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# Conceptual framework thesis sample pdf

A conceptual framework illustrates what you expect to find through your research. It defines the relevant variables for your study and maps out how they might relate to each other. You should construct a conceptual framework before you begin collecting data. It is often represented in a visual format. This article explains how to construct a conceptual framework for an expected cause-and-effect relationship, incorporating relevant variables that might influence that relationship. What is a conceptual framework? A conceptual framework is a written or visual representation of an expected relationship between variables. Variables are simply the characteristics or properties that you want to study. The conceptual framework is generally developed based on a literature review of existing studies and theories about the topic. Research example You want to know if students who study more hours get higher exam scores. To investigate this question, you can use methods such as an experiment or survey to test the relationship between variables. Before you start collecting data, construct a conceptual framework to show exactly which variables you will measure and how you expect them to relate to each other. A conceptual framework can be designed in many different ways. The form yours takes will depend on what kinds of relationships you expect to find. Independent and dependent variables If we want to test a cause-and-effect relationship, we need to identify at least two key variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. In our example: the expected cause, "hours of study," is the independent variable (aka the predictor or explanatory variable), the expected effect, "exam score," is the dependent variable (aka the response or outcome variable). In other words, "exam score" depends on "hours of study." Our hypothesis is that the more hours a student studies, the better they will do on the exam. Causal relationships often involve several independent variables that affect the dependent variable. However, to keep things simple, we'll work with just one independent variable, namely "hours of study." To visualize our expected cause-and-effect relationship, we will use the basic design components of boxes and arrows. Each variable appears in a box. To indicate a causal relationship, each arrow should start from the independent variable (the cause) and point to the dependent variable (the effect). Next, we should identify other variables that might influence the relationship between our independent and dependent variables. Some common variables to include are moderators, mediators, and control variables. Moderating variables Now we'll expand the framework by adding a moderating variable (aka a moderator). A moderator alters the effect that an independent variable has on a dependent variable. The moderator thus changes the effect component of the cause-and-effect relationship. This moderation is also referred to as the interaction effect. In our example, we expect that the number of hours a student studies is related to their exam score: the more you prepare, the higher your score will be. Now we add the moderator "IQ." A student's IQ level changes the effect that the variable "hours of study" has on the exam score: the higher your IQ, the fewer hours of study you must put in to do well on the exam. In other words, the "IQ" moderator moderates the effect that the number of study hours has on the exam score. Let's take a look at how this might work. The graph shows how the number of hours spent studying affects exam score. The more hours you study, the better your results. A student who studies for 20 hours will get a perfect score. But the graph looks different when we add an "IQ" moderator of 120. A student with this IQ will already achieve a perfect score after just 15 hours of study. Below, the value of the "IQ" moderator has been increased to 150. A student with this IQ will only need to invest five hours of studying in order to get a perfect score. The higher the IQ, the fewer hours a student needs to study in order to achieve a score of 100%. In short, a moderating variable is something that changes the cause-and-effect relationship between two variables as its value increases or decreases. Now we'll expand the framework by adding a mediating variable. In a cause-and-effect relationship, a mediating variable is a variable that links the independent and dependent variables, allowing the relationship between them to be better explained. Here's how the conceptual framework might look if a mediator variable were involved: The mediating variable of "number of practice problems completed" comes between the independent and dependent variables. The hours of study impacts the number of practice problems, which in turn impacts the exam score. In this case, the mediator helps explain why studying more hours leads to a higher exam score. The more hours a student studies, the more practice problems they will complete; the more practice problems completed, the higher the student's exam score will be. By adding the mediating variable of "number of practice problems completed," we help explain the cause-and-effect relationship between the two main variables. Keep in mind that mediating variables can be difficult to interpret, and care must be taken when conclusions are drawn from them. It's important not to confuse a moderators and mediators. To remember the difference, you can think of them in relation to the independent variable. A mediating variable is affected by the independent variable, and it affects the dependent variable. Therefore, it links the two variables and helps explain the relationship between them. A moderating variable is not affected by the independent variable, even though affects the dependent variable. For example, no matter how many hours you study (the independent variable), your IQ will not get higher. Control variables To test a cause-and-effect relationship, we also need to consider other variables that we're not interested in measuring the effects of, but that could potentially impact students' exam scores. These are control variables—variables that are held constant so that they don't interfere with the results. For example, it is likely that if a student feels ill, they will get a lower score on the exam. Therefore, we'll add "health" as a control variable. That means we should keep the variable "health" constant in our study—we'll only include participants who are in good health on the day of the exam. 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

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