

WHAT IS ANTHROPOLOGY?

Anthropology is the scientific study of humans and human behaviour and societies in the past and present.

Anthropology is a global discipline involving humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Anthropology builds upon knowledge from natural sciences, including the discoveries about the origin and evolution of Homo sapiens, human physical traits, human behaviour, the variations among different groups of humans, how the evolutionary past of Homo sapiens has influenced its social organization and culture, and from social sciences, including the organization of human social and cultural relations, institutions, social conflicts, etc.

Applications of the discipline of Anthropology

1. Health and Disease

- Medical anthropology is an interdisciplinary field which studies "human health and disease, health care systems, and biocultural adaptation".
- Currently, research in medical anthropology is one of the main growth areas in the field of anthropology as a whole. It focuses on the following six basic fields:
 - ❖ the development of systems of medical knowledge and medical care
 - ❖ the patient-physician relationship
 - ❖ the integration of alternative medical systems in culturally diverse environments
 - ❖ the interaction of social, environmental and biological factors which influence health and illness both in the individual and the community as a whole
 - ❖ the critical analysis of interaction between psychiatric services and migrant populations .
 - ❖ the impact of biomedicine and biomedical technologies in non-western settings.

2. Nutrition and Nutritional status

Nutritional anthropology is a synthetic concept that deals with the interplay between economic systems, nutritional status and food security, and how changes in the former affect the latter. If economic and environmental changes in a community affect access to food, food security, and dietary health, then this interplay between culture and biology is in turn connected to broader historical and economic trends associated with globalization. Nutritional status affects overall health status, work performance potential, and the overall potential for economic development for any given group of people.

3. Direct and Indirect parameters of nutritional assessment used in community

The principal aim of such an assessment is to determine the type, magnitude and distribution of malnutrition in different geographical areas, to identify 'at risk' groups and to determine the contributory factors.

Nutritional status can be assessed by the following methods-

DIRECT METHODS

- Anthropometry
- Clinical Examination
- Biophysical Examination
- Laboratory estimations

INDIRECT METHODS

Dietary assessment
Vital Health Statistics

Anthropometry

Anthropometry is the measurement of human body at different age and levels of nutritional status.

Standard techniques for measurement are-

1. **Body Weight-** It is the most widely used and sensitive and simplest reproducible anthropometric measurement for the evaluation of nutritional status of young children.
 - ⦿ It indicates the body mass and is a composite of all body constituents like water, minerals, fat, proteins and bones.
 - ⦿ For measuring body weight beam or liver actuated scales with an accuracy of 50-100 gms are preferred.
 - ⦿ Weight should be taken with a individual under basal conditions with minimal clothing and without shoes.

2. Height-

- ⦿ The height of an individual is influenced both by genetic and environmental factors .
- ⦿ In children below the age of 2 years who cannot stand properly recumbant length should be measured with infantometer. The legs need to be held straight and firm with a feet touching the sliding board. In older children and adults height is measured with the vertical measuring rod using stadiometer. The subject should stand erect looking straight on a levelled surface with heels together and toes apart and without shoes.

3. Mid upper arm circumference-

- ⦿ It indicates the status of muscle development.
- ⦿ It is useful not only in identifying malnutrition but also in determining the mortality risk in children.
- ⦿ It correlates well with weight, weight for height and clinical signs.

Clinical Examination

- It assesses levels of health of individuals or of population groups in relation to the food they consume.
- It is the simplest and practical method.
- When two or more clinical signs characteristic of a deficiency disease are present simultaneously, their diagnostic significance is greatly enhanced.

Biophysical Examination

- These tests are used in specific studies where additional information regarding change in the bone or muscular performance is required.
- It is also called radiological measurement.
- Radiological methods have been used in studying the change of bones in rickets, osteomalacia, scurvy.

Laboratory Estimations

- ① Haemoglobin estimation- It is a useful index of the overall state of nutrition irrespective of its significance in anaemia. RBC count is also valuable.
- ① Stools and Urine- Stools are examined for intestinal parasites. History of parasitic infestation, chronic dysentery and diarrhoea provides useful background information about nutritional status of persons. Urine is examined for albumin and sugar.

Indirect methods

1. Dietary Assessment- A diet survey provides information about dietary intake patterns of specific foods consumed and estimated nutrient intakes.
 - ⦿ It indicates relative dietary inadequacies, which is helpful in planning health education activities and changes needed in agriculture and food production industries. Most of the time, the surveys are carried out for 7-10 days.
 - ⦿ Various dietary assessment methods are- inventory method, weighment method, food frequency method, 24 hour recall method.

Vital Health Statistics

- ① It signifies the data and analytical methods for describing the vital events occurring in communities.
- ① The raw data of vital statistics are generally obtained through the sources of population census, sample surveys and vital statistics registers.
- ① For public health and nutrition, the vital statistics are most useful.
- ① It includes the count of births, deaths, illnesses, movements etc.

Emic & Etic Perspective

- In anthropology, and the social and behavioural sciences, **emic** and **etic** refer to two kinds of field research done and viewpoints obtained i.e. *emic*, from within the social group (from the perspective of the subject) and *etic*, from outside (from the perspective of the observer).



Emic Perspective

- The emic approach investigates how local people think, how they perceive and categorize the world, their rules for behavior, what has meaning for them, and how they imagine and explain things.
- Emic knowledge and interpretations are those existing within a culture, that are determined by local custom, meaning, and belief and best described by a 'native' of the culture.

Etic Perspective

- ⦿ The etic approach shifts the focus from local observations, categories, explanations, and interpretations to those of the anthropologist. The etic approach realizes that members of a culture often are too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially.
- ⦿ Etic knowledge refers to generalizations about human behavior that are considered universally true, and commonly links cultural practices to factors of interest to the researcher, such as economic or ecological conditions,

THANK YOU

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