The Fundamental Principles of Social Sciences

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Type of manuscript: theoretical paper

Abstract: *This paper provides an overview of the fundamental principles of social sciences, encompassing a wide range of academic disciplines dedicated to studying human society and human relationships. Drawing from the author's understanding of social sciences, it offers a comprehensive examination of key concepts and highlights the significance of social science theories and practices. The paper begins by elucidating the definitions of social sciences, emphasizing their interdisciplinary nature and their focus on understanding societal dynamics. It explores the contributions of major thinkers in the field of social sciences, showcasing their intellectual impact and influential ideas. Furthermore, it presents a selection of notable social science thinkers from the 21st century, illustrating the ongoing evolution of the discipline. A core aspect of the paper focuses on the significant role of social scientists in contributing to societal development. It explores their diverse areas of expertise and the application of their research findings to address social issues and shape public policies. Additionally, the paper delves into the main theories and theoretical developments within social sciences, including the theory of governance, governmentality, network theory, and environmentalism. It specifically addresses the intersection of social sciences with climate change, highlighting the unique challenges and perspectives offered by this field. Sustainable development emerges as a prominent discipline within social sciences, with its emphasis on balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. The paper explores its relevance in addressing pressing global challenges. Moreover, it examines the emergence of new theories and practices within social sciences, presenting a glimpse of the evolving landscape of research and scholarship. Considering the future direction of social science research and practices, the paper offers insights into potential areas of exploration and the evolving nature of research methodologies. It addresses key research questions, such as what, why, how, when, where, and for whom, providing a framework for comprehensive inquiry. This paper provides a broad overview of social sciences, elucidating key principles, theories, and notable contributions to societal development. By examining the past and present, it also outlines the potential future trajectory of social science research and practices, shedding light on the significance and relevance of this dynamic field.*

Keywords: fundamental principles of social sciences, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, geography, history, communication studies, theory of governance, the theory of governmentality, network theory, environmentalism theory, climate change, research methods.

JEL Classification: D11, I20, O35.

Cite as: Bhandari, M.P. (2023). The Fundamental Principles of Social Sciences. *Business Ethics and Leadership, 7*(2), 73-86. http://doi.org/10.21272/bel.7(2).73-86.2023.

The Fundamental Principles of Social Sciences

Introduction

Social sciences refer to a wide range of academic disciplines that study human society and relationships. The social sciences encompass various fields, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, geography, history, and communication studies. The social sciences aim to understand the complex social, cultural, political, and economic phenomena that shape human behaviour, relationships, and institutions. Social scientists use a variety of research methods, including quantitative and qualitative research, surveys, case studies, and experiments, to analyze data and develop theories that can help explain and predict social phenomena (Bhandari, 2019; 2020; 2023; Lemert, 1993; Millet, 1970; Schütz, 1943; 1944; 1946; 1953; Smith, 1998; Tomas and Dittmar, 1995).

Social sciences are a broad field of academic inquiry that seeks to understand human behaviour and social phenomena through empirical research and analysis. While each social science discipline's specific principles and methods may vary, some fundamental principles are common across many fields. These include:

Empirical research. Social sciences rely on empirical research methods to gather and analyze data about human behaviour and social phenomena. It often involves collecting data through surveys, experiments, interviews, and observations and analyzing it using statistical methods and other analytical tools.

Objectivity. Social scientists strive to maintain objectivity in their research, which means they seek to avoid bias and ensure that personal or ideological beliefs do not influence their research. It often involves developing rigorous research protocols, using reliable and valid measurement instruments, and providing that research findings are replicable.

Theory development. Social scientists use theory to explain and interpret social phenomena. Theories are sets of concepts and principles used to organize and explain empirical observations and make predictions about future observations.

Multidisciplinary. Social sciences often draw on insights and methods from multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics. This multidisciplinary approach allows social scientists to explore complex social phenomena from various perspectives.

Ethics. Social scientists are guided by ethical principles that prioritize research participants' safety, privacy, and dignity. It often involves obtaining informed consent from participants, protecting their identities and personal information, and ensuring that research findings are used for the benefit of society.
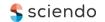
Social sciences seek to understand human behaviour and social phenomena through empirical research, theory development, and multidisciplinary inquiry guided by principles of objectivity and ethics.

