

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining Paradigmatic Shifts: Unveiling the Philosophical Foundations Shaping Social Research Methodologies

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Abstract: Research is a systematic process involving collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data using appropriate methods and tools to investigate a specific problem or question, leading to a deeper understanding of the issue. The framework and execution of research are inherently tied to the philosophical paradigms that underpin it. The philosophical paradigm in research encompasses fundamental elements, namely ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, shaping the presumptions, norms, beliefs, and values inherent in the research process. This study aimed to delineate the shifts in philosophical perspectives within social research, utilizing content analysis. The examination and interpretation of document contents highlight the prevalence of positivist and post-positivist paradigms as traditional frameworks predominantly advocating quantitative research. In contrast, newer paradigms such as interpretivist/constructivist, critical, postmodern, and multiparadigmatic philosophies emphasize qualitative and mixed research designs advocate for qualitative and mixed methods research. This study highlights the significant influence of philosophical paradigms on research design and processes, emphasizing the need for researchers to understand these paradigms thoroughly. This understanding is crucial to ensure clarity, relevance, and authenticity in research. By delineating the shifts in philosophical perspectives within social research, this study provides valuable insights into how these paradigms shape research endeavors.

Keywords: *philosophical paradigms; social research; methodological shifts; quantitative research; qualitative paradigms*

Introduction


Navigating the shifting terrain of academic inquiry, researchers adapt their methodologies to address emerging issues and changing paradigms. Research, as a rigorous exploration utilizing scientific techniques to address specific issues or problems, undergoes dynamic transformations influenced by contextual variations and shifting paradigms (Bhat, 2019). Acknowledging these dynamic shifts becomes crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the methodologies and frameworks employed in the exploration of ideas, emphasizing the continual need for adaptability and openness in the arena of scholarly investigation. Research is a systematic investigation aimed at describing, explaining, predicting, and controlling specific observed phenomena. For example, in social research, sociologists might study

the impact of social media usage on adolescent mental health to understand behavioral patterns and inform

policy recommendations. The research process, inherently dynamic, is subject to change along with the researcher's evolving beliefs, perspectives, contextual factors, and philosophical paradigms (Kincheloe & Tobin, 2015). The 21st century marks an era of significant transformation in social research, witnessing epistemological debates advocating for diverse research approaches and challenging traditional methods (Taylor & Medina, 2013). In the ever-evolving landscape of research, acknowledging these dynamic shifts becomes crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the methodologies and frameworks employed in the research process.

Within the complex mosaic of social research, the philosophical paradigm encapsulates a comprehensive belief system or worldview guiding the nature and practice within a research field (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Serving as a conceptual framework of methodology, methods, theoretical perspectives, and epistemology, it allows researchers to examine the

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overall research processes (Crotty, 1998). This paradigm, comprising a set of worldviews, directs and guides research actions or investigations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Viewed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as a human construction, it represents the means through which researchers construct knowledge embedded in the data, highlighting the significant influence of philosophical underpinnings on the research endeavor. In the intricate journey of research, locating specific studies within a philosophical paradigm is a deliberate and guided endeavor. The beliefs inherent to the chosen paradigm shape the researcher's selected research design. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Crotty, 1998, Bryman, 2016). A philosophical paradigm, serving as a foundational framework, encompasses ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. This paradigm is underpinned by unique bases and assumptions related to these elements, playing a pivotal role in shaping the researcher's approach and design. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Crotty, 2020). In essence, it underscores the profound impact of philosophical considerations on the intricate fabric of the research landscape.

Exploring the fundamental framework of philosophical considerations, ontology, a branch of philosophy, analyzes into the nature of existence or reality (Scotland, 2012). This comprehensive analysis into the essence of existence serves as a foundational element in shaping the philosophical underpinnings of research methodologies and frameworks. It addresses the belief that something is real and accredits the nature of the phenomenon the researcher believes in. This element aids in conceptualizing the form and nature of reality, enabling researchers to formulate hypotheses about it. Scott and Usher (2004) emphasize the importance of ontology in social research, as it provides knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated or explored. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) assert that understanding how evidence is interpreted requires considering philosophical beliefs about the nature of reality. The philosophical concepts, propositions, or assumptions help familiarize the researcher's thinking about research problems, objectives, significance, and approaches to answering research questions (Bryman, 2012, Crotty, 2020, Cariaga, 2023). Philosophy, linked to rationality and science, seeks deeper truths about the cosmos and our place in it. Through epistemology, philosophers examine whether knowledge comes from sensory experience or internal conceptions and through axiology, it tries to explore the researchers' position to manipulate the information or data.

