

Why Sociological approaches in sociological research are multiple Lamouri Mehdi ^{1,*}, Samir Grid ²,

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Abstract

In this article, we will attempt to answer the following question : Why do theoretical approaches in sociological research vary ? To do so, we will first define the sociological approach and sociological research, then delve into the significance of sociological approaches in sociological research. Finally, we will explore in depth the reasons behind the diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research.

Keywords :

approach, Sociological approach, sociological research, diversity of sociological approaches

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- Introduction :

Sociological research encompasses a wide range of phenomena, from social interactions to social institutions and cultural practices. To fully understand and analyze these complex social phenomena, sociologists employ various theoretical approaches. This diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research arises from the recognition that the social world is multifaceted, dynamic, and cannot be adequately explained by a single perspective.

One key reason for the proliferation of theoretical approaches in sociological research is the inherent complexity of social life. Societal structures, power dynamics, cultural norms, and individual agency all contribute to the intricate tapestry of social reality. Different theoretical perspectives offer distinct lenses through which sociologists can examine and interpret these social phenomena. Whether it is the structural-functionalist perspective, symbolic interactionism, conflict theory, or postmodernism, each theoretical approach highlights different aspects of social life, shedding light on unique dimensions of social phenomena.

Moreover, the diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research reflects the evolving nature of social theory itself. Sociologists continually develop and refine theoretical frameworks to capture the nuances and complexities of contemporary social issues. The field of sociology embraces a pluralistic approach that recognizes the value of multiple theoretical perspectives in uncovering the intricacies of social phenomena. This openness to diverse theoretical approaches fosters intellectual dialogue, encourages critical thinking, and contributes to the advancement of sociological knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the sociological approach is considered a strategic choice for researchers as it helps them access scientific facts and underlying patterns that are clearly explained to them. It enables them to understand the meanings formed by the interconnected relationships that constitute the phenomenon. The diversity of theoretical approaches prevents researchers from getting lost or scattered, and provides them with a sociological analytical framework that stimulates their imagination. This enables them to use sociological approaches that aid in understanding, analyzing, and interpreting field data, uncovering its dimensions, indicators, and implications.

The justification for the multiplicity of sociological approaches lies in the diversity of perspectives and understanding of social phenomena. Therefore, researchers must approach these approaches with openness and a deep understanding of their mechanisms and rationale. This diversity underscores the reality that social phenomena are highly complex, and in order to understand their underlying patterns, we must break away from a single interpretation. The diversity of sociological approaches is the only way to achieve this comprehensiveness.

Furthermore, the adoption of multiple theoretical approaches allows researchers to explore different levels of analysis and consider various explanatory factors. Sociological phenomena are often influenced by a multitude of factors, including individual actions, social structures, historical contexts, and cultural values. By drawing on different theoretical perspectives, sociologists can gain a comprehensive understanding of these phenomena, unraveling their intricate connections and uncovering their underlying mechanisms.

Based on this understanding, in this article, we will attempt to answer the following question: Why do theoretical approaches in sociological research vary? Therefore, it is necessary first to define the sociological approach and the sociologist's research, then delve into the importance of theoretical approaches in studies, and finally address the reasons for the diversity of theoretical approaches related to the studied phenomenon. This comprehensive approach provides us with an idea of the analytical model adopted by the study.

I. conceptual definition

I. 1. The Sociological approach

The sociological approach refers to the systematic study and analysis of social phenomena, utilizing theoretical frameworks and empirical research methods. It aims to understand the social world, including social structures, interactions, institutions, and cultural processes, by examining patterns, causes, and consequences of social behavior (Giddens, 2006, pp 77- 78)

In other words, the sociological approach involves the systematic study and analysis of social phenomena, using theoretical frameworks and empirical research methods. Its main objective is to gain a

comprehensive understanding of the social world by examining various aspects such as social structures, interactions, institutions, and cultural processes. By studying patterns, causes, and consequences of social behavior, sociologists aim to uncover the underlying dynamics that shape and influence society. This approach emphasizes the importance of examining social context, historical factors, and cultural influences in order to comprehend the complexities of human behavior and social systems.

