Ethnography Research in Real-Life Environment: A Case Study Based on Street Children in Mamaghar, Nepal, Hetauda

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Abstract

The exploration of ethnography research in the street children of Hetauda is the major aim of the research paper. A case of Mamaghar Nepal has been adopted in the paper. The qualitative and inductive research approaches have been used in the ethnography research. An interview method is thought as suitable method to collect the secondary information from the concerned ethnographer Mr Arpan Parajuli. The paper concluded the great importance of ethnography research in real-life environment to overcome the current problem of the street children in Hetauda. The policy makers' positive awareness in the policy on the street children issue was major outcome of the research. To understand the ethnography in Nepali context, the research paper is supposed to be the additional knowledge building paper for students, academicians, practitioners, professionals, authorities as well as researchers.

Keywords: *ethnography, street children, Mamaghar, case study, real-life environment*

1.0   Introduction

Research in general means search again and again. The knowledge generating process is research. The fact-finding process is research. The researchers have developed an idea on research process, types and nature. However, the meaning, process and methods are different in research according to the nature of the research issue. The research design is clear when the researcher can trace out the research problem correctly. Throughout the life, the researcher will be searching for happiness in the results of research. The difficult job, in the sense of producing an extra or new knowledge in the existing literature is research. While turning around the way of life, many questions become unquestionable as well as unanswerable.

The researchers always try to investigate/ analyse/ assess/ determine and to know the issues, cause and effect in the particular research problem. Fortunately to the

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researcher, somebody has done the job without an idea on 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-centred 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. An unidentified issues and unexpected results are two major tenets of ethnography. Ethnography is the branch of anthropology that involves trying to understand how people live their lives. Unlike traditional market researchers, who ask specific, highly practical questions, anthropological researchers visit consumers in their homes or offices to observe and listen in a no directed way. The goal is to see the people's behaviour on their terms. While the observational method may appear inefficient, it enlightens the context in which customers would use a new product and the meaning that product might hold in their lives (Ken, 2009).

Traditionalists conduct ethnographic research based on the observations. In a research domain, the contributions of researcher to work and live with research issues are countable. Everyone can imagine being a doctor, to be an engineer, to be an army, to be a politician, to be a teacher, to be a president, to be an actress and so on. The imagination is not the primary step of ethnography. Ethnography starts with sympathy, feelings, enthusiasm and motivation. There is a saying that only a mad can go ahead in the ethnography. The reality is unknown until and unless people sacrifice the present living standard and quality of work life for a period of time. The research design that navigator had followed was ethnography. The paper has tried to triangulate the real-life problems, a case of unknown researcher and ethnography. Thus, the paper intends to explore the lifetime reality through a case of the street children to Mamaghar, Nepal in Hetauda.

2.0   Literature Review

The term ethnography is thought to have first been introduced in 1922 by Bronsilaw Malinowski (1884 – 1942) (Tesch, 1990). It has its roots in the descriptive science of social anthropology, central to which is the study of culture and cultural behaviour (Dharamsi & Scott, 2009; Like & Steiner, 1986). Ethnographies, however, are not limited to study of ethnic rituals and practices. The researchers include studies that describe and explain a range of social phenomena within various culture sharing groups. These ethnographies provide an in-depth description and analysis, and paint a portrait of the ways in which culture sharing groups interpret their experiences and create meaning from their interactions. Figure 1 has shown the conceptual framework

