

Paradigm of Post Positivism, Critical Theory, and Constructivism in Social Research

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Post Positivism, Critical Theory, Constructivism, Social, Management

Received : 20, October

Revised : 07, November

Accepted: 08, December

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the application of post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism paradigms in social research in the field of management. The method used in this study is a qualitative approach with descriptive and analytical data analysis, through the elaboration of main ideas related to the topic discussed. The results of the study indicate that the three paradigms, namely post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism, all strive to advance science, although with different approaches. However, in essence, the three paradigms complement each other in providing a deeper and contextual understanding of managerial practices, as well as opening up opportunities for a more inclusive, fair, and socially dynamic managerial approach in the organization. The application of these three paradigms also encourages changes in the way of viewing roles and power in the organization, which can lead to improvements in overall managerial practices.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are thinking animals. In the science of *manthiq* (logic) there is a formulation about human beings that also distinguishes them from animals, namely *Al-insan Hayawanun Nathiqun*, which means: Human beings are *nathiq* animals, who speak and have opinions based on their thoughts; Strictly speaking, humans are animals that think to find the truth, namely science, philosophy, and religion (Anshari, 1991). Basically, philosophy is the result of human thought that is so influenced by different backgrounds, different situations and circumstances of different times, so philosophy is also different and creates various types of schools as well. Philosophers differ on how to get knowledge. Among the currents that emerged were the school of post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism.

Critical studies on positivism, critical theory, and constructivism, especially regarding positivism, have been carried out extensively. Among them is by Ricky Rengkung (Wahyuni, 2017) entitled "Criticism (ideology) of the way of thinking Positivism or Scientism". In the study, what and how the theory of thinking according to Positivism or Scientism is described, then Rengkung criticizes the two theories from the contradictory side of the two theories, but he does not discuss the criticism of the Islamic perspective. The same criticism of positivism was carried out by Emma Dymala Somantri (Dymala, 2013) in her criticism Emma explained that positivism has the weakness of only thinking in terms of *aqliyah* in seeking the truth, but should be in seeking the truth must refer to *naqliyah* as well, so that *naqliyah* becomes *aqliyah*, thereby arriving at the true knowledge that is pleased by Allah SWT.

Science is developing very rapidly, where society is seen as having entered the stage of rational thinking. At that time, a methodology was built that guaranteed the correctness of human knowledge findings (Irwansyah, 2021). Methodology in social science is based on the basic views/thoughts of the researcher containing the interaction of the researcher with the subject, social reality, and obtaining knowledge, namely how knowledge can be built. There are several differences in views related to social reality theories such as post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. In order to better understand these three approaches, especially in the realm of social research, especially in the field of management science, this research was conducted. So that later a comprehensive understanding will be obtained in looking at each of these paradigms in their use in social research.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Post-positivism is a paradigm that critiques classical positivism, emphasizing the limitations of human knowledge in achieving absolute truth. It maintains the importance of objectivity while recognizing potential biases in human observation. Post-positivist research often employs quantitative methods but is open to qualitative approaches, focusing on testing hypotheses through falsification. Reality is understood as probabilistic rather than absolute, making this paradigm suitable for studies exploring causal relationships, such as the effects of policies on social behavior. Key contributions to this paradigm

include Karl Popper's falsificationism and Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts.

Critical theory, on the other hand, is grounded in the aim of understanding and transforming social structures that perpetuate inequality. This paradigm is normative, focusing on social justice, power dynamics, and emancipation from oppressive systems. Researchers within this framework prioritize the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, often employing participatory methods to involve these groups in the research process. Critical theory is frequently applied in studies on gender inequality, racism, or the impacts of capitalism on disadvantaged communities, with significant contributions from thinkers like Jurgen Habermas, Antonio Gramsci, and Paulo Freire.

