

The approach to framework synthesis can be adapted to suit the initial aim and timeframe of the review, the availability of an existing theory or model and the intended purpose of the final results. By choosing an approach that was best suited to the context of each review, we ensured that the results met the requirements of key stakeholders and fulfilled our research objectives.

Framework synthesis sits within a family of analysis methods often termed “meta-synthesis”. There are relatively few examples in the literature that showcase how the approach used is influenced by the context in which the work is carried out. Below we share our experiences of using three different approaches to framework synthesis.

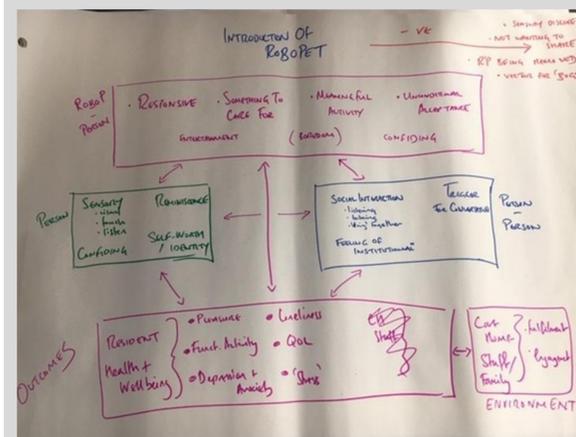


Figure 1: Developing a logic model for an initial framework

Three studies were identified which contributed the most data relevant to all five objectives. The themes from these studies were used to revise the framework.

The first and second-order construct data which in each theme was then examined. The names of themes were revised and subthemes created using an inductive approach

We then explored the relationships between the final themes and subthemes.

Figure 2: Developing a framework based upon initial research questions

Example 1



Full text
Robopets

Example 2



Full Text
MHA

Example 3



Protocol Caring
about Care

Example 1: Using a Framework based upon the background literature

For a traditional nine-month review focusing on the experiences of robotic animals within care homes, the team used an initial framework based upon a logic model developed using the existing literature as seen in Figure 1.

If the background literature supports a framework try Example 1.

+ Initial framework reflected existing knowledge and theory. Presents opportunity to draw upon existing models to inform current work and integrate views of patients and members of the public.

- May require additional time to become familiar with background literature and require consultation with a topic expert.

Example 2: Using the research objectives to develop a Framework

Within a six-week rapid review intended to inform the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act (1983), there was no pre-existing model or theory on which to base the framework, and the limited timeframe prohibited the creation of a logic model. Instead, we based the initial framework upon the research objectives and revised using the method shown in Figure 2.

If you have a limited timeframe and are working closely with a policy customer try Example 2.

+ Synthesis possible within a very short timeframe and themes were closely aligned with specific interests of policy customers.

- Final themes were more descriptive.

Example 3: Using Framework synthesis within a meta-ethnography

In a mixed-methods review focusing on improving the experience of care for people with dementia in hospital, framework synthesis was used as a tool for identifying and organizing relevant data within the initial stage of a meta-ethnography approach.

If you are working on a larger review, try Example 3.

+ Indicated how data from primary papers supported preliminary themes and supported the researcher to develop links between important ideas and concepts.

- As themes are developed through additional interpretation, the initial framework requires updating, which can be time consuming.

Qualitative evidence synthesis: three different approaches to using framework synthesis within healthcare research

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