

# Selecting Topic and Building Block of Argument

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# Essentials of Research Topic

A thesis/dissertation topic must:

- ▶ Relate to or aim to solve or suggest solution(s) to disciplinary and social problems;
- ▶ Showcase the discipline;
- ▶ Include the essential variables, contention, and context;
- ▶ Clear, coherent, correct, and short (12 to 15 words); and
- ▶ Represent the research questions and the main commentary.

## Cont...

- ▶ Research topic must be carefully chosen because it may not be tweaked or modified later. Even though you are allowed to do so in some cases you have to go through procedural requirements.

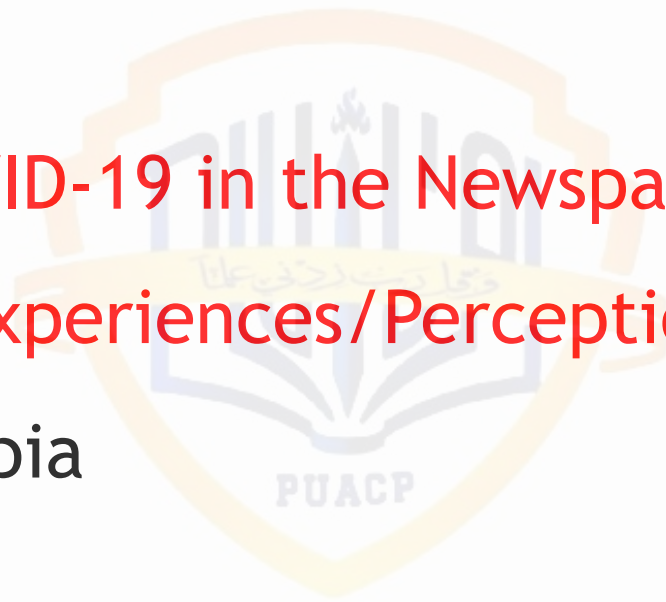
# Topic to Review

- ▶ Language of COVID-19: Discourse of Fear and Sinophobia



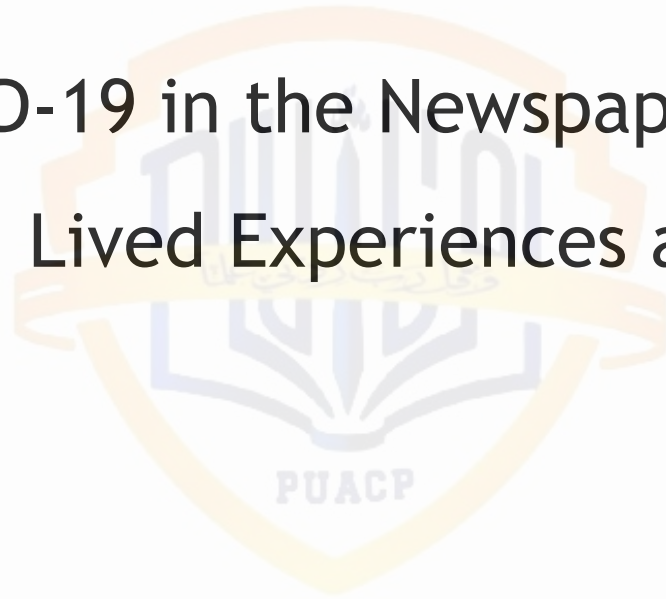
# Cont.

- ▶ Language for COVID-19 in the Newspapers and Students' Lived Experiences/Perceptions about Fear and Sinophobia



# Cont.

- ▶ Language for COVID-19 in the Newspapers and **Pakistani** Students' Lived Experiences about Fear and Sinophobia



# Cont.

- ▶ Language for COVID-19 in **the English** Newspapers and Pakistani Students' Lived Experiences about Fear and Sinophobia



# Cont.


- ▶ Language for COVID-19 in the English Newspapers and Pakistani Students' Lived Experiences about Fear and Sinophobia: **Media Discourse Analysis**



# Thesis Topic

- ▶ Proposal Stage
- ▶ Write-up Stage
- ▶ Pre-evaluation Stage
- ▶ Post-evaluation Stage

# Building Block of Argument

The background features a large, faint watermark of the University of Poonchri logo. The logo is a shield-shaped emblem with a yellow border. Inside the shield, there is a stylized building with a central tower and a banner across the middle with Arabic calligraphy. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF POONCHRI' is visible at the bottom of the shield.

