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DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN POSITIVIST AND NON-POSITIVIST RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE: A QUEST FOR A MEETING POINT

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ABSTRACT

Research encompasses a detailed inquiry into the social setting of a phenomenon. It is a deliberate exercise aimed at discovering the world of man. In all, the objective is to build a methodology that can help uncover the truth about phenomena and how they interact with the existing human reality. This paper sets out to broaden the polemics on two dominant paradigms that have long-defined research methodologies in social sciences: positivism and non-positivism. However, despite its assurance of a high degree of objectivity, its inability to explain and predict the inner processes of man and his actions explains the invention of non-positivist paradigms that have come with variants such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. The aptness of the non-positivist tradition in explaining the inner processes of man and the interpretation of his worldview through qualitative methods richly contrasts with the positivist tradition. However, just as an inaccurate interpretation of human mental processes is the major shortcoming of positivism, so also is subjectivity the bane of non-positivist tradition which has come to define the popular question in social sciences; can social science research be objective? Based on the unavoidable shortcomings embedded in both paradigms, this paper concludes that mixed methods which incorporate the use of positivist and non-positivist methodologies should be encouraged to enrich social inquiry and uncover truths which are seen as the end-products of any productive research venture.

Keywords: Social Research, Research methods, Positivism, Non-Positivism, Mixed methods

INTRODUCTION

Humans have an innate need to learn, which motivates us to investigate, comprehend, and resolve issues in a wide range of fields. This journey is guided by research methodology, which offers a methodical framework for gathering accurate and valid data. Political science research

methodology has two paradigmatic inclinations. The paradigms of social political science research are positivist and non-positivist. Since Kuhn's 1962 publication of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, the notion of a paradigm or worldview as an all-encompassing framework that organises our entire way of being in the universe has been commonplace. It is considered that the intellect is more universal than any world observation from which it derives its current cognitive carriage, in contrast to the belief that a paradigm is, by definition, beyond description and the comprehension of the human intellect. Research paradigms can be understood as a set of underlying assumptions about the real world and how it might be recognised. These assumptions are meant to be applied to three central, interrelated concerns (Guba & Lincoln, 1996). Nonetheless, there are the following ontological questions: "What is the structure and type of truth and, consequently, what is at hand that can be recognised and known about it?"; "What is the connection between the knower or could-be knower and what could be known?"; and "How could the investigator and inquirer set out regarding discovering whatsoever he or she deemed could be known about?" are epistemological and procedural questions. Therefore, in the framework of political science research methodology, this paper aims to compare the positivist and non-positivist approaches and make a case for them individually and collectively.

MEANING OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The theoretical underpinnings and methodical approach of research technique are what make research possible. It includes the methods, policies, and strategies applied in the gathering, processing, and interpretation of data (Punch, 2020). It serves as a road map, detailing the procedures necessary for a research endeavour and guaranteeing a methodical and systematic approach. Study methodology, to put it simply, is the "why" behind a certain study approach rather than just the "how" of conducting it. It offers a structure for defending your research decisions and

guarantees that your findings are reliable and significantly advance our understanding. The following are the main elements of research methodology:

i. **Research query/Hypothesis:** The cornerstone of any research effort is a precise and well-stated query or hypothesis. The technique used should directly address this main question and serve as a roadmap for gathering and analysing data.

ii. **Research Design:** This describes the general framework of the study, including the sampling plan, data collection techniques, and study type (qualitative, mixed, or quantitative).

iii. **Data Collection:** Using a variety of techniques, such as surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments, this stage entails obtaining information pertinent to the study issue.

iv. **Data Analysis:** To find patterns, trends, and relationships that address the research question, the gathered data is carefully examined using the relevant methodologies.

v. Interpretation and Conclusion: Lastly, the data analysis is interpreted within the framework of currently known information, resulting in conclusions that further the research topic of choice.

