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Assignment No: 02

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Subject: Research Philosophy

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Q.01:- Summary of positivism

Ans:- It has to be acknowledged that the positivism research philosophy is difficult to be explained in a precise and succinct manner. This is because there are vast differences between setting in which positivism is used by researchers. The number variations in explaining positivism may be equal to the number of authors who addressed the area of research philosophy. Nevertheless, in its essence, positivism is based on the idea that science is the only way to learn about the truth. Here we explain positivism with the focus on business studies in particular.

Positivism:-

As a philosophy, positivism adheres to the view that only "factual" knowledge gained through observation (the senses), including measurement, is trustworthy. In positivism studies the role of the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation in an objective way. In these types of studies research findings are usually observable and quantifiable. Positivism depends on quantifiable observations that

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lead to statistical analyses. It has been noted that "as a philosophy, positivism is in accordance with the empiricist view that knowledge stems from human experience. It has an atomistic, ontological view of the world as comprising discrete, observable elements and events that interact in an observable, determined and regular manner" [1].

Moreover, in positivism studies the researcher is independent from the study and there are no provisions for human interests within the study. Crowther and Lancaster (2008) [2] argue that is a general rule, positivist studies usually adopt deductive approach, whereas inductive research approach is usually associated with a phenomenology philosophy. Moreover, positivism relates to the viewpoint that researcher needs to concentrate on facts, whereas phenomenology concentrates on the meaning and has provision for human interest.

Researcher warn that "If you assume a positivist approach to your study, then it is your belief that you are independent of your research and your research can be purely objective. Independent means that you maintain minimal interaction with your research participants when carrying out your research." [3]

In other words, studies with positivist paradigm are based purely on facts and consider the world to be external and objective.

The five main principles of positivism research philosophy can be summarized as the following:

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

The research should aim to explain and predict.

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Research should be empirically observable via human senses. inductive reasoning should be used to develop statements (hypotheses) to be tested during the research process.

Science is not the same as the common sense. The common sense should not be allowed to bias the research findings.

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

The following table illustrates ontology, epistemology, axiology and typical research methods associated with positivism research philosophy.

Ontology	Epistemology	Axiology	Typical Methods
Real, external, independent	Scientific method	Value-free research	Typically deductive, highly structured
One true reality (universalism)	Observable and measurable facts	Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched	Large samples, measurement, typically quantitative method of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed
Granular (things)	Law-like generalizations		
Ordered	Numbers	Researcher maintaining objective stance	
	Causal explanation and prediction as contribution		

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## Ontology, epistemology, axiology and typical research methods associated with positivism research philosophy.

Science as an Underlying Ground for Positivism  
Positivism often involves the use of existing theory to develop hypotheses to be tested during the research process. Science can be specified as a cornerstone in positivism research philosophy.

Specifically, positivism relies on the following aspects of the science.

1. Science is deterministic. Scientific approach is based on assumption that X causes Y under certain circumstances. The role of researcher when following the scientific approach is to discover specific nature of cause and effect relationships.
2. Science is mechanistic. Mechanical nature of scientific approach can be explained in a way that researchers develop hypotheses to be proved or disproved via application of specific research methods. This leads to the fact that.
3. Science uses method. Chosen methods are applied mechanically in order to operationalize theory or hypothesis. Application of methodology involves selection of sample, measurements, analysis and reaching conclusions about hypotheses.
4. Science deals with empiricism. In other words, science only deals with what can be seen or measured. From this perspective, science can be assessed as objective.

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## Differences between positivism and Interpretivis.