Why Social Science

The major purpose of social science is to study and understand human behaviour and social phenomena. Social sciences use scientific methods to investigate social patterns, institutions, and relationships and seek to explain how and why people behave the way they do in different social contexts. We need social scientists and social sciences because they play a crucial role in helping us understand the complex social dynamics that shape our world. Social scientists use various research methods to study human behaviour, social interactions, institutions, and cultural practices. Their work helps us identify and address social issues and challenges, ranging from poverty and inequality to climate change and global conflict.

Social scientists help us understand how societies function, how social structures and systems impact individuals and communities, and how we can create more just and equitable societies. They also provide critical insights into how cultural and historical factors shape our beliefs and values and how technology and innovation impact our lives. Moreover, social scientists and social sciences help policymakers, government officials, and other stakeholders make informed decisions that impact people's lives. Their research can help identify areas of need, inform policies and programs, and measure their effectiveness. Social scientists and social sciences are essential to understanding and addressing the social, economic, and political challenges facing our world today.

The Origin of Social Sciences

The origin of social sciences can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato Confucius and Aristotle, who sought to understand human behavior and society through reason and observation. They developed ideas about society, politics, and ethics. However, the modern social sciences as we know them today emerged in the 19th century, as scholars began to apply scientific methods to study social phenomena.

The Enlightenment and the scientific revolution heavily influenced the early social sciences, emphasising reason, empirical observation, and systematic analysis. During the Enlightenment, philosophers and social thinkers began questioning traditional beliefs about religion, politics, and society. They sought to develop new ways of understanding the world based on reason, empirical observation, and scientific methods. It led to the development of new fields of inquiry, such as sociology, economics, political science, and anthropology. The French philosopher Auguste Comte is often credited with being the founder of sociology, which he saw as a scientific study of society that could be used to solve social problems and promote social progress. Other important figures in the development of social sciences include Karl Marx, who developed the theory of historical materialism and examined the relationships between social class and power, and Max Weber, who explored the role of culture, religion, and bureaucracy in shaping modern society.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the social sciences expanded and diversified with the development of fields such as anthropology, psychology, political science, and economics. Early social scientists were often motivated to understand and address social problems like poverty, inequality, and political conflict. Throughout the 20th century, social sciences continued to grow and evolve with the development of new theoretical perspectives and research methods. It included the rise of positivism, which emphasised the use of scientific methods and empirical observation, and the development of critical theories, which highlighted the role of power, ideology, and social change. Social sciences continue to be an important and dynamic field, with scholars from various disciplines working to understand and address some of our time's most pressing social and political issues.

Social sciences have continued to evolve and expand, with new disciplines such as psychology, communication studies, and cultural studies emerging over time. Today, social scientists use a range of research methods and theoretical approaches to study human behaviour and society and to address pressing social issues such as inequality, poverty, and climate change (Bhandari, 2019; 2020; 2023; Lemert, 1993; Millet, 1970; Schütz, 1943; 1944; 1946; 1953; Smith, 1998; Tomas and Dittmar, 1995).

Definitions of Social Sciences

Social sciences are a group of academic disciplines that study human behaviour, interactions, and societal structures. These disciplines use empirical research and critical analysis to understand human behaviour and the various social, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence it. Here are some definitions of social sciences by discipline:

➢ *Sociology*. Sociology is the scientific study of human society, social relationships, and social structures. It examines how societies are organized, how they change over time, and how they shape individuals and groups.
➢ *Psychology*. Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. It explores the processes that underlie thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and how social and environmental factors influence these processes.
➢ *Anthropology*. Anthropology studies human culture, societies, and evolution. It examines the cultural practices, beliefs, and customs of different societies and how they have developed over time.
➢ *Political Science*. Political Science studies government, political institutions, and political behaviour. It examines how people decide how to allocate power and resources and how political systems shape society.
➢ *Economics*. Economics studies how individuals and societies allocate scarce resources. It explores how people make decisions about what to produce, distribute, and consume and how these decisions are influenced by economic factors such as supply and demand, inflation, and market competition.

In general, major coverage in social science studies includes (but not limited to): Anthropology, Area studies, Civics, Criminology, Demography, Development Studies, Economics, Education, Environmental Studies, Folkloristics, Gender studies, Geography, History, Industrial relations, International relations, Law,

Library science, Linguistics, Media studies, Communication studies, Political science, Psychology, Public Administration, Public relations, Social work, Sociology, Statistics, Sustainable development etc.

Social sciences seek to understand human behaviour and social phenomena through empirical research, theory development, and multidisciplinary inquiry. They provide insight into the complexities of human society and offer tools for addressing social issues and promoting social progress.