Advantages of a Robust Research Methodology

There are several advantages for both researchers and the advancement of knowledge when using a strong research methodology. Among the principal benefits of research methods are:

i. Increased Credibility and Rigour: Research is conducted methodically and with the least amount of prejudice, thanks to a clearly established process. This enhances the findings' credibility and increases their dependability and trustworthiness for the next studies and applications.

ii. Enhanced Research Efficiency: The methodology's clear road map prevents time and money from being wasted on unrelated lines of inquiry. It encourages a targeted strategy, guaranteeing that the study stays on course and produces significant findings.

iii. Replication and Comparability: Other researchers can duplicate the study or expand on its findings with the help of an open and thoroughly described methodology. This encourages comparison between various studies and leads to a more thorough comprehension of a topic.

iv. Grounded Decision-Making: Research results derived from a strong methodology can guide evidence-based choices in a range of domains, including public policy, business, healthcare, and education.

Unveiling the Diverse Landscape of Research Methodologies

Different techniques that are suited to particular research issues and disciplines are required due to the vastness of the field of research. Below is a summary of several popular research techniques:

i. Quantitative Research: To test theories and determine correlations between variables, this methodology makes use of numerical data and statistical analysis. Surveys, experiments, and content analysis of numerical data are examples of common methodologies (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

ii. Qualitative Research: This method goes beyond, investigating the "how" and "why" of events. It uses techniques including focus groups, ethnography, and in-depth interviews to collect detailed, descriptive data that sheds light on experiences and viewpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

iii. Mixed Methods Research: This strategy offers a more thorough grasp of a research problem by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. By utilising the advantages of both

strategies, it enables researchers to triangulate their results and obtain a more complex understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Each of these main groups include a few subtypes and modifications:
i. Action research: In this methodology, researchers actively engage in the study environment with the goal of enhancing procedures or cooperatively resolving issues with participants (McNiff, 2013).
ii. Case Study Research: To fully comprehend the complexity of a particular item, event, or phenomenon, this method focuses on in-depth investigation (Yin, 2018).
iii. Survey research: By employing structured interviews or questionnaires to collect data from a sizable sample of participants, this method enables researchers to extrapolate findings to a larger population (Babbie, 2019).

The research issue, the type of data being examined, the resources available, and the intended degree of generalizability all influence the particular approach that is used.

Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were traditionally separated into two groups (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This distinction is highlighted in several textbooks. According to Myers (2009), for instance, qualitative research focuses on textual material and entails a thorough investigation of social and cultural elements, whereas quantitative research uses numerical data and looks at general trends among populations. Two primary research approaches are based on the perspectives of eminent researchers: qualitative and quantitative (Goundar, 2012).

i. Quantitative methodology: This method investigates correlations between variables and tests hypotheses. It is methodical and primarily uses numerical data.

ii. Qualitative methodology: This strategy places a strong emphasis on descriptions and observations. Through participant experiences, it examines knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and opinions subjectively. This approach involves the researchers using their discretion, which is inappropriate in quantitative research.

Whereas qualitative technique is in line with the non-positivist approach, which values subjective experiences and interpretations, quantitative methodology is in line with the positivist approach, which emphasises objective, measurable data.

POSITIVIST APPROACH

Origin and Development

The mid-19th century saw the emergence of positivism as a paradigm for discovering the truth; thanks to Auguste Comte's critique of metaphysics (Kaboub, 2008). He maintained that reality could only be revealed by verifiable, scientific facts. Later, positivism was endorsed as the best scientific and technical method by the Vienna Circle, a group of early 20th-century philosophers and scientists that included Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2020). They saw philosophy as an outdated approach to comprehending the natural world and replaced it with a single, cohesive scientific worldview. But as critics like Karl Popper noted, positivism's capacity to be a rigorous philosophy was eventually hampered by the intrinsic conflict between its conceptions of "reality" and "knowledge" (Popper, 1959).