In the exploration for understanding the intricacies of knowledge generation, epistemology, another crucial element, explores how knowledge is formed (Taylor and Medina, 2013). This critical examination of the nature of knowledge not only shapes the foundations of research methodologies but also lays the groundwork for the researcher's approach in navigating the complexities of their chosen field. It is a view about the type of knowledge that can be generated and standardized for justification. The nature of knowledge and its justification play a vital role in theoretical perspectives and methodology, infused with the notion of knowing (Crotty, 2020). In addition to exploring how knowledge is formed, epistemology delves into the multifaceted nature of knowledge beyond mere true beliefs. It encompasses the social construction of knowledge, acknowledging its dependency on cultural and societal contexts (Bryman, 2012, Cariaga, 2023). Moreover, epistemology considers the reliability and validity of information, emphasizing the importance of robust methodologies in knowledge generation. Furthermore, it recognizes the diversity of knowledge, accommodating various perspectives and paradigms (Taylor and Medina, 2013, Crotty, 2020). Practical or experiential knowledge is also valued, highlighting its significance alongside theoretical understandings. Thus, epistemology navigates the complexities of knowledge generation by encompassing a broad spectrum of factors, from social influences on practical applications, beyond the realm of truth alone.

Epistemology in research seeks answers regarding the nature of language, ways of achieving knowledge, the relationship between the given and new knowledge, and the relationship between the researcher and their reflection (Creswell and Clark, 2014, Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The researcher thoughtfully utilizes those inquiries to position themselves within the study framework, investigating what is novel and what is assumed.

Axiology, the theory of reasoning, brings ethical considerations to the forefront while framing a research report or proposal or even during the whole research process (Finnis, 2011). Axiology is a philosophical approach that aids in deciding value or logic (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). It concerns what things or ideas are considered valuable in the research and how these values are treated by the researcher. This encompasses the value the researcher attributes to different aspects of research, including informants, data, and the audiences to which research results are reported.

Methodology is the final element, referring to the strategy employed by the researcher throughout the research process, from selecting the research problem to concluding the analysis and interpretation of the data (Crotty, 2020). Methodology demonstrates the logic and progression of organized procedures used to carry out a research project or learn more about the study subject.

Theoretical perspectives serve as philosophical frameworks that inform methodological choices by contextualizing processes and establishing their rationale and criteria. Researchers often hold certain assumptions regarding their chosen methodologies for specific research endeavors, elucidating these assumptions within the broader theoretical context to enhance the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the methodology (Crotty, 2020). Through the elucidation of theoretical perspectives, researchers gain insights into the human world and social phenomena, anchoring methodological assumptions within a broader theoretical framework.

Each research paradigm treats these four elements; ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology in a distinct manner. The philosophical paradigms for a social researcher are crucial, offering opinions and rules that determine what and how research should be conducted, how data should be gathered and examined, and how outcomes should be understood. Every decision made during the research process is guided by the philosophical framework in which the researcher situates their work. Lack of familiarity with the research paradigm can hinder the researcher's ability to conduct research with appropriate processes and ethics.

As an educator and researcher, interactions with colleagues pursuing M. Phil. and Ph.D. degrees reveal their challenges in determining the philosophical roots guiding their research designs. Colleagues often seek assistance in filling out ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects of their research. Similar challenges arise when supervising Master's students' theses. Without determining the paradigm, there is no basis for further choices in terms of methodology, methods, literature, and research design itself (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Many problems in the social sciences and humanities hinge on selecting an appropriate paradigm, a challenging task for researchers. A paradigm shapes the methodological direction, research questions, research objectives, and the objectives of the respondents. Researchers, therefore, must carefully consider the purpose of their research and the necessary data before prioritizing research approaches (Maksimovic and Evtimov,

2023). Ultimately, a well-chosen paradigm is crucial for the coherence and success of the research endeavour.

These experiences have prompted the preparation of theoretical literature on research paradigms. This article endeavours to comprehensively review, analyse, and interpret philosophical paradigms in social research, aiming to equip researchers with the awareness and awareness required to select appropriate research designs in social contexts.

As social researchers navigate the complexities of their studies, the elements of ontology, epistemology, axiology, theoretical perspectives, and methodology play pivotal roles in shaping the researcher's worldview and guiding their research design (Crotty, 2020). The ongoing evolution of research paradigms, as observed in the 21st century, highlights the importance of embracing diverse epistemological perspectives and breaking away from traditional approaches (Bryman, 2012). For researchers and educators alike, being cognizant of the philosophical underpinnings becomes imperative in fostering a conscious and aware approach to selecting research designs aligned with the social context. The expression and investigation of these paradigms contribute to formulating a theoretical framework that aids researchers in tackling challenges and making well-informed decisions during the research process.

