

Theoretical concepts



Answers to Questions Find the problem statement. The problem statement is indicated in the section, "...even though a dimension of psychological adaptation is supported in dying persons, studies are lacking that identify the variables associated in such an outcome" (Dobratz, 1993, p. 708). The purpose section of Dobratz (1993, pp. 712) indicates that the problem statement of Dobratz's research is: what are the effects of select person-environment variables as they influence psychological adaptation to dying in home hospice patients?

2. Identify the purpose statement.

The purpose statement is, "The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of selected person-environment variables as they influenced psychological adaptation in home hospice patients" (Dobratz, 1993, p. 712).

3. What three things should be present in a purpose statement? Are these entities present in the article that you are evaluating?

Based on the PowerPoint slide, "The world of research theory: Building the theoretical framework," a purpose statement clarifies the direction of research, the relationships among the concepts in the study, and often provides the most information about the intent of the research problem. In addition, according to the PowerPoint slide, a purpose statement should clearly state why the researcher is conducting the study. These "entities" are present in Dobratz (1993) but not all of them are wholly present in the purpose section of the article (p. 712). However, considering the article in its totality, the elements of purpose statements are fully there.

4. Find two or more propositions. What concepts are related in these propositions?

Proposition 1: person-environment variables positively influence psychological adaptation to dying. This proposition relates the concepts "

person-environment variables” and “ psychological adaptation to dying”.

Proposition 2: Cognitive adaptive processes minimize psychological distress.

This proposition relates the concepts “ cognitive adaptation processes” and “ psychological distress”.

5. Find two conceptual definitions.

One conceptual definition is on psychological processes. It is conceptually defined in the article as those “ used by individuals to adapt both to self and to environmental influences (Dobratz, 1993 citing Hann, 1969, 1977).

Another conceptual definition is “ physical function” or the “ degree of dependence on other persons for assistance as measured by Karnofsky, Abelmann, Craver, and Burchenal” (Dobrotz, 1993, p. 713).

6. What is the dependent variable?

The dependent variable is “ psychological adaptation to dying” as indicated by the “ state of well-being related to life satisfaction” as measured by the Affect Balance Scale described in Dobratz (1993, p. 713).

7. What are the independent variables?

The independent variables are age, length of illness since diagnosis, gender, social support as perceived by the ill (perception of value, group belonging, provision of attachment/intimacy, chance for nurturance, etc.), and pain intensity as developed by Melzack (1975).

8. Identify the type of hypothesis that is listed in #1.

Consistent with Polit & Beck (2004, p. 80), the hypothesis reflected in number 1 is a complex hypothesis. According to Polit & Beck, a complex hypothesis is a “ prediction of relationship between two (or more) independent variables and/or two (or more) dependent variables” (p. 80). In the article however, there is only one dependent variable.

9. What level of theory is appropriate for hypotheses generation?

One level of theory that is appropriate for hypothesis generation is the “hypothesized causal model” as used by Dobratz (1993, p. 709). However, I suppose that other levels of theories are appropriate well when research procedures are followed. For instance, concepts must be transformed into operational definitions so hypotheses can be generated.

10. Find two operational definitions. What is an operational definition?

Two operational definitions pertain to length of illness and dying. In the article, the length of illness was counted from the time since diagnosis. The conceptual definition of dying was constructed “in accordance with hospice care and practice standards” in which the National Hospice Organization definition of 1982 was adopted or “an expected survival time of 6 months or less”. According to Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister (2006, p. 35), an operational definition “explains a concept solely in terms of the observable procedures used to produce and measure it”.

References

- Dobratz, M. C. (1993). Causal influences of psychological adaptation in dying. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 15 (6), 708-729.
- Polit, D. & Beck, C. (2004). *Nursing Research: Principles and Methods*. 7th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.
- Shaughnessy, J., Zechmeister, E., & Zechmeister, J. (2006). *Research methods in psychology*. 7th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.