# Structure of an argument

- ▶ An argument is when you have a message – that is, you have something to say or a point to make – and because of your unique idea, it is then possible for there to be an interaction between different views around this message.

# Definition

- ▶ Argument is the act of making claims.

For example;

- 1) 1 plus 1 is equal to 2.
- 2) Lahore has the worst air index in the world.

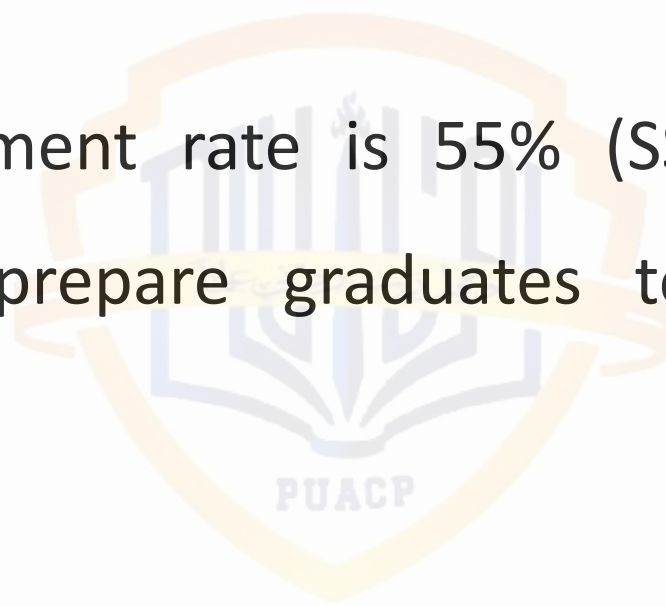
- ▶ You cannot be a good researcher if you simply write down facts.
- ▶ Unless there is an interaction between different ideas, there is no argument.

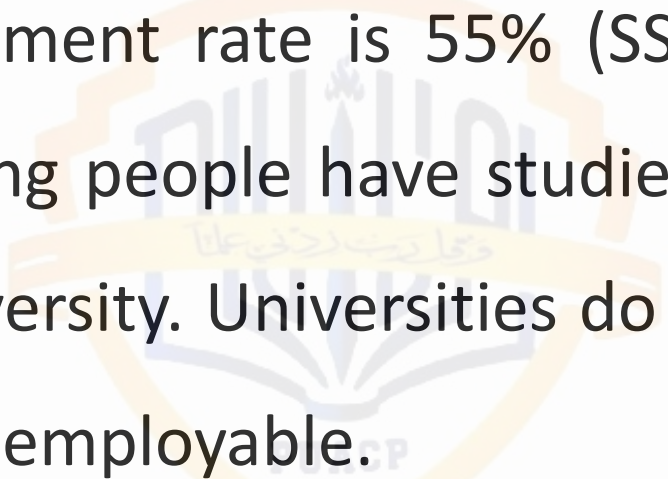
# Let's make an argument!

- ▶ Universities do not prepare graduates to become employable.



- ▶ The youth unemployment rate is 55% (SSA, 2012).  
Universities do not prepare graduates to become employable.



- 
- ▶ The youth unemployment rate is 55% (SSA, 2012). A quarter of these young people have studied towards a qualification at a university. Universities do not prepare graduates to become employable.

