The Ethnographic Method (GE 4 / SEMESTER 4)

Ethnography is a research method which involves a detailed study of a particular cultural group. The word ethnography comes from Greek words Ethnos meaning people and Graphy meaning writing.

Ethnographers use both qualitative and quantitative research methods when studying specific groups, communities or institutions that form a part of a larger complex society. The methodology relies on participant observation while collecting qualitative data. Its aim is to observe a situation without imposing any deductive structure or framework upon it and to view everything as strange or unique

Ethnography is a research approach that looks at people in their cultural setting; their language, and the symbols, rituals and shared meanings that populate their world, with the object of producing a narrative account of that particular culture, against a theoretical backdrop.Ethnography entails examining the behaviour of the participants in a given social situation and also understanding group members' own interpretation of such behaviour.

<u>**Features of Ethnographic Method**</u>

* Involves investigation of very few cases in detail.

* Often involves working with primarily unconstructed data. This data had not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories.

* Emphasizes on exploring social phenomena rather than testing hypotheses.

* Data analysis involves interpretation of the functions and meanings of human actions. The product of this is mainly verbal explanations, where statistical analysis and quantification play a subordinate role.

* Methodological discussions focus more on questions about how to report findings in the field than on methods of data collection and interpretation.

* Ethnographies focus on describing the culture of a group in very detailed and complex manner. The ethnography can be of the entire group or a subpart of it.

* It involves engaging in extensive field work where data collection is mainly by interviews, symbols, artifacts, observations, and many other sources of data.

*The researcher in ethnography type of research looks for patterns of the group's mental activities, that is their ideas and beliefs expressed through language or other activities, and how they behave in their groups as expressed through their actions that the researcher observed.

* In ethnography, the researcher gathers what is available, what is normal, what it is that people do, what they say, and how they work.

There are different forms of ethnography. Two popular forms are "realist ethnography" and 'critical ethnography'.

Realist ethnography is a traditional approach used by cultural anthropologists. it reflects a particular instance taken by the researcher toward the individual being studied. It's an objective study of the situation. It's composed from a third person's perspective by getting the data from the members on the site. The ethnographer

stays as omniscient correspondent of actualities out of sight. The realist reports information in a measured style ostensibly uncontaminated by individual predisposition, political objectives, and judgment. The analyst will give a detailed report of the everyday life of the individuals under study.. (Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 93)

Critical ethnography is a kind of ethnographic research in which the creators advocate for the liberation of groups which are marginalized in society. Critical researchers typically are politically minded people who look to take a stand of opposition to inequality and domination. For example, a critical ethnographer might study schools that provide privileges to certain types of students, or counseling practices that serve to overlook the needs of underrepresented groups.(Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 94)

Sociology is a field which prominently features ethnographies. Urban sociology, Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta University), and the Chicago School, in particular, are associated with ethnographic research