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**Book Review: Badrinarayan Shankar Pawar, *Theory Building for Hypothesis Specification in Organizational Studies*. London: SAGE, 2009, xii+133 pp., SLR 1680, ISBN: 978-81-321-0244-1**

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During the last few years, when teaching research methodology classes, I repeatedly noticed the limited attention given in text books on research methods to what we call ‘conceptualization of the research problem’ or what I call ‘formulation of an expectancy framework’. I attempted to address this issue by recommending articles such as *What theory is not by* Sutton and Staw (1995) and *Organizational theories: Some criteria for evaluation* by Bacharach (1989), and by taking a long time to explain how one should go about formulating an expectancy framework; however, I knew that the issue was not addressed sufficiently. The articles available focus primarily on explaining what theory is or what it is not, than how a researcher taking a positivistic approach should develop the expectancy framework. When I read Pawar’s *Theory Building for Hypothesis Specification in Organizational Studies* (2009), I realized I am not the only one who suffers from this, but it is an acute pain for many academics teaching research methodology. However, unlike many of us, Pawar has taken a practical step to address the gap. In his book, Pawar describes how one should formulate an expectancy framework, while illustrating how it differs from theories which are more abstract and have a more universal perspective. He has approached his topic *theory building for hypothesis specification* meticulously and scholastically, yet, has presented it in a simple and reader friendly manner which makes it a welcome addition to the recommended reading of research methodology courses at graduate and even doctoral level.

Leaving out the first chapter which sets the baseline for the subject of the book, the remainder is organized around three major sub topics which are linked to one another. First part of the book explores theory in general, while the second part deals with theory building for hypothesis specifications, and the final section addresses more complex issues such as mediator and moderator relationships.

The first section of the book which runs into three chapters explains the role of theory in the broader context of reality, knowledge, science and research, illustrates the role of theory in research,

and finally, describes units of theory. These chapters, while discussing what theory is in detail, also serve to explain the differences between theory building and theory building for hypothesis specification. The discussion found in these chapters on the role of theory and the role of assumptions in theory is noteworthy as many novice researchers formulate hypotheses from a theory, or theories, disregarding their original assumptions.

The second part, running into two chapters, explains how one should approach developing a theory for hypothesis specification. While discussing hypothesis specification in detail, Pawar has taken much time to explain the place of logic in hypothesis specification – a discussion rarely found in text books on research methods. Dedicating a significant number of pages for this topic is certainly warranted due to two reasons. First, logic serves as the yardstick of evaluating a theory at this stage of developing the expectancy framework. Second, this is one of the areas that many novice researchers find less comfortable, probably due in part to the little attention paid by text books and courses on research methodology to the place of logic in hypothesis specification.

The final chapter of the book extends the discussion of the first two sections in two major directions: first, the development of complex theories consisting of mediating and moderating relationships, and second, the more abstract, universal theories. The latter is an area beyond the basic purpose of this book. However, this discussion adds value in important ways. It tells the novice researcher how the theory he/she develops to predict/explain a very specific area of reality can be extended to a more abstract, universal theory – the ultimate goal of research. In addition, it also provides some insights into deducing the expectancy framework from existing theories – the converse process of the first. Another important task that Pawar has accomplished in this last chapter is to inform the reader about alternative approaches of theory development.

While appreciating what this book has accomplished, there are several revisions that I would like to see in future editions, which students of research methodology reading this book should take into account. First, Pawar should reconsider defining theory and concept as “a representation of reality” (p. 25). To me, a theory is not a representation of a particular area of reality but an approximation of a particular area of reality. Similarly concept or construct (I use the terms as the interchangeable in the way Pawar does, although my view is different to that of Pawar) is again an approximation of what theory treats as a cause or an effect. The difference between a concept and theory is that a concept approximates a cause or an effect while a theory approximates the relationship among two or more causes and effects. This conception of concept and theory is evident in the notion of validity of research, concepts and theory. More specifically, since the goal of research, when one takes a positivistic perspective, is to comprehend reality as exactly as possible, the term ‘approximation’ which means ‘nearly exact’ rather than merely ‘standing for’ or ‘symbolizing,’ which is implied by the term ‘representation,’ qualifies as a better term to define theory and concept.

Second, knowledge should not only be logically appealing but also be empirically verifiable/falsifiable; thus, any bit of knowledge should, at least theoretically, pass both tests. Given this, knowledge, for me, is logico-empirical. Especially, theory developed for hypothesis specification must be falsifiable. Therefore, researchers who engage in developing theory for hypotheses specification should be concerned about this, unlike in the case of developing abstract, universal theory. Given its importance, students of research should be made aware of this criterion. Pawar could have realized this goal when he discusses “role of theory in facilitating economy in empirical verification” (p. 33).

Finally, Pawar should give some thought to discussing the role of existing knowledge in building logic into theory. Logic involves a premise or premises and researchers deduce these premises from existing theory. Though one could develop a hypothetical premise and thus make a prediction based on it about a phenomenon, s/he would fail to build credibility into his/her argument. This is why development of knowledge through empirical research becomes a gradual process than a paradigm shift (Lakatos, as cited in Chalmers, 1976), and also why researchers face difficulties in convincing the scientific community when they develop too 'original' theories standing significantly away from the current stock of knowledge.

The above few concerns I have about this book do not in any way negate the fact that Pawar has managed to more than adequately address a gaping chasm in methodology discussions. Therefore, without any hesitation, I recommend *Theory Building for Hypothesis Specification in Organizational Studies* to all teachers of research methods, as a valuable companion who will share the burden of grooming their research students.

## **References**

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