of the ethnography research. In the model, the ethnography starts with the concept of navigator, Mr Arpan Parajuli, followed by a case of street children landed over Mamaghar, Hetauda.
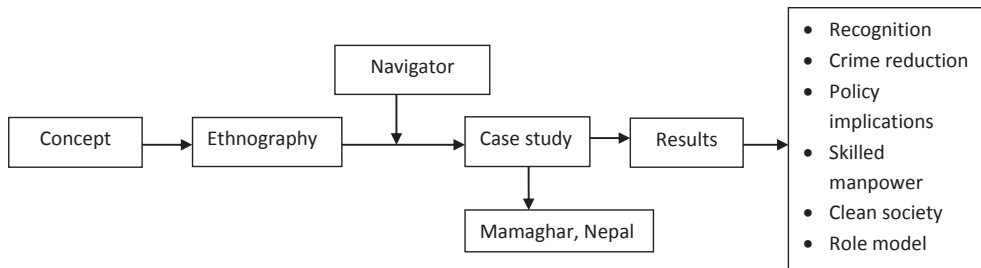
Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Anthropological research, as practised in the early to middle twentieth century, usually involved an Anglo-American or European working in a small isolated community in a remote area of the world, with a group of people who often lived without modern amenities, had little or no formal education, and existed at a modest if not impoverished economic level. The anthropologist took up residence in the community, and set out to learn who the people in the community were and how they lived. Depending on their interests, anthropologists investigated topics as diverse as economic and household tasks, social organization and religious beliefs, family life and local markets virtually anything that made up daily life. Since they also lived in the community, anthropologists visited with people, attended communal events, and worked together with community members on common projects, including the ethnography itself (Agar, 2006).

General ethnography is a type of qualitative research that identifies and describes, through long-term participant observation and interviewing, the activity of a whole small-scale social unit; the routine practices of everyday life and the meaning perspectives according to which those practices are conducted and interpreted by those who enact them (Erickson, 2010). DePoy and Gitlin (2016) had classified ethnography as a naturalistic design because of its reliance on qualitative data collection and analysis, the assumption that the researcher was not the knower, and the absence of a priori hypothesis derived from theory, or a theory imposed before entering the setting. However, ethnographers might draw on various theories to inform their query. The belief that knowledge could be generated about the other without the viewpoint of the investigator influencing the study was different philosophical approach from heuristic and endogenous designs.

Furthermore, ethnography is a design that is capable of moving beyond description to reveal complex relationships, patterns, and theory. Ethnography is a peculiarly social endeavour, resulting from human interaction. More generally, writing ethnography means turning raw data into descriptions of what happened in a study, and then making the results meaningful to other readers. Ethnography involves a series of stages in which a whole phenomenon is dissected, divided into its components and then reassembled in such a way to make the phenomenon understandable to others. In doing so, ethnography is about illuminating the obvious. The overall aim is to generate ethnographic theory, which is typically constructed recursively. Within the context of validity and reliability, it is important to briefly mention the notions of truth. Until fairly recently, ethnographers have been concerned with the comparative study of cultures and societies that was based on work 'at home' while seeking objective knowledge about ethnic, exotic or marginal 'others' (Kruger, 2008). The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008).

The recent and growing use of ethnography in research on health should provide better understanding of the issues studied; however, many of the studies were not founded on careful observation of the practices performed. It is pertinent to ask whether the recent and growing use of ethnography in research on health would not almost characterize a distortion of its original premises, configuring what could be termed as ethnographic like observation. It is understood that this could be occurring as a consequence of certain difficulties currently faced by researchers, including the short time periods given by postgraduate programs and by research support agencies, as well as by the difficulties inherent to the method that demands prior training of the researcher and a familiarity with the classical texts of anthropology, readings of research reports and field diaries and of great importance, the capacity to write (Caprara & Landim, 2008). Engaging with participants in the real world poses several challenges; first the researcher must decide whether to adopt an overt or covert approach to data collection and observation. In an overt approach the participants know they are being observed, whereas in a covert approach the participants are unaware they are being observed (Jones & Smith, 2017).

3.0   Research Approach

Ethnographic methods are diverse and a range of approaches can be adopted; they are based on observation, often complemented with interviews, and detailed analysis often at a micro level. Although the methods used are not exclusive to ethnography, it is the depth of fieldwork and the continuous process of engaging with participants

and their natural environments that is central and adds strength to the findings of ethnographic studies (Brink & Edgecombe, 2003). There are some other research designs associated with the qualitative method, many doctoral scholars prefer to use ethnographic paradigm as the most effective and appropriate process in conducting qualitative research (Ejimabo, 2015). The research paper is based on the real lifetime story of street children in Hetauda.

