studies of numerous deviant subgroups, like, drug dealers, street gangs, various unusual urban occupations, such as taxi dance hostesses, jack rollers, janitors and the hobo, and relatively unknown social worlds, like those of flop houses and burlesque halls, Polish immigrants, Jewish ghetto culture and the culture of the slum (as well as that of the wealthy Californian Gold Coast elite). In every case, investigators actively participated in the setting or the way of life under study, being mindful that, as Robert Park, the foremost of the Chicagoans, used to put it to his undergraduates, for 'real research' first-hand observation was necessary.

While social anthropology called this approach 'ethnography', sociologists tended to call it participant observation or field research, but it meant much the same thing in the way research was conducted. There are some differences between these two intellectual pillars (see Berg 1998: 120), but many similarities. The task of each was, in Wolcott's (1973) phrase, 'cultural description', and while social anthropology sought to explore pre-industrial groups and cultures, requiring ethnographers to adopt an initial research role as an outsider, the groups studied by the Chicagoans were only slightly less unfamiliar and strange to middle-class, Middle Western Americans, and their research role as an 'insider' was not guaranteed. Since then, of course, ethnography has moved into other social sciences, notably education, health studies and social work, and the differences between sociological and social anthropological uses of ethnography have widened, despite the fact that social anthropology now parallels sociology in a focus on urban and industrialized settings. But this heritage has left one particular legacy for ethnography that dogs it to this day: the common-sense notion that it offers mere

description of things foreign, exotic and peculiar. Within sociology, this just adds to the distortions about the discipline within common-sense knowledge.

Characteristics of Ethnography:

However, for the purposes of this discussion we suggest that the principal common characteristics of ethnography are:

- A focus on a discrete location, event(s) or setting.
- A concern with the full range of social behavior within the location, event or setting.
- The use of a range of different research methods which may combine qualitative and quantitative approaches where the emphasis is upon understanding social behavior from inside the discrete location, event or setting.
- An emphasis on data and analysis which move from detailed description to the identification of concepts and theories which are grounded in the data collected within the location, event or setting.
- An emphasis on rigorous or thorough research, where the complexities of the discrete event, location or setting are of greater importance than overarching trends or generalizations.

Meaning of Ethnographic Research:

Ethnographic research is a qualitative method where researchers observe and/or interact with a study's participants in their real-life environment. Ethnography was popularized by anthropology, but is used across a wide range of social sciences.

Within the field of usability, user-centered design and service design, ethnography is used to support a designer's deeper understanding of the design problem - including the relevant domain, audience(s), processes, goals and context(s) of use.

The aim of an ethnographic study within a usability project is to get 'under the skin' of a design problem (and all its associated issues). It is hoped that by achieving this, a designer will be able to truly understand the problem and therefore design a far better solution.

The birth of Ethnographic Methodology:

The birth of ethnographic methodology is commonly dated to the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's. It developed internally to ethnology, a discipline which in the first half of the 1800s split away from traditional anthropology, which was then dominated by the physical and biological paradigm. Ethnology was more concerned with studying people (through comparison of their material artifacts) and their cultures and classifying their salient features. Before the advent of ethnographic methodology, ethnologists did not collect information by means of direct observation; instead, they examined statistics, the archives of government offices and missions, documentation centers, accounts of journeys, archeological finds, native manufactures or objects furnished by collectors of exotic art, or they conversed with travelers, missionaries and explorers. These anthropologists considered the members of native peoples to be 'primitives': they were savages to be educated, and they could not be used as direct informants because they could not be trusted to furnish objective information. This prejudice was also held towards the poor in the United Kingdom at the end of 1800s.

Ethnographic methodology did not suddenly erupt in anthropology; rather it arose gradually through the work of various authors, among them the English anthropologist of Polish origin, Bronislaw K. Malinowski (1884–1942), and the English anthropologist Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955). British social anthropology of ethnographic stamp assimilated the positivist intellectual climate of its time and put itself forward, according to Radcliffe-Brown (1948), as a 'natural science of society' which was better able to furnish an objective description of a culture than the other methods used by anthropologists at the time. Radcliffe-Brown's polemic was directed against the dominant speculative or 'desk' anthropology, which preferred to rely on secondary sources rather than undertake direct observation of social facts (customs, rituals and ceremonies) in order to uncover the 'laws' that govern a society.

Malinowski is commonly regarded as being the first to systematize ethnographic methodology. In his famous Introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* – the book which sets out his research conducted in the Trobriand Islands of the Melanesian archipelago off eastern New Guinea – Malinowski described the methodological principles underpinning the main goal of ethnography, which is 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world' (Malinowski, 1922: 25). To this end, Malinowski lived for two years (between 1914 and 1918) among the Kula of the Trobriand Islands. He learnt their language (Kiriwinian), used natives as informants, and directly observed the social life of a village, participating in its everyday activities. Malinowski inaugurated a view 'from within' that American anthropologists of the 1950s would call the 'emic' perspective – as opposed to the 'etic' or comparative perspective, which instead sought to establish categories useful for the analyst but not necessarily important for the members of the culture studied (for details on the difference between emic and etic,

From the 1920s onwards, ethnographic methodology was incorporated into sociology – where it was adopted by researchers who mostly belonged to the Department of Sociology of the University of Chicago and then into psychology. Although it was imported from anthropology, however, fully 70 years previously the

