**“Which research philosophy will be used in Business Management Researches? Positivism Vs Interpretivism”**

A research paper submitted

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To

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this work is to investigate the main philosophical underpinnings of major research paradigms using Positivism and Interpretivism as examples. It would also explain and give crucial interrelationships with ontology, epistemology, methodology, and method. The study followed a literature review approach and was mostly supported by secondary research, which included the incorporation and consideration of many peer-reviewed academic papers relevant to the issue as well as other sources such as books. Researchers might examine the fitness of every model based on the nature and context of their study. This work will assist scholars in developing a better grasp of both positivist and interpretivist perspectives. The interpretivist paradigm might allow researchers to go deeper by seeking perceptions and experiences of a specific social context. The positivist paradigm, on the other hand, will allow researchers to rely more on statistics and generalization, resulting in the formation of universal rules and discoveries.

**Keywords:** Positivism, Interpretive

**Chapter # 1**

**Introduction**

* 1. **Background of the study**

According to various scholars, all scientific study should be based on three essential fundamental philosophical assumptions, taking into account the nature of the research, the data available to support it, and the technique utilised for the research. (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Myers & Nia, n.d.) These assumptions may be divided into three categories, which are as follows: First, there is belief about the subject of study. Second, there is belief in the concept of knowledge. Third beliefs on the relationship between knowledge and the empirical reality, as described by (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This knowledge will allow them to increase their research comprehension, application of theory to classroom practise, participation in academic discussion, and presentation of their very own research findings. This paper provides an outline of what a paradigm is before delving into and debating the assumptions behind scientific and interpretative paradigms. (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). It is critical for researchers to comprehend the main underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as how the given assumptions influence researchers' choice of technique and methodologies. Furthermore, how they relate to major study discoveries. The above mentioned assumptions also allow for the enhancement of research quality in terms of research understanding, interaction with research materials and debates, theory application, and presentation of research key results and consequences. (Scotland, 2012).

What exactly is a paradigm? A paradigm is made up of various components, which may be classified as follows: All of the phrases Methodology, Ontology, Epistemology, and Methods are interchangeable (Scotland, 2012). Each of the elements listed below is thoroughly described and compared to the others. Ontology The nature of existence is defined as follows according to ontology: (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). As a result, ontology is mostly concerned with the nature of the phenomenon's existence. It is the process of using existing categories of information to determine the truth or answer to a research problem. Epistemology As explained by, epistemology may be defined as the researcher's knowledge of reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

As a result, epistemology is focused with what a researcher seeks to reveal information in order to arrive at reality. Furthermore, epistemology is considered an internal component of the researcher since it deals with how they discriminate between good and evil, as well as how they understand the environment. Various paradigms have different notions and points of view in terms of ontology and epistemology. As a result, individuals may have distinct assumptions about reality and knowledge, which determines the methods they use to conduct their research. (Scotland, 2012)

**1.2. Research Objective**

The goal of this research is to look at the philosophical foundations of two key research paradigms, Positivism and Interpretivism. The study would also find and highlight important interrelationships with the following: Methodology - Epistemology - Ontology - Epistemology - Epistemology - Epistemology - Epistemology - Epistemology According on the type of study and setting, the study emphasis indicated above would give significant insights for researchers to pick one of the supplied paradigms.

 **1.3. Research Question**

Which research philosophy will be used in Business Management Researches Positivism or Interpretivism?

**1.4. Significance of the study**

This work will assist scholars in developing a better grasp of both positivist and interpretivist perspectives**.**

**1.5. Limitations and Delimitations**

First this study only focus on only two types of research philosophies while there are other types also present like realism and Pragmatism. Second this research only covers the domain of business management studies.

**1.6. Organization of the study**

The first chapter comprises of introduction and four other chapters are as follow. Chapter two addressed and covering all the key aspects of my work. The full analysis of my studies is shown in Chapter three and my conclusions and suggestions were summarized in Chapter four.

**CHAPTER # 2**

Literature Review

(Daniguelo, 2020) in 2022 study Potential, Positivism, and Rationalism Approaches to Ontology in Public Administration he says that The existence of proof, or an in-depth examination into the heart of the issues discovered, is the starting point for administrative science ontology. The scientific and human methods to advancement in different parts of life and modern living are the two fundamental approaches. What is researched from the standpoint of how the public administration process is handled successfully to regulate, serve, and defend the public interest is the ontological foundation of scientific development of public administration in the context of administrative science philosophy. Knowledge can never surpass facts, according to positivism, however administrative rationalism is a way for acquiring knowledge in the realm of administration. Then rationalism implies that knowledge is derived from the intellect.