Methods

Employing the Document Analysis Method (DAM) as part of the qualitative research approach, this study analyses into the contents of available documents within the domain of the selected phenomenon, drawing inspiration from Bell's methodology (1999), as cited in Al-Jardani.(2012). Focused on the philosophical paradigm in social research, the researcher explores a diverse array of resources, including books, articles on social research and philosophies, and dissertations and theses. Noteworthy among the reviewed documents were Taylor and Medina.(2013), Kivunja and Kuyini.(2017), Creswell and Clark.(2014) Cohen et al.,(2010), Fadhel.(2002), Searle.(2015), Martens (2015), Willis.(2007), Guba and Lincoln.(1994), Anney.(2014), Alise and Teddlie.(2010), Kincheloe and McLaren.(2000), Denzin and Lincoln.(2005), Crotty.(2020), Bryman.(2012) and Knowles and Cole.(2008) among others. The selected documents were chosen to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of social research paradigms. These documents, including works by Creswell, Guba, Lincoln, Crotty and others, are foundational in the

field, offering diverse perspectives on qualitative research methodologies and philosophical paradigms. They were selected for their historical significance, theoretical contributions, and practical applications in social research. The selection process involved a systematic literature review, where academic databases, libraries, and online resources were searched using keywords related to social research paradigms, qualitative research, and philosophical foundations. Inclusion criteria focused on the relevance, contribution to the field, and citation frequency of each document. Employing the Document Analysis Method (DAM), the content of these documents was analysed to extract key themes, concepts, and arguments, ensuring a thorough understanding of the philosophical underpinnings and methodological approaches in social research. The examples presented under each paradigm in reviews and discussion are not given references because they are created by myself based on my experience for making the concept more comprehensive.

Results and Discussion

Throughout the history of social research, a multitude of philosophical paradigms have directed researchers across diverse fields of study, moulding their examinations of policies and practices. These paradigms exert their influence over theories pertaining to social phenomena, spanning areas such as education, sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, public health, and political science. Within these disciplines, philosophical paradigms inform research into teaching and learning methodologies, curriculum development, professional growth strategies, evaluation methodologies, resource creation, community development, social justice initiatives, and various other dimensions of social inquiry.

Classical Paradigms

Classical paradigms act as philosophical foundations guiding quantitative research methodologies, focusing on data quantification to uncover fundamental truths, though some of the classical approaches focus on qualitative research as well. These traditional philosophical paradigms, typically associated with research preceding the 1980s, are considered tried and trusted frameworks (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Within the area of social research, positivist and post-positivist philosophical paradigms are acknowledged as fundamental representatives of these traditional approaches. However, Interpretivist paradigms,

commonly associated with contemporary qualitative research, are also considered traditional or classical by some scholars due to their foundational role in shaping qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Ponterotto.(2005) emphasizes interpretivism's historical influence on counselling psychology, while Schwandt (2014) discusses its context within the framework of historical development. These citations collectively highlight interpretivism's recognition as part of the traditional approach to qualitative research.

Positivist Paradigm

Positivism, as a paradigm, is dedicated to exploring, confirming, and predicting reality, rooted in the philosophy introduced by August Comte and characterized by the scientific method of investigation though Benthan and Descrates come first (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). According to Creswell.(2014), positivists, also referred to as instructivists, assert that reality exists and can be discovered, measured, and manipulated. Taylor and Medina.(2013) suggest that the positivist paradigm finds common usage in graduate research for testing theories or hypotheses, particularly in natural and physical sciences or, to some extent, in social science, especially when dealing with large sample sizes. Fadhel.(2002) emphasizes that research grounded in positivism follows a deductive approach, formulating and testing hypotheses, quantifying objective data through mathematical calculations, and expressing reality and knowledge to derive conclusions (Cohen et al., 2010). . affirm that the positivist paradigm offers explanations and predictions based on measurable outcomes, characterized by determinism, empiricism, parsimony, and generalizability.

This paradigm, predominantly aligned with quantitative methodology, employs experimental methods or surveys on extensive informant samples, presenting results in mathematical notations. However, some researchers have attempted to apply positivist principles to qualitative research, emphasizing rigor, replicability, and systematic data collection to ensure objectivity. Silverman.(2010) discusses adopting rigor and systematic approaches in qualitative studies, while Miles et al.,(2014) highlight the importance of systematic data analysis and coding. Seale.(1999) explores applying objectivity and rigor standards to enhance qualitative research quality. Additionally, Morse et al.,(2002) describe verification strategies to establish reliability and validity in qualitative research, reflecting positivist concerns. Despite these efforts, the core tenets of positivism are more naturally suited to quantitative methods.

The ontology of positivism reflects naive realism, subscribing to a single reality. Its epistemology is considered objectivist, emphasizing the acquisition of human understanding and worldviews through reason (Fadhel, 2002, Searle, 2015). Burns.(2000) describes experimental methodology within positivism as involving the manipulation of one variable to determine its impact on another variable. Mertens.(2014) justifies the axiology of beneficence, asserting that social research should aim to maximize positive outcomes, minimizing risks or harm during the research process. A practical example illustrating the positivist paradigm in a research project is shown in box 1.

Box 1. Example of a Research Pertaining Positivist Paradigm

A research entitled Use of Journal Articles in Teaching Reading, conducted by a second-year graduate researcher at a constituent campus of a public university. This experimental research utilized both experimental and control groups, with the former exposed to a treatment involving the use of journal articles in teaching reading. The research's ontology embraced a single reality, its epistemology sought objective knowledge justified from reality, and its methodology was quantitative, underpinning the entire research process. The presentation and statistical analysis of data followed a descriptive approach, emphasizing validity and reliability as quantitative standards in each table.