Constructivism, meanwhile, posits that social reality is subjectively constructed through interactions and interpretations. It emphasizes the pluralistic and subjective nature of reality, focusing on how individuals derive meaning from their experiences. This paradigm heavily relies on qualitative methods, such as narrative analysis, case studies, and ethnography, where the researcher actively interprets the data. Constructivism is ideal for exploring individual perspectives and social phenomena like identity construction, with foundational theories from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann on the social construction of reality and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

In summary, post-positivism aims to explain causal relationships through empirical and probabilistic approaches, critical theory seeks to address and transform social inequalities, and constructivism focuses on understanding subjective meanings. Each paradigm offers unique insights and methods, chosen based on the objectives and philosophical underpinnings of the research.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach. Ibnu Dalam (Nasser, 2021), explained that qualitative research is research in which data is presented in verbal form and analyzed without using statistical techniques. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that qualitative research is research that prioritizes data in the form of verbal, does not use numbers, and is analyzed without statistical techniques. The object of this research includes data sources related to postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism in the social sciences, especially in the field of management research. The collected data will be analyzed with a descriptive-analytical approach, namely explaining and elaborating the main ideas related to the topic discussed, as well as presenting a critical analysis based on primary and secondary literature sources relevant to the research theme (Sugiyono, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Post-positivism

Post positivism is a school that wants to improve the weaknesses of positivism that only relies on the ability to directly observe the object being studied. Ontological this school is critical realism which views that reality does exist in reality according to the laws of nature, but it is impossible if a reality can be seen correctly by humans. Methodologically, the experimental approach through the triangulation method is various types of methods, data sources and theories, Salim (2006:40).

Ontologically, this school adheres to the view of critical realism, which states that reality does exist and is in accordance with the universal and general laws of nature. However, such reality is unlikely to be fully understood in an objective way by humans (researchers) who take a distance from the object being studied. Therefore, methodologically, the experimental approach is carried out through the triangulation method, which involves the use of various methods, data sources, researchers, and theories. Epistemologically, the relationship between the observer and the object or reality cannot be separated as in the positivism paradigm. This school argues that a claim of truth cannot be achieved if the observer separates himself from the object being studied. Therefore, the relationship between the observer and the object must be interactive, with the observer trying to remain neutral, so that subjectivity can be minimized (Heru, 2009).

This paradigm seeks to correct the shortcomings that exist in positivism, which only relies on direct observation of the object being studied. Ontologically, this school adopts critical realism, which acknowledges that reality does exist according to the laws of nature, but it is impossible for humans (researchers) to see that reality completely correctly. Therefore, methodologically, an experimental approach that relies only on observation is considered insufficient, and a triangulation method is needed, which involves a wide variety of methods, data sources, researchers, and theories. To better understand the paradigm of postpositivism, there are several things that need to be noted: first, this paradigm is not a new philosophy in science, but it is very closely related to positivism. One of the main differences between the two is that postpositivism prioritizes the process of verifying observational findings using various methods.

Thus, a science can be considered to achieve objectivity if it has been verified by various parties through various methods. Second, the initial view of positivism (old-positivism) is anti-realist, which rejects the existence of reality in a theory. Modern realism is not a continuation of positivism, but the final development of the postpositivist view. Third, postpositivism recognizes that the paradigm only functions as a lens, not as a spectacle. Relativism asserts that all views can be considered correct, while realism focuses only on those views that are considered the best and true. Postpositivism rejects the view that society can determine what is considered real and true about an object. Fourth, objectivity is an indicator of the truth that underlies every investigation. Without this principle, the investigation cannot continue. However, what he wants to emphasize is that objectivity does not guarantee the achievement of truth (Tjahyadi, 2015).

According to Ghuba (1990:20) argues that postpositivism is best characterized as modified version of positivism. Having assessed the damage that positivism has occurred, postpositivism struggle to limited that damage as well as to adjust to it. Prediction and control continue to be the aim. (Postpositivism has the main characteristic as a modification of positivism. From the many shortcomings of positivism, the proponents of postpositivism try to adjust and minimize these weaknesses. It can be concluded that post positivism is a more flexible approach than positivism.

Post-positivism states that our knowledge is not perfect because of the influence of perspectives and social contexts. In this paradigm view, in looking at a social phenomenon, in addition to being able to be measured and tested empirically, other ways of looking at the phenomenon are also needed. Given that in looking at a social reality, it is impossible for a researcher as a human being to see or view it correctly. Therefore, in social research that uses the post-positivism paradigm, it is necessary to use the triangulation method, be it data triangulation, researcher triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodology triangulation. This is done one of them to reduce the subjectivity of researchers when conducting social research.