(Al-Ababneh, 2020) study Linking Ontology, Epistemology and Research Methodology he said that quantitative methodology, which is based on the positivist paradigm, and qualitative methodology, which is based on the interpretivist paradigm and quantitative methodology, which is based on the positivist paradigm, are the two primary types of research methodology. Understanding the significance of social phenomena is the goal of qualitative methodology. Quantitative methodology, on the other hand, is concerned with attempts to quantify social processes via the collection and analysis of data. Researchers may conduct their study more effectively if they have a clear knowledge of the philosophical approach. As a result, integrating study and philosophical traditions aids researchers in clarifying the theoretical frameworks of their studies. Multiple research methodologies are presented in the research framework, including perspectives on the nature of ontology, the theory of knowledge that drives the investigation (epistemology), and how that knowledge could be achieved (methodology).

(Rashid et al., 2019) purpose Business Researchers' Step-by-Step Guide in which about Philosophy of research he says that The realism or common sense ontology underpins the positivist approach. According to the positivist position, knowledge can only be created through the five basic senses. The positivist believes in realistic foundationalism ontology, which holds that the world exists regardless of human perspective, implying that the cosmos is objective. The researcher begins his investigation from an independent attitude, therefore epistemology stays impartial in this scenario. As a result, the researcher and the phenomena are unrelated. A positivist sees the world as a single objective fact. The researcher believes that reality is objective and that he or she may measure it independently under positivist philosophy. Positivism attempts to correctly describe the world and to gain a scientific understanding of events. Positivist research assumes a priori structures with predetermined relationships that may be tested using organized instruments. Theories are put to the test in order to gain a better knowledge of phenomena by using measurable variables and hypothesis testing. About interpretivist he said Because interpretivism helps the researcher to experience the world through the eyes of the participants, it allows the researcher to have many perspectives on a study subject. Interpretivists are concerned in the relativist or subjective realities that exist in each study problem from an ontological standpoint. Interpretivism's epistemological stance is that of subjective epistemology. When it comes to how people comprehend things, the interpretive paradigm stresses social context and human complexity. The world is not seen objectively by interpretivists. Individuals, on the other hand, create the world, each experiencing their own reality. Human beings build meanings when they interact with the reality they are interpreting, according to the interpretive perspective. These facts must be comprehended in order to comprehend the world. The interpretivist seeks to get a thorough knowledge of the social phenomena under investigation, and understands the role of participant subjectivity in this process. When describing their experiences and beliefs, research participants utilize their own language.

(Berkovich, 2018) study The paradigmatic disclaimer and positivist qualitative research, in which he claims that acknowledging positivist qualitative research as a unique and legitimate type of qualitative research will assist to enhance the quality of qualitative social science research. Such acceptance would bolster the story of entirely positivist qualitative research. One innovation that might aid these efforts is to include a paradigmatic perspective sub-section in qualitative articles, where researchers state their paradigmatic thinking. Researchers, both positivist and non-positivist, would benefit from such contemplation since it would make them more conscious of their preconceptions and push them to produce more cohesive qualitative works.

(Wijesinghe, 2011) study a methodological approach to human resource management research, from interpretivism to positivism The purpose of this work was to highlight a methodological approach to HRM research based on two philosophical research philosophies: positivism and interpretivism. Normally, research traditions begin with positivism and progress to interpretivism, but this work proposed the opposite, particularly in light of the nature of information and data in HRM research. Various justifications for such a strategy were attempted to be justified in the article. The ability to present objective and logical conclusions in accordance with a globally recognized standard of scientific technique is a major factor in favor of the proposed methodology. The positivist method is unquestionably scientific and rational, since it is capable of assessing the link between HR factors and quantifying the productive outcomes. That is why this study underlines the importance of transitioning from interpretivism to positivism in order to maintain research quality and scientific quantitative standards. However, we must not overlook another philosophical paradigm known as Critical Social Theorists, who reject subject-object dualism in favor of critically exploring the social environment and empowering individuals to address social problems via the use of mix technique.