The sociological approach involves the application of sociological theories and research methods to investigate and interpret social phenomena. It focuses on examining social relationships, social structures, and social processes to uncover underlying patterns, dynamics, and meanings in society (Andersen & Howard F. Taylor, 2013, pp 13- 14)

Sociological approach refers to the perspective that emphasizes the role of social factors in shaping individual and collective behavior. It examines social phenomena through the lens of social structures, cultural norms, power relations, and social interactions, seeking to understand how these factors influence human behavior and societal outcomes.

The sociological approach encompasses the theoretical frameworks and research methodologies employed by sociologists to study and explain social phenomena. It involves the examination of social structures, social processes, and social interactions to understand the complexities and dynamics of society

In the book "Sociology: A Global Perspective" by Joan Ferrante, the sociological approach is defined as follows: "The sociological approach is a way of seeing and understanding the social world by analyzing social behavior, social institutions, and social structures. It involves studying how individuals and groups are shaped by social forces and how they, in turn, shape society (Ferrante-Wallace, 2011, p 3)

One of the key objectives of the sociological approach is to investigate the ways in which individuals and groups are influenced and molded by social forces. These social forces can be diverse and encompass factors such as culture, norms, values, social class, gender roles, and institutions. By studying how these social forces impact people's behaviors, choices, and interactions, sociologists aim to gain insight into the mechanisms that shape human actions within the larger societal context.

Additionally, the sociological approach also examines how individuals and groups, through their collective actions and interactions, play a role in shaping society. This includes understanding how social structures and institutions are formed and maintained, and how they, in turn, influence individual and group behaviors.

Overall, the sociological approach provides a comprehensive perspective that delves into the intricate interplay between individuals, social structures, and societal processes. Through careful analysis and empirical research, sociologists strive to uncover patterns, causes, and consequences of social behavior, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics that shape human societies.

The sociological approach involves investigating and understanding the social world through systematic research, theoretical analysis, and empirical observation. It focuses on the study of social relationships, institutions, culture, and social processes to reveal patterns, trends, and underlying mechanisms that shape human behavior and society (Macionis & Ken Plummer, 2018, p 8)

The sociological approach, in this sense, is a method of studying and comprehending the social world through systematic research, theoretical analysis, and empirical observation. It seeks to explore various aspects of society, including social relationships, institutions, culture, and social processes, with the aim of unveiling patterns, trends, and underlying mechanisms that influence human behavior and shape the broader society.

By employing rigorous research methodologies and theoretical frameworks, sociologists delve into the complexities of social life to uncover the interplay between individuals, groups, and societal structures. Through empirical observation and analysis, they strive to understand how social interactions, cultural norms, and institutional practices impact human behavior and contribute to the construction of social reality.

Sociological approach refers to the application of sociological theories and methods to explore and explain social phenomena. It seeks to uncover the social forces, norms, and values that influence individual actions and societal outcomes. Sociologists utilize qualitative and quantitative research to gain insights into various aspects of human behavior within diverse social contexts (Ritzer, 2011, p 6)

In another context, the sociological approach is defined as follows: "seeks to explain human behavior by examining the broader social forces that shape individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and actions. It emphasizes

the importance of social interactions, culture, and social institutions in influencing human behavior (Kendall, 2012, pp 13- 17)

In a sociological context, this definition highlights that the sociological approach aims to understand and explain human behavior by examining the larger social forces that influence individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and actions. It emphasizes the significance of social interactions, cultural norms, and social institutions in shaping how individuals behave and interact with one another in society. The sociological perspective recognizes that individual behavior is not solely determined by personal traits, but is heavily influenced by the social environment in which individuals live and interact. By studying these broader social factors, sociologists can gain insights into the patterns and dynamics of human behavior within different social contexts.

The sociological approach is "a method of studying human behavior and society that emphasizes the role of social forces and institutions in shaping individual behavior and social outcomes. It looks at how social structures, norms, and values influence human actions and interactions (Schaefer, 2013, p 8)

In a sociological context, the definition highlights that the sociological approach is a method of studying human behavior and society that gives prominence to the influence of social forces and institutions in shaping individual behavior and social outcomes. It examines how social structures, norms, and values impact human actions and interactions. This approach emphasizes that human behavior is not solely determined by individual characteristics but is deeply influenced by the broader social context in which individuals exist. By exploring the interplay between social factors and human behavior, sociologists seek to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and patterns of social life.