Major Thinkers of Social Sciences

The field of social sciences has been shaped by many influential thinkers over the years, with contributions spanning various disciplines. Here are some of the major thinkers of social science to date:

Karl Marx: Marx was a philosopher, economist, and social theorist whose ideas profoundly impacted social sciences. He is best known for his theories on the relationship between labor, capital, and power and his critiques of capitalism.

Max Weber: Weber was a sociologist and political economist who developed theories about the role of culture, religion, and bureaucracy in shaping modern society. His work emphasized the importance of understanding people's subjective meanings to social phenomena.

Emile Durkheim: Durkheim was a French sociologist known for his studies on the social factors that shape human behaviour. He developed the concept of social solidarity, which refers to the social bonds that hold individuals and societies together.

Sigmund Freud: Freud was an Austrian psychologist who developed theories on the unconscious mind and psychoanalysis. His work profoundly impacted psychology, sociology, and cultural studies.

Michel Foucault: Foucault was a French philosopher and social theorist known for his power, knowledge, and discourse theories. His work challenged traditional notions of power and authority and examined how power operates within social systems.

Jane Addams: Addams was an American social worker and activist known for her pioneering work in social reform. She founded Hull House, a settlement house providing social services to Chicago immigrant communities and was a vocal advocate for social justice.

W.E.B. Du Bois: Du Bois was an American sociologist, historian, and civil rights activist known for his studies on race and racism in America. He was the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University and played a key role in the civil rights movement.

Jürgen Habermas − philosopher and social theorist, known for his work on communicative action, deliberative democracy, and critical theory.

John Maynard Keynes − the economist, is known for his contributions to the development of macroeconomics and his ideas on government intervention in the economy.
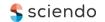
Edward Said − literary critic and cultural theorist, is known for his works on Orientalism, colonialism, and the representation of the "Other" in Western culture.

These are just a few of the major thinkers who have shaped the field of social sciences to date. Their ideas and contributions have had a lasting impact on our understanding of human behaviour and social phenomena.

Some of the Notable Social Science Thinkers of the 21st Century

Social scientists have played a crucial role in shaping human civilization and advancing social development throughout history. Social scientists have used their knowledge and expertise from ancient philosophers to modern scholars to understand and improve society. Social scientists have helped us better understand human behaviour, social structures, and cultural practices through their research. They have developed theories and models that have guided social and economic policies, educational systems, and legal frameworks. Social scientists have also been instrumental in promoting social justice and advocating for marginalized groups. Their work has helped to address some of the most pressing social issues of our time. While capturing the full extent of their contributions is difficult, we owe a great deal to the countless social scientists who have dedicated their lives to advancing our understanding of society and improving the lives of individuals and communities worldwide. There are few notable social scientists of 21st century.

Amartya Sen: Sen is an Indian economist and philosopher who has contributed to social choice theory, welfare economics, and development economics. He has won numerous awards for his work, including the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

Naomi Klein: Klein is a Canadian author and activist who has written extensively on globalization, neoliberalism, and climate change topics. Her work has influenced political science, economics, and environmental studies.

Steven Pinker: Pinker is an American psychologist and linguist who has contributed to cognitive and evolutionary psychology. He is known for his work on language acquisition, cognitive science, and the science of human nature.

Thomas Piketty: Piketty is a French economist who has written extensively on economic inequality. His book "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" became a bestseller and sparked renewed debate on wealth and income inequality.

Sherry Turkle: Turkle is an American professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT who has written on the impact of technology on society. She has studied how digital technology shapes our relationships with each other and ourselves.

Manuel Castells: Castells is a Spanish sociologist who has written extensively on the social, cultural, and political aspects of globalization. His work has focused on how information technology has transformed social structures and political power.

These are just a few examples of social science thinkers who have significantly contributed to their fields in the 21st century. As the century progresses, new ideas and thinkers will likely emerge to shape our understanding of human behaviour and society.

Social Scientist Contribution on Societal Development

Social scientists have made many significant contributions to the development of society in various ways. Here are a few examples:

Policy development: Social scientists have helped shape policies and regulations in healthcare, education, and social welfare. Through research and analysis, they provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to make informed decisions that positively impact society.

Understanding social problems: Social scientists study problems such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination and provide insights into their causes and potential solutions. This information helps policymakers and social service organizations develop effective strategies for addressing these issues.

Technological advancements: Social scientists have contributed to technology development by studying the social and cultural impacts of new technologies and helping to shape policies and regulations that ensure their ethical and equitable use.

International development: Social scientists work globally to address poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability issues. Through international development initiatives, they provide support and resources to marginalized communities and promote sustainable economic and social development.

