

Prepared by Dr. Mahitab ELrafii

Research Methods (RSC 701)

Lecture 4



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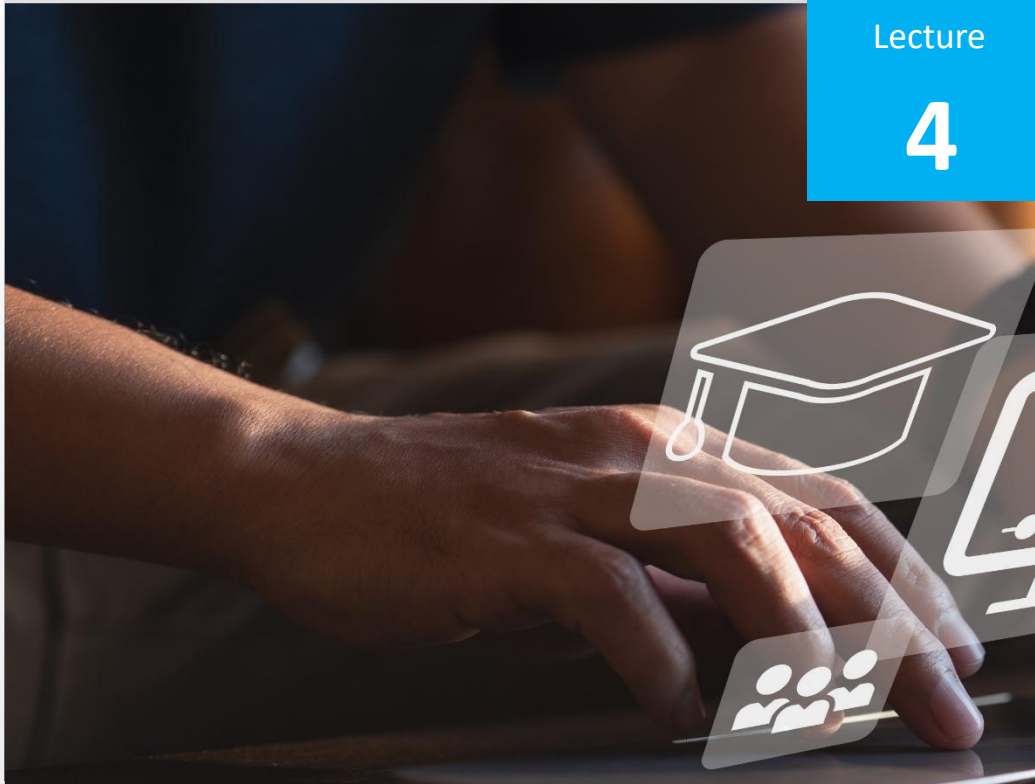
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Lecture

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Lecture Content



the research problem

Lecture

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Lecture 4 Includes the following points:

- Define the research problem
- Why is the research problem important?
- Practical research problems
- Step 1: Identify a broad problem area
- Step 2: Learn more about the problem
- Step 3: Set your aims and objectives
- How to write Problem Statement in Mass Communication Research work

Define the research problem

A research problem is a specific issue, difficulty, contradiction, or gap in knowledge that you will aim to address in your research. You might look for practical problems aimed at contributing to change, or theoretical problems aimed at expanding knowledge.

Bear in mind that some research will do both of these things, but usually the research problem focuses on one or the other. The type of research problem you choose depends on your broad topic of interest and the type of research you want to do.

Why is the research problem important?

Your topic is interesting and you have lots to say about it, but this isn't a strong enough basis for academic research. Without a well-defined research problem, you are likely to end up with an unfocused and unmanageable project.

You might end up repeating what other people have already said, trying to say too much, or doing research without a clear purpose and justification.

You need a problem in order to do research that contributes new and relevant insights. Whether you're planning your thesis, starting a research paper or writing a research proposal, the research problem is the first step towards knowing exactly what you'll do and why.

Step 1: Identify a broad problem area

As you discuss and read about your topic, look for under-explored aspects and areas of concern, conflict or controversy. Your goal is to find a gap that your research project can fill.

Practical research problems

If you are doing practical research, you can identify a problem by reading reports, following up on previous research, and talking to people who work in the relevant field or organization.

You might look for:

Issues with performance or efficiency in an organization

Processes that could be improved in an institution

Areas of concern among practitioners in a field

Difficulties faced by specific groups of people in society

If your research is connected to a job or internship, you will need to find a research problem that has practical relevance for the organization.

Theoretical research problems

Theoretical research focuses on expanding knowledge and understanding rather than directly contributing to change. You can identify a research problem by reading recent research, theory and debates on your topic to find a gap in what is currently known about it.

You might look for:

A phenomenon or context that has not been closely studied

A contradiction between two or more perspectives

A situation or relationship that is not well understood

A troubling question that has yet to be resolved

Theoretical problems often have practical consequences, but they are not focused on solving an immediate issue in a specific place (though you might take a case study approach to the research)

Step 2: Learn more about the problem

Next, you must find out what is already known about the problem, and pinpoint the exact aspect that your research will address

Context and background

- Who does the problem affect?
- Has it been an issue for a long time, or is it a newly discovered problem?
- What research has already been done?
- Have any solutions been proposed?
- What are the current debates about the problem, and what do you think is missing from them

Specificity and relevance

- What particular place, time and/or people will you focus on?
- What aspects will you not be able to tackle?
- What will be the consequences if the problem is not resolved?
- Whose will benefit from resolving the problem (e.g. the management of an organization or future researchers)?

