

Analysis of The Basic Criteria of Social Science Positivism Research

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Abstract: As a kind of science, social science has its clear scientific attributes, which requires people to always adhere to a positivism position in the research to really carry out effective research. In view of this, this paper focuses on the core of social science positivism, mainly taking Durkheim's positivism research criteria as the framework, from the basic standpoint, the research object, the links of investigation, explanation and verification to discuss the basic criteria of social science positivism research, in order to limit the social science research in the empirical category more clearly.

Keywords: Social sciences, Positivism, Basic criteria, E. Durkheim.

1. Introduction

The origin of positivism research in social sciences is actually related to August Comte, who is the founder of positivism theory and sociology. Comte first summarized the evolution of human knowledge into the theological stage, the metaphysical stage and the positive stage, and believed that in the positive stage, through the constant relationship between the observed phenomena, people systematically evaluated the existence from all aspects, that is, the causal relationship. In Comte's opinion, the real social science is the empirical study of social phenomena, which also lays the foundation of the social science positivism. However, although Comte put forward the theory of positivism, he did not put it into practice. At this point, E. Durkheim critically inherited Comte's positivism thought and proposed a set of positivism sociological research methodology. On the basis of incorporating the basic positivism position, this paper mainly analyzes the basic principles of positivism research in social sciences by taking Durkheim's series of principles of positivism research as the framework. A clear understanding of the basic criteria of social science positivism research helps us to define social science research more effectively in the category of positivism, so as to ensure the reliability of research results.

2. Scope Limitation -- Social Sciences

Social science is defined by analyzing positivism study basic principles of the horizon. Since the connotation of social science itself is rich, and the definition of social science in this paper has a certain directivity, so in order to lay the foundation for subsequent analysis, this paper first makes a certain explanation for social science.

2.1. General concepts of social sciences

Generally speaking, the concept of social science can be divided into a broad or narrow sense. In a broad sense, social science can be regarded as a collective concept including sociology, political science, economics, law, etc. In a narrow sense, social science can be regarded as the expression of sociology at the level of science. However, whether in a broad or narrow sense, social science must strictly follow the path of science, that is, emphasize that social phenomena can also

be studied by science as natural phenomena.

2.2. The definition of social science in the context of this paper

Although the analysis of the basic principles of social science positivist research in this paper is mainly based on Durkheim's framework of the principles of positivist sociology, But in the context of this article, the sociology of social science is not only in the scientific level of performance, but follow the general concept of the social sciences, that is, social science is defined as a collective science that uses scientific methods to understand and study various social phenomena. As a kind of science, social science should adhere to the positivism position, and its research must conform to the rules of science. Therefore, we should adhere to a series of positivism criteria including Durkheim's so as to ensure that research always belongs to the category of positivism.

3. Basic Position - About Experience, Causation and Purpose

If a social science research is to be defined in the category of positivism, then during the whole research process, the researcher must follow a series of basic positivism positions on experience, causation and purpose.

3.1. Upholding the objectivity of experience

A social science research belonging to the positivism category must insist on the objectivity of experience at the empirical level. The objectivity of experience means that when people have a certain degree of understanding of the experience, they can reuse the experience in various scenarios with similarities, and such experience can be universally recognized, that is, it can obtain public confirmation. Therefore, the positivism research of social science needs to uphold the basic position of positivism, admit the objectivity of experience, adhere to empiricism, regard experience as scientific, based on experience, to explore a causal relationship with explanatory and driving ability.

3.2. Admit the validity of the law of causation

The fundamental purpose of its research must be consistent with natural science because social science is in the category

of science, that is, what it fundamentally wants to explore is causality. The premise of the practice of this research orientation lies in the fact that social science must admit the universal existence and validity of causality, which in essence reflects the concept of positivism. "We can only really understand the interrelationships of effects, whether they are minor or major, whether they are impacts or gravity, whether they are thoughts or morals," Comte said. This actually admits that the social sciences have the same logic as the natural sciences in their search for laws. Therefore, the positivism research of social science needs to admit the validity of causality at the level of basic standpoint.

3.3. The fundamental purpose is to explore the causal relationship

As mentioned above, the scientific nature of the social sciences necessitates the exploration of causality as the fundamental purpose of research. Such a position actually adheres to the positivism view. From the perspective of positivism, the main task of researchers in scientific research is to explore the law, that is, to fundamentally explore the causal relationship, and try to make corresponding contributions to the existence and development of human beings. Therefore, the positivism research of social science must adhere to the discussion of causality as the fundamental purpose of research, so as to on the one hand maintain the scientific attributes of its own research, and on the other hand to make the research based on the positivism position in a real sense.

4. Research Object -- Social Fact

Durkheim believed that sociology should have the fixed object of study, and not overlap with the study of biology, psychology field. [1] when analyzing and explaining social phenomena, in order to make sociology get rid of its dependence on natural science, Durkheim proposed that social facts should be taken as the research object of sociology. [8] In fact, this affirmation provides a reference for the definition of the research object of social science, that is, the positivist research of social science should also take social facts as the research object to a certain extent.