Post-Positivist Philosophical Paradigm

Amidst the challenges faced by researchers in comprehending the complexities of research and its contextual details, a paradigm shift emerged, challenging the notion that the social world can be understood in the same manner as the natural world. This transformative shift in belief and worldview gave rise to the post-positivist philosophical paradigm. Guba and Lincoln.(1994) contends that post-positivism acknowledges that reality is inherently elusive, emphasizing approximation and providing a conceptual framework for research conducted on human behavior within social contexts. This paradigm acknowledges the imperfection of reality and the non-absoluteness of truth, characterizing it as probable rather than definitive. According to Willis.(2007), post-positivism represents a more tempered iteration of positivism, maintaining similar principles while allowing for increased interaction between the researcher and informants. (Creswell, 2015) notes that post-positivism introduces additional research tools,

such as survey research, observation, and interviews, which were optional within the positivist framework. Taylor and Medina.(2013) perceive it as a modified version of the scientific method tailored for social science and social research. The overarching goal of the post-positivist paradigm is to generate objective and generalizable knowledge concerning social patterns or universal properties in the relationships among pre-defined variables.

The fundamental differences between positivist and post-positivist paradigms lie in their perspectives on objectivity and the nature of reality, as well as in their approaches to knowledge and theory. Positivism adheres to the belief in an objective reality that can be observed and measured, striving for empirical verification and generalizable laws (Creswell, 2014). In contrast, post-positivism recognizes the presence of subjectivity and acknowledges the role of interpretation in shaping our understanding of reality, advocating for the consideration of multiple perspectives and the importance of reflexivity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Regarding knowledge, positivism views knowledge as objective and absolute, while post-positivism sees knowledge as socially constructed and acknowledges the influence of context and interpretation on knowledge formation (Creswell, 2014). In terms of theory, positivism emphasizes the development of universal laws and causal relationships, often through deductive reasoning, while post-positivism allows for more flexibility in theory-building, accommodating diverse perspectives and interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). An illustrative example in box 2 from a social science research context demonstrates how the post-positivist paradigm manifests in the comprehensive processes of research.

between culture, context, and research paradigms has resulted in a noteworthy transformation in the philosophical underpinnings of research endeavours. Researchers, rooted in diverse domains of pedagogy, now find themselves aligning with philosophical paradigms such as interpretive, critical, pragmatic, multi-paradigmatic, and postmodern approaches. This diversity reflects a recognition of the complex and multifaceted nature of social phenomena.

Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm

Philosophical paradigms are pivotal in shaping researchers' perspectives and methodologies within the dynamic landscape of social research.

Box 2. Example of a Research Having Post-Positivist Paradigm

The research entitled "Navigating Complexity: Understanding the Multifaceted Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Well-Being" employs a post-positivist paradigm to study the intricate link between adolescent well-being and social media usage. Recognizing the complexity of this relationship, it adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and focus groups with 50 diverse adolescents, alongside quantitative surveys to capture both data patterns and qualitative insights. Additionally, content analysis of social media posts enriches the understanding of adolescents' online experiences. Data analysis involves grounded theory and thematic analysis, revealing emergent themes and patterns. Embracing the post-positivist perspective, this research offers nuanced insights into the multifaceted nature of social media's impact on adolescent well-being, informing holistic strategies for supporting youth in the digital age.

One such paradigm, the interpretivist paradigm, stands out for its deeply involved and participatory approach to understanding the complex intricate web of human experience within various social contexts. This paradigm, characterized by an in-depth exploration of subjective realities and multiple perspectives, contrasts sharply with traditional positivist and post-positivist paradigms.

At the core of the interpretivist paradigm lies the researcher's engagement with the authentic field of study. Guba and Lincoln.(1994) concede that this paradigm encourages researchers to establish rapport with participants by actively participating, observing, or interviewing them. The central tenet of interpretivism revolves around exploring into the subjective world of human experience, emphasizing the unique interpretations individuals attribute to their surroundings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Unlike positivist and post-positivist approaches, interpretive knowledge in this paradigm emerges as a result of prolonged interactions, with theory evolving concurrently with the research process.

Social research within the interpretivist paradigm provides researchers with a subtle perception of individuals and their cultural contexts. Punch.(2005) asserts that researchers construct knowledge through personal experiences within the natural settings under investigation, extracting meaning through cognitive processing and interactions with participants. Chalmers et al.,(2005) further, highlight that the interpretivist paradigm facilitates the exploration of

multiple realities and the reconstruction of meaning through human interactions.

Data collection strategies in interpretive research are diverse and include interviews, discourse analysis, text messages, reflective sessions, focus group discussions, participant observation, and document analysis. This variety of tools allows researchers to triangulate, integrate, and interpret data collected from various sources, enriching the depth of understanding (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The interpretivist paradigm fosters a value-laden approach, treating each participant and process with equal importance and striving for a balanced representation of findings.

