

# An Empirically Derived Persona-lisation Framework for Technical Support

Solomon Gizaw.

Supervised by: Dr. Sarah Beecham and Dr Jim Buckley

## 1 Introduction

- » Information Technology Technical Support (TS) is challenging but key to achieving user satisfaction, user loyalty, increased sales, competitive advantage and ideas for new functionality.
- » However, the literature suggests current TS services are not satisfying user requirements. Hence users are abandoning traditional company-based TS, in favour of open-source, non-proprietary alternatives.
- » User characterisation is a neglected activity in TS.

### Aim

- My programme of research aims to empirically derive a user-characterization framework for use in IT-TS. The fundamental question that my research tries to answer is:
- » Can increased personalisation in Technical Support improve user satisfaction?
  - » This, in turn, is based on the following specific questions:
    - » What are the personalisation characteristics found in TS forums?
    - » What are the structural and content-based patterns of communication that can be observed in TS forums?
    - » What can we learn from the literature on personalisation in general to help characterise user needs in a TS context?

## 2 Method

My research method shown in Figure 1 follows an iterative process (even though the diagram may appear linear).

My current stage in the Framework Validation stage

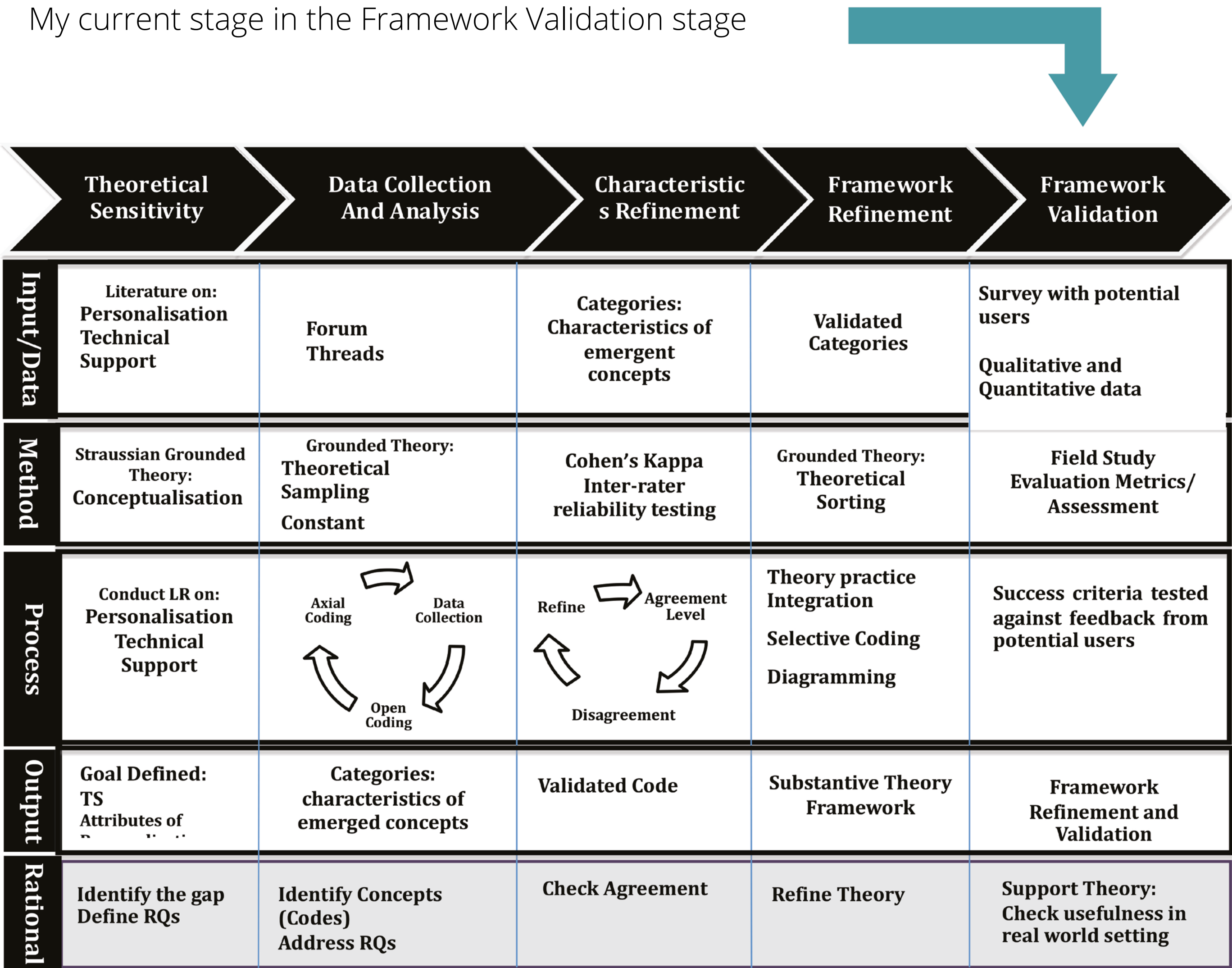


Figure 1:- The Research Methodology

## 3 Results

- » The research developed three main categories and seven subcategories. Categories were refined and interrelated by systematically integrating attributes or concepts through statements of relationship (see Table 1)

Category	Sub Category	Attributes	Number of Occurrence		
			Questioner	Respondent	Total
User Characteristics	Level of expertise	Novice	47	1	48
		Intermediate	11	6	17
		Experienced	16	4	20
		Total	74	11	85
	User Values	Loyalty	24	53	77
		Value for Money	27	49	76
		Credibility	26	9	35
		Security	10	14	24
Communication Process	Activity	Emphasis	50	88	138
		Procedure	18	37	55
		Total	68	125	193
	Communication Issues	Misinformation	9	14	23
		Misunderstanding	22	20	42
		Confusion	12	14	26
	Technical issues	Multi-Component	22	6	28
		Total	22	6	28
	Emotions	Frustration	28	0	28
		Anger	21	13	34
		Total	49	13	62
Outcomes	Successful	Satisfaction	141	0	141
		Total	141	0	141
	Unsuccessful	Insult	5	19	24
		Frustration	-	-	-
		Anger	-	-	-
	Total		5	19	24

Table 1:- Empirically Derived User Characterisation Categories

## 4 Conclusion

- » The prevalence of several user characteristics suggests that the results are applicable at a persona level, where groups of people are aggregated into persona clusters to customise systems or services for their intended users.
- » Users expression of experience is limited
- » Users value cerdibility of the service provider, value for money, their security and focus on loyalty
- » Several communication characteristics emerged such as misinformation, misunderstanding and confusion.
- » Communication handling process emrged. For example managing users emotions such as furstration, anger and insult.
- » Currently looking for relationships with user-characteristics and modes-of-communication that proved ultimately successful

### Future Work

- » Examine the usefulness of the framework in a real world setting by testing critical success factors against user feedback.
- » I am currently designing a questionnaire to capture feedback on my framework, that will be administered to TS users and TS advisors.