# Reduce the possibility of the claim to being true

- ▶ It is certain that ... universities do not prepare their graduates for employment
- ▶ It is probable that ....
- ▶ It is possible that ...
- ▶ It very unlikely that ...
- ▶ Reduce the possibility of the claim being true



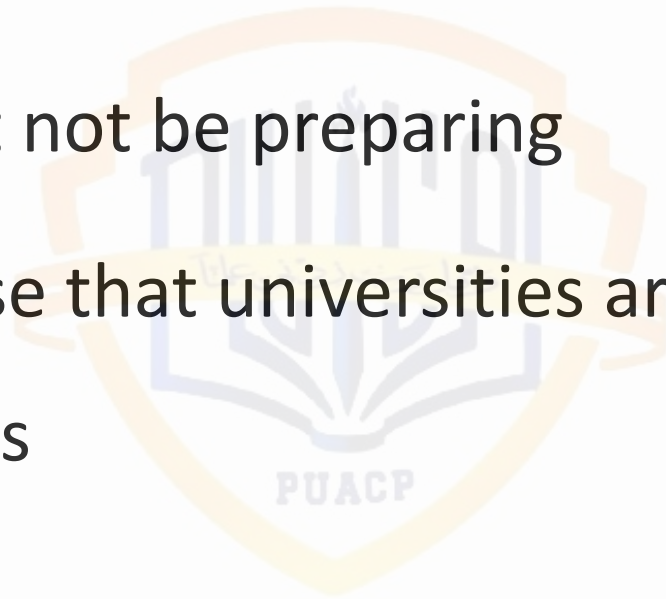


# Create a distance between you and the claim

- ▶ It seems that ... universities do not prepare their graduates for employment
- ▶ According to recent studies ...
- ▶ The limited data suggests that...
- ▶ Change the verb
- ▶ Universities might not be preparing

# Modify the Verb

- ▶ Universities might not be preparing
- ▶ It could be the case that universities are not preparing students



# Make the claim more specific

- ▶ Qualify the verb: in this case 'prepare'. Universities do not adequately prepare graduates for positions in the medical industry.
- ▶ Qualify the noun: in this case, focus on either 'graduates' or 'universities'. Most universities in European countries do not prepare their graduates.
- ▶ Add exceptions such as: 'Except for Engineering qualifications...', 'Besides the top 100 universities...' or 'Under certain conditions...'

## *Now, let's return to the example...*

- ▶ The youth unemployment rate is 55% (SSA, 2012).  
A quarter of these young people have studied towards a qualification at a university. So it appears that universities play a role in graduates not being employable.

# Counterargument

- ▶ The youth unemployment rate is 55% (SSA, 2012). A quarter of these young people have studied towards a qualification at a university. So, it appears that universities play a role in graduates not being employable. However, Smith (2011) argues that individual characteristics are more important when it comes to determining employability.

# To refine the counterargument

- ▶ The youth unemployment rate is 55% (SSA, 2012). A quarter of these young people have studied towards a qualification at a university. So it appears that universities play a role in graduates not being employable. However, Smith (2011) argues that individual characteristics are more important when it comes to determining employability. While this is true, Jones (2010) showed that universities can change individual characteristics. This suggests that universities are indeed failing their graduates because instead of developing them as individuals, they focus mainly on conveying generic subject knowledge.

# The importance of counterarguments

- ▶ You can criticize those with whom you disagree in your own voice, but this may not come across as credible. It is more credible if you use other authors to criticize those you disagree with in order to substantiate your argument.

# Summary

- ▶ In some ways, counterarguments can do more to strengthen your claim than data can. The only way to show that you are the strongest is to defeat your most formidable prospective opponent.
- ▶ Similarly, if you can refute the strongest counterargument to your claim, your claim immediately appears much more robust. Counterarguments also clarify your argument since it allows your readers to see the contrast between what you see as true and false. We only recognize what is false if we know what is true. Knowing what you see as false makes it easier for the reader to understand what is true. Or demonstrating gaps in the past studies in terms of direction, context, and data provide the reader basic understanding and justification of your study.



# Example

- ▶ Cyberbullying in Pakistan: Positioning Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders



- ▶ Most of the studies cited here are from Europe and America. However, not much attention is paid to the prevalence of CB in the less developed countries like Pakistan (see e.g., Zych, Ortega-Ruiz & Rey, 2015). The focus of past research (Antoniadou, Kokkinos, & Markos, 2016; Carter, 2013; Ferreira et al., 2016; Guckert, 2013; Murshid, 2017) has been either on 'victim' or 'bystander' or specific age group considered vulnerable to CB. By taking the perspective of victim and bystander about the aggressor, this study investigates: (a) The prevalence of CB among male and female students of different age groups from different educational institutions situated in Lahore, Pakistan, (b) causes of CB, (c) reasons of CB, and (d) CB preventive measures. Research on CB has been largely based on empirical evidences. Hence, by taking 'constructivist grounded theory' as the theoretical framework, this study attempts to triangulate empirical findings with the qualitative data. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help understand the phenomenon, causes of CB, and encourage preventive measures for the provision of safe cyberspace to youth – whose social lives increasingly incorporate the digital means (see e.g., Pew Research Center, 2014).