As a qualitative research design, the interpretivist paradigm finds expression in various methodologies, including case studies, naturalistic research, grounded theory, phenomenological research, ethnography, phenomenography, and action research(Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Josselson, 2007). These methodologies, rooted in interpretive philosophical paradigms, contribute to a rich and detailed exploration of social phenomena. To illustrate the practical application of the interpretivist paradigm in social science research, consider a study focused on understanding the impact of educational interventions on student learning experiences as shown in box 3.

Box 3. Example of a Research Pertaining Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm

In this study, the researcher immerses themselves in the educational setting, engaging with students, educators, and relevant stakeholders. The research design incorporates interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of multiple perspectives. The findings, derived through interpretive methods, provide a rich understanding of the complex interplay between educational interventions and student learning experiences, highlighting the unique contextual factors influencing the outcomes.

The example in box 4 illustrates how the interpretivist paradigm contributes to a holistic and contextually embedded understanding of social phenomena in the realm of education.

Pragmatic Paradigm

The emergence of the pragmatic paradigm in social research was a response to the limitations and critiques leveled against the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Philosophers argued against the notion that a singular scientific method could access the ultimate truth about the real world, and they questioned the feasibility of determining social reality through these paradigms. According to Biesta.(2010), the pragmatic

paradigm stands in opposition to a mono-pragmatic orientation in research. In the realm of social research, Alise and Teddlie.(2010) assert that the pragmatic paradigm promotes research methods deemed most suitable for studying a particular phenomenon.

Box 4. Example Showing Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm

The research Exploring Adolescents' Subjective Experiences: A Qualitative Study of Social Media and Well-Being employs an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm to explore adolescents' subjective experiences with social media and well-being. Instead of pursuing objective truths, it seeks to understand the unique meanings and perspectives adolescents associate with their social media interactions. Through qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and participant observation with 20 adolescents aged 13 to 18, this study captures rich narratives. It emphasizes the collaborative meaning-making process between researchers and participants, acknowledging the influence of social and cultural contexts. Thematic coding, narrative analysis, and constant comparison will uncover underlying themes. This approach provides a profound understanding of how adolescents interpret their social media experiences and their implications for well-being, contributing to a nuanced comprehension of the interplay between subjectivity and social media in adolescent lives.

It emphasizes the adoption of practical research designs and encourages a pluralistic approach to understanding the behaviours of informants. This paradigm seeks to employ diverse methodologies that are most effective in gaining knowledge and discovering new insights. An example of pragmatic paradigm is action research. Action research aligns well with the pragmatist paradigm, which emphasizes practical solutions and real-world applications. Pragmatism values both quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing on practical implications over strict methodology. Action research reflects this by iteratively refining interventions based on empirical evidence and feedback. As noted by Creswell.(2014), pragmatism prioritizes research outcomes and utility, aligning with action research's goal of fostering positive change (Creswell and Clark, 2014).

Bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches, Kivunja and Kuyini.(2017) affirm that the pragmatist paradigm is characterized by relational epistemology, acknowledgment of multiple realities, employment of mixed-methods methodology, and a value-laden axiology. The emphasis is on the workability and practical utility of actions suited for investigating a specific phenomenon. This implies that the pragmatic philosophical paradigm in social

research advocates for the flexibility to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods based on the specific needs, objectives, and contextual nuances of the research endeavor.

The pragmatic paradigm's application in social research extends to a diverse range of studies, where researchers navigate the intricacies of human behavior, societal dynamics, and complex phenomena. For instance, in exploring the effectiveness of educational interventions in enhancing student learning experiences, a pragmatic approach may involve integrating qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and participant observation with quantitative surveys and assessments. This methodological pluralism allows researchers to capture the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon under investigation, providing a more comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding. Furthermore, the pragmatic paradigm advocates for the pragmatic use of research methods that align with the practical realities of the research context. It encourages researchers to be responsive to the dynamic nature of social phenomena and adopt methodologies that are not only theoretically sound but also feasible and effective in uncovering the complexities inherent in various social settings. Artificial intelligence, as a recent digital tool, embodies pragmatism by focusing on practical solutions and real-world applications. It leverages both data-driven (quantitative) and context-aware (qualitative) approaches, prioritizing utility and effectiveness, aligning with the pragmatist emphasis on actionable knowledge and tangible results.

In essence, the pragmatic philosophical paradigm in social research promotes a holistic and adaptive approach, recognizing the need for methodological diversity to address the nuanced nature of social phenomena. Researchers operating within this paradigm navigate the area of social research with an emphasis on practicality, utility, and the application of methods that best serve the objectives of their studies. This paradigm's flexibility makes it a valuable framework for addressing the diverse and dynamic challenges posed by social research across various disciplines and contexts. The example in box 5 presents pragmatism in research.

Critical Paradigm

The critical paradigm, also known as the transformative paradigm, situates its research within the sphere of social justice issues, with a deep commitment to addressing the political, social, and

economic challenges that contribute to oppression, conflict, struggles, and power imbalances within societies.