David Hume's empiricist interpretation of reality was adopted by positivism. Hume postulated that independent, observable events (micro-level) comprised reality (Kaboub, 2008). He thought that our ability to create factual information is influenced by our sensory experiences. Positivism ultimately stressed the importance of observation and experimentation, even as it acknowledged

the possibility that reason could discover underlying links between phenomena. Moreover, positivism embraced René Descartes's insistence on reason as the main method of information acquisition (Kaboub, 2008). Descartes thought that to produce knowledge about reality and truth, logic and reason were necessary. His deductive approach, which positivism adopted, made the assumption that things are predetermined and related to one another, resulting in a known and organised reality.

But positivism's strength was ultimately eroded by this internal discrepancy. The positivist paradigm places a strong emphasis on the scientific and empirical investigation of observable events to arrive at conclusions through logical analysis (Kaboub, 2008; Aliyu et al., 2014). A scientific theory's viability depends on the investigator's capacity to confirm observations and reproduce results. According to Aliyu et al. (2014), the positivist research technique preferred controlled, laboratory settings that reduced external complications, such as social, psychological, and economic elements impacting crime rates. The development of interventions (such as job training for the unemployed, depression treatment, and jail for criminals) was then founded on these findings. Although these methods produced results that had internal validity—that is, associations that could be observed in the given context—they frequently lacked external validity, which means that the conclusions might not hold up in the real world with all of its interacting variables. When examining a complicated social problem like unemployment, a positivist might pay more attention to the observable behaviours of the unemployed than to the underlying, less obvious causes (Aliyu et al., 2014). As a result, positivist remedies frequently focus on symptoms rather than underlying issues.

The Heyday and Decline of Positivism

Early in the 20th century, positivism had a big impact on scientific methods in the social sciences, humanities, and even the arts for several decades. This was especially true for the scientific sciences, where precise predictions could be made since lab tests closely mimicked real-world circumstances. Unfortunately, human subjectivity and variability made laboratory tests less accurate in domains like the social sciences and humanities. In the end, positivism's fundamental contradictions caused it to fade away in favour of more sophisticated theories like critical pluralism, which admits that no one approach can fully comprehend complicated events (Junjie &Yingxin, 2022). Critical pluralism highlights how crucial it is to use a variety of research techniques, samples, and analyses in order to gain a more thorough understanding of a phenomenon.

Meaning and Criticisms of Positivism

According to Aliyu et al. (2014), positivism is a research methodology based on the idea that reality and truth exist apart from the observer. This term is widely agreed upon by academics (Kincaid, 1998). The idea that the cosmos is ruled by immutable principles, the idea that complexity can be reduced through reductionism, and the emphasis on impartiality, objectivity, measurability, and repeatability are some of positivism's main traits. In their study, positivist scientists frequently employ quantitative analysis, nomothetic experiments, confirmatory analysis, laboratory experiments, and deduction. In the 19th century, positivism was popular because it placed a strong focus on objectivity and held up the possibility of discovering universal truths. However, positivism's limitations became clear as human rights gained attraction and the social sciences developed. Detractors contended that positivism disregarded the influence of humans on

the world and that scientific progress was not keeping up with the increasing quantity of intricate human inquiries (Gavrilov, 2020).

The collapse of positivism has been attributed to a number of flaws:

1. Slow Scientific Development: In the early and mid-20th centuries, there existed a major scientific knowledge gap regarding the human brain (Gavrilov, 2020). Attempts to examine complex social phenomena and human psychology through a solely objective positivist lens were impeded by this ignorance.

2. Failed Religious Alternative: Comte's attempt to replace religion with positivism also failed (Gavrilov, 2020). His denial of any abstraction, be it "spirit" or "matter," created an emptiness that was previously supplied by conventional religious ideas. The social order that some thought positivism could restore was undermined by the lack of a moral authority figure, such as God.

3. Deficiency in Sociology and Psychology: The positivist perspective's focus on universal principles and indifference to personal experiences was insufficient in the field of psychology (Gavrilov, 2020). Insufficient understanding of the brain would prevent a one-size-fits-all strategy from successfully addressing psychological issues. Comparably, Sociology found it difficult to describe novel social phenomena by relying solely on quantitative techniques, ignoring the influence of language and the creation of meaning on social reality (Gavrilov, 2020).

