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## OBJECTIVITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

## OBIEKTYWIZM W NAUCE SPOŁECZNEJ

### Abstract

*The debate on the scientific status of the Social Sciences and their bid to achieve objectivity in their inquiries is an unending debate within and outside the Social Science family. The positivists are of the opinion that objectivity in Social Science is achievable and that scientific methods can be used in Social Science inquiry, just the same or similar way(s) the natural scientists do their scientific endeavor. To the positivists 'value-free Social Science' is possible. This position is however criticized even within the Social Sciences, let alone in the scientific world. All these debates centered on whether or not the Social Scientists are truly scientific in their quest for knowledge. No matter the outcome of the debate what is obvious is that there is a philosophical problem with scientific objectivity in general. Based on a historical review of the development of certain scientific theories, in his book, 'the Structure of scientific revolutions', a scientist and a historian Thomas Kuhn raised some philosophical objections to claims of the possibility of scientific understanding being truly objective. Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to unravel the varied theoretical debates on the subject.*

**Keywords:** Objectivity, Science, Social Science, Social reality, Positivism, Value neutrality

### Streszczenie

*Debata na temat statusu naukowego nauk społecznych oraz ich dążenia do osiągnięcia obiektywizmu jest niekończącą się debatą w rodzinie nauk społecznych i poza nią. Pozytywiści są zdania, że obiektywizm w naukach społecznych jest osiągalny i że metody naukowe mogą być stosowane w badaniach społecznych, w taki sam lub podobny sposób, w jaki naukowcy przyrodniczy stosują je w swoich badaniach. Dla pozytywistów „społeczna*

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nauka bez wartości” jest możliwa. To stanowisko jest jednak krytykowane nawet w naukach społecznych, nie mówiąc już o świecie naukowym. Wszystkie debaty koncentrowały się na tym, czy naukowcy społeczni są naprawdę naukowcy w poszukiwaniu wiedzy. Bez względu na wynik debaty oczywiste jest, że istnieje filozoficzny problem z obiektywizmem naukowym w ogóle. Opierając się na historycznym przeglądzie rozwoju niektórych teorii naukowych, w swojej książce „Struktura rewolucji naukowych” naukowiec i historyk Thomas Kuhn podniósł pewne filozoficzne obiekcje wobec twierdzenia, że naukowe zrozumienie jest naprawdę obiektywne. Artykuł stara się rozwikłać różnorodne teoretyczne debaty na ten temat.

**Słowa kluczowe:** obiektywizm, nauka, nauki społeczne, rzeczywistość społeczna, pozytywizm, neutralność wartości

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### **Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.**

The concept of scientific objectivity which incorporates the dichotomies of “intellectual” vs. “emotion” and “self” vs. “others” is considered the cornerstone of modern science. Objectivity can be defined as being uninfluenced by emotion, surmise, personal prejudice or belief. It is an unbiased inquiry. According to the free encyclopedia, objectivity in science is often attributed to the property of scientific measurement that can be tested independently from the individual scientist (the subject) who proposes them. It is indeed considered the sine qua non of science. Objectivity is the most fundamental and most valuable attribute of science and one which all scientists should pursue. Scientists are by definition highly intellectual and highly rational and ought not to be biased in their scientific quest for knowledge.

As stated earlier the discourse on objectivity in Social Science (Social Science when used in the context of this paper refers to the

behavioral and cultural sciences i.e. sciences that study various aspects of behavior and society and these include Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, Geography, etc. Science as the mother concept when used in this text simply means systematized knowledge in any discipline (Kuna, 2001)) is unending debates that attract a lot of comments within and outside the Social Science family.

This paper, therefore, seeks to unravel these debates. To achieve this, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section is the introductory section, which is devoted to a synopsis of the whole paper. This is followed by a section on the nature and characteristics of scientific explanation. The third section focused on a critical examination of Social Science theory. The fourth section is the spine of the paper where varied debates about objectivity in Social Science are presented and the final section is devoted to a brief summary of the paper.

**Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.**

The nature and characteristics of scientific explanation

The scientific explanation is governed by law. Law/generalizations allow scientists to predict. Law ought to be descriptive i.e. laws supposed to show how things work. They do not justify the work of things; they either support or oppose. There is a distinction between the origin of theory, law and its acceptability. This implies that scientific explanation does not favor an explanation of any sort. Scientists, therefore, suppose to be value-free i.e. objectivity is very important in scientific explanation.