(Pham, 2018) study the major perspectives of positivism, interpretivism, and critical inquiry. in which she said The positivist paradigm, which is part of the objectivism epistemology, is a methodological philosophy in quantitative research in which we use natural scientific approaches to learn about social science. In this regard, real-world comprehension must be assessed and backed by data. This paradigm, on the other hand, supports positivist researchers in clearly comprehending the objects by applying empirical tests and methods such as sampling, measurement, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. This means that positivist researchers' findings may have a high level of validity and reliability, and that they may be applied to a broad population. The interpretivist paradigm is founded on the idea that methods used to explain knowledge in social and human sciences could be the same as those used in physical sciences because humans interpret their environment and then act on it, but the world does not. As a result, interpretivists accept a relativist ontology, in which a single phenomenon may have several interpretations rather than being a single reality that can be proved by measurement. Researchers prefer to get a deeper grasp of the event and its intricacy in its particular context using interpretivism rather than aiming to generalize the foundation of understanding for the entire population.

(Irshaidat, 2022) study Interpretivism vs. Positivism in Political Marketing Research he said that Positivism allows the subject of research to make strong assertions about the trustworthiness, objectivity, and efficacy of the results. Through predetermined variables incorporated in hypothesis, the goal is to locate causality venues. As a result, the methodology aims to develop reproducible outcomes for the purposes of generalization using statistical approaches and tight standards in language. Interpretivism is an appropriate research paradigm for political marketing research. The necessary inspection is carried out by taking into account differences in political perceptions of the same reality while eliminating preconceptions and respecting the distinctiveness of time and location. By subscribing to voter centrism, marketing orientation relates to the requirements of political customers.

(Saunders et al., n.d.) Say the term "research philosophy" relates to the process and character of knowledge development. Your research philosophy contains important assumptions about your worldview. The three main techniques to studying philosophy are epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Each has distinct characteristics that will influence how you do your study. According to pragmatism, the study subject is the most important predictor of the epistemology, ontology, and axiology used. Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of sociological phenomenon as entities. Subjectivism believes that social phenomena are generated by social actors' perceptions and actions, whereas objectivism maintains that social things exist outside of social actors in reality. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with what constitutes acceptable knowledge. The philosophical perspective of natural scientists is referred to as positivism. Working with observable social reality is necessary, and the end result can be law-like generalizations similar to those found in the physical and scientific fields. Interpretivism is an epistemology that states that the researcher must grasp the distinctions between individuals in our positions as social actors. Axiology is a philosophical subject that studies value judgments. Social scientific views may be used to gain fresh insights into real-world obstacles and problems in management and business research. The four paradigms explored in this chapter are functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralize.

According to (Qualitative Research in Business & Management, n.d.) the most common research method in business and management is positivism. This research method is familiar to most business and management researchers. The bulk of positivist researchers think that reality is supplied objectively and may be described by quantitative characteristics that are objectively measurable and his or her equipment. In general, positivist research aims to put theory to the test in order to increase the predictability of events. The positivist model of social research has been described as a natural science model. The procedures and equipment used in natural science research are regarded to be well-suited to studying social and organizational phenomena. Positivist researchers commonly construct propositions that portray the academic content in terms of independent and dependent variables, as well as their relationships. Although it has gained favor in the last 20 years, interpretative (or 'interpretivist') research is not as common in business and management as positivist research. Practically every important magazine in the business world now accepts interpretive research papers. Interpretive academics think that only social inventions such as language, awareness, shared meanings, and instruments allow access to reality. Interpretive researchers concentrate on the complexities of human sense-making as events develop, aiming to explain events by the meanings that people assign to them.

According *Sandeep Rao*, n.d. 2018 In finance research, the positivist approach is prevalent. The literature on financial theories and issues regarding financial market contagion research is dominated by functionalism positivism. Findlay and Williams (1980) argue, however, that rejecting to employ a positivist technique in finance is a normative judgement. This opens up hitherto unexplored ground in which non-positivist models might be utilized to construct, comprehend, and critique financial theories. The majority of research on the effects of foreign portfolio finance and business market contagion is based on formalism, which applies a positivist epistemology that includes model construction, testing hypothesis, and deductive reasoning. A different paradigmatic approach is required to investigate the prospect of adding to the understanding of market contagion. This paper makes recommendations for employing an interpretivist approach to undertake contagion research.

According to new research… (“Out of Touch: Comparing and Contrasting Positivism and Interpretivism in Social Science,” 2022) Each of the two research philosophies, positivist and interpretative, has its own particular perspective on regarding research philosophy. In terms of ontology, epistemology, and practice, there are some striking parallels between these two systems. By posing epistemological questions, ontological similarity is a resemblance in the area of epistemology, such as establishing a means to explain reality or describe the nature of the research scientist connection. Both ideologies study and comprehend a wide range of research concerns using a number of approaches. At the same time, there are a few distinctions between these two schools of thinking. These distinctions, particularly the methodological disparities between the two philosophies, have a significant impact on the development of all types of scientific inquiry. The positivist approach is based on numerical data, whereas the interpretative methodology is based on qualitative data.