Based on the previous knowledge, we can define the sociological approach procedurally as follows: "A systematic method of studying human behavior and society, which involves using theoretical frameworks, conducting empirical research, and analyzing data to explore social phenomena, understand social relationships, and investigate the impact of social forces on individuals and groups. The sociological approach emphasizes evidence-based and purposeful methods to uncover patterns, trends, and underlying mechanisms that shape human behavior and social structures. Through this approach, sociologists aim to gain a deeper insight into the complexities of society and contribute to the understanding of social dynamics."

I. 2. Sociological research:

Sociological research involves the scientific exploration of social issues, utilizing empirical evidence to develop theories and draw conclusions about human behavior, social institutions, and societal changes. It employs various research methodologies to gather data and test hypotheses (Babbie, 2016, p 4)

In a sociological context, the term "sociological research" refers to the systematic and scientific investigation of social issues and phenomena. This research approach utilizes empirical evidence, which means data gathered through observation or experimentation, to develop and refine sociological theories and draw meaningful conclusions. Sociologists use a wide range of research methodologies, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, to collect data and analyze it. These methodologies may include surveys, interviews, ethnographic studies, content analysis, and statistical analyses, among others.

Sociological research encompasses the systematic inquiry into social structures, behavior, and experiences of individuals and groups. It utilizes various research designs and methods to collect and analyze data, aiming to contribute to the understanding of social phenomena and societal trends. Sociological research plays a vital role in addressing social challenges and informing public policies (Neuman, 2014, p 21)

This definition emphasizes that sociological research involves a comprehensive exploration of social structures, behaviors, and experiences of individuals and groups. Through the use of diverse research designs and methods, it seeks to collect and analyze data to enhance our understanding of social phenomena and trends in society. Sociological research plays a crucial role in addressing social challenges and informing public policies.

By delving into social interactions, institutions, and cultural values, sociological research aims to uncover intricate details that shape human behavior and societal development. It serves as a powerful tool to discover underlying mechanisms behind social changes and transformations. Moreover, sociological research plays a vital role in confronting pressing social issues by identifying root causes of various problems and proposing effective solutions.

In another context, Alan Bryman defines sociological research as the systematic study of the behavior of individuals, groups, and societies, employing a variety of empirical, theoretical, and methodological approaches

In a sociological context, this definition refers to the systematic examination and analysis of the behavior of individuals, groups, and societies. Sociologists utilize a wide range of empirical, theoretical, and methodological approaches to investigate and gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena. The focus of this study is to explore the complexities of human interactions, group dynamics, and societal structures, aiming to uncover patterns, trends, and underlying mechanisms that shape human behavior and social dynamics.

In another context, it is worth mentioning that some researchers define sociological research refers to the scientific investigation of social phenomena, aiming to discover patterns, causes, and consequences of human behavior within a social context. It employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine social relationships, institutions, and cultural norms (Schutt, 2012, pp 9- 12).

In a sociological context, this definition highlights that sociological research involves conducting scientific inquiries into social phenomena. The primary objective is to uncover patterns, reasons, and outcomes of human behavior within the framework of society. To achieve this, sociological researchers utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. They examine various aspects of social life, such as social relationships, institutions, and cultural norms, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of human society and behavior.

Sociological research involves a systematic inquiry into social structures and processes, emphasizing the interplay between individual agency and societal structures. Researchers utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods to study social phenomena, seeking to uncover the factors that shape human behavior and contribute to social order and change (Merton & Patricia L. Kendall, 1946, p 67-72).

Sociological research is a rigorous and organized investigation that focuses on understanding the intricate relationships between social structures and processes, while also highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual actions and the broader societal context. Researchers in sociology employ a diverse range of research methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, to explore various social phenomena. The ultimate goal is to shed light on the underlying factors that influence human behavior, as well as their impact on shaping social order and driving societal transformations. Through this systematic inquiry, sociologists strive to gain deeper insights into the complexities of human interactions and the intricate mechanisms that govern societies.

In this sense, sociological research requires unraveling the social reality, starting from describing the studied social phenomenon and uncovering its hidden patterns through analysis, interpretation, and attempting to reach its indicators, meanings, and dimensions.

Based on the above, we can define sociological research procedurally as a type of scientific inquiry that aims to uncover the causes of a particular social phenomenon or issue, address it, and propose appropriate solutions using logical and systematic methods that align with lived realities.

