

Accounting Paradigm from a Sociological Study Perspective

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a conventional understanding of accounting, descriptions related to functionalism and positivist, sociological perspectives or scientific paradigms as well as relevant philosophical foundations underlying conventional understanding. This study seeks to explore the differences in several sociological perspectives that develop in studying or conducting studies on accounting as a direct impact of differences in sociological perspectives of the organization. The methodology used in this study is qualitative with secondary data methods mainly through bibliometric research obtained from journals or supporting articles. Accounting is a multiparadigm subject and accounting studies are currently in transition. The perspective of social sciences, especially sociology, has the potential to open a wider space for accounting researchers or future researchers to examine the issues or problems of accounting science from other perspectives that have been "neglected".

1. Introduction

The term paradigm itself was first used by Thomas Kuhn in his work *The Structure of the Scientific Revolution* (1962). Paradigm is an important term in the development of science introduced by Kuhn, although he did not clearly state what is meant by paradigm itself. In fact, the term model is used no less than 21 different ways. Indeed, after Kuhn many definitions related to models emerged, both of them tried to reduce Kuhn's 21 definitions into three main concepts of models, the three types of paradigms presented by Masterman. (Ritzer, 2003; Riza et al., 2022). are the metaphysical paradigm, sociological paradigm and construct paradigm. Metaphysical paradigm is a type of paradigm regarding (1) something that exists and does not exist; (2) regarding only something that exists; or (3) only something that really exists; which is the center of attention of certain scientific communities. From the metaphysical paradigm, Kuhn proposed a concept which he called exemplar, namely the results of scientific discoveries that are generally accepted. This exemplar is also called the sociological paradigm type. Meanwhile, the construct paradigm is the narrowest concept among the three types of paradigm above.

Paradigms can also be understood as world views. Worldview in Western etymology consists of two words *monde* (world) and *vue* (point of view) which means world view. The world view in German is called *Weltansicht* or *Weltanschauung* (*welt*=world; *anschauung*=perception), which means awareness of the world. In Italy, *Weltanschauung* is defined as the conception of the world. Meanwhile in France, this meaning extends to the metaphysical vision of the world and the concept of life. The worldview in Russia is called *Mirovozzrenie*, which has the same meaning as *Weltanschauung*. Among all these words, according to Zarkasyi (2005), according to their linguistic meaning, everyone agrees that worldview must be linked to cultural, religious and scientific values.

The main idea to be conveyed through this article is the statement that scientific claims regarding a scientific concept, scientific process, or scientific research results are basically relative claims. Every research, including in the field of accounting, has its own philosophical assumptions and theoretical foundations. Therefore, it is important to properly recognize and assess every philosophical assumption and theoretical basis that underlies each type of scientific research to ensure that both the philosophical assumptions and theoretical basis used in scientific research are consistent with the scientific beliefs or paradigms held by the researcher. . To achieve the aim of writing, the systematics of this paper are structured as follows. The first part will try to review the problem of conventional understanding of

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accounting, namely the understanding of accounting that is currently dominant because it is held by the majority of accountants and accounting academics. Also, the first part of the description tries to relate it to functionalism and positivism, sociological perspectives or scientific paradigms as well as relevant philosophical foundations underlying conventional understanding. This article attempts to discuss the status and implications of accounting, borrowing Ahmed Belkaoui's (1992) term, as a multiparadigms discipline. A historical description of the development of multiparadigm or multiple perspectives on accounting (some also call it interdisciplinary studies on accounting), is also discussed in this section to emphasize that the idea of interdisciplinary studies on accounting is not a strange thing that must be "bonded" in its development. This article attempts to explore the differences in several sociological perspectives that have developed in studying or conducting studies on accounting as a direct impact of the differences in sociological perspectives of organizations. Because each of them can be characterized by so many basic distinctions, the exploratory review in this section is attempted to be presented more briefly.

2. Method

The methodology used in this research is qualitative with secondary data methods, especially through bibliometric research obtained from journals or supporting articles (Sugiyono, 2014), document review is an important tool for contextual analysis, where documents are useful and very useful in providing context and meaning in the article being worked on, and through the literature review, the researcher can also state it clearly and concisely. . Readers know why things happen. What you want to research is a problem that needs to be researched, both in terms of the research topic and the science involved.

