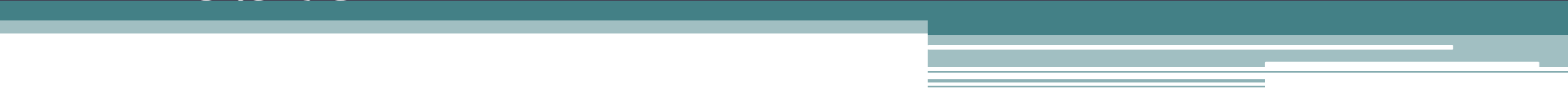


Formulation of Research Problem



Dr. Ghazala Shaheen
Guest Faculty
Vanijya Mahavidyalaya

What is research problem?

- Any question that you want answered and any assumption or assertion that you want to challenge or investigate.
- *However;*
 - not all questions can be transformed into research problems.
 - the process of formulating them in a meaningful way is not at all an easy task.
 - it requires considerable knowledge of both the subject area and research methodology.

What is research problem? (cont.)

- A research problem is a perceived gap between what is and what should be.
- Research problem arise from;
 - Evolution of theories.
 - Peers and supervisors etc.
 - Published research (literature review).
 - Day-to-day experience



where

do we go

from

here?

**Research
problem is like
an identification
of destination
before
undertaking
research journey**

The way we formulate the research problem determines every step that follows;

- type of study design that can be used
- type of sampling strategy that can be employed
- research instrument that can be used or developed
- type of analysis that can be undertaken



Importance of Formulating a Research Problem

- Formulation of research problem is the first and important step of research process. It is like the identification of a destination before undertaking a journey.
- A research problem is like the foundation of a building. The type and design of the building are dependent upon the foundation. If the foundation is well designed and strong you can expect the building to be also.
- The research problem serves as the foundation of a research study; if it is well formulated, you can expect a good study to follow.
- According to Kerlinger:

"If one wants to solve a problem, one must generally know what the problem is. It can be said that a large part of the problem lies in knowing what one is trying to do."

Consideration in Selecting a Research Problem

- When selecting a research problem there are a number of considerations to keep in mind which will help to ensure that your study will be manageable and that you remain motivated.

These considerations are:

- ✓Interest
- ✓Magnitude
- ✓Measurement of concepts
- ✓Level of expertise
- ✓Relevance
- ✓Availability of data
- ✓Ethical issues

Steps in Formulating a Research Problem

- The formulation of a research problem is the most crucial part of the research journey as the quality and relevance of your research project entirely depends upon it.
- The process of formulating a research problem consists of a number of steps. Working through these steps presupposes a reasonable level of knowledge in the broad subject area within which the study is to be undertaken and the research methodology itself.

Step 1: Identify a broad field or subject area of interest to you.

- It is a good idea to think about the field in which we would like to work after graduation.
- This will help us to find an interesting topic, and one which may be of use to us in the future it is a good idea to think about the field in which we would like to work after graduation. This will help us to find an interesting topic, and one which may be of use to us in the future.
- Example: As a student of public health, intending to work with patients who have HIV/AIDS, you might like to conduct research on a subject area relating to HIV/AIDS.

Step 2: Dissect the broad areas into subareas

- We can select any subject area from the field such as community health or consumer research and go through the dissection process.
- In preparing this list of subareas we should also consult others who have some knowledge of the area and the literature in our subject area.
- Once we have developed an exhaustive list of the subareas from various sources, we proceed to the next stage where we select what will become the basis of your enquiry.

Step 3: Select what is of most interest to you.

- It is neither advisable nor feasible to study all subareas. Out of this list, we should select issues or subareas about which we are passionate.
- This is because our interest should be the most important determinant for selection.
- One way to decide what interests us most is to start with the process of elimination. We should go through our list and delete all those subareas in which we are not very interested.
- We need to continue until we are left with something that is manageable considering the time available to us, our level of expertise and other resources needed to undertake the study.
- Once we are confident that we have selected an issue we are passionate about and can manage, we are ready to go to the next step.

Step 4: Raise research questions

- At this step we ask ourselves, ‘What is it that I want to find out about in this subarea?’
- We should make a list of whatever questions come to our mind relating to our chosen subarea and if we think there are too many to be manageable, go through the process of elimination, as we did in Step 3.

Step 5: Formulate objectives

- Both our main objectives and our sub-objectives now need to be formulated, which grow out of our research questions. The main difference between objectives and research questions is the way in which they are written.
- Research questions are obviously that – questions. Objectives transform these questions into behavioral aims by using action-oriented words such as ‘to find out’, ‘to determine’, ‘to ascertain’ and ‘to examine’.
- Some researchers prefer to reverse the process; that is, they start from objectives and formulate research questions from them.
- Some researchers are satisfied only with research questions, and do not formulate objectives at all.
- If we prefer to have only research questions or only objectives, this is fine, but we should keep in mind the requirements of our institution for research proposals.

Step 6: Assess your objectives

- Now, we examine our objectives to ascertain the feasibility of achieving them through our research endeavor. Consider them in the light of the time, resources (financial and human) and technical expertise at your disposal.

Step 7: Double-check

- We should go back and give final consideration to whether or not we are sufficiently interested in the study, and have adequate resources to undertake it.
- We should ask ourselves, ‘Am I really enthusiastic about this study?’ and ‘Do I really have enough resources to undertake it?’ Answer these questions thoughtfully and realistically.
- If we answer to one of them is ‘no’, reassess your objectives.

Formulation of Research Objectives

- Objectives are the goals we set out to attain in our study. Since these objectives inform us of what we want to achieve through the study, it is extremely important to word them clearly and specifically.
- Objectives should be listed under two headings:
 - ✓ Main objectives
 - ✓ Subobjectives
- The main objective is an overall statement of the thrust of our study. It is also a statement of the main associations and relationships that we seek to discover or establish.
- The subobjectives are the specific aspects of the topic that we want to investigate within the main framework of our study.