Understanding human behaviour: Social scientists have contributed to our understanding of human behaviour, helping us better understand ourselves and others. Their work has informed fields such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology and has helped to improve relationships and social interactions.

Social scientists play a crucial role in societal development by providing valuable insights into human behaviour and social phenomena. Their work informs policies, improves social services, and helps to address some of the most pressing issues facing society today.

Theories and Theoretical Development of Social Sciences

In social sciences, a theory is a well-substantiated and coherent explanation of phenomena or observations. It is a systematic and organized body of concepts, ideas, and principles that help to explain and understand social phenomena. A theory can be used to generate predictions and hypotheses, guide research, and provide a framework for interpreting data and making sense of complex social phenomena. Theories in social sciences can range from micro-level theories, which focus on individual behaviour, to macro-level views,

which seek to explain large-scale social patterns and institutions. They can also be grounded in philosophical or methodological traditions, such as positivism, interpretivism, or critical theory. Examples of well-known social science theories include structural functionalism, social exchange theory, feminist theory, rational choice theory, and symbolic interactionism.

It is important to note that social science theories are not fixed or final explanations of social phenomena. They are subject to revision and refinement as new evidence or perspectives emerge. Additionally, theories in social sciences are often contested and debated among scholars, reflecting the diversity of perspectives and approaches in the field (Schutt, 2012; Sheppard, and Fennell, 2019; Backhouse, and Fontaine, 2010; Delanty, 1997; Hargittai, 2009; Hunt, and Colander, 2008; Carey, and McKean, 1883; Galavotti, 2003; Gorton, 2006; Brunell, and Burkett, 2019; Collins, and Bilge 2016; Collins, 1990; Cook, 2006; Wallin, 2001; Zaitsev, Shvindina and Bhandari, 2019). Social sciences are a diverse field of study, encompassing many theories and theoretical frameworks. Here are some of the major views and theoretical developments in social sciences:

Structural functionalism views society as a complex system of interconnected parts that work together to maintain social order and stability. It focuses on the functions of social structures and institutions and how they contribute to the well-being of society.

Conflict theory views society as a collection of groups competing for power and resources and examines how power and inequality are structured and maintained. It focuses on how social structures and institutions perpetuate power imbalances and social divisions.

Symbolic interactionism views society as a collection of individuals who create and interpret meanings through social interaction. It focuses on how individuals use symbols and language to communicate and construct social reality.

Rational choice theory views human behaviour as a product of rational decision-making, in which individuals weigh costs and benefits to make choices that maximize their self-interest. It focuses on how individuals make decisions and allocate resources.

Feminist theory views society through the lens of gender and examines how gender inequalities are structured and perpetuated. It focuses on the experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups and seeks to promote social justice and gender equality.

Postmodernism challenges traditional assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge and argues that reality is socially constructed and subjective. It focuses on how language, discourse, and power shape our world understanding.

Governance theory refers to the processes and structures through which power is exercised, and decisions are made in society. Various theories of governance attempt to explain how governance works and what factors contribute to adequate and equitable governance. Here are some of the major theories of governance:

The classical liberal theory emphasizes individual liberty and limited government intervention in economic and social affairs. It argues that government should have a minimal role in society and that the free market should be the primary mechanism for organizing economic activity.
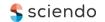
Social contract theory posits that individuals in a society voluntarily give up some of their freedoms in exchange for protection and security provided by the government. It emphasizes the importance of a legitimate social contract between the government and the governed and argues that the government's legitimacy is based on its ability to protect citizens' rights.

The democratic theory emphasizes the importance of citizen participation in governance and argues that democratic processes such as voting and representative government are the best mechanisms for ensuring responsive and accountable governance. It emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

New public management theory emphasizes the importance of efficiency and performance in public sector management. It argues that government should adopt management practices from the private sector, such as performance measurement and competition, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery.

Participatory governance theory emphasizes the importance of citizen participation in governance and argues that citizens should have a direct say in decision-making processes. It highlights the importance of building strong partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector.

French philosopher Michel Foucault first introduced *the governmentality theory* in the late 1970s. It is a concept that focuses on how power is exercised through various techniques and practices of governance and how individuals and groups are governed and controlled through these practices.