John Stuart Mills as far back as 1843, worked on scientific explanation. He claimed in series of his books “if Social Sciences were to produce an account of their action, they must then follow the same way as the natural sciences do”. Basically, Mills’s starting point is that Social Sciences are in some sense a failure; for Social Sciences to be responsible they have to make use of methods used by Natural Sciences in an understanding of the social universe. The ultimate aim of science according to him is to produce general laws that are universal i.e. applied to all events. These laws are to be precisely stated and they should enable us to predict and control events. In the search for these laws, scientists should be able to generate that which can be added with time.

Mills further argued that “not all knowledge is scientific”; for knowledge to be counted as science, it has to possess some criteria i.e. laws. It is a known fact that there are no laws in Social Science, Sociology in particular. Though we have the law of supply and demand in Economics, which contemporary economic realities have proved the theory not to be valid? It is thus not easy to identify a law in Social Science because

generalization changes at different times. In fact, generalization is extremely difficult in Social Science. On this note therefore, Mills said: “if there are no laws, it is difficult or not surprising that accumulation can be absent in Social Sciences”.

This does not condemn Social Sciences; instead, they have been compared with the wrong models. Even though generalization in Social Science may seem difficult but Social Scientists explain human behavior in a systematic way. Despite the fact that there is the absence of Social technology there are times people predict their behaviors. For example, it can be established that if we do X, Y will happen. This implies that there is some degree of regularities, which are bound to occur in social life. On this basis Social Scientists make predictions. At the societal level, there are greater regularities, for example, suicide. This point relates to the ability to come up with an explanation of human behavior, even though one may not come out with the actual truth.

We have a great deal of knowledge from everyday life. It is true that Social Scientists do not produce law the way the Natural Scientists do. The Social Scientists put together in a systematic way everyday knowledge, though this does not fit into the framework of scientific explanation. People can make a decision on how to behave. They can sometimes choose to disobey rules. Behavior can only be explained in terms of appropriateness.

They may or may not be ruled. Some of the regularities we see are because people term them to be appropriate. So, it is difficult to maintain value freedom in explaining social behavior. Values are viewed as bias; the idea is that explanation in the natural world be objective and rational.

Then, what does it mean to say that our explanation in Social Science is the value-free explanation? This is because an attempt to

be value-free is also an attempt to be neutral. To achieve this, there is a need for an analysis of the nature of Social Science theories as well as the nature of social reality.

### **Aims of paper. Methods**

This paper aims to unravel various theoretical debates on the subject matter through a review of secondary sources by using content analysis. This will bring forward the arguments for and against the objectivity of

social sciences. Views of various scholars within the social sciences are paramount in understanding the subject matter of the paper.

### **Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion.**

#### **Nature of Social Science theory**

Facts refer to a range of events which we believe to be true. Theories are about a whole. There are interconnections between theory and reality. There are various types of theories such as the analytic theory that is used in Applied Science i.e. in the realm of mathematics and logic and we have a scientific theory which is a universal empirical statement that asserts a causal connection between events. A scientific theory is empirical because the statement can be deduced from them. Every scientific theory must be subjected to scrutiny.

Scientific theories refer to theories, structures, mechanisms, which are observable in society and interact with society to produce certain meaning (Sule, 1997). This includes the individual way of seeing his world which is also created through human experience.

A scientific theory is partially a mental construct in as well as a set of concrete phenomena i.e. what is observed is partially a picture of what is actually there which is based on past experience. Though to a certain extent each observer is not entirely impartial but can be said to be biased towards what he/she sees. The fundamental question

of scientific theory has always hinted on an assertion about the explanation of two aspects of human life:

a. Its existence as a set of material phenomena (materialism).

b. Its existence as a set of ideas (idealism). These two conceivable outcomes comprise the elective arrangement of what is the social reality. The individuals who stress the material qualities of what is social reality consider/say that human exercise is best comprehended as conduct occurring inside the useful material condition. The marvels of nature decide the significance and the points of confinement of our possibilities as individuals whether they are atmosphere, gravity or our physical properties. Be that as it may, social marvels are additionally viewed as material and obliging whether they are various types of associations, methods for savagery, social relics, creation framework and so forth.

On the off chance that we are to clarify the significant procedures of public activity, we should along these lines pressure the reality of their materiality.