4.1. The definition of social fact

In Durkheim's view, social facts refer to "all modes of action, whether fixed or unfixed, that can impose constraints on individuals from the outside, or in other words, that are ubiquitous in the society and have inherent existence, regardless of their performance in individuals, are called social facts" [1].

4.2. The characteristics of social fact

The concept of social fact has a definite set of features. These characteristics strictly limit the social facts in the category of science and provide the basis for our identification of social facts.

4.2.1. Externality or Objectivity

Through the analysis of law, morality, obligation, religious belief, symbol system, monetary system and other phenomena, Durkheim pointed out that these modes of behavior, modes of thinking and modes of feeling have obvious attributes existing outside the individual, so as to illustrate that social facts have the characteristics of externality. [1] Social facts show the characteristics of

objectivity because they exist outside the individual and are not transferred by the individual's will. Objectivity can be regarded as the essential feature of social fact. [15]

Following such a feature that social facts exist outside the individual, we can further distinguish the discussion of social facts from their performance at the individual level in positivism research, thus helping to make the research meet the basic requirement of taking social facts as the object.

4.2.2. Mandatory

On the basis of externality, social facts have the character of compulsion. Durkheim argued that social facts "not only exist outside the consciousness of the individual, but have a subordinated, coercive force by which they are imposed on the individual, whether he is willing to accept them or not." [1] Just as the "middle income trap" is not set by any one country or government, but is caused by a conflict between economic growth and rising wages, it is accepted that it exists. [10]

Therefore, when researchers conduct social science research based on positivism, they can use the feature of compulsion as one of the evaluation criteria to examine whether the research object is a social fact. The investigation of compulsion can be divided into direct and indirect levels. On the direct level, compulsion on the one hand shows that social facts must produce mandatory force on people which must be obeyed. On the other hand, compulsion is also embodied in that if someone violates the norms of social facts, he must receive some direct punishment. At the indirect level, coercion is also manifested as a non-immediate negative impact, for example, the violation of commercial credit may lead to the eventual bankruptcy of an enterprise.

4.2.3. Universality and Collectivity

Social facts have both universal and collective characteristics. What universality means is that social facts are the common phenomena of the members of society or most of the members of society, which is reflected as a common rather than a special phenomenon. Collectivity, on the other hand, is mainly against individuality, that is, social facts are non-individual, they exist in the collective. From the relational point of view, compulsion leads to collectivity, which in turn leads to universality. Collective phenomena must be universal, but universal phenomena are not necessarily collective phenomena.

In this sense, social science research based on positivism needs to distinguish clearly between social facts and individual facts that embody social facts, and cannot equate them.

4.2.4. Repeatability

Repeatability, also known as reproducibility, emphasizes that social facts can be reproduced continuously in many individuals. For example, within a defined space and time, each person acts according to the common habits of the group to which he belongs. Repeatability of social science make it further accorded with the basic principles of science, the researchers have enough conditions to use the scientific method to know on social fact

5. Rules About Observing Social Fact

Since social facts have the same characteristics as the research objects of natural science, we should also observe and understand social facts in a scientific way in the research of social science positivism.

5.1. The first maxim - to examine social facts as things

In social science research based on positivist position, observations of its research object namely the social fact must follow "the first and most basic rule is that the social facts as content to see" [1]

In fact, this criterion emphasizes that the social fact itself has an objective reality connected with the object of study of natural science, and this objective reality is not subject to human will. Such a general cognitive path of social facts significantly reflects the inheritance of positivism to materialism, following the path of materialism, that is, emphasizing that human cognition is from things to ideas, rather than from ideas to things. Because of this principle is the object of study, has as the objective reality of things, so researchers can be observed using natural science methods that the way of realizing social facts. In this way, introspection is meaningless for the investigation of social facts, because the investigation of social facts does not start from internal ideas, but from the observation of external things.

The positivist research of social science needs to strictly adhere to the principle of examining social facts as things, and use a series of characteristics of social facts to limit them to the level of things in practice.

This criterion in practice, however, has a certain passivity, it is only in view of the situation of that time sociology and points out problem, called for, and did not point out the concrete solution, thus prompting Durkheim further about the specific principles of observing social facts are put forward. [16]

5.2. Concrete criterion

Durkheim believed that only theoretical demonstration and ideological experience were not enough to ensure the practical application of the above first rule in research. People naturally have a tendency to be unwilling to admit the truth, so there must be strict rules to ensure that people walk on the right path. [1] Therefore, Durkheim proposed a more specific criterion based on the first criterion.

5.2.1. Must be consistently free from all preconceptions

Durkheim's specific standards of the first is: "must consistently get rid of all the prognosis. [1] In fact, this criterion emphasizes the issue of value neutrality, that is, it fundamentally requires researchers to get rid of the influence of personal orientation in social science research. On the investigation to the social reality and the conclusion obtained is not the researcher's personal imagination and guess, but need to rely on a series of scientific conclusion factual proof, in the end, so the researchers in both prior to and during the process of observation can let oneself of the tendentiousness and the observation of social facts have crossed, otherwise it will affect the quality of the observed properties, Let observation be a matter of imagination and conjecture.