Box 5. Example Showing the Belief of Pragmatic Paradigm

The research entitled "Social Media and Adolescent Well-Being: A Pragmatic Inquiry into Impact and Coping Strategies" takes a pragmatic approach to understand how social media affects adolescent well-being and provide practical guidance. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it surveys 300 adolescents (aged 13-18) and conducts in-depth interviews with 30 of them. Additionally, content analysis of social media is performed. Data analysis utilizes both statistical techniques and thematic analysis. Rooted in the pragmatism paradigm, the study aims to bridge theory and practice by offering actionable recommendations. It seeks to empower adolescents, parents, and educators with insights on how to navigate the challenges of social media while enhancing well-being, promoting a healthier and informed approach to its use among adolescents in real-world contexts.

At its core, criticalism in social research aims to empower researchers as imaginative and critical thinkers capable of probing into questions of whose interests are either fulfilled or neglected by prevailing social policies and practices (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011). Termed a transformative philosophical paradigm, its primary goal is to instigate substantial societal changes. In the realm of social research, scholars such as Brookfield.(2000) emphasize that researchers embracing the critical paradigm undergo a process of raising their critical consciousness, constructing a moral vision for a better society, and actively advocating for change. Positioned as change agents, researchers within this paradigm champion the ideals of equity, fairness, and sustainability. The critical paradigm unfolds as a powerful force seeking to dismantle oppressive structures and foster a more just and inclusive social order.

Critical inquiry within this paradigm fosters teachers' imaginative and analytical thinking, influencing aspects such as curriculum design, assessment strategies, and the adoption of student-centered, culturally sensitive teaching methods. The critical paradigm operates on a transactional epistemology, fostering regular interactions between the researcher and informants. Rooted in historical realist ontology, it acknowledges and addresses societal oppression. The methodology it employs is often dialogic, and its axiology is characterized by a profound respect for cross-cultural norms and values (Kivunja and Kuyini,

2017). At the heart of the critical paradigm's focus in research is the unveiling of hidden agencies within social practices, ultimately aiming for liberation and emancipation. Methodologies aligned with the critical paradigm include Neo-Marxist theories, feminist perspectives, cultural studies, queer theory, action research, participatory emancipation, and critical race theory. These methodologies collectively contribute to a robust framework that seeks to engage with and dismantle systems of injustice and inequity. The critical philosophical paradigm, therefore, emerges as a potent advocate for research that delves into social justice concerns, amplifying the voices of the marginalized, and supporting and empowering those who lack power.

Critical paradigm in social research serves as a driving force for transformative change. By integrating critical consciousness and moral vision, researchers within this paradigm actively contribute to the ongoing discourse on social justice, challenging oppressive structures, and advocating for a more equitable and inclusive society. Through its distinct methodologies and unwavering commitment to empowerment, the critical paradigm stands as a powerful approach within the broader landscape of social research. The use of critical paradigm in social research can be seen in box 6.

Box 6. Example with the Essence of Critical Paradigm

The research on "Unmasking Inequity: An Examination of Social Media, Power Dynamics, and Marginalization" employs a critical paradigm to investigate the influence of social media on power dynamics and the marginalization of specific groups online. Using a qualitative approach rooted in critical theory, it gathers data through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and content analysis. A diverse sample of 40 participants is included, representing various backgrounds and identities. The study aims to unveil how social media platforms either perpetuate or challenge power structures and the silencing of marginalized voices. Data analysis includes critical discourse analysis and thematic coding to reveal patterns of oppression, resistance, and social change. The research underscores social injustices within social media and explores avenues for empowerment and activism in digital spaces.

The Postmodern Paradigm

In today's globally connected, digitally enhanced, and culturally diverse education systems, researchers are increasingly acknowledging the significance of narratives or discourses that are locally, contextually,

and temporally generated, rather than imposing authoritative knowledge and generalizations. The postmodern paradigm, as elucidated by Denzin and Lincoln.(2005), emerges as a new and stimulating avenue for social researchers by focusing on representation, acknowledging that internal thoughts and emotions are not directly accessible to the external world. This paradigm directs attention towards what is reflected in context and culture, challenging assumptions and emphasizing the need to explore and particularize research findings in their specific contexts.

The postmodern paradigm shares affinities with interpretive and critical paradigms, diverging from the positivist approach. Taylor and Medina.(2013) highlight the shift in philosophical thoughts, noting that education reports influenced by positivism maintain an objective tone using third-person gender-neutral pronouns and passive voice. However, the emergence of interpretive and critical paradigms has introduced alternative means of representation, allowing the voices of both researchers and informants to be revealed in the first person. The postmodern paradigm aligns with these shifts and encourages researchers to engage in professional practice, metaphorical thinking, dialectical thinking, and reflective thinking (Taylor et al., 2012). the postmodern paradigm marks a departure from positivism, aligning with interpretive and critical paradigms, fostering a more inclusive and reflective approach in education reports and research representation.