French mining engineer and later sociologist Pierre Le Play (1806–92) had used primitive forms of participant observation, when he had stayed with the working-class families that he was studying. The English philanthropist Seebohm B. Rowntree (1871–1954) also used primordial forms of participant observation (after 1886) for his inquiries into poverty and living conditions in the London slums. Nevertheless, still today, many anthropologists identify sociology with the survey, deeming themselves the sole Doing Ethnography (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland and Lofland, 2001)

Data Collection Method of the Researcher:

Both qualitative and quantitative data are used. But this Paper is chiefly based on the qualitative method. A qualitative approach was used because this research was dealing with inter-subjective, shared issues which are not agreeable to quantification, searching for the meanings which motivate actions (Hammersley, 1992). The theory and methods are closely linked in qualitative practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

- **Participant Observation:**

Participant observation is an omnibus field strategy in that it "simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. In participant observation the researcher shares as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the people in the observed setting. The purpose of such participation is to develop an insider's view of what is happening. This means that the researcher not only sees what is happening but "feels" what it is like to be part of the group.

When using participant-observation as an ethnographic research method, the researcher enters the world of the people he or she wishes to study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Wolcott, 2008). The participant observation is most appropriate method to understand the ethnographic field of weaving industry. In this field, many things needed to be observed with necessary conversation in the naturalistic setting to immerse in or to get used to the everyday field situations.

In qualitative research observation is a data collection procedure and the field notes are the data (Merriam, 2009), because there were many people in multiple settings, it was not possible to observe all of the activities and interactions that occurred.

- **Interview Method:**

Besides observation, an ethnographic study can be centrally based on open-ended narrative, or life history interviews, which can also be called 'ethnographic interviews' (Heyl, 2007). Most often, however, ethnographers supplement what they learn through participant observation by interviewing people who can help them understand the setting or group they are researching. It can be useful to interview a variety of people at various points of an ethnographic research.

Overall, interviews can be particularly helpful when choosing a site, after participant observation has been finished, or when the participants are going through changes that interest the researcher. While participant observation gives information on action and behavior, interviews provide a chance to learn how people directly reflect on their own behavior, circumstances, identities and events. This can be valuable in gaining an insider's perspective.

An important part of the interviews is to establish a rapport with the participant. The best way to do this is by being a good listener, which means to listen and hear much more than to talk and converse. Showing genuine interest towards the participant and doing what you can to make the other person socially comfortable are high priorities. When conducting an interview you should choose a setting where the participant can relax and talk openly. Be sure that the participant knows that the interview forms one part of your data and that they understand the overall implications of being interviewed.

Before starting to interview people, you should ask yourself what you want to learn from the interviews. Often, it is a good idea to make a list of all possible questions and then see which ones are most closely related to your research question. In order to let the participant talk from their own point of view, it is good to plan open-ended questions rather than structured ones. If the participant pauses during their talk or seems to be talking about irrelevant issues, wait awhile instead of immediately insisting on moving to the following question. This often leads to useful insights, even those that you would not have planned to ask.

Interviews can be taped with the participants' consent. Even if you are good at keeping notes, it is helpful to have an actual account of what was said and how. Taping allows you to transcribe interview data for closer analysis. If the participant does not want you to tape the interview, take enough time after the interview to write down more complete notes about what was said.

- **Group Discussion:**

Group Discussion (GD) is a research technique that helps generating data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. It is an important method because - a) it locates the interaction in a group discussion as the source of data and b) it acknowledges the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purpose. Others have argued that the value of GD goes well beyond listening to others, since they can serve as either a basis for empowering - clients (Magill, 1993; Race et al., 1994). It is more effective technique for idea generation (Fern, 1982).

- **Site Documents:**

In addition to participant observation and interviews, ethnographers may also make use of various documents in answering guiding questions. When available, these documents can add additional insight or information to projects. Because ethnographic attention has been and continues to be focused on both literate and non-literate peoples, not all research projects will have site documents available.

It is also possible that even research among a literate group will not have relevant site documents to consider; this could vary depending on the focus of the research. Thinking carefully about your participants and how they function and asking questions of your informants helps to decide what kinds of documents might be available. Possible documents include: budgets, advertisements, work descriptions, annual reports, memos, school records, correspondence, informational brochures, teaching materials, newsletters, websites, recruitment or orientation packets, contracts, records of court proceedings, posters, minutes of meetings, menus, and many other kinds of written items.

Analyzing:

Remember that the researcher is the detective looking for trends and patterns that occur across the various groups or within individuals (Krueger, 1994). The process of analysis and interpretation involve disciplined examination, creative insight, and careful attention to the purposes of the research study. Analysis and interpretation are conceptually separate processes. The analysis process begins with assembling the raw materials and getting an overview or total picture of the entire process. The researcher's role in analysis covers a continuum with assembly of raw data on one extreme and interpretative comment on the other. Analysis is the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units. The analysis process involves consideration of words, tone, context, non-verbal's, internal consistency, frequency, extensiveness, intensity, specificity of responses and big ideas. Data reduction strategies are essential in the analysis (Krueger, 1994).

Conclusion:

Ethnographic Research is one of the qualitative research methods. This method is largely using in western countries. Though this method is very easy at the same time it is very difficult to do the best. Many risks are there to do this research work. Many information's and data are derived from direct resources. So, we must do this research in people's suffering places and in their living conditions.

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