In this way, they do not see the significance of purposive considering people as being

impediments to the utilization of the strategies and systems of Natural Science to the top of Social Science.

From the view purpose of vision, realism misses the criticalness and quirk of human action. It misses the way that people inconsistent utilize a complex arrangement of etymological science and social images to show to themselves and to others what they expect to do. Optimism considers humans to be as an outflow of the implying that individuals given by means of language, images and so forth to their lead. To the visionary social activity is in every case along these lines a procedure of persevering through a circumstance with importance and it is those implications that are the substances of the social world. It is contended that such exercises as love, suicide are not a lot of discrete practices occurring under certain material conditions, yet rather human activities are to be comprehended inside the setting of social principles and social implications.

It is accepted that lifeless things do not consider the importance of exercises yet individuals do. Furthermore, the objects of Natural Science obey laws while people consent to social standards.

In the sociological examination, two clear answers for the issue of how we can realize social reality might be found by means of Nominalism and Realism.

Nominalism holds the view that the idea we use to portray and clarify the world, for example, religion, organization, social class, state and so on are only helpful names which we coin so as to condense specific things that make the social world. The truth of the social world whether it be material or perfect is that it is comprised of one of a kind, specific occasions and things that can never be completely comprehended by the use of ideas. From this viewpoint, the truth

of University, for instance, is all the specific entertainers and exercises that make it up at a specific time. By utilizing a general term University, we acknowledge that it is helpful, to sum up, or abridge all these interesting components, for example, it stays conceivable to sum up every one of those ones of kind collaborations that comprise University.

In becoming more acquainted with social reality, there is nothing incorrectly in utilizing such terms as long as we do not botch these general terms (names) for reality itself. This general way to deal with the issue of knowing is by and large alluded to as **NORMALISM**. Norminalism encourages us to comprehend social reality by the utilization of ideas. The mixing up of crediting reality to our general ideas is alluded to as **REIFICATION**.

The mistake of reification emerges when for instance we allude to social classes as following up on their own advantage. Social classes cannot act to their greatest advantage since the social class is just a name we provide for a complex of specific association nor would they be able to act since all people are fit for the activity.

To property such limit as a premium, activity, selling and purchasing to social classes, market, state and even the general public is to submit sin of reification. Ideas are just instruments of clarification however they disclose to you the subtleties of social reality. Obviously, the language of human science is brimming with a general, group and basic terms yet this must be seen the truth about it. It is only a reasonable banner of accommodation. Hence, Norminalism is not only a dismissal of any endeavor to propose that collectivities, and act, yet in addition includes the dismissal of any endeavor to allude to substances that are other than or go past the points of interest of social experience. At the point when Weber alluded to

the religion of China, he was just condensing the run of the mill manners by which issues of extreme importance are settled by individuals from people situated at a specific area.

The solidarity and all-inclusive statement inferred by the cleric, the religion of China is the consequence of Weber's applied exercises. To pick up information, he composed as if such solidarity existed. More or less, Norminalism is a method for conquering the inconceivability of knowing the social reality.

Authenticity is an elective answer for that of Norminalism. It is a place that claims that the centrality of logical ideas lie in their ability to uncover a social reality that is not promptly open to perception. Aside from recognizable materials such ideas really enter to a reality that underlies and clarify the specific occasions.

For instance, Marx contended that if the social structure were given to involvement along these lines, there will be a need for science by any stretch of the imagination. This methodology is alluded to as REALISM. Another model can be referred to on account of Durkheim's enthusiasm for Arunta, which was not in portraying their convictions which may be added to and contrasted and comparative investigation of different social orders, rather, the examination of Arunta practices were taken by Durkheim to represent the rudimentary type of all religions as the all-inclusive or general structures that describe society by and large.

### **Debates about Objectivity in Social Science**

Objectivity in Social Science is a topical issue that draws in bunches of discussions even among Social Scientists. Cunningham in his piece: "safeguard of objectivity" noticed that a request can be objective if and just it:

- (a) is feasible for its depictions and clarifications of a subject to uncover the real idea of that topic.
- (b) is unrealistic for two inquirers holding rival speculations about some topic and having total learning of one another's hypotheses (counting the justification for holding them) both to be defended in sticking to their hypotheses.

Sociology varies from Natural Science in one central regard: while in nature is insignificant, human activity is important (Weber, 1978). To Weber, Social Science is objective as in the importance allotted ought not to be self-assertive. It must be valid for the individuals who look for reality.