**CHAPTER # 3**

Methodology

**3.1. Research purpose**

The research purpose of this thesis is Exploratory. Exploratory research is a methodology that looks at research questions that haven't been thoroughly investigated before. This form of research can be used if you have a broad notion or a specific subject that you wish to investigate but no prior knowledge or framework with which to do it.

**3.2. Research design**

This study used a literature review method and was largely supported by secondary sources, which includes incorporating and considering many peer-reviewed academic articles pertinent to the topic, as well as other sources like books.

**3.3. Data Sources**

Books and past articles are use as data sources as in this article.

**3.4. Variable Descriptions:**

**3.4. 1. Positivism**

Positivism is a phrase that refers to a method of studying society that is based solely on empirical scientific facts such as scientific trials and statistics.

**3.4. 2. Interpretivism**

An interpretivist focus on social research would be substantially more qualitative, employing techniques like unstructured interviews and participant observation.

CHAPTER # 4

**EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 POSITIVISM**

Positivism is based on the philosophical method of the natural sciences, which creates generalizations based on observable reality in society. Positivism emphasizes the value of what is offered in principle, with a focus on data and statistics that are unaffected by human observation or prejudice. (Saunders et al., n.d; Scotland, 2012). If a researcher had an extreme positivist stance, the following would occur:

The researcher would see an institution or other relevant social things as real, just as he would regard physical objects and natural occurrences. In terms of epistemology, this inquiry would concentrate on the finding of observable and quantifiable facts or regularities. Furthermore, the events to be seen and quantified should contribute to the creation of data credibility and meaning. The purpose of the researcher would be to find causal relationships between the data collected in order to make law-life generalizations comparable to those established by scientists. In addition, the researcher would use and integrate important universal concepts and rules to justify or explain the examined behavior or occurrence in enterprises.

**Table 1:** **Research philosophy based on positivism Source:**(Saunders et al., n.d.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ontology | Epistemology | Axiology | Data collection  |
| External, objective and independent of social actors | Only visible events can provide reliable data and facts. Focusing on causation and generalizations, reducing things to their most basic components | The researcher is unaffected by the data and keeps an objective posture while conducting the investigation. | Quantitative, but qualitative can be used. Highly structured, huge samples, measurement |

The following table clarifies positivism in term of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and research methodologies. The tools employed by positivism to better comprehend the natural environment are not necessarily applicable to the social realm. As a result, positivism might be seen to have certain limits. It can be difficult to use positivism in some fields of research since it aims to reduce complexity to simplicity by simplifying and regulating the available variables, while also taking into account the reality that separation of some variables may be challenging and problematic. For example, in one trial, 20 different teaching approaches were used with a total of 20000 children. Because the research did not take into consideration numerous aspects related to the current situation, several of the explored hypotheses contained in the study were not rejected. Individual attitudes and distinct life situations are examples of variables. As a result of the random reasons chosen, various predictions were listed as right, and that there was no scientific reason of human behavior that was fully tied to the unique setting. This might be a significant challenge to become more exact and take into account all aspects that may affect findings during study. (Scotland, 2012).

Additional concerns and obstacles to address as a result of adopting positivism (Saunders et al., n.d.; Scotland, 2012; Ramanathan, 2009; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Misuse of statistical tests might lead to study misunderstanding owing to erroneous statistical test selection. Furthermore, the sample size has a significant impact on the test's results and significance. In this scenario, generalizations in study may lead to the omission of individuals' intentions, and their behaviors may not be thoroughly studied and understood. In light of the nature of the author's research, more detail is required to answer the research's key question based on the viewpoints of participants. Positivism is more dependent on the existing order, with more descriptive study findings. As a result, researchers may find it difficult to get a deeper understanding of topics that are important to their research.

**4.2 INTERPRETIVISM**

 Interpretivism emerged as a result of a subjective critique of positivism. Interpretivism is much more focused with context-specific factors and traits, and it views humans as distinct from physical processes in that they give greater complexity in meanings, due to the belief that persons cannot be investigated in the same manner that physical processes can

. As a result, research in the social sciences must be distinguished from research in the natural sciences. Interpretivism takes into account variances in cultures, conditions, and eras that contribute to the emergence of various social realities. Interpretivism differs from positivism in that it seeks to incorporate variety in the insights gained rather than establishing clear and universal rules that can be generalized and applied to everyone regardless of certain key qualities and elements. (Saunders et al., n.d.; Myers & Nia, n.d.; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) Hermeneutics is the study of how to read and comprehend philosophy. It is mostly concerned with biblical and wisdom literature. Phenomenology is the study of the world via direct observation of occurrences. Symbolic interactionism: It considers symbols as social objects that provide shared meaning. Symbols, it is claimed, give methods to assist the formation of reality based on this consideration. The interpretivist approach's beliefs are as follows:

Relativist ontology: In the research, reality is seen through intersubjectivity, taking into account meanings as well as social and experiential factors. (Saunders et al., n.d.). Subjective epistemology: This method assumes that humans and their knowledge are inextricably linked, resulting in a clear link between the study and the research subject. (Saunders et al., n.d.)