How to Write a Problem Statement

After you have identified a research problem for your project, the next step is to write a problem statement. An effective problem statement is concise and concrete. It should:

Put the problem in **context** (what do we already know?)

Describe the **precise issue** that the research will address (what do we need to know?)

Show the **relevance** of the problem (why do we need to know it?)

Set the **objectives** of the research (what will you do to find out?)

When should you write a problem statement?

There are various situations in which you might have to write a problem statement.

In businesses and other organizations, writing a problem statement is an important step in improvement projects. A clearly defined and well-understood problem is crucial to finding and implementing effective solutions. In this case, the problem statement is usually a stand-alone document.

When should you write a problem statement?

In academic research, writing a problem statement can help you contextualize and understand the significance of your research problem. A problem statement can be several paragraphs long and serve as the basis for your research proposal, or it can be condensed into just a few sentences in the introduction of your paper or thesis.

The problem statement will look different depending on whether you're dealing with a practical real-world problem or a theoretical scientific issue. But all problem statements follow a similar process

Step 1: Contextualize the problem

The problem statement should frame your research problem in its particular context and give some background on what is already known about it.

Practical research problems

For practical research, focus on the concrete details of the situation:

Where and when does the problem arise?

Who does the problem affect?

What attempts have been made to solve the problem?

Theoretical research problems

For theoretical research, think about the scientific, social, geographical What is already known about the problem?

Is the problem limited to a certain time period or geographical area?

How has the problem been defined and debated in the scholarly literature?

and/or historical background:

Step 2: Show why it matters

The problem statement should also address the relevance of the research: why is it important that the problem is solved?

This doesn't mean you have to do something groundbreaking or world-changing. It's more important that the problem is researchable, feasible, and clearly addresses a relevant issue in your field.

Practical research problems

Practical research is directly relevant to a specific problem that affects an organization, institution, social group, or society more broadly. To make it clear why your research problem matters, you can ask yourself:

What will happen if the problem is not solved?

Who will feel the consequences?

Does the problem have wider relevance (e.g. are similar issues found in other contexts)?

Theoretical research problems

Sometimes theoretical issues have clear practical consequences, but sometimes their relevance is less immediately obvious. To identify why the problem matters, ask:

How will resolving the problem advance understanding of the topic?

What benefits will it have for future research?

Does the problem have direct or indirect consequences for society?

Step 3: Set your aims and objectives

Finally, the problem statement should frame how you intend to address the problem. Your goal should not be to find a conclusive solution, but to seek out the reasons behind the problem and propose more effective approaches to tackling or understanding it.

Step 3: Set your aims and objectives

The research aim is the overall purpose of your research.

It is generally written in the infinitive form:

The aim of this study is to determine...

This project aims to explore...

I aim to investigate...

Step 3: Set your aims and objectives

The research objectives are the concrete steps you will take to achieve the aim:

Qualitative methods will be used to identify...

I will use surveys to collect...

Using statistical analysis, the research will measure...

Practical research aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate effective engagement strategies to increase voter turnout in region X. It will identify the most significant factors in non-voting through surveys and interviews and conduct experiments to measure the effectiveness of different strategies.

Theoretical research aims and objectives

This project aims to better understand young people's experiences in the gig economy. Qualitative methods will be used to gain in-depth insight into the motivations and perceptions of under-30s engaged in freelance and zero-hour work across various industries. This data will be contextualized with a review of recent literature on the gig economy and statistical analysis of demographic changes in the workforce

How to write Problem Statement in Mass Communication

Research work:

Writing the statement of the problem is always a challenge to students. Some get scared when they get to the stage in their work where they are required to write a statement of the problem. But it shouldn't be so. All you need do is understand the meaning of the statement of problem writing it

Basic Steps in Writing Statement of Problem

Follow these basic steps to make this process easy for you.
This way you won't get scared at all whenever you get to
problem statement in your study

Sight before you write:

Don't write anything yet. Identify the problem first. You have to be sure a problem exists which your work intends to solve. Identify the problem and tell yourself this is the problem that exists. For instance, someone wanted to study influence of television cartoons on children in a particular city.

Sight before you write:

The problem identified was that children exposure to TV films and cartoons could have a lot of undesirable effects. While some of the cartoons are useful in developing the moral character of children, others especially violent ones produce anti-social behaviour in them.

The researcher then wanted to carry out a study to find out the kind of effect exposure to cartoon had on children in a particular city. So you see, it is easy to identify the problem of your study. If you're not sure, brainstorm with your colleagues or even your lecturer. Another easy way is to look at similar studies done on the topic you are working on.

The problem they identified in their own works could give you a clue on what the problem in your own work is. When you have identified the problem, you can now start the process of writing it down.

Current State of things:

Begin with a few citations from studies already done, showing the existence of the problem in society and what it could cause if left unchecked. Mention the current situation which shows the problem existing in the society or organization that your work intends to solve. The existence of this problem prompted your own study.

You should be able to identify the challenge that requires a solution. It must not be negative or catastrophic. It could be the need for an improvement on what already exists. For instance, in the example we used earlier, a researcher wanted to study how exposure to television cartoons influenced children

The problem identified was that children's exposure to TV films and cartoons could have a lot of undesirable effects. While some of cartoons are useful in developing the moral character of children, others especially violent ones produce anti-social behaviour in them. This can prompt a study to know what solutions to suggest.



Thank You