

The Problem Statement in the Research Paper

The First Substantial Step

The problem provides the context for the research study and typically generates questions which the research hopes to answer. In considering whether or not to move forward with a research project, you will generally spend some time considering the problem.

In your paper, the statement of the problem is the first part of the paper to be read [we are ignoring the title and the abstract]. The problem statement should "hook" the reader and establish a persuasive context for what follows.

You need to be able to clearly answer the question: "what is the problem"? and "why is this problem worth my attention"? At the same time, the problem statement limits scope by focusing on some variables and not others. It also provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate why these variables are important.

Problem Importance

The importance of the problem should receive considerable and persuasive attention [note that importance is inevitably subjective and will vary from person to person and agency to agency]. Clearly indicate why your problem is an important one by answering questions such as these:

- Is the problem of current interest? Is it topical?
- Is the problem likely to continue into the future?
- Will more information about the problem have practical application?
- Will more information about the problem have theoretical importance?
- How large is the population affected by the problem?
- How important, influential, or popular is this population?
- Would this study substantially revise or extend existing knowledge?
- Would this study create or improve an instrument of some utility?
- Would research findings lead to some useful change in best practice?
- Is there evidence or authoritative opinion from others to support the need for this research?

The problem statement should persuasively indicate that major variables can be measured in some meaningful way. If you can identify likely objections to the study, identify and respond to them here.

Problem Statement Question

The problem statement should close with a question. Typically, the question contains two variables, a measurable relationship, and some indication of population. The purpose of the literature search that follows is to answer the research problem question. If the literature cannot answer the question, the research is needed to do so. An example question might be: "What is the

Disadvantages

- Ongoing and intrusive intervention
- Investigation/intervention at discretion of Child Safety/DCPL/Children's Court
- Consent of both parties required or Court application possible
- Lack of support/supervision after expiry of CPO



Problem Solving Steps



Step 1. What is my problem?



Step 2. Think, think, think
of some solutions.



Step 3. What would happen if...?
Would it be safe? Would it be fair?
How would everyone feel?



Step 4. Give it a try!