

Description

What is a Research Problem?

The terms *research question* and *research problem* are used interchangeably to reference the problem or issue you intend to investigate and/or solve with your research study. From the perspective of the research process, the problem you are proposing will be solved by asking a lot of questions, so we'll refer to research problem as the foundational purpose of your study, upon which all other research activity will be based.

What is the Importance of a Research Problem?

Identification and formulation of a research problem are very important and perhaps one of the most challenging aspects before conducting research. The research problem lays the foundation for entire research work.

Importance of identifying and formulating a research problem are as follows:

1. **Introducing the importance of the study topic:**

   The research problem orients the reader to the significance of the study and the research questions or hypotheses to follow in the research.

2. **Defines the context of the problem:**

   The research problem defines the parameters and elements that are being studied in the research work.

3.

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Framework for reporting the results:

It indicates and provides all necessary requirements to conduct the study. Furthermore, it explains how the findings will be presented to with reference to the information.

Writing for an Audience

When writing a research proposal, the objective is to convince a third party of the viability of your proposed study — your supervisor, or a grant committee that would provide the funding if the study is approved. However, before you focus on convincing that third party audience, it's important that you define research problem with a detailed consideration of your study:

- ### Sustain Your Interest

  You may have chosen a topic because it is 'hot' or because it interests your supervisor, but will it interest you enough to sustain you through many hours of literature review and research over the many months that it might take to complete the study? Additional data and support will always be available, but if you lose interest in the topic at any point during the process, your eagerness to learn the results can quickly dissipate and the study becomes a hard slog to the end.

- ### Range of Competencies

  You may be enthusiastic to take on this study, but are you overestimating your skills and experience in evaluating your ability to complete it? While it is true that a successful research study increases your skills as well as the body of knowledge on the topic, those objectives cannot be achieved if you don't have the right skill set to get there.

Clarification

Every book or syllabus on research methods includes some form of diagram or flow chart that outlines the steps that should be taken in documenting your research problem, but if you consider what your audience is looking for, you will see that the information is quite simple — *who, what, why, where, when, and how*.

By answering each of those questions, you will be providing all of the relevant information needed to convince yourself and your audience that the study is viable, and that you are the right person to conduct it.

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Establishing the feasibility of your study comes down to convincing your audience that you understand the parameters of the problem you are proposing to research, that you have identified the potential obstacles and challenges you might encounter, and that you have the knowledge, skills andexperience to handle them if and when they do arrive.

Justification in a Competitive Environment

Academic institutions subscribe to preferred research proposal outlines, and grant committees work with submission templates. In either case, what they're looking for is enough information to justify awarding the money or assigning the resources to your study as opposed to someone else's. This isn't intended to put more pressure on you than is already there, but it should prompt you to bear in mind that more often than not, the rejection of a research proposal is based on what's missing rather than what's there.

For that reason, your research problem should pursue an objective of reassurance for all parties. It should be defined clearly, and thoroughly, so that you present yourself as a researcher who is totally in command of your topic, your study, and the process needed to complete that study effectively.

So the next time you find it difficult to formulate your research problem, these tips will definitely come in handy! Let us know about how you plan your research problem in the comments section below!

You can also visit our Q&A forum for frequently asked questions related to different aspects of research writing and publishing answered by our team that comprises subject-matter experts, eminent researchers, and publication experts.

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

Date Created
2016/03/25
Author
editor

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