

INTERROGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEORY TO SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE RESEARCH IN THE POST COVID-19 ERA

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Abstract

One of the basic elements of social and management sciences research is the review and application of theory(ies) hence. This paper is interrogating the implication of theory(ies) in social and management sciences. The study adopted the explanatory research design with specifics focus on the impact of theory on social and management sciences. The paper relied on the secondary method of data collection in providing discussions and analysis on the topic under review. Although, the characteristics and implications of the theory, its greatest challenge is that, it has the wrong choice of usage, and again non or order application of relevant theory to the various topics under review. One of the characteristics of a theory is that it must be precise and clear in other to serve as the guide of research because a theory is based on postulations and assumptions, arising from the personal experience of an individual, empirical explanations that are scientific in nature. Due to the challenges associated with theories as highlighted in this paper. The paper, through suggestion, recommends that theoretical explanation to social science and management science phenomenon must be made compulsory, and the choice of the theory selected for a particular topic under discussion should be supervised by a panel of professors in the relevant area or discipline where the topic(s) is covered.

Keywords: *Theory, Social Science, Management Science, Post COVID-19.*

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1. Introduction

Social sciences and management science are core science of humanity and society that is head to the high esteem, the contributions of human beings in making an impact on the development of society, no society can develop without the presence of a political scientist, sociologist, economist, geographer, public administrator, business and administrator etc. this discipline and their individual needs a theory to provide empirical contribution(s) aimed at achieving both quantitative and qualitative transformation of the society.

To make progress on these kinds of intellectual and practical questions, individual researchers (and, indeed, the entire research enterprise) operate in two distinct but highly related worlds: the abstract (the world of concepts/ideas) and the concrete (the empirical/observable world). What scientific theories do is link these two separates?

domains and, in so doing, provide descriptions, summaries, integration, and explanations about what is known from research as well as guidance for additional research and practice that will increase further understanding.

‘Theory’ is one of the most important words in the lexicon of contemporary sociology. I am not referring only in fact, not principally to the subfield of social and management theory.

The words ‘theory,’ ‘theoretical,’ and ‘theorize’ are constantly and consequentially used by all sociologists. For instance, one way of describing what sociologists of social movements do is to say that they develop ‘theories’ about social movements. What do sociologists of the family do is develop ‘theories’ about the family? And so on. Moreover, it is a widespread belief that empirical social and management research should be driven or informed by ‘theory.’ Thus, sociology journals tend to reject ‘atheoretical’ and ‘undertheorized’ papers, as well as papers that fail to make a ‘theoretical contribution’ to the literature (be the paper’s subject-matter inequality, education, gender, or culture). Sociologists’ business is to ‘theorize’ about social things. Indeed, that sociology offers ‘theories’ about social things is arguably what makes it count as social science (and differentiates it from the accounts of society that laypersons, poets, and journalists offer).

2. Statement of the Problem and Methodology

This paper is to uncover the under-utilization of theory in the social and management science

field on the one hand and secondly, to uncover the reason for the misapplication of theories in social and management science research.

Methodology

The method of arriving at data used in this paper is a secondary method, publications, books, and as well as researched papers were exploited by the paper presenter to add value to academics and to the field of social and management sciences.

3. Conceptual Clarification

What exactly does social and management scientist mean by the words ‘theory. Their ubiquity notwithstanding, we shall see that it is quite unclear what these words mean in the social and management language (Glanz, 2017). More importantly, we shall also see that this is not at all an abstract philosophical problem, unrelated to the actual production of social and management knowledge. Unfortunately, semantic confusions about the word ‘theory’ have led to much miscommunication, inside and outside the subfield of social and management theory. Rather than an abstract philosophical problem, this is a practical problem, which insofar as agreed-upon logical and semantic bases are a prerequisite for any sort of epistemic progress social and management scientists cannot neglect (Scott and Usher 2004).

(Kivunjah 2018) defined a theory as “an integral set of laws or generalizations which is capable of providing a systematic explanation of some area of knowledge or body of observations, or which may be used to predict events or which prescribes conduct” this last category is a type of “normative” theory. However, social and management analyses are more centrally concerned with scientific or empirical theories. Consequently, theories are intended to explain and/or predict social and management events. Such theories are generally supposed to contain a reference to entities and relations which are not themselves directly observable but which may be indirectly tested through observation, e.g., power resources vs. relations to the political system.

The term theory is also used in political science to denote any act of loosely related assumption and concepts that is used in social and management analysis (Swanson 2013).

(Kivunjah 2018) explained the development of a theory in what they termed “layer-cake account”. The First layer is the body of empirical facts we gather by observation. Next. We

make generalizations about these facts. Then we try to explain these generalizations entities, that is we construct a theory. These layering may continue with higher level theories being constructed to explain the lower. These layers of theory are often labelled according to their range or level of generality “narrow range” or “partial theories” (e.g., concerning legislative behavior in post war British parliamentary politics); Middle range theory (e.g., concerning legislative behavior generally); general theory (e.g., a theory of political action, or of the political system). Having constructed theory, we may use it to generate hypotheses, the testing of which may lead us to modify or reject the theory.

In what seems like the Layer-cake account of (Kivunjah 2018) argued that:

“Theory belongs properly to that part of political studies concerned with making of generalizations about Political Phenomena, the construction of hypotheses from which predictions can be derived-predictions which can in principle, be falsified by normal empirical methods”.

The Concept of Social Sciences

Social Sciences are regarded as a category of science that accommodate solely the discipline which study man in relation to his social environment for the purpose of formulating laws, generalization and more importantly to make prediction on the future actions of man (Adeleke 2019).

