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What is a research problem?

It's a clear and definite statement or expression about your chosen area of concern, a difficulty to eliminate, a condition to improve, or a troubling problem that exists in theory, literature, and practice. A research problem indicates a need for its meaningful investigation. It doesn't state how to do something and a researcher shouldn't present a value question or offer a broad research proposal.

*A **research problem** is a statement about an area of concern, a condition to be improved, a difficulty to be eliminated, or a troubling question that exists in scholarly literature, in theory, or in practice that points to the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation. In some social science disciplines the research problem is typically posed in the form of a question. A research problem **does not** state how to do something, offer a vague or broad proposition, or present a value question.*

The purpose of a problem statement is to:

- 1. **Introduce the reader to the importance of the topic being studied.** The reader is oriented to the significance of the study and the research questions or hypotheses to follow.*
- 2. **Places the problem into a particular context that defines the parameters of what is to be investigated.***
- 3. **Provides the framework for reporting the results** and indicates what is probably necessary to conduct the study and explain how the findings will present this information.*

How to identify a research problem?

After choosing a specific topic for your academic paper, you need to state it as a clear research problem that identifies all the issues that you'll address. It's not always simple for students to formulate it. In some fields, they may end up spending a lot of time thinking, exploring, and studying before getting a clear idea of what research questions to answer.

Some topics are too broad to give a researchable issue. For example, if you decide to study certain social issues, like child poverty, remember that they don't provide any researchable question. These are very broad to address and take a lot of time and resources to become unfeasible so that your study will lack enough focus and depth.

What is a statement of a research problem?

An adequate statement of your research problem plays an important role in the success of your academic paper and study. It's possible to generate a number of researchable issues from the same subject because there are many issues that may arise out of it. Your study should pursue only one in detail.

Basic characteristics of research problem

For your research problem to be effective, make sure that it has these basic characteristics:

- Reflecting on important issues or needs;
- Basing on factual evidence (it's non-hypothetical);
- Being manageable and relevant;
- Suggesting a testable and meaningful hypothesis (avoiding useless answers).

Formulating your research problem with ease

Formulating your research problem enables you to make a purpose of your study clear to yourself and target readers. Focus your paper on providing relevant data to address it. A problem statement is an effective and essential tool to keep you on track with research and evaluate it. How can you formulate a powerful research problem? Consider 5 ways to formulate the research problem:

- Specify your research objectives;
- Review its context or environment;
- Explore its nature;
- Determine variable relationships;
- Anticipate the possible consequences of alternative approaches.

Specific research objectives

A clear statement that defines all objectives can help you conduct and develop effective and meaningful research. They should be manageable to bring you success. A few goals will help you keep your study relevant. This statement also

helps professors evaluate the questions your research project answers and different methods that you use to address them.

Review the context of your research problem

It's necessary to work hard to define and test all kinds of environmental variables to make your project successful. Why do you need to do that? This step can help you define if the important findings of your study will deliver enough data to be worth considering. Identify specific environmental variables that may potentially affect your research and start formulating effective methods to control all of them.

Why explore the nature of your research problem?

Research problems may range from simple to complex, and everything depends on a range of variables and their relationships. Some of them can be directly relevant to specific research questions, while others are completely unimportant for your project.

Why should you understand their nature? This knowledge enables you to develop effective solutions. To get a deep understanding of all dimensions, think about focus groups and other relevant details to provide the necessary insight into a particular question.

Determine variable relationships

Scientific, social, and other studies often focus on creating a certain sequence of repeating behaviors over time. What does your project entail? Completing the entire process involves:

- Identifying the variables that affect possible solutions to your research problem;
- Deciding on the degree to which you can use and control all of them for study purposes;
- Determining functional relationships between existing variables;
- Choose the most critical variables for a solution of your research problem.

During the formulation stage, it's necessary to consider and generate as many potential approaches and variable relationships as you can.

What are the consequences of alternative approaches?

There are different consequences that each course of action or approach can bring, and that's why you need to anticipate them. Why communicate possible outcomes? It's a primary goal of any research process.

Structuring your research problem

Look at scientific papers to notice their research questions because they are crucial for determining the quality of answers, methods, and findings. Quantitative designs use deductive reasoning to state a testable hypothesis. Qualitative methods use inductive reasoning to make a strong statement of your future thesis.

Tips for defining your research problem

You need to formulate it during the initial stage of a scientific process or study. For instance, literature reviews, research, and studies of previous experiments are likely to provide you with vague areas of interest. Look at the area that brings interesting results. Make sure that it has a potential for exploring. Think about reviewing a successful experiment and try to disagree with its results, methodology, and tests, define the entire process, and retest its hypothesis.

The importance of revising

Get useful feedback from teachers, students, and other people to successfully revise your research question. A final decision is always up to you. Feel free to decide which advice is helpful. Take the following details into account to simplify this process:

- Agreement among readers that a research problem is very broad;
- Suggestions that you have a certain misunderstanding of the chosen matter;
- Advice for narrowing your subject down or thinking of a better way to focus it;
- Specifics about your misunderstanding;
- A consensus that your research question is very narrow and interesting ideas to make it more general;
- Comments about its clarity and phrasing.

After revising your initial research problem, its possible solutions, and above-mentioned details, you're ready to write a formal version.

Do you have a good research problem?

Do a simple self-test to determine whether it's good enough for your scientific project and make sure that:

- Your question allows for a number of potential answers;
- It's testable, flexible, and open-ended;
- You have the evidence necessary to address it;
- It's possible to break it into resolvable parts;
- It's precise and clear;
- You don't use any vague terms that require definitions;
- It's suitable for the length of your paper;
- You can explain why your solutions matter;
- You made premises explicit.

What should a formal version be like?

Any research starts with a problem that you derive from the topic that attracts your attention after general reading, classroom discussions, etc. Most instructors prefer to set general topics. To formulate a powerful research problem and impress them, it should be:

- Interesting;
- Relevant;
- Specific and focused;
- Researchable.

Your question should have enough bearing on a given topic and stay within the limits set by your professors in advance. Pick an interesting subject to stimulate your motivation. It shouldn't be very vague or broad. If your research question is broad, you can make it more specific by specific aspects, time periods, or events. There shouldn't be more than a few possible answers.