# Awareness of argumentation

- ▶ **Problem:** Argue that you have a reason to say something.
- ▶ **Question:** Argue that what you have to say about this problem has not been said before.
- ▶ **Literature:** Use this to argue that previous research supports the question.
- ▶ **Design and methodology:** Argue that your research is likely to lead to an answer to the question.
- ▶ **Results and conclusions:** Argue that the results you generated have answered the research question and have made a contribution to the literature compared to previous studies

# Noticing your own voice

- ▶ **The claim:** You are the one who chooses which claim to make, even though you have to support that claim with evidence drawn from other people's research.
- ▶ **The data:** You decide which data is best and which authors to use in support of your claim.
- ▶ **The qualifier:** Based on your understanding of the evidence, you decide how far to go in qualifying your claim.
- ▶ **The warrant:** A warrant interprets the data, and, as the author of your research, you are the one who explains what we should see in the data.
- ▶ **The rebuttal:** You pick the counterarguments that you think are the best, and you decide how to handle these counterarguments.

# Evaluation of Argument

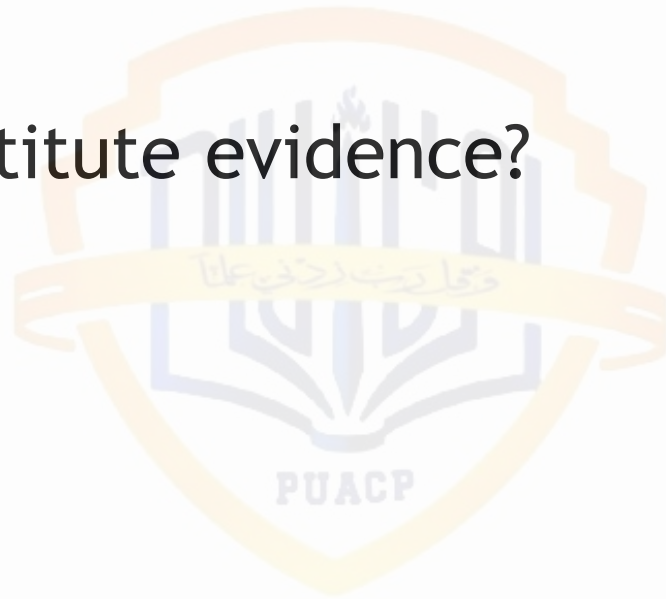
- ▶ Is there a clear claim?
- ▶ Is it supported by credible data?
- ▶ Is the data connected to the claim?
- ▶ Are other views acknowledged and are they treated in such a way that they clarify or strengthen the claim?

# Writing Arguments

- ▶ Identify an issue where there are different views.
- ▶ Summarise the different views fairly.
- ▶ Decide who you agree with and how you will position yourself.
- ▶ Determine what evidence you will call on to support your position and how the evidence warrants your position.
- ▶ Use the arguments of the view you agree with to critique the arguments of the view you don't agree with (based on the claim, qualification, warrant, data and/or method).
- ▶ With all this at hand, write up your argument by letting the authors interact with other and using appropriate argumentative language.

# Evidence

- ▶ What constitute evidence?



# Engaging Sources

- ▶ Acknowledging and responding to other arguments





# Activity

- ▶ What is the main argument in your Mater study?
- ▶ Why do you think it is worth investigation?



# Reading

- ▶ *Writing Challenges, Causes, and Strategies to Facilitate Doctoral Dissertation Writing Process: A Qualitative Analysis*
- ▶ Writing Argumentatively: pgs. 56-94 from *A Guide to Argumentative Research Writing and Thinking: Overcoming Challenges*