The Concept of Management Science

Management science is the application of scientific method in addressing problems and making decision that arises from communities and other organizations such as government and military institution, again management science encompasses scientific discipline such as public administration, business administration, policy administration etc in the field of management (Kerlinger & Lee 2000).

Concept of Post COVID-19 Era

Post COVID-19 Era signal the epoch that arises after the global health and social-economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic that accelerate the development towards the 4th industrial revolution, towards the restructured theorization of development and adaptability for the post

COVID-19 period. Again, the post COVID-19 era refers to the period after the lockdown imposed on the people and their businesses which has been relaxed by the government of various states (Randers 2021).

Characteristics of a Theory

A good number of authors (e.g., Bunge, 1967; Hunt, 1991; Johnson & Christensen, 2017; Popper, (Carnes 2011 and Wacker, 1998) outline the essential ingredients of a theory. A review of their work suggests that for a body of assertions, descriptions or predictions of behavior or relationships to qualify as a theory, it must meet the following characteristics:

1. A good theory has to be logical and coherent, and has clear definitions of terms or variables, and has boundary conditions
2. A good theory has a domain where it applies, and has clearly described relationships among variables
3. A good theory seeks to describes, explains, and makes specific predictions, and make comparism using concepts, themes, principles and constructs
4. A good theory must have been based on empirical data, and must have made claims that are subject to testing, been tested and verified
5. A good theory must be clear and parsimonious, and its assertions or predictions must be different and better than those in existing theories
6. A good theory predict must be general enough to be applicable to and in several contexts, and must assertions or predictions be applicable, and if applied as predicted, will result in the predicted outcome
7. A good theory makes assertions and predictions which are not set out in concrete terms, but subject to revision and improvement as social, and has scientists use the theory to make sense of phenomena in the world of social and management sciences (Scott and Usher 2004)

The Functions of a Theory

However, the functions of theory to social and management sciences are germane to understanding phenomenon and because of this its function are provided a lead to dealing with social and management challenges. Flowing from the words of (Ravitch & Riggan 2017), the function of theories are:

- i. Theory in social and management sciences synthesis isolated bits of empirical data into a broader conceptual scheme of wider applicability and predictability. It permits deeper understanding of data and translates empirical findings into a more readily understood, more readily available form.
- ii. Theory in social and management sciences permits the prediction of the occurrence of phenomena and enable the researcher to postulate and eventually to discover hitherto unknown and observed phenomena.
- iii. Theory in social and management sciences acts as a guide to discovering facts; it pin-points crucial aspect to be researched and germane questions to be answered by high lightened areas in need of explanations and clarification.
- iv. In social and management science theory, theories are based on assumption that detailed empirical findings are special cases of general laws without which progress cannot be made on a particular phenomenal.

4. Implications of Theory to Social and Management Sciences

Theories are built from concepts. Generally, concepts denote phenomena. A concept embraces the aspects of the social world that are considered essential for a particular purpose. Concepts are constructed from definitions. And definitions create scenarios for theories to be made. This part shall be discussing the importance of theory to social and management sciences in the post COVID-19 period. The significances are:

Firstly, theory helps social and management sciences in interpretations and deductions which ensures empirically testability, that is, theories provide means for interpretation and verification in social and management science field. Even after the COVID-19. It allows compatibility both with observation and previously validated (confirmed) theories. It helps in the provision of empirical data which have been checked and confirmed/verified and rest on sound postulates and hypotheses.

Secondly, theories help social and management sciences in making simple statements (precisely) and clearly which serve as a useful guide to research. This is the law of parsimony. However, theories help by over-looking variables simply because they are difficult to appraise. Social and management science theories are based on empirical facts and relations. It helps in organizing data into general principles that permit the interpretation of particular phenomena on the basis of the operation of more fundamental underlying factors even after the post

COVID-19 period.

The Challenges of Theories in Social and Management Sciences

There is no academic endeavor without challenges or restrictions. However, the challenges associated with theories in Social and Management Sciences in the Post COVID-19 Period ranges from two and are;

- a) **Misapplication of Theories;** This is one of the challenges militating against the use of theory in the social and management science field, researchers tend to employ theory that is not relevant to the field of study or the topic under review and this has made the essence of theoretical framework fruitless. Theories are used in areas where they are not supposed to be used and these make the assimilation of the content of research outcome cumbersome for assimilation and implementation even after Post COVID-19 period (Olaniyi 1997).
- b) **Under-Utilization of Theories;** Unlike misapplication of theories, the underutilization of theory is a very dangerous trend in social and management science research, this is because theories are enumerated without explanation and without highlighting the essence or benefit of the use of such theory in explaining such phenomenon. Thereby, making the outcome of the research lack applicability of such theory even in the post COVID-19 period.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper was able to examine the concept of theory, the concept of Social Sciences, the concept of management sciences, the concept of post COVID-19 era, the characteristics of theory, the functions of theory, as well as the significant of theory to social and management sciences in the post COVID-19 era as well as x-raying the challenges of theories in both social and management science research. It is however, based on the problems that this paper by way of recommendation suggest that:

- 1) **Theoretical Explanation** by the use of theories should be made compulsory to social and management science researchers on contemporary phenomenon in solving human and societal challenges.
- 2) **Panel of professors** should be composed to assess the choice of theory used under theoretical framework of any research in the field of social and management sciences, as this will help curb the challenge of under utilization of theories used in a research work.

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