A fundamental tenet of the postmodernist paradigm is the belief that social research, its practices, and findings cannot be isolated from social practices and cultural traditions. Prendergast et al.,(2009) argue that, closely aligned with interpretivism and criticism, the postmodernist paradigm extends its embrace to other disciplines, particularly the arts. (Knowles and Cole, 2007) underscore the diversification of art-based social research, incorporating literary genres like autobiographical writing, impressionist writing, and visual imaginaries such as film and photography. In this paradigm, researchers have access to various alternative modes of reasoning, similar to interpretive and critical paradigms.

In the field of social research, the postmodern paradigm is employed by scholars to navigate the complexities of representation, acknowledging the fluidity and multiplicity of truths. By adopting diverse modes of inquiry, including artistic expressions and narrative approaches, researchers within the postmodern paradigm contribute to a more nuanced and contextually rich understanding of social

phenomena. This paradigm invites continual reflection on the dynamic interplay between researchers, subjects, and the broader socio-cultural landscape, fostering a research ethos that appreciates the intricate tapestry of human experiences. Box 7 shows an example of post-modern paradigm pertaining in social science research.

Box7. Example Being Based on the Essence of Post-Modern Paradigm

This research entitled, "Navigating Digital Chaos: Postmodern Perspectives on Social Media and Identity" embraces a postmodern paradigm to investigate the intricate relationship between social media and identity formation in the digital age. It employs a qualitative approach, involving in-depth interviews and participant observations with 30 diverse participants aged 18 to 35 who actively engage on social media. Content analysis of social media posts is also conducted, focusing on the performative aspects of online identity. Drawing from postmodern and deconstructive frameworks, the study explores themes such as identity fragmentation, digital spaces' impact on self-perception, and the role of narratives in shaping online personas. This research sheds light on the fluid nature of online identity construction, acknowledging its complexity in the digital era.

Multi-paradigmatic research represents a philosophical hybrid paradigm that involves the amalgamation of two distinct philosophical frameworks within a single research endeavour. Analogous to mixed-method research design, where two methodological approaches are integrated, multi-paradigmatic research combines two different paradigms to create a comprehensive approach. Taylor et al.,(2012) emphasize the common practice of blending interpretive and critical paradigms in conducting critical auto-ethnographic research, highlighting the effectiveness of such amalgamations. They further emphasize that multi-paradigmatic studies exhibit considerable efficacy in transformative professional development, particularly when incorporating new literary genres and diverse modes of thinking into arts-based research.

The versatility of multi-paradigmatic research is evident in various educational and social research contexts. Holliday.(1994) identifies a powerful blend of interpretive and critical paradigms in ethnographic action research, highlighting its effectiveness in gaining insights into appropriate methodologies and classroom research. Similarly, Taylor and Medina.(2013) advocate for the application of multi-

paradigmatic research by intercultural researchers, asserting that this paradigm facilitates culturally situated studies and contributes to the development of culturally sensitive curricula.

The foundational philosophy of the multi-paradigmatic paradigm aligns with beliefs in multiple realities, subjective knowledge, a process-based dialogic methodology, and ideological axiology. By accepting the coexistence of various paradigms, this approach acknowledges the intricate and multifaceted nature of social phenomena. The acknowledgment of multiple realities allows researchers to navigate the intricacies of diverse contexts, enriching the depth and breadth of their investigations. The subjective knowledge emphasis underscores the importance of individual perspectives and experiences, fostering a more inclusive and holistic understanding of the studied phenomena.

In the field of social research, the multi-paradigmatic approach opens avenues for researchers to engage with a broader spectrum of methodologies and epistemological stances. This not only enriches the research process but also enhances the applicability and relevance of findings in varied contexts. The ideological axiology inherent in this paradigm encourages researchers to critically examine and consider the values and ideologies embedded in their research, contributing to a more reflexive and ethically grounded research practice. In essence, the multi-paradigmatic research paradigm emerges as a dynamic and adaptable framework that responds to the complexities of social research. By transcending traditional boundaries and incorporating diverse philosophical perspectives, this approach contributes to a more nuanced, inclusive, and contextually sensitive understanding of the multifaceted social realities under investigation. Multi-paradigmatic philosophical paradigm can be observed in the example of box 8.

Quality Standard in Various Research Paradigms

Ensuring quality standard in a research is crucial phenomenon. In positivist research, quality standards prioritize objectivity, rigor, and replicability (Creswell, 2014). Researchers maintain neutrality to ensure unbiased findings (Trochim and Donnelly, 2007). Clear, consistent methods allow for replication and reliability (Campbell et al., 1963).

Validity is ensured through internal and external validity checks (Bryman, 2016). Precise measurement and quantitative analysis yield accurate data (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). Testable hypotheses guide experimental designs for establishing causality

(Babbie, 2010). Rigorous statistical methods validate conclusions (Field., 2013).