According to Foucault, governmentality is not just about the formal institutions of the state but also includes the various techniques and practices used to shape individual behaviour and attitudes. It includes how individuals are socialized, educated, and trained to become productive members. Governmentality also consists of how individuals are controlled through various surveillance, discipline, and regulation forms, such as laws, policies, and technologies. Foucault argued that modern forms of government emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries as societies became more complex and populations grew. He argued that this led to the development of new techniques and practices of governance, such as statistics, scientific management, and psychology, that allowed states to exert greater control over individuals and populations.

The governmentality theory has been widely influential in various fields, including political science, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. It has been used to analyze a wide range of issues, including the rise of neoliberalism, the management of populations through health and welfare policies, and the use of technology and surveillance in contemporary governance. The theory of governmentality highlights how power operates in modern societies and how individuals and groups are governed and controlled through various techniques and practices of governance.

Network theory is a branch of social sciences that studies networks and their properties. It is an interdisciplinary field that draws from various fields, including sociology, psychology, economics, computer science, and mathematics. At its core, network theory examines the structure of social relationships and interactions between individuals and groups. It explores how social actors are connected and how these connections affect behaviour, attitudes, and outcomes. One of the key concepts in network theory is the idea of "nodes" and "edges". Nodes represent individual actors, such as people, organizations, or countries, while edges represent the connections or relationships between these actors. By mapping out the network of connections between nodes, researchers can identify patterns and structures that can help to explain various social phenomena.

Network theory has been applied to a wide range of social phenomena, including the spread of ideas, the diffusion of innovations, the formation of social movements, the emergence of social hierarchies, and the development of social capital. It has also been used to study the behaviour of complex systems, such as the Internet and biological networks. Network theory provides a robust framework for analyzing and understanding the complex social networks that underpin many aspects of social life. By examining the patterns of connections between actors, researchers can gain insights into the dynamics of social systems and develop new strategies for managing and regulating these systems.

Stakeholder theory is a concept in business management and ethics that suggests that organizations should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders or owners. Stakeholders are individuals or groups that are interested in or are affected by the organisation's activities, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and the environment. Stakeholder theory proposes that organizations are responsible for managing their operations to create value for all stakeholders rather than just maximizing profits for shareholders. It includes engaging with stakeholders to understand their concerns and interests and working to address those concerns through responsible business practices.

The stakeholder theory has gained prominence in recent years as a response to the perceived shortcomings of shareholder capitalism, which prioritizes the interests of shareholders above all other stakeholders. Advocates of stakeholder theory argue that a more holistic approach to business management, which considers the needs and interests of all stakeholders, can lead to better long-term outcomes for the organization and society.

Environmentalism as a Theory

Environmentalism has emerged as an important topic in the social sciences in recent decades, as scholars have recognized the significant impact that human activities have on the natural world. Environmentalism in the social sciences encompasses a broad range of disciplines, including sociology, political science,

economics, and geography. One of the key contributions of environmentalism in the social sciences has been to highlight how environmental issues are intertwined with social and economic factors. Environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion are often the result of social and economic practices, such as industrialization, urbanization, and consumerism. As such, addressing these issues often requires changes to social and economic systems and individual behaviour and attitudes.

Another important contribution of environmentalism in the social sciences has been to highlight the social and political dimensions of environmental issues. Environmental problems are not just technical or scientific challenges; they are also social and political challenges that involve power, distribution, and justice questions. For example, environmental issues often disproportionately affect marginalized communities, such as low-income and minority populations. As such, addressing environmental problems often requires social and political solutions that address these underlying inequalities and power imbalances.

Environmentalism in the social sciences has also led to the development of new concepts and theories, such as ecological modernization, environmental governance, and environmental justice. These concepts provide frameworks for understanding and addressing environmental issues more holistically and integrated, considering the social, economic, and political factors that shape environmental outcomes. The emergence of environmentalism in the social sciences reflects a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental systems and the need for integrated approaches to address the complex environmental challenges of our time.

Climate Change – Issues in Social Sciences

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time, and social sciences have an important role in addressing this challenge. Social sciences, including sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, can help to understand the social, economic, and political factors that drive climate change, as well as the social impacts of climate change and the societal responses to it.

One important contribution of social sciences to climate change issues is the study of public attitudes and behaviours related to climate change. Social scientists can help to identify the barriers and motivators to individual and collective action on climate change and develop strategies to encourage more sustainable behaviours and practices. Another important contribution of social sciences to climate change issues is the study of the political and economic factors that shape climate policy and action. Social scientists can help to identify the interests and power dynamics that shape climate policy at the local, national, and international levels and develop strategies to overcome barriers to effective climate action.