4. Underestimating Human Agency: Gavrilov (2020), argues that positivism underestimated the ability of human thought and activity to affect social change since it focused on examining society as a whole, ruled by predetermined laws. The idea that people are just

parts of a machine stands in stark contrast to the fact that people have agency and can form and alter social institutions.

5. **Restricted Application of Natural Sciences**: Gavrilov (2020), argues that positivism's emphasis on physics and astronomy to describe complicated human behaviour was insufficient. It was oversimplified to reduce human acts to simple physical processes because of the size of the cosmos and the state of science at the time.

NON-POSITIVIST APPROACH

Origins and Key Figures

One of the key figures in the growth of non-positivist methods is Max Weber. Although the direction of his research was hermeneutic, his subsequent work and theoretical ideas were interpretivist (Alessandrini, 2011). To finally explain social events through these meanings, Weber attempted to first analyse the meaning underlying actions and then construct causal linkages. His methodology, meanwhile, stayed under a scientific framework. Weber utilised a technique to approximate a generalised view, promoting a communal understanding of the cause underlying the phenomenon under investigation, in contrast to positivists who sought to discover distinct, individual explanations. Weber, it is made clear, was "not particularly interested in the specific meanings social actors gave to their actions, but with approximations and abstractions" (Blakie, 1993, 41). Weber's research on work ethics and religious denominations is a prime example. Though not a causal explanation, a positivist approach might have demonstrated a statistical correlation between the two. On the other hand, Weber's methodical approach comprised categorising the results before applying common sense and empathy to create a rough, generalised picture that reflected the collective societal comprehension of this particular occurrence.

Building on this basis, post-positivism surfaced in the latter half of the 20th century, and discussions over its features are still going on today (Alessandrini, 2011). Fischer (1993), has had a significant impact on the synthesis of important strands of this methodology. He relied on Hawkesworth's essential viewpoints when developing a post-positivist method to policy analysis (1988). These viewpoints demonstrated how theoretical presuppositions affect how observations are made, define "fact," and weigh the importance of particular events. They also set standards for test design, data organisation, and the assessment of scientific findings. In the end, they support particular explanation models and comprehension techniques. Recognising the circularity of positivism's normative foundations, Fischer highlights the significance of addressing and acknowledging these theoretical presuppositions (Fischer, 1993, p. 334). Although positivist approaches guarantee the accuracy of mathematical computations, they do not investigate the factual foundation given to presumptions (Alessandrini, 2011). Although it is not impervious to this constraint, post-positivism encourages the open recognition and analysis of these assumptions.

In line with the 1970s consciousness-raising women's movement, the feminist research movement vigorously backed non-positivist research viewpoints (Alessandrini, 2011). A thorough examination of positivist approaches exposed their shortcomings for women as well as their propensity to produce false or misleading conclusions. Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), highlight the fact that "a deep suspicion of quantitative methods as having concealed women's real experience has motivated…preoccupation with and advocacy of qualitative methods as methods which permit women to express their experiences fully and in their terms" (p. 89). In their article, The positivist ideas of objectivity and value neutrality were questioned by feminist researchers. They therefore looked for and created feminist-aligned research procedures "that could be advocated for general use in the social sciences" (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991, p. 89).

Understanding the Non-Positivist Approach

Non-positivists see people as autonomous thinkers with the power to impact society, in contrast to positivism's emphasis on a pre-socialized picture of humanity (Sociology Guide, 2022). Their approaches seek to comprehend the inner workings of the mind and how they affect society. These concepts existed long before sociology was recognised as a distinct field of study. The German idealist school, which included academics like Dilthey and Rickert, provided a unique description of social reality in the late eighteenth century. Based on meaning, symbols, and motivations, they highlighted the distinctive qualities of human society (Sociology Guide, 2022). Expanding on this principle, Georg Hegel contended that thoughts formed in people's brains shaped history and social phenomena. By the end of the 1800s, a strong rival to positivism had developed that took into account a variety of viewpoints: the non-positivist approach. Max Weber was a pioneer in this field, as were Mead, Blumer, and Schutz. Mead promoted symbolic interactionism, while Weber established the foundation for interpretivism (Sociology Guide, 2022). Other noteworthy non-positivist techniques are Schutz's 193-era phenomenology, Weber's ideal types, verstehen, and symbolic interactionism.