In social science, post positivism uses quantitative and qualitative approaches. Post-positivists do not reject statistical or experimental methods, but they do emphasize the importance of context, interpretation, and reflection in social research. For example, researchers may combine large surveys with in-depth interviews to provide a more complete picture of a social issue. For example, research in Social Policy measures the impact of social policies through quantitative research, but also analyzes the social and cultural factors that influence those policies. Some of the principles of Post-positivism are probabilistic knowledge where our knowledge of the world is limited and only temporary, critical of the objective that full objectivity is impossible to achieve. The influence of the researcher's subjectivity, values, and assumptions must be recognized, and the third principle is the use of mix-methods, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, this makes the researcher better understand social phenomena in full. Another example of social research, especially in the field of management, that uses a post positivism approach is research that discusses the influence of leadership on employee satisfaction and team performance. The research can be carried out using two methods, namely quantitative and qualitative or often known as the mix method. The quantitative method can be carried out through surveys, while the qualitative method can be carried out by conducting interviews with a number of parties related to the research being conducted. Through the use of the mix method, it is hoped that it can reduce the bias and subjectivity of the researcher as emphasized in this post-positivism paradigm.

Critical Theory in the Social Sciences

Criticism is a school that tries to answer the problem of knowledge with its figure Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant's starting point is time and space as two forms of observation. The intellect receives the materials of knowledge from

empirical (from the senses as external empirical and from experience as internal empirical). The ingredients in the form of empiris are still chaotic. Then reason regulates and regulates in the form of observation, namely space and time. The applicatory materials are placed one after the other. Observation is the beginning of knowledge, while processing by reason is its formation (UGM, 2001). Critical theory is a school of thought that developed especially in the 20th century, with the main goal of analyzing, critique, and changing oppressive social structures. The theory focuses on the relationship between power, ideology, and society, as well as how social and cultural structures can affect the lives of individuals and groups in society.

Critical theory originated in the Marxist tradition, but it also developed a broader approach to understanding and addressing social, political, economic, and cultural issues. Critical theory first developed in the context of the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923. This group of intellectuals was known as the Frankfurt School and consisted of prominent figures such as Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) – As director of the Institute for Social Investigation in Frankfurt, Horkheimer was one of the main figures in developing critical theory. He argued that social science should aim to change society and not just understand the world passively. Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) – A philosopher and sociologist who contributed extensively to the critique of popular culture and modern rationality. Adorno focuses on how mass culture is used to control society and distract them from criticism of the existing social system.

Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) – Marcuse is known for his criticism of industrial society and capitalism that restricts individual freedom. In *One-Dimensional Man*, he describes how industrial societies create passive and uncritical individuals, trapped in a culture of consumerism. Erich Fromm (1900–1980) – A psychoanalyst and sociologist who focused on social psychology and alienation in capitalist society. Fromm criticized how capitalist social structures cause individuals to feel alienated from themselves and from others. The main principles of Critical Theory are the liberation of the individual from oppressive social structures, criticism of rationality, critical theory of more dominant and practical ideologies in which research and theory must be closely related to social practice.

The critical theoretical paradigm in social research can be used in criticizing social structures, power, and domination that exist in society, including in the world of work and organizations. In the context of management, critical theory highlights how managerial practices can exacerbate inequalities, such as gender injustice, racial discrimination, or power inequality between managers and employees. In the scope of research, this paradigm can be used by researchers in exploring and criticizing a number of management policies that have the potential to have an influence on inequality or discrimination that exists in an organization or company. Through social research, especially in the field of management, it is hoped that it can bring and encourage better changes in the organization or company.

The role of critical theory in social research, especially in the field of management, is to encourage more equitable social change. In the context of management, critical theory invites researchers not only to understand and analyze existing problems, but also to seek and find ways that these changes can lead to employee empowerment, greater participation, and equality in organizational decision-making. In addition, critical theory can also be used to evaluate whether the changes made in the organization really lead to an improvement in the welfare of all members of the organization, or whether the changes only benefit a few in power which can later lead to inequality and inequality. So that with this critical theory paradigm, it is hoped that welfare and justice can be created for employees in every organization or company.