Ethnography of street children has been done by Mr Arpan Parajuli, a resident of Hetauda using covert approach. The ethnographer had invested approximately sixty days for ethnography and continuously gathering experiences in the area of managing the street children. The qualitative paper is based on case study approach. The area of ethnography research was Hetauda, Kavre, Kathmandu and Biratnagar. The inductive research approach had been adopted by the navigator to come to conclusion that could address the research objectives. The verification of the reality has been carried out by the navigator Mr Arpan Parajuli, a patron of Mamaghar, Nepal. The collected secondary information was then coded, decoded and transcribed to meet the objectives of the research paper. The case study research approach becomes useful for the concerned authorities, policy makers, practitioners, academicians, scholars and interested people. The case has great contribution in the field of qualitative research although it has time, budget, territorial, geographical and policy limitations.

Case Study of Street Children

Mr Arpan Parajuli is a resident of Hetauda who has been working as a faculty in the academic institution for more than a decade. One day, Mr Parajuli was thinking for doing a PhD and talked with the professor for suitable topic of the PhD. Professor had advised him to come up with a concept that could address a research issue. Mr Parajuli had started to work for the concept of research. While waiting to a friend for an hour in the street of Hetauda, Mr Parajuli had noticed the couple of children searching for the food in front of the street food stall. The street children were asking for MOMO to those who were enjoying the food stall. The children ran to the plate thrown by the customer and started to taste the residual of the food. Mr Parajuli asked and welcomed them for MOMO, but none of them came to accept that food. Then, Mr Parajuli went to home and could not sleep for whole night. Again, on the second day, Mr Parajuli went to the same place and asked for the MOMO, one of the leaders of the street children came and accepted the purpose of Mr Parajuli.

At the end of the day, Mr Parajuli promised them that he could come again to treat them. Slowly, the children become familiar with Mr Parajuli. During the period of week, Mr Parajuli had invited all the children and made the circle and announced

for the introduction programme. Mr Parajuli hosted the PARICHAYATMAK KARYAKRAM (Introduction Programme) but, none of the children knew the meaning of the programme.

The host started by saying 'I am Arpan Parajuli. I am the teacher of Hetauda Shikshya Campus. Then, one by one, Mr Parajuli had asked for their name, family, residence and so on. Mr Parajuli and other two associates had spent 51 days with the street children for whole days and night. After the seven days of time spending, the street children had felt the group and shown the behaviour as the member of the family. In the first session of introduction programme, the children were laughing. Mr Parajuli and the team asked the reason for that expression amusement. Being a part of the street children with the approval from concerned Police office was a challenging job. The living standard adaptation and the food adaptation as similar to the street children is the process of ethnography. The personal threats and nosocomial infections were the major risks in the ethnography. The leader of the street children Mr Prakash Dhakal replied that his Mamaghar surname was also Parajuli. The leader was the DON of the group and given the order to all the members to say MAMA to Mr Arpan Parajuli. After the episode, the team of MAMA had prepared 45 numbers of questions to know about the situation, status, education and aim related issues of the street children in Hetauda. The major findings of the ethnography were pointed out as follows:

1.   Aim: To be a big DON in future.

2.   Process of Being a DON: Ask for money and food, if not, kill them.

3.   With 10,000 rupees of money: Children were interested to buy a gun.

4.   Dissatisfaction: Children never had experienced the buildings, mall and supermarket. They did not have experience of restaurant food as per their interest. They always have to depend on the secondary food. The behaviour of socialized people was the first dissatisfaction factor. The street children said that the people in the society could not allow them to sleep in the bed of land with jute bag cover.