At the core of the trouble is: what is genuine, exact, or 'satisfactory' for the outside spectator is dictated by the social hypothesis the researcher happens to hold. This infers Social Science cannot be as a target as the Natural Science, on the off chance that it tends to be objective by any means, unequivocally on the grounds that the portrayal of social activity includes decisions concerning what comprises the 'signifying' of an activity.

Weber believed that "announcements of certainty are a certain something, explanations of significant worth another, and any confounding of the two is impermissible". Dahrendorf (1987) wrote in his article "Max Weber and Modern science" that Weber explained the contrast between declarations of reality and worth. In reality, Dahrendorf leaves vague precisely what Weber's perspective on objectivity was. All the more explicitly, Dahrendorf does not wander today out nitty-gritty clarification on whether Weber accepted that the Social Scientist could dispose of the impact of qualities from the examination of actualities (Hoenich, 2006).



Since the demise of Weber, Sociologists and Political Scientists have been contesting where Weber remained with respect questions concerning the relationship of objectivity of actualities and qualities. Actually, Weber held the Social Scientists' qualities to be a topic. Weber accepted that "esteem directions" are basically emotional, and strife among them cannot be sanely settled. Besides, Weber accepted that worth directions could not be dispensed with from Social Scientific work. To him, they essentially decide the expert's viewpoint. Weber stated, 'Political Economy' was a 'Political Theory', as in it must continue from a worth point of view.

### **Conclusions.**

Objectivism or subjectivism in theoretical Social Science which is the main question of what is the nature of social reality has led us to a major unfolding crisis in the Social Sciences i.e. whether Social Science can be value-free or neutral or put differently, is it possible to have an objective Social Science. Weber (1949) in the methodology of science suggested that objectivity in Social Science could be achieved if a researcher takes care to separate the values he/she displays in every day from his/her professional roles as Social Scientist in which he or she tries to frame from value judgment. Thus, Cunningham kept up that, "if objectivity is on a fundamental level achievable, and on the off chance that it is attractive to seek after Social Science unbiased, at that point Social Scientists should take a stab at objectivity, and whether it is feasible will be shown in their prosperity. The confirmation of the pudding is in the eating". Then again, an expanding number of Social Scientists incorporating followers in a few methodological ideal models dismissed that it is conceivable to have esteem free Social

All the more urgently, Portis (1986) quotes Weber as composing that "there is no target logical examination of culture... or social marvels. Portis concurs, composing that Weber came to accept that exact technique, in Social Science, could recognize genuine and deceptions just when scientists took an unmistakable direction toward their definitive worth

On the whole, it is obvious that objectivity and value freedom in Social Science is desirable though extremely difficult to attain. The proper task of a Social Scientist, therefore, is to endeavor to reduce the degree of subjectivity in his/her inquiry by trying to detach him/herself from the object of study.

Science. Alvin summarizes this situation in his article "the fantasy of significant worth free human science". In that article, he noticed that exacting adherence to the worth free position will, in general, overlook the differentiation among great and abhorrence possibilities constantly present in science. For Marx social orders comprise hostile classes; whatever one does, is done on the compassion of one class or the other.

Cunningham (1980) further contended that: "in the event that enemy of objectivism was right, at that point it is conceivable to find out advancement in science. In the event that these were the situation, at that point, one could not state that holding one hypothesis rather than another is pretty much in light of a legitimate concern for finding and continuing genuine convictions about certain things since no one would ever comprehend what truly and thus could not figure out how to recognize failing and not blundering in the quest for genuine convictions".

Overall, the issue of objectivity involves a degree in light of the fact that even the individuals who support supreme objectivity have been upset by subjectivism. All things considered, logical learning itself is the result of numerous people working in (recognize or unacknowledged) show. Subsequently, the logical request is a social practice.

The central issue in objectivity in either of the sciences is replication i.e. using known scientific procedures by different researchers arriving at the same conclusion.

The only distinction between objectivity in Natural and Social Sciences is in the object

of the study and the fact that Social Sciences are less exact and Social scientists are part of the item of study. Because science is impartial and objective; scientists should not let their feelings influence their work. This way they can reduce the tendency of their being biased. There are significant roles the Social Scientific community can play.

Various scientific processes such as peer reviews, the discussions at scientific conferences, and other meetings where scientific results are presented are part of a social process whose purpose is to strengthen the objective aspect of the scientific methods.

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