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ABSTRACT

In the field of sociology, researchers require a theoretical approach when conducting scientific research due to its significant importance in laying the foundation for understanding the studied phenomenon. Many students and researchers inquire about the most suitable approach that contributes to providing the research with a conceptual model and intellectual and ideological frameworks. These frameworks support the researcher in the process of analysis and interpretation of the research topic, aiming to achieve logical sequence and methodological coherence throughout each stage of the research. Consequently, this article aims to explore the theoretical approach and its application in scientific research in the social sciences, relying on the following elements:

1) Concepts and meanings; 2) The relationship between theory and scientific research; 3) Why we need a theoretical approach in scientific research?; 4) Employing the theoretical approach in scientific research; 5) How to formulate the theoretical approach in the theoretical aspect.

Keywords: Approach, Theory, Theoretical Approach, Scientific Research.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical approach is considered the intellectual framework that establishes the research, rendering it characterized by precision, strength, and depth in its treatment and analysis. This is evident through its concepts and ideas present in all elements and components of the research, starting with the formulation of the problem and scientific inquiries that transform into hypotheses directly related to the concepts. These hypotheses are then linked to variables that evolve into theoretical chapters within the body of the research. The theoretical approach is also apparent in the analysis of results, examining the level of compatibility and similarity between the current research and the theoretical approach, as well as the extent of the differences between them. Furthermore, it surfaces in the recommendations and the conclusion of the research.

Hence, when conducting scientific research, the researcher embarks on one or multiple theoretical approaches that align with the nature of the studied subject. These approaches necessitate intellectual and cognitive integration, avoiding contradictions when examining the subject from different perspectives. Each theoretical approach has its own concepts, foundations, tools, hypotheses, and intellectual and methodological issues.

Therefore, when delving into the theoretical approach, the researcher must highlight its characteristics that distinguish it from other approaches in constructing the research problem until reaching general results and conclusions. Ultimately, this contributes to the in-depth study, analysis, and interpretation of the studied social phenomenon, unveiling its dimensions comprehensively.

1. Concepts and Significances

Concepts are fundamental methodological steps that every researcher employs to identify and elucidate their ideas through analyzing the relationships among variables that illustrate the fundamental aspects of the research topic. These relationships are primarily grounded in theoretical references by addressing essential concepts in the research. In this research paper, we rely on the following concepts:

A. Approach Concept

The approach is a perspective or system of sociological analysis and its orientations. According to Ahmed Zaki (1977), it is "a set of ideas for the sociological analysis and its directions" (Dictionary of Social Sciences Terminology, p. 24). The approach comprises a set of ideas used by the researcher to interpret human behavior, aiding in explaining the studied phenomenon in its interactions with the environment and social situations.

B. Theory Concept

Karl Lang (1986) defines theory as "a set of concepts with relationships between them, presented in an organized manner to study the phenomenon by specifying the relationship between variables with the aim of clarifying and predicting the studied phenomenon." It is a set of generalizations through which the researcher attempts to interpret the phenomenon in a systematic scientific manner. It is a formulated set of concepts that organize its observations and inferences, predict phenomena, interpret them, and lead to specific testable predictions (Munther Al-Damin, Basics of Scientific Research, 2007, p. 39).

Saad Al-Haj bin Jakhdal explains the difference between approach and theory as follows: The approach, in its broadest meanings, is the method by which a person, scholar, or researcher deals with the subject or the method they advance in something. It consists of theoretical propositions that do not rise to the level of theory, as it is a unique, non-traditional method of using scientific theory (Saad Al-Haj bin Jakhdal, Preliminary Frameworks for Scientific Research: From Passion to Hypothesis, 2019, p. 98).

The following figure illustrates the relationship between the approach and theory :

Approaches Tools
Methods..... MethodsData Collection
Theories..... Field

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for the Relationship between Approach and Theory

Source: Saad Al-

Haj bin Jakhdal: Preliminary Frameworks for Scientific Research: From Passion to Hypothesis, the aforementioned reference, 2019, p. 99.

C. Concept of Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach is the theoretical framework adopted by the researcher in their work, signifying their reliance on a theory or a set of theories during their study and research (Jamal Maatouk: Methodology of Social Sciences and Social Research, 2013, p. 53).