Box 8. Example Having Sense Multi-Paradigmatic Paradigm

The research on Unraveling the Complexity of social media: A Multi-Paradigmatic Investigation employs a multi-paradigmatic approach to comprehensively explore the intricate impact of social media on society. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it surveys 1,000 participants to examine social media usage patterns and well-being. Additionally, 50 in-depth interviews delve into individual experiences and perceptions related to social media, while content analysis uncovers discursive and visual elements in online communication. Data analysis encompasses statistical, thematic, and discourse analysis, drawing on positivist, interpretivist, and critical theory insights. This holistic approach provides a nuanced understanding of social media's multifaceted nature, offering practical implications for various stakeholders and bridging perspectives from diverse disciplinary backgrounds.

Adhering to these standards aims to produce objective, reliable, and generalizable knowledge. Similarly, quality standards within post positivist paradigm, such as objectivity, validity, and reliability, can be enhanced through the application of triangulation, simultaneously employing multiple data sources, methods, and theories (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This paradigm directs and guides the worldview of quantitative research in a manner akin to the positivist paradigm.

Trustworthiness, a crucial aspect in interpretive research, is multifaceted, encompassing credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability. Credibility, akin to internal validity, is established through prolonged immersion in the field and continuous validation with informants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Dependability, reflecting the consistency of findings, is maintained through open-ended or emergent inquiry, ensuring reliability in the research process. Transferability, or the generalization of findings to different contexts, is facilitated by rich descriptions and purposeful sampling. Conformability ensures that the research process aligns with a specific methodological framework, adding a layer of authenticity to the study. Authenticity within the interpretivist paradigm focuses on the ethical dimensions of the researcher's relationship with participants. (Josselson, 2007) identifies key aspects, including educative, fairness, catalytic, and tactical considerations. The evolving landscape of the interpretive paradigm emphasizes the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation process and actively

involves teachers as reflective practitioners, fostering an enhanced understanding of real-life experiences in social research.

In pragmatic research, quality standards prioritize practical utility, relevance, and effective application of findings (Morgan, 2007, Creswell and Clark, 2014). Research addresses real-world issues, employing flexible methodologies and integrating multiple methods to ensure applicability and responsiveness to practical needs. Clear, actionable findings and an iterative refinement process are essential, with validity often judged by practical consequences and effectiveness in application.

In criticalist research, quality standards emphasize critical reflection, social justice, and transformative impact (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Research aims to empower marginalized groups and challenge social injustices, producing knowledge that contributes to social change (Creswell, 2014). Continuous reflection on biases, open dialogues with participants, and contextual grounding are crucial (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Quality is measured by the research's ability to effect change and address social inequalities (Mertens, 2014). Upholding ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality, is paramount (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Quality standards within the postmodern paradigm are flexible and contingent upon the purpose, issue, and context of the research. (Manen, 1990) illustrates this variability, suggesting that if a researcher engages literary genres to prompt critical reflective thinking among readers in their professionalism, the quality standard becomes pedagogical thoughtfulness. This example highlights how the postmodern paradigm is reflected in social science research, emphasizing the contextual and subjective nature of knowledge construction.

Conclusion

This review explored into diverse philosophical paradigms prevalent in social research by meticulously studying, scrutinizing, and interpreting ideas sourced from various published and online materials. The findings highlight the crucial role that philosophical paradigms play in shaping the ontology, epistemology, and axiology within research, subsequently influencing the methodological approaches adopted. Each paradigm, underpinned by specific assumptions, signifies a commitment to a particular nature of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, thereby guiding the incorporation of specific methodologies in research endeavors. Traditional paradigms, such as positivism and post-positivism, are characterized by their adherence to objectivity and a

preference for quantitative research methodologies. Conversely, interpretivism, criticalism, pragmatism, postmodernism, and multiparadigmatism share interconnected beliefs, promoting qualitative and mixed-methods research. The selection of a paradigm not only dictates the overarching research design but intricately shapes the formulation of research questions, participant selection, tool design, data collection, and subsequent analysis and interpretation processes. Consequently, researchers must possess a comprehensive understanding of the paradigm underlying their research to ensure the efficacy and success of their endeavors.

In the present time, familiarity with philosophical paradigms in social research has become imperative for practitioners and researchers. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which primarily revolves around a small-scale, document-based theoretical exploration. In conclusion, this study acts as a catalyst for increasing researchers' awareness of the significant influence that philosophical paradigms have on the research landscape. Understanding the complex interaction between paradigms and methodological choices is essential for carrying out effective and meaningful research in the ever-evolving field of social science.

As researcher navigates the complexities of philosophical paradigms, it contributes to the continuous evolution and refinement of methodologies, ultimately enhancing the depth and breadth of knowledge in social research. add implications on it. Navigating diverse philosophical paradigms in social research is paramount for researchers, influencing fundamental aspects of research design and methodology. Understanding paradigms enhances research rigor and coherence, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and addressing complex social issues. Transparent paradigm communication promotes accountability and ethics, while integrating paradigm discussions into education develops critical thinking. Engaging in paradigm discourse evolves methodologies, and grounding research in diverse paradigms improves its application in policy and practice. Overall, paradigm awareness refines research and advances social inquiry, promoting inclusivity and impact.

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