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Theoretical framework and conceptual framework example

The terms theoretical framework and conceptual framework are often used interchangeably to mean the same thing. Although they are both used to understand a research problem and guide the development, collection, and analysis of research, it's important to understand the difference between the two. When working on coursework or dissertation research, make sure to clarify what is being asked and any specific course or program requirements. Theoretical framework A theoretical framework is a single formal theory. When a study is designed around a theoretical framework, the theory is the primary means in which the research problem is understood and investigated. Although theoretical frameworks tend to be used in quantitative studies, you will also see this approach in qualitative research. Conceptual framework A conceptual framework includes one or more formal theories (in part or whole) as well as other concepts and empirical findings from the literature. It is used to show relationships among these ideas and how they relate to the research study. Conceptual frameworks are commonly seen in qualitative research in the social and behavioral sciences, for example, because often one theory cannot fully address the phenomena being studied. O SlideShare utiliza cookies para otimizar a funcionalidade e o desempenho do site, assim como para apresentar publicidade mais relevante aos nossos usuários. Se você continuar a navegar o site, você aceita o uso de cookies. Leia nosso Contrato do Usuário e nossa Política de Privacidade. O SlideShare utiliza cookies para otimizar a funcionalidade e o desempenho do site, assim como para apresentar publicidade mais relevante aos nossos usuários. Se você continuar a utilizar o site, você aceita o uso de cookies. Leia nossa Política de Privacidade e nosso Contrato do Usuário para obter mais detalhes. SlideShare uses cookies to improve functionality and performance, and to provide you with relevant advertising. If you continue browsing the site, you agree to the use of cookies on this website. See our User Agreement and Privacy Policy. SlideShare uses cookies to improve functionality and performance, and to provide you with relevant advertising. If you continue browsing the site, you agree to the use of cookies on this website. See our Privacy Policy and User Agreement for details. The theoretical framework defines the key concepts in your research, proposes relations between them, and discusses relevant theories based on a literature review. A strong theoretical framework gives your research direction, allowing you to convincingly interpret, explain and generalize from your findings. Sample problem statement and research questions Your problem statement, research questions and literature review will serve as the basis for preparing your theoretical framework. Company X is struggling with the problem that many online customers do not return to make subsequent purchases. Management wants to increase customer loyalty and believes that improved customer satisfaction will play a major role in achieving this goal. To investigate this problem, you have identified the following problem statement, objective, and research questions: Problem: Many online customers do not return to make subsequent purchases. Objective: To increase customer loyalty and thereby generate more revenue. Research question: 'How can the satisfaction of company X's online customers be improved in order to increase customer loyalty?' Sub-Questions: 'What is the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction?' 'How satisfied and loyal are company X's online customers currently?' 'What factors affect the satisfaction and loyalty of company X's online customers?' As the concepts of "loyalty" and "customer satisfaction" play a major role in the investigation and will later be measured, they are essential concepts to define within the theoretical framework. Sample theoretical framework Below is a (simplified) example of how you can describe and compare definitions and theories. In this example, we focus on the concept of 'customer satisfaction.' 2.1 Customer satisfaction Thomassen (2003, p. 69) defines customer satisfaction as "the perception of the customer as a result of consciously or unconsciously comparing their experiences with their expectations." Kotler & Keller (2008, p. 80) build on this definition, stating that customer satisfaction is determined by "the degree to which someone is happy or disappointed with the observed performance of a product in relation to his or her expectations." Performance that is below expectations leads to a dissatisfied customer, while performance that satisfies expectations produces satisfied customers. Expectations being exceeded leads to a "very satisfied or even pleasantly surprised customer" (Kotler & Keller, 2003, p. 80). The definition of Zeithaml and Bitner (2003, p. 86) is slightly different from that of Thomassen: "Satisfaction is the consumer fulfillment response. It is a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product of service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment." Zeithaml and Bitner's emphasis is thus on obtaining a certain satisfaction in relation to purchasing. Thomassen's definition is the most relevant to the aims of this study, given the emphasis it places on unconscious perception. Although Zeithaml and Bitner, like Thomassen, say that customer satisfaction is a reaction to the experience gained, there is no distinction between conscious and unconscious comparisons in their definition. Company X claims in its mission statement that it wants to sell not only a product, but also a feeling; as a result, unconscious comparison will play an important role in the satisfaction of its customers. Thomassen's definition is therefore more relevant to the current study. Thomassen's Customer