The theoretical approach involves embracing a scientific theory to provide a conceptual interpretive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Through adopting various concepts, issues, statements, intellectual foundations, and hypotheses, the theoretical approach utilizes them to analyze the interconnections present in the study. Its concepts and ideas emerge within the context of the problem statement and hypotheses, dealing with variables, constructing theoretical chapters, choosing data collection tools, analyzing results, and formulating recommendations. In essence, it permeates all stages of the research from its inception to its conclusion.

The characteristics of a good theoretical approach, as outlined by Saad Al-Haj bin Jakhdal in his valuable book "Preliminary Frameworks for Scientific Research: From Passion to Hypothesis, 2019," are as follows:

A. Simplicity of the Good Approach: The researcher aims to narrow the focus to a specific angle.

B. Commitment to the Essence of the Theoretical Framework: The researcher adheres to the core of the theoretical framework from which the approach is derived.

C. Integration of Multiple Specializations in Understanding the Theory: Balancing between different disciplines to comprehend the theory.

D. Development of a Unique Approach: When creating a specific approach, the researcher must consider both modernity and authenticity.

E. Derivation from Practical Models: Good approaches are extracted from accomplished practical models related to the theory.

(Saad Al-Haj bin Jakhdal: Preliminary Frameworks for Scientific Research: From Passion to Hypothesis, the aforementioned reference, 2019, p. 99).

D. Concept of Scientific Research

In language, research is defined as asking about something and inquiring into it, as Ibn Manzur states, or it is examination and inspection, as Al-Jurjani mentions. In the conceptual sense, research is the demonstration of the relationship between two variables through inference, or it is the pursuit, investigation, and dissemination of truth among people.

Scientific research is the exploration of truth with the aim of proclaiming and declaring it without being confined to the researcher's personal or subjective motives (Mahmoud Tawfik: Methodology of Scientific Research with Application to Geographic Research, 2007, p. 21). Scientific research is an organized process through which the researcher reaches answers to posed questions. It is systematic inquiry following specific scientific methods and approaches for scientific facts, aiming to confirm their accuracy or modify and add new information to them (Ammar Bouhouch, Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Dhneibat: Research Methodologies and Research Preparation Methods, 2014, p. 12).

In general, the term scientific research encompasses general points that define the concept, such as:

- Research is a process of mobilizing things, concepts, and symbols.

- It is a means of organized, precise inquiry or investigation.
- The researcher conducts their research to discover more information or new relationships.
- The goal of research is to develop, correct, or achieve existing theories or information.
- The researcher follows the steps of the scientific method, especially concerning the selection of appropriate methods and reliable and valid tools to achieve this goal (Mohammed Al-Ghareeb Abdul Kareem: Scientific Research, Design, Method, and Procedures, 1982, pp. 20-21).

2- The Relationship between Theory and Scientific Research

A. The Role of Theory in Research:

- Theory serves research in various ways, including:
- Defining the study, assisting in the selection of aspects of the studied phenomenon.
- Providing the research with a conceptual model that aids the researcher in their inquiry.
- Summarizing.
- Drawing similarities.
- Predicting.
- Guiding towards undiscovered areas.

B. The Role of Research in Theory

- Research contributes to theory in the following ways:
- Contributes to building theory through the obtained results.
- Examines existing theories.
- Reframes theory.
- Refocuses theory.

The research also contributes to the discovery of new facts or the examination of existing facts, attempting to explain and clarify them. It seeks to understand the relationships between social phenomena and tries to develop scientific tools that allow the study, analysis, interpretation, and prediction of various human activities and behaviors.

On this basis, the relationship between theory and scientific research is interactive, interconnected, and complementary. When formulating the research problem, the researcher needs a theoretical foundation to organize their thoughts and clarify their methodological and cognitive direction. This is achieved through the use of concepts and ideas that are relevant to scientific research. The researcher resorts to a theoretical approach to align the research with academic scientific standards.

The research problem, presented as a primary scientific question and subsidiary questions, prompts the researcher to later seek answers through scientific research. This process is organized and involves a meticulous attempt to find realistic solutions to the questions by following scientific steps, practical procedures, and using scientific tools, techniques, and methodologies.