3. Result and Discussion

In this conventional understanding, accounting as defined by the American Accounting Association in A Statement of Basic Accounting Theory (ASOBAT) is nothing more than "the process of identifying, measuring and communicating economic information to enable appropriate and rational considerations and decisions to be made by users of economic information." that" (Belkaoui, 1992, p. 22; Roslender, 1992, p. 2). Accounting is placed more at a practical level, namely solely as a decision-making tool. This definition of accounting does not mean it is wrong or wrong, because the conceptual framework from which the meanings of accounting and accounting standards get their reference, indeed emphasizes the need for accounting to be placed in this practical realm, namely by including decision usefulness as the most important criterion in selecting principles or concepts that will be used as a reference in developing accounting standards. However, we rarely realize that this rather excessive emphasis on practical aspects has the implication that accounting becomes confined and placed solely in an iron cage for the purpose of making reasonable decisions, while the degree of reasonability is largely based on measurement. rationality (read "interests") of shareholders and creditors alone. Further consequences will be seen in, for example, the use of profit (economic advantage) as the main representation of the success of accountability relationships in an organization where accounting has its most important role, namely the company. This fact ignores the existence of other measures of success which may very well have important aspects for other community groups. This has been proven, for example, there is pressure on business and accounting circles to pay attention to aspects of environmental sustainability so that they can achieve what is now known as sustainable growth.

If the context is an organization that has an agency relationship, logically this will give rise to the need for accounting as a means of providing accountability information, precisely as a monitoring tool to avoid information asymmetry between the principal and the agent. As long as the nature of the organization is profit seeking and only has two interested parties, namely the principal and agent, and strictly separates the roles between principal and agent, then accounting will provide optimum benefits, because empirical phenomena will indeed support or be in accordance with all the assumptions made. the basics. However, if the situation of the organization is not like that, for example organizations in the public sector or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose principal interests (public or community) are clearly not solely economic or financial aspects (in fact they vary greatly), then it is certain that the use of reports Conventional finance as the main accountability report will give rise to information distortion, a situation where accounting information is not fully able to meet what is expected by its users. One of the reasons is the nature or essence of accountability which is different between that in companies and that in public sector organizations. Therefore, efforts to equalize the two which are currently being intensively carried out by international donor institutions through New Public Management programs such as the implementation of accrual accounting, for example, are the same as the uniformity of the model of accountability in public sector organizations towards a private or accountant's model of accountability. The

long-term impact is clearly not only a technical impact but also a very broad behavioral and social impact (Rosenbloom and Yaroni, 1992; Farazmand, 1999), because it is associated with the philosophy of "thinking wisely". Currently, we can guess who will benefit and who will suffer losses, both domestically and internationally. (Syakur, Muid, et al., 2022).

Most practicing accountants, being pragmatic in nature, do not seem to care whether there are significant differences between various accountability models that also affect their compliance model. They even really appreciate this condition. Strangely enough, academic accountants are also trapped in a blind belief that only prioritizes the important aspects of accountability, to the point that it must be applied in all types of organizations without trying to ask whether the concept of responsibility is truly single. or plural. idea. idea? If so, is accountability, such as Type A, appropriate for Type B organizations? If not completely, what aspects need to be adjusted? For those of us who work in academia, these are questions we must ask ourselves before declaring the need to enforce accountability in any type of organization. It is this phenomenon of apathy that seems to worry Perks (1993). In your opinion, there is a tendency to homogenize the meaning of the term accountability, even though every use of this term is definitely associated with determining who is responsible? (Profit, 1993).

Of course, the answers to these questions can be very different for each type of organization. Therefore, one of the weaknesses of conventional accounting understanding is its tendency to simplify and homogenize things that are in fact neither simple nor uniform. However, it needs to be understood that from the perspective of the philosophy of science, this general understanding is not without a philosophical basis or sociological perspective. Therefore, the next part of this article will try to explore the relationship between conventional views and one of the schools of scientific thought that greatly influenced or shaped it, namely realization.