Social sciences can also help to understand the social impacts of climate change, particularly on vulnerable populations. Social scientists can study how climate change exacerbates existing social inequalities by disproportionately affecting low-income and marginalized communities. By understanding these impacts, social scientists can help to develop more equitable and just responses to climate change. Social sciences have an important role in addressing climate change, both by understanding the social factors that contribute to climate change and its impacts and by developing strategies to encourage more sustainable practices and policies.

Sustainable Development a Leading Disciple in Social Sciences

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s as a response to growing concerns about economic growth and development's environmental and social impacts. At its core, sustainable development is a vision of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN DESA, 2022; United Nations, 2022; Wallin, 2001; Zaitsev, Shvindina, and Bhandari, 2019). Sustainable development theories and practices draw on various disciplines, including economics, ecology, sociology, and political science. One of the key concepts in sustainable development is the notion of environmental sustainability, which refers to the ability of natural systems to support human well-being over the long term. Another important concept in sustainable development is social sustainability, which refers to the ability of social systems to support human well-being and equity. It includes poverty reduction, access to education and healthcare, and social justice. Sustainable development theories and practices have influenced a range of policy areas, including energy, transportation, urban planning, and agriculture. They have also led to the development a range of sustainability-focused initiatives, such as green buildings, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture.

The emergence of sustainable development theories and practices reflects a growing recognition of the need to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations in pursuing human well-being. While there is still much work to be done in achieving sustainable development goals, sustainable development theories and practices provide a framework for addressing these challenges and creating a more sustainable future. Sustainable development is an important issue in the social sciences, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for addressing sustainable development challenges. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets that cover a broad range of issues related to sustainable development, including poverty, education, health, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, climate action, and sustainable cities and communities. Social sciences have a critical role in achieving the SDGs and their targets. For example, social scientists can contribute to developing policies and strategies that promote sustainable development, including poverty reduction, education, and gender equality. They can also study the social, economic, and political factors that hinder or promote sustainable development and identify practical solutions to address these challenges.

Social scientists can also contribute to achieving specific SDG targets related to climate action and sustainable cities and communities. For example, social scientists can study the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, develop strategies to promote sustainable transportation and urban planning and assess the effectiveness of policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, social sciences can help ensure that the SDGs' achievement is equitable and just. They can study the social inequalities and power dynamics that underlie sustainable development challenges and identify strategies to address these inequalities and promote social justice. Sustainable development, SDGs, and targets are important issues in the social sciences, and social scientists have a critical role in achieving these goals. They can contribute to developing policies and strategies, study the factors that hinder or promote sustainable development, and ensure that the achievement of the SDGs is equitable and just.

The Emergence of New Theories and Practices in Social Sciences

Societal challenges and pressing issues often drive the emergence of new theories and practices in social sciences. In recent years, issues such as inequality, race, sex, gender, climate change, environmental degradation, and political conflicts have led to the development of new theories and practices in social sciences. For example, the study of inequality has led to the development of new theories of social stratification, which aim to understand the mechanisms through which social inequality is produced and reproduced. These theories focus on access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities and seek to identify effective strategies for reducing social inequality.

Similarly, the study of race, sex, and gender has led to the development of new identity and social construction theories, which aim to understand how social categories such as race and gender are created, maintained, and challenged. These theories are often critical of traditional approaches to social science, which have tended to overlook the role of power and oppression in shaping social relations. The emergence of climate change and environmental degradation has led to the development of new theories and practices in environmental sociology, which aim to understand the social and cultural factors that contribute to environmental problems and to identify effective strategies for promoting sustainable development and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Finally, political conflicts, wars, pangs of hunger, and natural calamities have led to the development of new theories of humanitarianism and development, which aim to address the root causes of these issues and promote social justice and human rights. These theories focus on poverty reduction, disaster relief, and conflict resolution and seek to identify effective strategies for promoting social change and building a more just and equitable world. The new social sciences theories and practices reflect the evolution of social science disciplines as scholars seek to address new and pressing issues in our rapidly changing world.

Major Research Methods in Social Sciences

Research refers to systematically and scientifically investigating a specific topic or problem. It involves collecting and analyzing data or information to generate new knowledge or insights about the issue or problem under investigation. Research can be conducted in various fields, including science, social sciences, humanities, and business. It can be used in different methods and approaches, such as qualitative or quantitative methods, experimental designs, case studies, or surveys. The ultimate goal of the research is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of a specific topic or problem and to make

evidence-based recommendations or conclusions (Schutt, 2012; Sheppard, and Fennell, 2019; Backhouse, and Fontaine, 2010; Delanty, 1997; Hargittai, 2009; Hunt, and Colander, 2008; Carey, and McKean, 1883; Galavotti, 2003; Gorton, 2006; Brunell, and Burkett, 2019; Collins, and Bilge, 2016; Collins, 1990; Cook, 2006; Wallin, 2001; Zaitsev, Shvindina and Bhandari, 2019).