3- Why Do We Need Theoretical Approach in Scientific Research:

The theoretical approach acts as the umbrella under which the researcher operates, and its influence is palpable throughout the entire research process. It comprises a set of concepts and ideas that explain and interpret the phenomenon. Here are several reasons why the theoretical approach is crucial in scientific research:

- **Supports Analysis and Interpretation:** Assists the researcher in analyzing, interpreting, addressing, and predicting the research problem.
- **Logical Basis for Research Structure:** Reveals the logical basis behind dividing the research into parts and elements.
- **Guidance and Methodological Clarification:** Guides the researcher and clarifies their methodological stance.
- **Defines Research Boundaries:** Sets boundaries for the topic, placing the research within a specific field.
- **Source of Hypotheses:** Provides a source for formulating hypotheses.
- **Clarifies Conceptual Limits:** Helps the researcher understand the limits of concepts used in the current study.
- **Aids in Data Collection Design:** Assists in the precise design of data collection tools.
- **Facilitates Analysis and Interpretation of Results:** Aids in analyzing and interpreting results by providing a set of tools, concepts, principles, ideas, and issues.
- **Transforms Research Identity:** Shifts the research from a general nature to a sociological one, giving it a distinct sociological identity.

4- Utilizing Theoretical Approach in Research

The researcher can identify the most suitable theoretical approach for their research topic through thorough and careful reading of various theoretical traditions in their field of specialization. To effectively employ the theoretical approach, attention should be given to the following points:

1. **Researching Ideas and Theories:** Searching for theoretical ideas and concepts and documenting them for use in the research.
2. **Identifying Pioneers in the Field:** Knowing the leading theorists and scholars in the field, paying attention to their ideas and statements to use them as references in the research.
3. **Defining Theoretical Terms and Concepts:** Writing down the terms and concepts of the theory, which are key to the approach and enable the researcher to understand its research and methodological orientation.

For example:

Functional-Structural Approach: Key concepts and ideas of the functional-structural approach revolve around construction, function, balance, coordination, unity, stability, functional support, functional analysis, structural analysis, social action, functional requirements, social system, and social integration and solidarity. This theory is concerned with explaining issues covering wide sectors of society, delving into deep-rooted aspects of people's lives such as beliefs, ceremonies, marriage rituals, mourning, values, patterns, and more. It focuses on interpreting these entities as comprehensive social systems.

Marxist Approach: The Marxist approach centers around concepts like conflict, social class, infrastructure, forces and means of production, superstructure, patterns of thoughts and beliefs, social consciousness, alienation, and social contradictions. It critically examines the social and economic structures, emphasizing the role of power, class struggle, and the economic base in shaping society.

Fourth: Utilizing Existing Studies Applying the Same Theories

Researchers may adopt a pre-existing scientific theory, such as Michel Crozier's Strategic Analysis, if their research pertains to organizational work and power dynamics. This theory encompasses concepts like organizational power, strategic actor, collective behaviors, individual behaviors, issues, stakes, objectives, tangible actions, strategy, control over others, zone of doubt and suspicion, limited rationality, play and maneuver, social construction, and interaction among actors in the organization.

Alternatively, a researcher might opt for a deductive methodology, not relying on a single scientific theory but rather incorporating ideas and concepts from various theories. This approach involves synthesizing multiple theories to explain interrelated research variables cohesively. The choice of approaches depends on objective criteria related to the nature and goals of the research, aligning with the suitable methods, tools, concepts, premises, and ideas.

In formulating the theoretical approach in research on the theoretical aspect, the researcher must follow the following essential steps in crafting the theoretical framework in the introductory chapter of the study:

- a. Define the theoretical approach by elucidating the theoretical framework to which it belongs.
- b. Provide a historical overview of its emergence and development.
- c. Highlight its pioneers, scholars, prominent ideas, hypotheses, foundations, and issues.
- d. Emphasize the principles upon which it is built.
- e. Highlight its concepts and terminologies, aiming to establish connections between the concepts of this approach and those of the research being conducted. The researcher should attempt to relate the approach to the independent and dependent study variables, illustrating how the approach addresses them. The researcher should elaborate extensively on the extent of congruence or divergence between the results obtained through the research and the theoretical approach employed, indicating whether the results align with or differ from the chosen theoretical approach.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical approach is a crucial aspect that no researcher can overlook in their study, as it constitutes a decisive stage in scientific research that directs it toward choosing appropriate paths and methods. The researcher aims to uncover new facts, explain and clarify them, and elucidate the relationships between the variables included in the theoretical aspect of the research. This is achieved by starting from the basic assumptions of the theoretical approach, aligning them with the nature and objectives of the subject, and adopting suitable methods, tools, techniques, ideas, and foundations. This contributes to unifying the research elements and establishing it scientifically. The researcher can rely on a single theoretical approach or multiple approaches to provide a comprehensive picture in the study, analysis, and interpretation, attempting to identify integrative relationships in the variables under investigation.

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