5.   GANG: COBRA, BICHHU, BHANTE, BLADE etc.; they usually made a gang and work with the leader. The street was divided for each gang. During the certain period of time, the street children fight among each other. Those who could fight are supposed to be strong among all become the leader until the next fight. The bus park area has been allotted for low class gang, tourist area for medium level gang and AVOCADO Resort area for high class gang.

6.   Sex: Bisexual nature, homosexual nature, very few were engaged in opposite gender sex with less contraceptive uses.

7.   Language: Code language; police: COPS, Matches: License, etc.

8.   Health: The street children did not care for health. One of the children had approximately 96 number of JUMRA (Litch) in the hair. Majority of them were drug addicted.

9.   Motive behind coming to street: Family problem, poverty and lack of caring.

10.   Future: future crime, criminal, thief, etc.

The team of Mr Arpan Parajuli had prepared a report and presented in Hetauda Municipality. The designated authorities were shocked for transparent truth in the society. Mr Parajuli was worried on the issue that if children were grew up in that way, they become the thieves and criminal in the society in near future. The designated authority advised the team to make the organization named MAMAGHAR NEPAL and worked for it. In 2068 BS, the organization was formally registered as MAMAGHAR NEPAL (MGN), Kanti Rajpath, Hetauda.

MGN is a non-governmental, non-profit organization working for the street, labour and poor children based in Hetauda Makawanpur, Nepal. The Organization is founded by a group of young and energetic social workers and individual. Mamaghar, Nepal is established having a mission to uplift and construct prosperous society by rescuing and rehabilating the children who are badly trapped in bad company. It has organized various programs, workshops and events to give awareness and help the children. The organization aims to make these children morally, socially capable and independent.

Makawanpur former CDO Dinesh Bhattarai was glad to inaugurate a child shelter named Mamaghar, Nepal. MGN was founded jointly by Hetauda Municipality and an organization with an objective of getting the municipality rid of street urchins. The house has been providing shelter to around 14 street children in the initial stage. Mr Bhattarai was happy to see sudden change in the children behaviour. CDO expressed that love and care had changed the behaviour of the street children. An experiences sharing by Mr Parajuli during his stay with the street children in the shelter of Makawanpur, Biratnagar, Kathmandu and so on, explained that most of the children had run away from their homes to become street urchins as they were mistreated by their parents. Most of the children aged from seven to seventeen were arrested up to ten times for burglaries.

Today, Hetauda is the street children less municipality, this become possible with the effort of Mr Arpan Parajuli and his team members. Mr Parajuli is felicitated by Young Talent and Encourage Young Entrepreneur Award 2072 by Ministry of Youth and Sports, Best NGO of year by NGO Federation Makawanpur and many more awards from different organization and society. Many national and international organizations are promoting the job of Mamaghar, Nepal. Mamaghar, Nepal has just started to build own home. Mr Parajuli said to their children with a drop of tears in his eyes, today we have a family, recognition, education, skills and better health. In the days to come, we will have a home with our home name Mamaghar, Nepal. In the future, no one will able to tell you homeless, poor, illiterate and the children without guardianship.

4.0   Conclusion

The street children in the garbage and the children in the home have different culture, thinking, status and work life. Mr Arpan Parajuli was succeeding in overwhelming the research problem and come up with the solution. It is difficult to act as a researcher as well as problem solver. The case has clearly explained the process of ethnography and its importance in induction process. The project was particularly a challenge; however Mamaghar, Nepal has done such a great job in rehabilitating the street children. Mamaghar, Nepal is able to manage all the logistic, accommodation and education arrangement plus skill development programme in 16 scopes.

No one is unhappy in the world, no one has enemy in the world, and just the perception is negative, as Mr Parajuli said and proved it. Mr Parajuli had rescued more than hundred street children. Approximately five thousands street children are in Nepal. The concerned authorities and the people of Nepal should walk a step ahead to overcome the issue. The study of human being is the major part of anthropology. It is an area of research and mode of presentation for educational, academic or humanitarian purpose. Anthropologists eye are different from others. The further continuation of the ethnographic research is the future scope of the research.

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