Satisfaction Model According to Thomassen, both the so-called value proposition and other influences have an impact on final customer satisfaction. In his satisfaction model (Fig. 1), Thomassen shows that word-of-mouth, personal needs, past experiences, and marketing and public relations determine customers' needs and expectations. These factors are compared to their experiences, and this comparison between expectations and experiences determines a customer's satisfaction level. Thomassen's model is important for this study: it allows us to determine both the extent to which company X's customers are satisfied and where improvements can be made. Fig. 1: Customer satisfaction creation (Thomassen, 2007, p.30). Of course, you could analyze the concepts more thoroughly and compare additional definitions to each other. You could also discuss the theories and ideas of key authors in greater detail and provide several models to illustrate different concepts. Learn more about writing the theoretical framework The terms 'conceptual framework' and 'theoretical framework' are commonly used in referring to the overall structure that shapes a research project. However, there are subtle differences between the two. This article sets out to clarify these differences along with providing pointers on how to go about constructing each framework. Let's begin by seeing the difference between a concept and a theory. Concept vs. theory A concept is an idea that has been formally developed and organised. A theory is a set of concepts, models, principles, definitions etc. that make sense of a phenomenon by determining relationships among variables. Theories are established and validated by experiments and evidence. Purpose of conceptual framework A conceptual framework is like a roadmap for your study, helping you visualise your research project and put it into action. It defines the relevant variables for your study and maps out how they might relate to each other. Conceptual frameworks have different uses in different types of studies. In quantitative studies, a conceptual framework might be used to determine survey questions or data points, or to generate a hypothesis for explanations and predictions. In qualitative studies, a conceptual framework might be used to provide a working hypothesis or a set of research questions, or to identify or explore categories in descriptive research. Purpose of theoretical framework A theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory/theories underpinning the research problem. Thus, theoretical frameworks support research by describing and/or drawing from relevant theoretical aspects obtained in previous work. Note: In master's research, there might be one or two theoretical frameworks. For a PhD, which warrants original research that provides a substantial contribution of new knowledge, three or more theoretical frameworks might be involved. Conceptual vs. theoretical framework Here's a summary of the key differences between the two frameworks. Conceptual Framework Theoretical Framework It is more about the approach that a researcher takes in answering a research question. It is developed from existing theory/theories. It is derived from concepts. It is derived from theory. A conceptual framework is composed of several concepts. Further, a conceptual framework may include a theoretical framework. By itself, one theory alone can serve as a theoretical framework. Conceptual frameworks identify factors influencing a particular field, e.g., exploration of 'masquerade' mimicry in animals based on phenomena such as protective mimicry, crypsis and aposomatism. A theoretical framework arises from outcomes beyond a single study, based on one or more theories, e.g. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Constructing a conceptual framework A conceptual framework is created before you start your experiments. It may be in a written or diagrammatic format, representing expected relationships between variables. You can even combine or modify existing frameworks. Constructing a theoretical framework Read and review the literature to identify long-standing themes and the main concern(s) for the inquiry. List all constructs and variables and consider how the variables are related to a theory. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks: Example Suppose you want to investigate if nutmeg finches visiting bird feeders in cities have better fitness than those in the wild. You will develop a conceptual framework outlining the variables to study and how you expect them to relate to each other (see Figure 1). Your conceptual framework may include a theoretical framework as well: say, you want to relate the observed phenomena with certain ecological theories. In the example in Figure 1, the 'optimal search theory' and 'optimal foraging theory' provide a lens through which the variables should be explored. Figure 1. Example of a conceptual framework for a fictional study about the fitness of nutmeg finches visiting bird feeders versus those foraging in the wild. End note It is important to develop these frameworks in the early stages of your study to guide your thinking and enable you to visualise linkages between various concepts and theories. A framework can make research findings more meaningful, providing a solid foundation for the study. Charlesworth Author Services, a trusted brand supporting the world's leading academic publishers, institutions and authors since 1928. To know more about our services, visit: Our Services Visit our new Researcher Education Portal that offers articles and webinars covering all aspects of your research to publication journey! And sign up for our newsletter on the Portal to stay updated on all essential researcher knowledge and information! Register now: Researcher Education Portal Maximise your publication success with Charlesworth Author Services.

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