Methods and Data

Importantly, non-positivists don't entirely reject empirical data, nor do positivists completely disregard subjective viewpoints (Marsh & Stoker, 2002). In fact, both qualitative and quantitative methods can be employed within the same research project, without privileging one over the other. The focus lies not on the data itself, but rather on its interpretation, the meaning attributed to it, and its perceived relevance. Early non-positivist thought challenged the imposition of scientific methodology on studies of human behaviour. It advocated for replacing objectivist assumptions and their corresponding research design and data collection techniques with entirely new

approaches (Alessandrini, 2011). Hermeneutics and phenomenology emerged as rigorous alternatives with the potential to provide deeper insights.

Finding socially shared ideas and experiences is the goal of hermeneutics, the study and analysis of language in texts (Alessandrini, 2011). Although its origins are in the Protestant tradition of Bible interpretation, it has subsequently broadened to include the investigation of language and meaning in other texts and word-based data (Blaikie, 1993). In its most advanced form, academics explore the circumstances surrounding the book's development and the lives of the people involved to feel the work as nearly as possible to the author(s). There is no place for empirical analysis in hermeneutic projects.

Despite not being a quantitative approach, phenomenology asserts its objectivity. Blaikie (1993), asserts that meaning becomes purer when it is "liberated from the relativism of social and historical entanglements" (p. 33). This method contends that eliminating the empirical hegemony improves research. But phenomenology takes a step further, highlighting the necessity of eliminating the skewing effects of culture and history to conduct a thorough investigation (Alessandrini, 2011). From a phenomenological standpoint, all seen occurrences are analysed and classified as either objective or subjective. Then, components originating from the researcher's norms and values are strictly excluded (Babbie, 1998). Between these two methods lies interpretivism. The majority of data comes from text-based and linguistic sources. Nonetheless, where applicable, interpretivists recognise the need to use empirical data and methodologies (Alessandrini, 2011). Interpretivism rejects the unachievable goal of trying to eliminate the indisputable influence of culture and history on social outcomes (Alessandrini, 2011). Rather, the emphasis is on recognising and taking this influence into account. Therefore, meaning is crucial and dependent on social networks of shared meaning. The interpretivist's job is to detect and clarify these networks.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Non-positivist methods use an inductive research process as opposed to a deductive methodology based on hypotheses (Alessandrini, 2011). As a result, fewer preset study questions based on hypotheses are generated. Thus, actual experiences are less likely to be masked by an over-reliance on statistical procedures or scientific techniques. By avoiding the possibility of self-fulfilling prophecies and the hypothesis-narrowing effect, unexpected details can be discovered. As a result, rather than the other way around, research topics are shaped by the study itself and its conclusions.

The absence of a generally recognised procedure for objectively confirming results in a way that persuades scientists is a commonly mentioned shortcoming of non-positivist research (Alessandrini, 2011). Traditional statistical testing might be incorporated into a mixed methodology, as employed in post-positivism, but this is frequently impractical. Moreover, the non-positivist viewpoint is at odds with the basic tenets that underpin this kind of validation. Triangulation (using several data sources), in-depth case studies, and comparative examination of comparable and dissimilar situations are methods that can be used to accomplish validation. Another validation strategy, which feminist researchers especially like, is going back to research participants with the data gathered to make sure the researcher's interpretation appropriately captures their viewpoints.

Validation is nevertheless a major worry despite these obstacles, particularly when research attempts to sway policymakers who are used to positivist conceptions of objectivity and inquiry. Depending on the objectives of the study, one must decide whether to give the viewpoint of the research topic priority. A more positivist approach might be more appropriate for cost-benefit evaluations. Of course, some non-positivist data collecting would probably be required if the goal

is to reach a "triple bottom line" that takes economic, environmental, and social aspects into account.