	Positivism	Social Constructionism
The observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human Interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypotheses and deductions	Gather rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be operationalised so that they can be measured	Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to simplest terms	May include the complexity of 'whole' situations
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

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Differences between positivism and Social constructionism

	Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenology Paradigm
Basic notions	The world is perceived as external and objective	The world is perceived to be socially constructed and subjective
	Independency of the observer	Observer is considered a part of the object of observation
	Value-free approach to science	Human interests drives science
Responsibilities of researcher	Focusing on facts	To be focusing on meanings
	Causalities and fundamental laws are searched	Aiming to understand the meanings of events
	Phenomenon are reduced to the simplest elements	Exploring the totality of each individual case
	Hypotheses formulation and testing them	Ideas are developed by induction from data

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Most suitable research methods

Concepts have to be operationalized

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Using several methods in order to different aspects of phenomena

Sampling

Samples have to be large

Small samples are analyzed in a greater depth or over longer period of time

### Shortcomings of positivism

Positivism as an epistemology is associated with 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, time and space are not based on experience.

Secondly, positivism assumes that all types of processes can be perceived as a certain variation of actions of individuals or relationships between individuals.

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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.

Q.2: Summary of Interpretivism (interpretivist)

Ans:- Interpretivism, also known as interpretivist involves researchers to interpret elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. Accordingly, "interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments." [1] Development of interpretivism philosophy is based on the critique of positivism in social sciences. Accordingly, this philosophy emphasizes qualitative analysis over quantitative analysis.

Interpretivism 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. According to interpretivist approach, it is important for the researcher as a social actor to appreciate differences between people. Moreover, interpretivism studies usually focus on meaning and may employ multiple methods in order to reflect different aspects of the issue.

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# Interpretivism Research Philosophy

## Important Aspects of Interpretivism

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, meanings emerge usually towards the end of the research process.

The most noteworthy variations of interpretivism include the following:

Hermeneutics refers to the philosophy of interpretation and understanding. Hermeneutics mainly focuses on biblical texts 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 phenomena.

Symbolic interactionism accepts symbols as culturally derived social objects having shared meanings. According to symbolic interactionism symbols provide the mean 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 understanding on social and experiential levels.

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2: Transactional or subjectivist epistemology. According to this approach, people cannot be separated from their knowledge; therefore there is a clear link between the researcher and research subject.

The basic differences between positivism and interpretivism are illustrated by Pizam and Mansfeld (2009) in the following manner:

Assumption Nature of reality	Positivism Objective, tangible, single	Interpretivism Socially constructed multiple
Goal of research	Explanation, strong prediction	Understanding weak prediction
Focus of interest	What is general average and representative	What is specific, unique, and deviant
Knowledge generated	Laws Absolute (time, context and value free)	Meanings Relative (Time, Context, culture, value bound)
Subject/Researcher relationship	Rigid separation	Interactive, Cooperative, Participative

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Desired information

How many people think and do a specific thing, or have a specific problem

What some people think and do, what kind of problem they are confronted with, and how they deal with them

## 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 principal of Contextualization.

The principal of interaction between the Researcher and the subjects.

The principal of Abstraction and Generalization.

The principal of Dialogical Reasoning

The principal of Multiple Interpretations

The principal of Suspicion

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Interpretivism

Main disadvantages associated with interpretivism relate to subjective nature of this approach and great room for bias on behalf of researcher. Primary data generated in

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Interpretivist studies cannot be generalized since data is heavily impacted by personal view-point and values. Therefore, reliability and representativeness of data undermined to a certain extent as well.

On the positive side, thanks to adoption of interpretivism, qualitative research areas such as cross-cultural differences in organizations, issues of ethics, leadership and analysis of factors impacting leadership etc. can be studied in a great level of depth. Primary data generated via interpretivism studies might be associated with a high level of validity because data in such studies tends to be trust-worthy and honest.

Generally, if you are following interpretivism research philosophy in your dissertation, the depth of discussion of research philosophy depends on the level of your studies. For a dissertation at Bachelor's level it suffices to specify that you are following interpretivism approach and to describe the essence of this approach in a short paragraph. For a dissertation at Masters level discussion needs to be expanded into 2-3 paragraphs to include justification of your choice for interpretivist approach.

At a PhD level, on the other hand, discussion of research philosophy can cover several pages and you are expected to discuss the essence of interpretivism by referring to several relevant secondary

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

The End

