

LESSON 10**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A theoretical framework is conceptual model of how one theorizes or makes logical sense of the relationships among several factors that have been identified as important to the problem under study. These factors which may also be called as variables may have been identified through such processes as interviews with informants, observations, and literature survey. The theoretical framework discusses the interrelationships among the variables that are considered to be integral to the dynamics of the situation being investigated. Developing such a conceptual framework helps us to postulate or hypothesize and test certain relationships and thus improve our understanding of the dynamics of situation.

From the theoretical framework, then, testable hypotheses can be developed to examine whether theory formulated is valid or not. The hypothesized relationships can thereafter be tested through appropriate statistical analysis.

Hence the entire research rests on the basis of the theoretical framework. Even if the testable hypotheses not necessarily generated, developing a good theoretical framework is central to examining the problem under investigation.

There is a relationship between the literature survey and the theoretical framework whereby the former provides a solid foundation for developing the latter. Literature survey helps in the identification of the relevant variables, as determined by the previous researches. This in addition to other logical connections that can be conceptualized forms the basis for the theoretical model. The theoretical framework elaborates the relationships among the variables, explains the theory underlying these relations, and describes the nature and direction of the relationships. Just as the literature survey sets the stage for a good theoretical framework, this in turn provides the logical base for developing useable hypotheses.

From the preceding discussion it can be concluded that a theoretical framework is none other than identifying the network of relationships among the variables considered important to the study of any given problem situation. Therefore, the theoretical framework offers the conceptual foundation for constructing the edifice of research that is to taken in hand.

Specifically a theoretical framework:

- Elaborates the relationship among the variables.
- Explains the logic underlying these relationships.
- Describes the nature, and direction of the relationships.

In the review of literature it is possible that you may come across a number of theories readily available for adoption as theoretical framework for the study under consideration. Theories are supposed to be generic whereby they could be applicable to different situations. Some concepts borrowed from such theories may have to be replaced with arguments, logic explicated, and the framework may be readily available. It is also possible that the researcher may combine more than one existing theory and come up with an entirely new framework, and in the process may develop new concepts as well.

However, in the absence of the ready made conceptual framework the researcher may venture to develop his/her own framework. Though, the researcher has to depend a lot on the existing body of literature for the identification of variables as well as for developing a rigorous logical argumentation for the interrelationships among different variables.

Whether the researcher uses a ready-made theoretical framework or explicates an entirely new one, there are some essential features that have to be taken into consideration. These features may be called as components of a theoretical framework.

The Components of the Theoretical Framework

A good theoretical framework identifies and labels the important variables in the situation that are relevant to the problem identified. It logically describes the interconnections among these variables.

The relationships among the independent variables, the dependent variable(s), and if applicable, the moderating and intervening variables are elaborated.

The elaboration of the variables in the theoretical framework addresses the issues of why or how we expect certain relationships to exist, and the nature and direction of the relationships among the variables of interest. At the end, the whole discussion can be portrayed in a schematic diagram. There are six basic features that should be incorporated in any theoretical framework. These features are:

1. **Make an inventory of variables:** For developing a framework it appears essential to identify the factors relevant to the problem under study. These factors are the empirical realities which can be named at some abstract level called concepts. The concepts taking more than one value are the variables. In other words the researcher makes *an inventory of relevant variables*. The variables considered relevant to the study should be clearly identified and labeled in the discussion.
2. **Specify the direction of relationship:** If the nature and direction of relationship can be theorized on the basis of the findings of previous research, then there should be an indication in the discussion as to whether the relationship should be positive or negative.
3. **Give a clear explanation of why we should expect the proposed relationships to exist.** There should be clear explanation of why we would expect these relationships to exist. The arguments could be drawn from the previous research findings. The discussions should state how two or more variables are related to one another. This should be done for the important relationships that are theorized to exist among the variables. It is essential to theorize logical relationship between different variables.
4. **Make an inventory of propositions:** Stipulation of logical relationship between any two variables means the formulation of a proposition. If such relationships have been proposed between different variables, it will result in the formulation of a number of propositions. Let us call such a collection of propositions as *an inventory of propositions*. Each proposition is backed up by strong theoretical argumentation.
5. **Arrange these propositions in a sequential order:** one proposition generates the next proposition, which generates the next following proposition, which in turn generates the next following proposition, and so on. This is an axiomatic way of the derivation of propositions. Resultantly it will provide us a sequentially arranged set of propositions which are interlinked and interlocked with each other. Theory, if you remember, is an interrelated set of propositions. Therefore, the present interrelated set of propositions relevant to a particular problem is in fact a theoretical framework explaining the pathways of logical relationships between different variables.
6. **Schematic diagram of the theoretical model be given:** A schematic diagram of the theoretical framework should be given so that the reader can see and easily comprehend the theorized relationships.

Example:

Research Question: Why middle class families decline in their size?

By following the guidelines discussed earlier let us develop a theoretical framework.

1. **Inventory of variables:** Education levels of the couples, age at marriage, working women, rationalism, exposure to mass media of communication, accessibility to health services, practicing of family planning practices, aspirations about the education of children, shift to nuclear families, mobility orientation.

2. **Specify the direction of relationship:** Higher the education higher the age at marriage. Higher the education of women greater the chances of their being career women. Higher the education more the rationalism. Higher the education more selective the exposure to mass media of communication. Higher the education more the accessibility to health services. Higher the education more the practicing of family planning practices. Higher the education of the parents the higher their aspirations about the education of their children. Higher the education of the couple greater the chances of shifting to nuclear families. Higher the education of the couples the higher their mobility orientation.
3. **Give a clear explanation of why we should expect the proposed relationships to exist.** For example higher the education higher the age at marriage. One could build up the argument like this: For purposes of getting high levels of education the youngsters spend about 16 years of their life in educational institutions. Let us say they complete their education at the age of 22 years. After completing education they spend 2-3 years for establishing themselves in their careers. During this period continue deferring their marriage. By the time they decide about their marriage they are about 25 years. Compare this age at marriage with the age at marriage of 16 years. Obviously with this higher age at marriage there is a reduction in the reproductive period of women. Similarly we can develop logic in support of other proposed relationships.
4. **Make an inventory of propositions.** The proposed relationships under item 2 about could be the examples of propositions.
5. **Arrange these propositions in a sequential order.** These propositions can be arranged sequentially.
6. **Schematic diagram of the theoretical model be given**

Voluntary Job Turnover:

- Inventory of variables:
- Equity of pay, job complexity, participation of decision making, job satisfaction, job performance, labor market conditions, number of organization, personal characteristics, expectation of finding an alternatives, intentions to quit, job turnover.
- Apply all the components of theoretical framework