Unveiling the Political: A Multifaceted Approach through Positivism and Non-Positivism

With its focus on the intricacies of human behaviour in the political sphere, political science benefits greatly from a variety of study approaches. The consequences of positivist and non-positivist methods for political science research are further examined in this approach. Political science has been greatly influenced by positivism, which places a strong focus on objectivity, scientific rigour, and the pursuit of universal truths (Kumar, 2014). Its methodical approach to hypothesis testing, generalizability, replication, and accumulated knowledge is its main strength. Developing theories that can be put to the test using organised techniques like surveys and experiments is what makes positivism thrive. This makes it possible to produce findings that can be applied broadly, giving researchers the ability to comprehend broad trends in public opinion, voting behaviour, or the outcomes of certain programmes (Lijphart, 1971). For instance, Lijphart used quantitative analysis of several nations to pinpoint significant distinctions between majoritarian and consensus democracies in his groundbreaking study on the subject. Replicability is emphasised in positivist research, enabling investigators to confirm results and expand on previously acquired information. This encourages a growing corpus of political science research. For example, decades of study on the rational choice theory, a central tenet of positivism, have provided important insights into how people weigh costs and benefits when making political decisions (Downs, 1957).

However, when positivism is applied to the complexities of human behaviour in the political arena, its limits become evident. It is possible for the positivist emphasis on observable phenomena to unintentionally ignore the subjective perceptions and experiences that have a major influence on

political behaviour. Ideologies, cultural values, and historical background are examples of concepts that are sometimes ill-defined and context-specific and may be disregarded. This may result in explanations of complicated political occurrences that are far too simple. To understand human behaviour, positivism frequently turns to the natural sciences, especially physics and astronomy. Given that political phenomena entail complex interplay between social, economic, and psychological aspects, this approach may be unduly simplistic. To comprehend political conflict, for example, one may find that using physics models fails to account for the complex historical grievances and cultural identities that drive the fight. The actual world, where multiple forces interact, may not readily accept findings from positivist testing, which is typified by controlled laboratory conditions. Research on voter decision-making in simulated environments may not fully capture how people select candidates in intricate political campaigns.

Non-positivist methods provide an insightful counterargument by exploring the subjective realities that shape political conduct. Discourse analysis, interpretivism, and feminist research are some of these methodologies. Understanding the meanings people ascribe to political ideas and events is the main goal of interpretivism. This method was used by researchers such as Max Weber to examine the impact of religious convictions on work ethic (Scott, 2019). This makes it possible to comprehend political participation, social movements, and ideologies on a deeper level. For example, Goodwin and Jasper (2004), examined how fear and fury drove the mobilisation of anti-immigrant movements in Western Europe using an interpretivist paradigm. By addressing the researcher's positionality and possible biases, feminist approaches contradict the positivist claim of objectivity. By highlighting the gendered aspects of political processes and institutions, this approach deepens our comprehension of the dynamics of political power. Scholars such as Kanter (1977), for instance, examined the obstacles women encounter in achieving leadership roles in

political parties that are controlled by men, exposing the institutionalised gender biases in these organisations. This method of discourse analysis looks at how language shapes political realities. It enables scholars to examine policy texts, political speeches, and media representations, exposing the underlying ideologies and power structures. Discourse analysis was used by Van Dijk (1993), to investigate how political speeches portray particular groups as threats, illustrating the influence of language on how the general public views security-related topics.

There are several advantages to non-positivist approaches in political science. Through the investigation of subjective experiences and meanings, non-positivist research offers a more comprehensive and intricate comprehension of political occurrences. This enables scholars to comprehend the intricacies of human motivation underlying political conduct. These methods go beyond a deterministic understanding of politics that holds that people are the helpless objects of strong forces and recognise the ability of individuals and social groups to influence political processes. Research on social movements, for example, emphasises how individuals can take action on their behalf and challenge established political systems. However, non-positivist approaches also present difficulties. Objectivity is a concern since the results may be influenced by the researcher's interpretations. Strict techniques like member checking—verifying results with research participants—and triangulation—using different data sources—are essential for reducing bias (Flick, 2014). The development of universal theories in political science may be hampered by the difficulty of extrapolating findings from qualitative investigations, which are frequently employed in non-positivist research to broader populations. A case study examining the driving forces behind a particular social movement, for example, might not be directly transferable to other movements operating in different environments.

