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Assignment: Summary of Interpretivism
and positivism.

Summary of Interpretivism:

Interpretivism

Involves researchers to interpret elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. Accordingly, ⁶⁶ Interpretive researchers assume that access to reality is only through social construction such as language, consciousness, shared meanings and instruments.

Development of interpretivist philosophy is based on the critique of positivism in social sciences. Accordingly, this philosophy emphasizes qualitative analysis over quantitative analysis.

It is associated with the philosophical position of idealism, and is used to group together diverse approaches, including social constructivism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, approaches that reject the objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independently of consciousness. It is important for the researcher as a social actor to appreciate differences between peoples.

Interpretivism research philosophy and its important aspects.

Interpretivist approach is based on naturalistic approach of data collection such as interviews and observations. Secondary data research is also popular with interpretivism philosophy. In this type of studies, meaning emerge usually towards the end of the research process. The important variations of interpretivism include the followings:

Hermeutics refers to the philosophy of interpretation and understanding. Hermeneutics mainly focuses on biblical text and wisdom literature and as such, has a little relevance to business studies.

Phenomenology is the philosophical tradition that seeks to understand the world through directly experiencing the phenomenon.

Symbolic interactionism accepts symbols as culturally derived social objects having shared meanings. According to symbolic interactionism symbols provide the means by which reality is constructed.

In general interpretivist approach is based on the following beliefs:

① Relativist ontology:

This approach perceives

reality as intersubjectively that is based on meanings and understandings on social and experiential levels.

(2) Transactional or subjectivist epistemology,
According to this approach, people can not be separated from their knowledge, therefore there is a clear link between the researcher and the subject.

Pizam and Mansfeld (2009) differentiate between positivism and Interpretivism

ASSUMPTIONS	POSITIVISM	INTERPRETIVISM
- Nature of reality	- objective - tangible single.	- socially const- - suited multiple
- Goal of research	- Explanation - strong prediction	- understanding - weak prediction
- Focus of interest	- what is general - average, representative.	- specific, unique - and deviant
- Knowledge generated	- Laws	- meanings
- subject/ - researcher relationship - desired	- Rigid - separation	- Interactive, coop- - erative, participative
- Informative	- How many - people think and - do a specific - thing or have - a specific - problem	- what some - people think - and do, what - kind of - problems they - are confronted - with, and how - they deal with - them.

Research philosophy Assignment PJ-04

Assumptions and research philosophies.

The use of Interpretivism approach in business studies involves the following principles as suggested by Klein and Myers (1999)

The fundamental principle of the Hermeneutic circle.

The principle of contextualization.

The principle of interaction between the researchers and the subjects.

The principle of abstraction and generalization.

The principle of Dialogical reasoning.

The principle of multiple Interpretations

The principle of suspicion.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interpretivism

Interpretivism disadvantage relate to its subjective nature and great room for bias on behalf of researcher, primary data generated in interpretivist studies cannot be generalized since data is heavily impacted by personal view point and values. Therefore reliability and representativeness of data is undermined to a certain extent as well.

On the positive side thanks to adoption of interpretivism, qualitative research areas such as cross-cultural difference in organization, issues of ethics, leadership

Research philosophy Assignment Pg-05

and analysis of factors impacting leadership etc can be studied in depth level.

In general if you are following interpretivism research philosophy its depth of discussion depends on your study level. For a dissertation Bachelors level it suffices to specify that you are following interpretive approach and to describe the essence of this approach in brief. For a dissertation at masters level discussion need to be expanded into large to include justification of your choice for this approach.

At a PhD level; discussion of research philosophy can cover several pages and you are expected to discuss the essence of interpretivism by referring to several relevant secondary data sources.

Your justification for the selection of interpretivism need to be offered in a succinct way in about two paragraphs.

POSITIVISM SUMMARY

It has to be known that positivism philosophy is difficult to be explained in a precise manner. The number variations in explaining positivism may be equal to the number of authors who addressed the area of research philosophy, positivism is based on the idea that science is the only way to learn about the truth.

Positivism as a philosophy adheres to view that only factual knowledge gained through observation, including measurement is trustworthy. Here studies the role of the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation in an objective way. In these type of studies research findings are usually observable and quantifiable.

Researchers warns that if you assume a positivist approach to your study then it is your belief that you are independent of your research and it can be purely objective.

Five main principles of positivism are as following.

There are no difference in the logic of inquiry across sciences.

The research should aim to explain and predict.

Research philosophy assignment Pg-07

Research should be empirically observable through human senses.

Science is not the same as the common sense.

Science must be value free and it should be judged only by logic.

Ontology Epistemology Axiology

<u>ONTOLOGY</u>	<u>EPISTEMOLOGY</u>	<u>AXIOLOGY</u>	<u>TYPICAL methods</u>
Real, external independent one true reality	Scientific method Observable and measurable facts	value free research Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched	Typically quantitative highly structured Large sample, measurement typically quantitative method of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed
Granular (things) ordered	Law like generalization Numbers causal explanation and prediction as contribution	Researcher maintains objective stance	

Research philosophy Assignment pg-08

- 1 Science as underlying ground of positivism
Science is deterministic, the role of researcher when following scientific approach is to discover specific nature of cause/relationship.
- 2 Science is having mechanical nature, researcher develops hypothesis to be proved/disproved.
- 3 Science uses methods, application of methodology involves sample selection and analysis about hypothesis.
- 4 Science deals with empiricism.
Distance between positivism and constructionism

	POSITIVISM	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM
- The observer	must be independent	is part of what is being observed.
- Human interest	should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science.
- Explanations	must demonstrate causality	Aim to understand general understandings of situations.
- Research progresses through	hypothesis and deduction	Gathers rich data.
- Concepts	operationalized so can measure	Should incorporate perspectives.
- units of analysis	Reduced to simple terms	Include complexity of whole situation.
- Generalization through	statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction.
- Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases for specific reasons.

Research Philosophy Assignment pg-09

Shortcomings of Positivism

Positivism as an epistemology is associated with the following set of disadvantages.

Firstly, positivism relies on experience as a valid source of knowledge. However, a wide range of basic and important concepts such as cause not experienced based.

Secondly, positivism assumes that all types of processes can be certain of actions of individuals/relationship between individuals.

Thirdly, adoption of positivism in business studies and other studies can be criticized for reliance on status quo, in other words research findings in positivism studies are only descriptive; thus they lack insight into in-depth issues.