It must be acknowledged that modern accounting research, especially in Indonesia, is still dominated by a positivist understanding or perspective. Thus, positivism has also become the "spirit" of conventionalism in accounting research in Indonesia today. In the spirit of conventionalism in current accounting studies in Indonesia, the influence of positivism is so strong that very few of us, as accountants or accounting scholars, realize that positivism, in the history of the development of science or even in the philosophy of science (philosophy) of science is basically wrong: this is a school of scientific thought and not the only school (scientific perspective or scientific paradigm). Positivism has achieved its own legitimacy in the world of accounting science in Indonesia. Because of this, he is also closely monitored by his supporters. It is not surprising that in situations like this, scientists unconsciously behave like tailors working with only one model and one size. The end result of a manufacturing process like this can be similar to one-size-fit-all clothing that can still fit everyone. The application of scientific methods like this to the natural sciences may not be problematic, but if applied to the social sciences, it is very likely that the consequences and risks that will arise will be very significant. The main reason is behavior.

Humans are different from the characteristics of natural science subjects which are basically heterogeneous and difficult to standardize. If further investigation is carried out, the strong influence of positivism on accounting studies today cannot be separated from the influence of economics, which is now the social science that has the most influence on accounting science. As a result, accounting studies at least until recently have been primarily conducted using the tools of economics and to some extent psychology (especially in the field of management accounting research). This has very broad implications for adoption by considering concepts from these two branches of social science. In the following context, not only theoretical concepts are discussed, but also research perspectives, approaches, methods and even methods. At a time when the economy, like psychology, is very positive, the accounting profession is also affected very positively. This can be seen in the behavior of most accounting scholars and of course accounting practitioners who uphold the a priori principles of positive science, such as primordialism, death, nominalism, naturalism, phenomenology, scientific law, and freedom of values (Smith, 1998).

If the condition of universality in the field of natural sciences, whose objects are not influenced by values, is not absolute, then how can the same degree of absoluteness (or non-absoluteness) be applied through the laws (theories) of the social sciences? which contains explanations about human behavior? This is greatly influenced by space and time. In short, social science is limited to context-free science. With this principle, positivist social sciences will reject the understanding of science by those who believe that science has a location or context. Another thing that can be understood from this principle is that although the inductive approach has not been fully implemented in the hypothesis deduction paradigm which is part of the current orthodoxy, this approach has been proven to have a large influence in the formation of empirical scientific laws.

For example, the emphasis on the application of IFRS as the only accounting standard with universal application is easily suspected of originating from a conventional positivist understanding model. On the one hand, affirmative science's adherence to factual foundations, not values, which are the sole basis for all

scientific claims will also strengthen what is based on scientific principles or nominal laws above. Logically, it is easy to accept the argument that if something applies generally, then certain local laws (local) will not apply to something that can be guaranteed to have priority value (norm). At a more microscopic level, the tension that arises due to the tug-of-war between relativity (locality) and universality also gives rise to differences in answers to the question of whether the scientific concept of IPS is objective (after universality) or subjective? (after universality). universality). relativity). But the most important impact of treating facts as the basis of all scientific claims is that science, including the social sciences, does not depend on values. Considering the nature of science itself, the study of normative issues, such as religion or morality - according to the positivist school of thought - regarding right and wrong or right and wrong, is basically unscientific. If this principle is carried out consistently and purely, then the study of religious or moral issues will only be called scientific research, while the research carried out will only be limited to behavioral, religious (in the relative sense) or moral (in the relative sense). people's behavior is visible and can be observed without establishing a relationship, whether people's behavior is good or bad (moral or unethical). (Syakur, Katmini, et al., 2022).

Michael C. Jensen (1983), a very famous scientist at Harvard Business School and a figure who played a role in developing the theory of the firm, wrote very interestingly in *The Accounting Review*, Volume LVIII, No. 2, 1983 with the title *Organizational Theory and Methods*. In his writings, he believed that because accounting was an integral part of an organization and because organizational theory was developing so rapidly, it would be inappropriate for accountants to ignore the frenetic development of organizational theory.

The importance of accountants or accounting scholars paying attention to organizational theory in their research has also been emphasized by Covalleski and Aiken (1986). Both argue that the inclusion of organizational theory as a basic theory in accounting research increases the relevance of accounting research findings, because the locus of accounting practice, for example accounting or control systems, lies within organizations. Furthermore, they add that although sociological theories may seem more closely related to accounting than the knowledge included in the field of applied organizational studies, it should be remembered that organizational studies also fall within sociology, hence the study of accounting issues. Sociology has strategic significance, especially its ability to connect the two aspects of accounting at the micro, meso and macro levels.