**Table 2: Interpretivism is a research philosophy.** (Saunders et al., n.d.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ontology | Epistemology | Axiology | Data collection  |
| Multiple, socially created, subjective, subject to change | Social phenomena and subjective meanings Concentrate on the specifics of the circumstance, the realism behind these specifics, and the subjective meanings that motivate behaviours. | Research is subjective because the researcher is a part of what has been researched and cannot be detached. | Qualitative research, small samples, and in-depth investigations. |

The table above provides further information on interpretivism's research philosophy on ontology, epistemology, axiology, and common methodologies. Individual meanings and contributions are more responsive to interpretivism as mentioned, rather than being undermined by positivist research philosophy. Interpretive research, on the other hand, may be criticized because it dismisses information created as a universal base, doubts its validity, and requires a different set of norms than the positivist paradigm. Furthermore, interpretivism as a paradigm argues that knowledge is socially created and subject to change depending on the individual. As a result, it's reasonable to assume that research participants wouldn't offer wide interpretations. (Scotland, 2012; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Furthermore, because the data acquired and analyzed were primarily focused on a particular the situation, the point of view, and the values, adopting the interpretivist paradigm would make the findings less likely to be generalized. (Saunders et al., n.d.) By gathering and evaluating qualitative data, the interpretivism paradigm may give a better knowledge of particular situations, including such cross-cultural studies and variables driving certain development, leading to true insight and discoveries that could differ from others, as suggested by (Saunders et al., n.d.; *Qualitative Research in Business & Management*, n.d.)  Because it is based on individual contributions with awareness of many variables, adopting the interpretivist research paradigm would result in the development of high-level validity in data. (*Qualitative Research in Business & Management*, n.d.)

The interpretative paradigm described above would allow researchers to evaluate many characteristics such as behavioral features based on participant experiences, which would aid in describing reality given the interpretivist researcher's assumptions and ideas. Furthermore, the interpretive approach would allow researchers to approach the research environment and situation as unique, taking into account the conditions and people involved. This paradigm will also encourage research to become more focused on a single issue, rather than generalizing as the positivist paradigm does. (*Phenomenological Research Methods*, n.d.; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020)

Following the interpretivist paradigm, the research would acquire some common traits, which may be summarised as follows: For starters, rather than focusing on certain aspects of the event, the research would analyses the entire experience. Second, the researcher's interest, engagement, and dedication will have a significant impact on the creation of the study questions and difficulties. Third, researchers would be able to delve further into individual experiences through formal conversations and interviews. Fourth, a thorough examination of human experiences via the use of qualitative approach and procedures. Fifth, it would make it possible to use experience as a vital component and contributor to scientific study. Sixth, it would allow researchers to probe deeper into personal experience rather than relying on generalized metrics rather, as the positivist model mandates, expectations. Seventh, is deeply embedded in subjects and things, resulting in crucial discoveries and insights. (*Phenomenological Research Methods*, n.d.)

As a result of the traits that the interpretivism paradigm provides, qualitative approaches are the best ways for gaining profound insights based on a certain situation The positivist viewpoint, in contrast, would not allow for the same amount of depth and understanding. Quantitative research, on the other hand, enables researchers to become much more generalist, expressing topics in statistics and measurements rather than precise language. (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As a result, the nature of the study and its setting might impact the paradigm that is chosen.

CHAPTER # 5

**Conclusion**

The research includes the exploration, debate, and evaluation of several paradigms, specifically, the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, which are frequently used by researchers. However, some increasingly prevalent paradigms, like as pragmatism, can be studied. Researchers can examine the appropriateness of each paradigm depending on the offered debate and investigation, which is backed by a range of arguments and opinions obtained from the literature. The interpretivist philosophy and qualitative approaches would allow researchers to go deeper by exploring experiences and perceptions of a specific social setting. In contrast, the positivist paradigm, would allow researchers to rely more on statistics and generalization, resulting in the formation.

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