

Anthropological approaches to health systems research: A scoping review

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Background and objectives

- Anthropological approaches - increasingly receiving ***renewed attention*** in low-and middle income countries.
- Evidence suggests that a ***holistic understanding of social, cultural, economic, psychological and political contexts*** can shape the ***health outcomes***.
- Conceptualizing ***health systems*** as a field – ***social systems***
- The scoping review aims to:
 - explore how the ethnography of health systems is ***theoretically informed, and can provide deeper insights on power structures, relationships, and inclusive governance***.

Methodology

- Scoping review of both published and grey literatures on health systems research in the anthropological scholarship
- Primarily aims to explore the scope and relevance in terms of significant contributions of ethnography in health systems research.

Results

- The ethnography of health systems largely help explore and gain deeper insights on
 - how ***people produce, engage and use local policies, services, programs, and systems to shape and enact and resist health agenda.***
- provides important insights on the ***culture, economies, politics and governance*** of health systems.
- “We need to mobilize the ***power of ideas*** in order to ***influence the ideas of power***, that is to say, those with ***the power to make decisions***” (Gilson, 2012, p. 13).

Results

- Important insights on ***the economies, politics, and governance of health systems*** (Pfeiffer and Nichter, 2008, p. 410).
- Health systems are ***social systems*** (Nichter, 1996), made up of people with relationships to each other (Janzen, 1978; Mishra, 2014).
- These systems are locally situated, shaped by ***local ecological, political, economic, and social determinants*** (Kleinman, 1978).
- These relationships are shot ***through with power and politics, and shaped by history*** (Kleinman, 1978).

Conclusions

- Anthropological approaches offer more deeper insights on ***people-centred views of health systems, its actors and complexities.***
- While health systems are social systems where people have a range of relationships ***grounded with power and politics, and are shaped by history.***
- There is an emerging need ***to raise anthropological voice in the health systems research.***

Thank you for your time and attention !

Jhabindra Bhandari has keen interest in global health, and is presently engaged in health systems governance research in Central Department of Anthropology, TU, Kirtipur.