In fact, the positivist research in the value neutrality and Max weber's value neutrality or things that have many differences. Weber sees value judgments as "an evaluation of the humble or legitimate practice of the phenomena affected by our actions." [17] In the specific research process, if researchers adjust their understanding of social phenomena with the value judgment outside science, the scientific nature of their understanding will be threatened, and it is impossible to accurately understand social phenomena, which will affect the objectivity and reliability of research conclusions.

Therefore, the researcher must adhere to the position of value neutrality in the research process, and draw conclusions through scientific understanding without being affected by the value tendency.

5.3. Operational definition based on the external characteristics of things

This criterion emphasizes that social science researchers from positivist standpoint must define things according to their external characteristics, and then reflect their internal attributes through their external characteristics. And in the field of social scientific positivism study, researchers must be through the observation of natural science to social fact know them, so it requires the researchers must seize the main problems in observation or major aspects of contradiction, to grasp the essence of social fact attributes, in order to gain real understanding.

5.3.1. The study of social facts as such and the exclusion of their individual manifestations

Based on positivism position of social science research and ruled out the need to study social reality itself on individual performance, namely "must from the social reality from its hard on personal performance investigates the profile and independent existence". [1] Firstly, this criterion emphasizes the distinction, that is, to distinguish whether a phenomenon is a social fact itself or the expression of a social fact on an individual. Secondly, it is necessary to clearly investigate and study the social fact rather than its expression on an individual, so as to exclude the expression on the individual level and not to confuse the two.

6. Rules About Interpreting Social Facts

From the standpoint of positivism, researchers also have to follow a series of criteria when interpreting social facts. The existence of criterion regulates the researchers' interpretation of social facts and guarantees the scientific nature of the interpretation activities fundamentally.

6.1. Explain social facts in terms of social facts

This interpretation guidelines emphasize, the researchers of social facts can not be decisive on personal state of consciousness, and can only be explained by social facts should be established for the notion of social facts. The fundamental emphasis is the difference between social facts and individual consciousness. Changes in social facts are caused by social facts, not individual consciousness, so researchers can only interpret social facts in terms of social facts. The standards actually reflected on regular operation logic to follow, law itself is reflected by the phenomenon and the phenomenon of the relationship between this relationship is expressed in the field of social science is the correlation between social facts, and fundamentally embodied in the cause and effect, which fit with the social facts explain social norms.

6.2. Interpret social facts at causal and functional levels, respectively

From the positivist standpoint, social science, as a kind of science, should pursue the law, and the law is fundamentally manifested as the causal relationship, and people's understanding of the causal relationship should ultimately serve human beings themselves, that is, they should make full

use of this understanding to serve human beings. Such a logical process fundamentally reflects the two levels of causality and function, namely, to explore the causes of social facts, to explore the causal relationship in social facts, that is, to carry out causal analysis; The second is to make full use of this causal relationship for human services, namely, functional analysis. In terms of order, causal analysis as an activity of seeking laws comes first, and functional analysis as an activity of applying laws comes second, thus constituting this criterion of explaining social facts at two levels. As Durkheim said, "When we try to explain a social phenomenon, we must study separately the causes of the phenomenon and the functions it has." [1]

7. Rules About the Verification of Social Facts

In essence, the principle of verifying social facts mainly discusses how to understand the interrelation between social phenomena and social phenomena, which fundamentally explores the causal relationship. When the researcher really discusses the causal relationship clearly, he can identify the social law, and use the understanding of the social law to solve social problems, so as to promote the development of society.

In the perspective of verifying social facts, Durkheim emphasized the application of covariation, that is, the principle of social science on verifying social facts with covariation as the main means.

In Durkheim's view, the complexity of social phenomena makes people's understanding of social laws limited, so it is difficult to apply either the residual method, the fit method or the difference method to social science research. [1] But in the use of covariance method, researchers can by investigating the change of phenomena in the two groups of logic, namely in the case of other conditions unchanged, a group of phenomenon whether the change will lead to changes in another set of phenomena, and whether the change of the two parties in proportion to determine the presence of a causal relationship. Therefore, in the research of social science positivism, researchers need to make more use of covariation method to verify social facts.

8. Conclusion

In general, the connotation of the basic criteria of social science positivism research is quite rich, and how to standardize social science research in the category of positivism is a problem involving many aspects. On the basis of integrating the basic position of positivism, this paper mainly combines the criteria enumerated by Durkheim, the representative figure of positivism in the field of social sciences, as the basic criteria of social science research based on the positivism position. These include the identification of social facts, the criterion of observing social facts, the criterion of explaining social facts and the criterion of verifying social facts.

In essence, the positivist research of social sciences emphasizes the concept of the supremacy of science, that is, it insists on using the perspective of natural science to examine the research of social sciences. Under the guidance

of this concept, researchers need to follow the three basic positions of objectivity of experience, validity of causality law and research purpose of exploring causality in social science positivism research. On this basis, social facts are determined as research objects, and a series of scientific rules about observing, explaining and verifying social facts are strictly followed in the research process. As a whole, social science research can be classified into the category of positivism, and it is truly based on positivism.

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