

SECTION – 2

QUESTION-2.

ANSWER:-

Research Problem:-

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.

Importance of..

The purpose of a problem statement is to:

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.

Places the problem into a particular context that defines the parameters of what is to be investigated.

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.

So What!

In the social sciences, the research problem establishes the means by which you must answer the "So What?" question. The "So What?" question refers to a research problem surviving the relevancy test [the quality of a measurement procedure that provides repeatability and accuracy]. Note that answering the "So What" question requires a commitment on your part to not only show that you have researched the material, but that you have thought about its significance.

To survive the "So What" question, problem statements should possess the following attributes:

Clarity and precision [a well-written statement does not make sweeping generalizations and irresponsible statements],

Identification of what would be studied, while avoiding the use of value-laden words and terms,

Identification of an overarching question and key factors or variables,

Identification of key concepts and terms,

Articulation of the study's boundaries or parameters,

Some generalizability in regards to applicability and bringing results into general use,

Conveyance of the study's importance, benefits, and justification [regardless of the type of research, it is important to address the “so what” question by demonstrating that the research is not trivial],

Does not have unnecessary jargon; and,

Conveyance of more than the mere gathering of descriptive data providing only a snapshot of the issue or phenomenon under investigation.

Castellanos, Susie. Critical Writing and Thinking. The Writing Center. Dean of the College. Brown University; Ellis, Timothy J. and Yair Levy Nova Framework of Problem-Based Research: A Guide for Novice Researchers on the Development of a Research-Worthy Problem. Informing Science: the International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline 11 (2008); Thesis and Purpose Statements. The Writer’s Handbook. Writing Center. University of Wisconsin, Madison; Thesis Statements. The Writing Center. University of North Carolina; Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements. The Writing Lab and The OWL. Purdue University.

Personal Experience

Your everyday experiences can give rise to worthwhile problems for investigation. Think critically about your own experiences and/or frustrations with an issue facing society, your community, or in your neighborhood. This can be derived, for example, from deliberate observations of certain relationships for which there is no clear explanation or witnessing an event that appears harmful to a person or group or that is out of the ordinary.

Relevant Literature

The selection of a research problem can often be derived from an extensive and thorough review of pertinent research associated with your overall area of interest. This may reveal where gaps remain in our understanding of a topic. Research may be conducted to: 1) fill such gaps in knowledge; 2) evaluate if the methodologies employed in prior studies can be adapted to solve other problems; or, 3) determine if a similar study could be conducted in a different subject area or applied to different study sample [i.e., different groups of people]. Also, authors frequently conclude their studies by noting implications for further research; this can also be a valuable source of problems to investigate.

III. What Makes a Good Research Statement

A good problem statement begins by introducing the broad area in which your research is centered and then gradually leads the reader to the more narrow questions you are posing. The statement need not be lengthy but a good research problem should incorporate the following features:

Compelling topic

Simple curiosity is not a good enough reason to pursue a research study. The problem that you choose to explore must be important to you and to a larger community you share. The problem chosen must be one that motivates you to address it.

Supports multiple perspectives

The problem must be phrased in a way that avoids dichotomies and instead supports the generation and exploration of multiple perspectives. A general rule of thumb is that a good research problem is one that would generate a variety of viewpoints from a composite audience made up of reasonable people.

Researchable

It seems a bit obvious, but you don't want to find yourself in the midst of investigating a complex research project and realize that you don't have much to draw on for your research. Choose research problems that can be supported by the resources available to you. Not sure? Seek out help from a librarian!

NOTE: Do not confuse a research problem with a research topic. A topic is something to read and obtain information about whereas a problem is something to solve or framed as a question that must be answered.

IV. Mistakes to Avoid

Beware of circular reasoning. Don't state that the research problem as simply the absence of the thing you are suggesting. For example, if you propose, "The problem in this community is that it has no hospital."

This only leads to a research problem where:

The need is for a hospital

The objective is to create a hospital

The method is to plan for building a hospital, and

The evaluation is to measure if there is a hospital or not.

This is an example of a research problem that fails the "so what?" test because it does not reveal the relevance of why you are investigating the problem of having no hospital in the community [e.g., there's a hospital in the community ten miles away] and because the research problem does not elucidate the significance of why one should study the fact that no hospital exists in the community [e.g., that hospital in the community ten miles away has no emergency room].