II-The importance of the sociological approach in sociological research :

The sociological approach is of paramount significance in sociological research as it provides a systematic and comprehensive framework to study and understand complex social phenomena. Sociologists use this approach to investigate various aspects of human behavior, social structures, and interactions within societies.

Moreover, the sociological approach holds significant importance in sociological research as it provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for studying and understanding various social phenomena and human behavior. By employing this approach, researchers can gain insights into the complexities of social interactions, structures, and institutions, and how they influence individuals and society as a whole.

According to C. Wright Mills in his book "The Sociological Imagination," the sociological approach encourages researchers to go beyond individualistic explanations and consider broader social forces and historical contexts that shape human actions and behaviors. Mills argues that the sociological imagination

enables researchers to connect personal troubles with public issues, thus revealing the larger social patterns influencing individual lives (MILLS, 1959, p25)

Another prominent sociologist, Emile Durkheim, emphasizes the importance of the sociological approach in understanding social facts, collective representations, and the role of social institutions in regulating human behavior. In his seminal work "The Division of Labor in Society," Durkheim explores how social integration and solidarity are achieved through social institutions, and how these institutions contribute to the cohesion and stability of societies (DURKHEIM, 1895, pp50-75).

Another influential scholar, Weber (1922), introduced the concept of *verstehen*, which underscores the need for researchers to empathize and understand the subjective meanings individuals attach to their actions. This interpretive approach deepens the comprehension of social behavior and interactions (WEBER, 1922).

Furthermore, Goffman (1959) contributed to the sociological approach by focusing on symbolic interactions and the ways in which individuals perform roles in social situations. His insights reveal the intricacies of face-to-face interactions and their role in shaping social identities (Goffman, 1959, pp176-182).

By employing sociological theories and research methods, sociologists gain valuable insights into the complexities of social life. For instance, quantitative studies enable researchers to identify statistical trends and correlations, while qualitative research methods, as advocated by Becker (1996), and allow for a more in-depth exploration of individuals' perspectives and experiences (Becker, 1996, p164).

In conclusion, the sociological approach is an essential foundation for sociological research, providing a diverse range of theoretical frameworks and empirical methodologies. By drawing upon the works of seminal scholars like Mills, Durkheim, Weber, and Goffman, sociologists can navigate the multifaceted dimensions of human society, uncovering profound insights into the dynamics of social life.

Through the sociological approach, researchers gain insights into the interplay between individual agency and social structures. They analyze how societal norms, values, and cultural beliefs influence human actions and interactions. By employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, sociologists uncover the underlying mechanisms that contribute to social order and change.

Moreover, the sociological approach plays a crucial role in addressing contemporary societal challenges such as inequality, discrimination, and social injustice. By examining the interconnections between individuals and society, sociologists can propose informed solutions and policy recommendations to address these issues effectively.

III-Why do theoretical approaches vary in sociological research?

In sociology, the multiplicity of theoretical approaches in research is a fundamental aspect that enriches the discipline and enhances its understanding of complex social phenomena. This diversity arises due to several factors that shape the sociological landscape and the nature of human societies.

In this context, there are intersecting and interconnected relationships between social sciences, which necessitates utilizing this openness to analyze facts and construct data. The essence of sociological research lies in the unification of these relationships, with a focus on both explicit and hidden details. It cannot be achieved through a closed methodological approach, but rather through an open and pluralistic methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative research tools. Today, there is a pressing need for an open sociological science that borrows methodologies, concepts, and theories from various disciplines.

With this understanding, the sociological researcher should adopt an open sociological perspective on the terrain of society to comprehensively grasp reality. This can be achieved by incorporating theoretical approaches from other fields of knowledge, enabling a deeper understanding of social reality. It should be acknowledged that social phenomena cannot be isolated from their cognitive and social context, as they are shaped by various social, cultural, and historical processes.

The diversity of sociological approaches leads us to emphasize the following methodological affirmations:

- Social facts, as social meanings and structures, are complex, interwoven, and relational, requiring an associative mode of thinking that recognizes the importance of each element in the reading and interpretation.