Social science research has a range of purposes, such as *describing social phenomena*: Social scientists use research methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations to define and document social phenomena, such as cultural practices, economic trends, and political systems. *Explaining social phenomena*: Social scientists develop theories and models to explain social phenomena, such as why people form social groups, how institutions are formed, and how social change occurs. *Predicting social phenomena*: Social scientists use their knowledge and understanding of social phenomena to predict future trends and behaviours, such as demographic changes, economic growth, and political shifts. *Improving social outcomes*: Social science research can be used to identify social problems and develop solutions to improve social outcomes, such as reducing poverty, improving education, and promoting public health. Social scientists use rigorous scientific methods to understand, explain, and improve social phenomena to enhance human well-being and contribute to the betterment of society.

Various research methods are used in social sciences, and they can be broadly categorized into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Here are some of the major research methods used in social sciences:

Quantitative research involves collecting numerical data and statistical analysis. Quantitative research is often used to test hypotheses and make predictions, and it relies on a large sample size to ensure statistical validity. Some common quantitative research techniques include surveys, experiments, and content analysis.

Qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and open-ended survey questions. Qualitative research is often used to explore complex social phenomena in-depth, and it relies on the researcher interpretation of data. Some common qualitative research techniques include case studies, ethnography, and grounded theory.

Ethnography involves the in-depth study of a culture or community. Ethnographers typically use participant observation, interviews, and other qualitative research techniques to understand the social, cultural, and economic practices of the group being studied.

Mixed-methods research involves using quantitative and qualitative research techniques in the same study. Mixed-methods research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena by combining the strengths of both approaches.

Action research involves researchers and community members collaborating to solve real-world problems. Action research typically involves multiple cycles of data collection, analysis, and action planning, and it often aims to empower community members to take an active role in the research process.

There are Several Ways of Data Collection Social Sciences

Surveys involve collecting data through questionnaires or interviews, which can be administered in person, over the phone, or online. Surveys can provide a broad perspective on a particular social phenomenon by collecting data from a large sample size.

Case studies involve an in-depth analysis of a particular social phenomenon or case. It can be conducted through interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Experiments test a hypothesis or theory by manipulating a variable and observing the effect on an outcome. Experiments can be conducted in controlled settings or the field.

Content analysis: This research method involves analysing text, images, or other forms of media to identify patterns or themes. Content analysis can provide insights into societal norms, values, and beliefs.

Observational research involves observing and recording behaviour naturally, without intervening or manipulating variables. An observational study can provide insights into human behaviour and social interactions.

Meta-analysis: This research method combines data from multiple studies to comprehensively analyse a particular social phenomenon.

Historical research: This method analyses historical documents and records to understand social phenomena and changes.

Each research method has its strengths and weaknesses, and social scientists often use a combination of techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena.

Research in Social Sciences – What, Why, How, When, Where, For Whom

What is research in social sciences? Research in social sciences refers to the systematic investigation of human behavior, social interactions, and social institutions using scientific methods. It aims to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of social phenomena and generate evidence-based knowledge that can inform policies and practices.

Why is research important in social sciences? Research in social sciences is important because it provides insights into human behavior, social interactions, and social structures that can be used to inform policies and programs aimed at addressing social issues and improving people's lives. It helps to identify patterns and trends in social phenomena, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and generate new knowledge.

How can research be conducted in social sciences? Research in social sciences can be conducted using a variety of methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Researchers can collect mixed methods surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, and secondary data sources such as government statistics and archival materials. They can analyze data using statistical software, coding, and thematic analysis to identify patterns and relationships in the data.

When should research be conducted in social sciences? Research in social sciences should be conducted when there is a need to investigate a social issue or problem, or when there is a need to generate new knowledge. Researchers should consider the feasibility of conducting research, the ethical implications of their research, and the potential impact of their findings.

Where can research be conducted in social sciences? Research in social sciences can be conducted in a variety of settings, including academic institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and businesses. It can also be conducted in the field, where researchers can observe and interact with people in their natural environment.
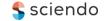
For whom is research important in social sciences? Research in social sciences is important for policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and the general public. Policymakers can use research findings to inform policy decisions, while practitioners can use research to develop and evaluate interventions. Researchers can use research to generate new knowledge and advance their field, while the general public can benefit from evidence-based information about social issues.