The idea of accounting as a multiparadigm science is not a new idea, in fact currently it is not limited to the field of sociology, which at least for most mathematicians, both academic and professional, is still recognized. as a foreigner in the field of economics or psychology. Academic accountants themselves have long been aware of this reality, see Anthony Hopwood's article in *The Accounting Review* Volume 85 Number 2 entitled *Where Does Accounting Research Go?* (Hopwood, 2007).

To some extent, this perspective can also be replaced by the perspective of conducting research or visualizing the results of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary accounting studies. However, it should be noted here that the use of the words "multi" or "inter" in relation to perspectives, models or principles is intended not only to indicate a model for studying accounting problems but also to combine existing scientific perspectives. into one, or what is often called mixed methods research. Mixed methods research designs are just one example of what can be achieved through this unique perspective. Consistent with the term used together with unconventional perspectives, the term unconventional emphasizes a perspective that is not monolithic and does not rely on logic and thinking that favors binary opposition. Therefore, this perspective is a perspective that in conducting research or on the results of accounting studies can follow one of the models commonly found in the social sciences, but does not provide the right time for the possibility of applying other perspectives or models when considering the problems faced. As a simple example of how postmodernism can be applied to the study of accounting, consider questions about accounting that until now, even for those with conventional views, have remained poorly understood. The term deconstruction in postmodernism is a product of the influence of the linguistic philosophy of Saussure (1857-1913), a Swiss professor of linguistics (O'Donnell, 2009), which integrated language studies. According to him, language is basically a system of signs (signs or symbols), meaning that signs are the result of a process of social construction. Language is not an abstract, eternal, and vague idea. (Syakur, 2023). Compared to words, language represents a whole system with underlying structures and rules, while words are just signs, each sign of which is always formed from a combination of objects and names. Saussure argued that the representation of objects based on names (or sounds) occurs arbitrarily, meaning that each symbol can be used differently in each culture (society), even though the basic rules are the same (O'Donnell, 2009). Because words are social constructions, they have social meanings that are appropriate to the context in which they were created. Thus, deconstruction is not a specific method or systematic program, but rather a way of reading texts that is able to find small details that are forgotten or lost (due

to certain social structures in the process of forming words or symbols). So that it can provide space for the validity of other perspectives or interpretations.

If so, accounting represents a language, especially the language of business, which is also full of signs and rules, which is likely to undergo deconstruction. First, as a language full of signs (symbols), the concept of accounting has certainly experienced and is the result of a social construction process so that accounting cannot just exist. Second, it is very likely that the social processes in which accounting concepts, standards, and other rules undergo construction have removed or obscured some of the actual important details, thereby making what has been rehearsed no longer feasible. more than just a complete concept. Deconstruction through re-reading the text, in this case accounting concepts, attempts to restore small details that were lost so that concepts can be created that provide a comprehensive or comprehensive meaning. Some research conducted at the Faculty of Accounting, especially regarding the humanistic concept of profit, can be included in the postmodern research category. It is possible that postmodern accounting studies are not satisfied with questioning the concept of profit, just as we cannot deconstruct the concept of fair value, for example. The concept of fair value seen from a postmodernist perspective is definitely formed through social processes, so that the attribute of "fairness" of "value" emerges. To do this, we can ask ourselves the question "only for whom?", "Who should decide justice?". In social sciences, the loss of certain details or aspects in the formation of a word or symbol should not be understood as something negative. First, social processes often take place as a negotiation arena involving the power of the parties involved. Second, cultural orientation and background can cause one aspect to be considered less important than other aspects.

4. Conclusion

Accounting is a multiparadigm subject and accounting studies are currently in a transition period. Regarding whether this transition constitutes a paradigm shift as described by Kuhn (1962) or simply a methodological transition, people may have different views on this issue. However, we see clear signs that accounting research is in transition. The emergence of sharia, a type of accounting based on religious values, is clear evidence of this. Meanwhile, the international community is now encouraging accountants to pay more attention to the environment and intergenerational justice, issues that are included in the so-called sustainability dimension. In the future, it can be predicted that financial statements, even though prepared based on the fair value concept, will no longer be considered complete if they do not reflect immutability. The perspective of social sciences, especially sociology, has the potential to open up wider space for accounting researchers or future researchers to examine issues or problems in accounting science from other perspectives that have been "neglected" so far. The sustainability and success of the revolutionary efforts made by several groups in the accounting academy, even in Indonesia, to pursue alternative accounting studies will depend greatly on the academic environment they face..

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All the authors cotributed to the research.

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