- The logic of constant pluralism in dealing with these facts necessitates various approaches and records, objectively explained, for example, by referring to history or the pattern of historical action and reflection on the past and present.
- Social facts, as holistic phenomena, require a holistic knowledge that goes beyond reductionism, relying on readings, tools, and approaches from multiple sciences, including sociology, history, and anthropology.
- An associative mode of thinking and a holistic approach to social facts do not necessarily negate the original specialized perspective from which the approach originates. Thinking holistically does not imply giving up the fundamental principles of sociological paradigm (Al-Atari, 2012, p. 148)

The plethora of theoretical approaches in sociological research is a valuable asset that enhances the field's capacity to unravel the complexities of human behavior and social structures. By embracing diverse perspectives, sociologists can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, accommodate dynamic changes, and foster critical analysis to advance the discipline. Interdisciplinary connections and cultural sensitivity further strengthen the significance of employing multiple theoretical frameworks in sociological research

The diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research is driven by the contribution they make to enriching the field and enhancing our understanding of complex social phenomena. This is achieved through the following aspects:

Complexity of Social Reality: Societies are intricate and multifaceted systems influenced by various social, cultural, economic, and political factors. The multiplicity of human interactions and behaviors necessitates a wide range of theoretical lenses to grasp the intricacies of social reality (Babbie, 2016, p. 13).

Comprehensive Understanding: Different theoretical frameworks offer unique viewpoints that enable researchers to comprehensively analyze and interpret social phenomena. A single approach may not capture the complete picture, while multiple perspectives allow for a holistic understanding of complex social issues (Kuhn, 1970, p. 82).

Exploration of Diverse Perspectives: Sociological research seeks to explore diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals and communities. Embracing various theoretical approaches allows researchers to acknowledge and respect the diversity of human experiences (Andersen & Howard F. Taylor, 2013, p. 32)

Accommodating Change: Societies constantly undergo transformations due to technological advancements, globalization, and socio-political developments. By employing diverse theoretical frameworks, researchers can adapt to evolving social contexts and examine emerging social issues (Macionis & Ken Plummer, 2018, p. 31).

Critical Analysis: Engaging with multiple theoretical perspectives encourages critical analysis of existing theories. Scholars can evaluate the strengths and limitations of each approach, paving the way for theoretical advancements and improvements (Giddens, 2006, p. 18).

Interdisciplinary Connections: Sociology intersects with various disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, economics, and political science. Embracing diverse theoretical approaches facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and enriches the exploration of complex social phenomena (Collins, 2004, p. 48).

Cultural Sensitivity: Different societies possess unique cultural norms and values. Employing diverse theoretical perspectives allows researchers to consider the cultural context when studying social phenomena, ensuring cultural sensitivity and avoiding ethnocentrism (Schaefer, 2013, p. 15).

Conclusion :

Undoubtedly, the diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research provides the researcher with varied perspectives and profound insights for analysis and interpretation, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the social reality. Therefore, relying on interconnected, intersecting, and integrated perspectives establishes a connection with the field of sociology.

the diversity of theoretical approaches in sociological research stems from the multifaceted nature of social phenomena and human behavior. Societies are complex systems shaped by a myriad of cultural, social, economic, and political factors, making them inherently difficult to study through a single lens. Researchers in sociology recognize the importance of adopting various perspectives and methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social reality.

Moreover, the ever-changing dynamics of societies, driven by technological advancements and globalization, further accentuate the need for multiple approaches in sociological inquiries. Each approach offers unique insights, enabling researchers to uncover different aspects of social life and interactions.

The plurality of theoretical approaches also allows for critical engagement and debate within the discipline. Scholars can evaluate the strengths and limitations of various theories, refining existing frameworks, or developing new ones that better fit the complexities of contemporary society.

Ultimately, the richness and diversity of sociological approaches contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the continuous exploration of the intricate tapestry of human societies. Embracing multiple perspectives empowers sociologists to tackle complex social issues and enriches our understanding of the intricate interplay between individuals and their social environments.

However, there is a crucial aspect that the researcher must pay attention to while presenting sociological approaches related to their study. It is essential to clarify which approach can be relied upon to rationalize their subject, while explaining the epistemological foundations and justifications that led them to choose one approach over another. Furthermore, the researcher must critically examine and discuss these approaches to demonstrate which ones align with their cognitive and methodological orientations.

In general, the plurality of sociological approaches to any social phenomenon is primarily due to their connection to human beings, governed by various cultural, social, economic, and political processes. The diversity of these approaches poses numerous challenges for sociologists, necessitating the development of alternative methodologies and theories that align with the ongoing developments within societies, especially in light of modern communication means and the profound changes they have brought forth. This demands embracing multiple approaches, methods, and research tools.

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