Constructivism

Constructivism argues that knowledge is a social and personal construct that is built through individual experience and social interaction. There is no one universal truth; Instead, each individual or group builds their own understanding based on their cultural, social, and life experiences. Constructivism comes from the word "construct", which means "to build" or "to create". In the context of learning theory, constructivism means that each individual is active in building his or her own knowledge. This knowledge is not something that is directly given, but rather the result of individual experiences, interactions, and reflections on the environment and existing information. Some of the important figures who contributed to the development of constructivism theory are: Jean Piaget: Piaget is a major figure in constructivism theory that focuses on children's cognitive development. Piaget argued that children not only imitate the world around them, but actively construct their own knowledge. Piaget divides cognitive development into four stages: sensorimotor, preoperative, concrete operational, and formal operational. Each of these stages reflects the way children view the world as it evolves over time.

Lev Vygotsky: Vygotsky developed a theory of social constructivism that emphasized the importance of social context in learning. According to Vygotsky, social and cultural interaction plays an important role in the formation of knowledge. The concept of the proximal developmental zone (ZPD) is key in this theory, where the best learning occurs between what the student can do with the help of others and what the student can do on his or her own. Jerome Bruner: Bruner focuses on the role of experience and activity in learning. He stated that learning must be active and students must be involved in the process of discovering knowledge. Bruner developed the concept of enactive, iconic, and symbolic representation, which describes how a person composes and represents knowledge in the form of actions, images, and symbols.

The constructivism paradigm can also be applied to social research in the context of management. This paradigm focuses on how a person in an organization or company acquires knowledge based on their experience. In the context of social research, including management, constructivism views that reality is not something objective and fixed, but something that is subjective and shaped by human understanding and experience. This paradigm is in contrast to

a more positivistic approach, which assumes that reality can be measured objectively and independently of the subject who observes it. Research that uses this type of paradigm can be carried out using qualitative methods through data collection techniques such as conducting observations, interviews, and case studies. This is done to explore individual experiences, views, and subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied.

One example of the application of the constructivism paradigm in social research in the field of management is a case study-based research that examines the application of managerial leadership styles in a company. Through this research, information can be obtained about how a manager in a company applies a leadership style based on his experience and interactions with colleagues. In addition, research that raises the theme of the influence of organizational culture on decision-making is also included in the constructivism paradigm. According to the perspective of constructivism, the process by which managers determine decisions until those decisions are taken can be influenced by the culture of the organization or company. So that through research using this paradigm, it can be known and gain an understanding of how the organizational culture in a company and how the organizational culture can affect decision-making.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Post-positivism is an approach that seeks to overcome the weaknesses of positivism by acknowledging that human knowledge is limited and influenced by social perspectives and contexts. In this case, reality is considered to exist according to the laws of nature, but it is impossible to see it fully objectively by humans. Therefore, post-positivism uses a methodological approach of triangulation, which involves a combination of various methods, data sources, theories, and researchers, in order to reduce subjectivity. This approach is more flexible than positivism because it accepts the use of quantitative and qualitative methods at the same time (mix-methods) to provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon being studied.

Meanwhile, critical theory focuses on criticizing oppressive social structures and championing social change to create justice, by criticizing power and domination in society. In the context of management, critical theory helps evaluate inequalities in organizations and champions employee empowerment and equality. Meanwhile, constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is built socially and personally through individual experiences and social interactions. In social research, especially in the field of management, constructivism views that reality is subjective and shaped by individual understanding. This approach is suitable for exploring subjective experiences and views through qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, which leads to a deeper understanding of social phenomena, for example in the context of leadership styles or organizational culture.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research could deepen the application of post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism in social and management contexts. For post-positivism, studies could explore methodological triangulation in complex phenomena like cross-cultural management and assess mixed-methods approaches across industries. Research might also examine how post-positivist principles adapt to dynamic environments like technological change. Critical theory could focus on analyzing power dynamics in modern organizations, such as digital surveillance or gig economy practices, while developing models to empower employees and promote equality. Leadership development programs could integrate critical theory to foster ethical decision-making.

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