Finding the Synergy: A Multi-Method Approach

Depending on the study objective, a multi-method strategy that employs positivist and non-positivist methodologies is probably the most fruitful one for political science research. While in-depth interviews can provide light on the reasons behind these preferences, large-scale quantitative surveys can offer generalizable statistics on voting patterns or public opinion (Clark, Foster, Sloan & Bryman, 2021). For instance, a study might employ interviews to learn the rationale behind the public's opinions after initially using a survey to determine sentiments towards a particular policy. Discourse analysis of political ads can be used in conjunction with statistical analysis of campaign funding data to uncover the tactics used by politicians and the power dynamics represented in their messaging. When combined, these methods can offer a more complete view of the political system's power dynamics.

Although non-positivist methods are excellent at delving into subjective experiences, some opponents contend that they may place too much emphasis on the action of the individual to the detriment of social institutions. How to strike a balance is as follows:

i. **Structuration Theory:** A compromise is provided by Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, which recognises the interaction between social structures and human agency (Giddens, 1984). Research can look at how people interact with, replicate, and even subvert established power structures. For example, research could look at how social media platforms influence political discourse, recognising both the agency of users (individuals) in generating content and the role of the platform (structure) in supporting communication.

ii. **Critical Realism:** Although it recognises the limitations of our ability to directly see social structures that shape political phenomena, this approach does admit their presence (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002). To conclude these structures,

researchers can use comparative analysis and case studies. For instance, research comparing political involvement in various nations may take into account the impact of past elements like colonisation on current political systems (structures), while also recognising the challenges associated with precisely quantifying these historical influences.

The Future of Political Science Research: A Pluralistic Dance

Likely, a pluralistic approach that recognises the benefits and drawbacks of positivist and non-positivist approaches will shape the future of political science research. Based on the unique phenomenon being studied and the study question, researchers should carefully select their methods: Large-scale surveys may be the best approach for researching general trends in voting behaviour. However, in-depth interviews might be more appropriate to comprehend the reasons behind these voting trends. Analysing campaign finance data can also highlight funding arrangements, but to comprehend the underlying messaging and power relations in political commercials, discourse analysis is required. A more thorough grasp of the intricacies of the political world is fostered by the continuing conversation between positivist and non-positivist views. Researchers can create studies that accurately reflect the complex and multifaceted character of political processes by recognising the limitations of each approach.

CONCLUSION

Any research is a methodical investigation aimed at defending the human situation as well as the domains of knowledge. Relating to non-positivism without considering the available information could result in simply rewriting the same thing from a different angle. Furthermore, positivism, which focuses a lot on knowledge, may produce pointless research that is useless to people. An

ethnographer, for instance, can help a non-positivist understand racism or poverty. Ultimately, though, to address these problems on a larger scale, the non-positivist must consult comparable studies or data (such as the percentage of the population living in poverty), which can be obtained using the positivist approach's scientific methodology. To handle field concerns, this circumstance requires the integration of these two methodologies. The non-positivist method is only useful if the information gathered is connected to and validated by positivist or scientific principles. It is said that "the pursuits of science and interpretation are not essentially distinct." Thus, these extremes of positivism and non-positivism have been brought in by social thinkers and philosophers to a variety of perspectives, including critical/scientific realism. This viewpoint, which is founded on anti-foundationalism, is in the middle, acknowledging positivism as a causal explanation on the one hand and unobservable layers of truth on the other.

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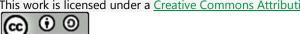Giddens, A. (1984). The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Univ of California Press.

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