

The Analysis of Secondary Case Studies as a Starting Point for Grounded Theory Studies: An Example from the Enterprise Software Industry

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Abstract : A fundamental principle of Grounded Theory (GT) is to prevent the formation of preconceived theories. This implies the need to start a research study with an open mind and to avoid being absorbed by the existing literature. However, to start a new study without an understanding of the research domain and its context can be extremely challenging. This paper presents a research approach that simultaneously supports a researcher to identify and to focus on critical areas of a research project and prevent the formation of prejudiced concepts by the current body of literature. This approach comprises of four stages: Selection of secondary case studies, analysis of secondary case studies, development of an initial conceptual framework, development of an initial interview guide. The analysis of secondary case studies as a starting point for a research project allows a researcher to create a first understanding of a research area based on real-world cases without being influenced by the existing body of theory. It enables a researcher to develop through a structured course of actions a firm guide that establishes a solid starting point for further investigations. Thus, the described approach may have significant implications for GT researchers who aim to start a study within a given research area.

Keywords : grounded theory, interview guide, qualitative research, secondary case studies, secondary data analysis

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