The Future Direction of Social Science Research and Practices

The future research direction in social sciences will likely be shaped by new technologies, changing social and political contexts, and emerging research questions. There will likely be a greater emphasis on interdisciplinary research as social issues become increasingly complex and multifaceted. There may also be an increased focus on participatory research, where researchers collaborate with communities and stakeholders to co-create knowledge and develop solutions to social problems. Additionally, there may be an increased focus on research that promotes social justice and equity as researchers seek to address systemic inequalities and promote social change. Here are some potential directions that social science research and practices may take in the future:

The integration of big data and machine learning: As technology advances, social scientists are likely to increasingly rely on big data and machine learning to collect and analyze large-scale datasets. It may lead to new insights into complex social phenomena and help researchers identify previously hidden patterns. The focus on interdisciplinary research: Many of the most pressing issues facing society today are complex and multifaceted, requiring multidisciplinary approaches that draw on various social science disciplines. Future social science research will likely focus on bringing together scholars from different fields to tackle these complex issues. The increasing importance of global perspectives: Social science research is increasingly taking a global perspective, with researchers focusing on issues that transcend national boundaries. It may lead to new insights into the social, economic, and political forces that shape our world, as well as new strategies for addressing global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and poverty.

The emphasis on community-engaged research: Social scientists increasingly recognise the importance of engaging with communities better to understand their needs, perspectives, and experiences. It may lead to more collaborative and participatory research approaches that prioritise the voices of marginalised communities. The use of innovative research methodologies: Social scientists are constantly developing new research methodologies and techniques, from social network analysis to participatory action research. The future of social science research will likely be shaped by these innovations, which will help researchers better understand complex social phenomena and develop effective interventions and policies. The future of social science research and practices is to be characterised by innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to addressing some of the most pressing social, economic, and political challenges of our time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social sciences have a rich history that has evolved, leading to the emergence of different theories and practices. From its origins in philosophy, economics, and political science, social sciences have developed into a vast field that encompasses a wide range of disciplines (Schutt, 2012; Sheppard, and Fennell, 2019; Backhouse, and Fontaine, 2010; Delanty, 1997; Hargittai, 2009; Hunt, and Colander, 2008; Carey, and McKean, 1883; Galavotti, 2003; Gorton, 2006; Brunell, and Burkett, 2019; Collins and Bilge, 2016; Collins, 1990; Cook, 2006; Wallin, 2001; Zaitsev, Shvindina and Bhandari, 2019). Major thinkers have contributed to the development of social sciences over the years, and some of the notable social science thinkers of the 21st century are advancing new ideas and practices to address complex societal issues (Babbie, 2010; Esterberg, 2002; Garfinkle, 1967; Gubrium, and Holstein, 2000; Heritage, 1984; Krippendorff, 2004a; 2004b; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken, 2010; Palys, Tand Atchison, 2014; Patton, 2015; Bhandari, 2020; 2023; Lemert, 1993; Millet, 1970; Schütz, 1943; 1944; 1946; 1953; Smith, 1998; Tomas, and Dittmar, 1995).

Social scientists have played a crucial role in shaping and contributing to societal development, using research and theories to understand and address various issues such as inequality, climate change, governance, and sustainable development. The theory of governance, governmentality, network theory, and environmentalism have been developed and applied in the social sciences to provide insights into complex social phenomena and create effective interventions and policies. The concept of sustainable development has emerged as a leading discipline in social sciences, focusing on balancing economic development with social and environmental sustainability. The emergence of new theories and practices in social sciences, particularly about issues such as race, sex, gender, and climate change, has led to more interdisciplinary research and a focus on community-engaged research.

There are various research methods used in social sciences. They can be broadly categorized into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research, and there are several ways of data collection in social sciences. The future direction of social science research and practices will likely be shaped by various factors, including technological innovation, changing social and political contexts, and evolving research methodologies. Looking to the future, social science research and practices will continue to evolve with integrating big data and machine learning, a focus on interdisciplinary research, and the increasing importance of global perspectives. Social scientists will continue developing innovative research methodologies and engaging with communities to understand complex social phenomena better and develop effective interventions and policies. Ultimately, the future of social sciences will be shaped by the ongoing efforts of scholars and researchers to understand and address the most pressing social, economic, and political challenges of our time.

Acknowledgements

Conflicts of Interest: Author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

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