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7 Basic Steps in Formulating a Research Problem



by Abdul Awal © March 7, 2019

Research Problem is the very first step in the Research Process. It necessarily will guide you throughout the entire research work. The research problem functions as the base of a research study in fact. If it is well formulated, you would expect better research results to implement in practice that is the ultimate aim of a research study. If you want to solve a problem, you must know the problem precisely. So, formulating a research problem is much more important. We will explain clearly the nature of a research problem & the steps of formulating a problem.

What Does Mean Research Problem?

Research Problem means **questions** that researchers want to answer or any assumption or assertion that we want to challenge or to investigate. These questions can become a research problem or research topic for your study.

However, most importantly, keep in mind that not all questions can become a research problem. Someone can find some research questions extremely difficult to study. Significant research questions might happen frequently to us. But, the process of transforming them into a research problem or research topic in an effective way is not easy work at all.

If you are a newbie in research it might seem easy to formulate a research problem. But, in fact, it requires considerable knowledge about the study area and **Research Methodology**.

If you examine a question closely, you will instantly realize the complexity of formulation an idea into a problem that is researchable.

For example- if the question is **“What impact does social media have on people’s minds?”**

How do you transform this question into a research problem or research topic?

Well. First of all, you should specify this question. What type of social media do you like to study? Specify people’s age. Then, what kind of effect? Is it social or psychological or economic?

But, if the question is **“What impact does daily use of Facebook have on the study attention of under-20s?”**

This question defines its concepts clearly. It is researchable through both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Objectives of the Research Problem

Objectives define specific goals we set out to achieve in our research study. The objective directs us to what we want to reach through our study. Therefore, it is inevitable to describe objectives as clearly and specifically as possible.

Objectives should write down under two headings. (1) main objectives, (2) sub-objectives.

The main objective is the total statement of the main goal of the study. It also provides us with the main associations and relationships that we intend to explore and establish.

On the other hand, sub-objectives are the specific contexts of the research topic that researchers desire to investigate within the basic framework of the study.

Key Factors to Consider

When you formulate a research problem, you should take into account some key factors which will help you to ensure that your research study would be measurable and that you will remain motivated. These considerations are (a) Interest, (b) Magnitude, (c) Measurement of concepts, (d) Depth of expertise, (e) Relevancy of the study, (f) Data source, (g) Ethical issues.

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What is the most essential part of your research project? It is obviously the formulating of a research problem or selecting your research topic. This is because the quality & relevancy of your research work completely depends on it. The process of formulating a research problem requires a series of steps. Look at 7 basic steps in formulating a research problem.

1. Identify the Broad Study Area

This is a great idea to thinking about the subject area of your interest. You should identify the field in which you would like to work a long time after your academic study or graduation. It will help you tremendously to get an interesting research topic. For example- if you do graduation in sociology, you must decide your research study area in sociology. You might choose social problems like unemployment, road accident, community health, HIV/AIDS, etc.

2. Dissect the Broad Study Area into Subareas

In this stage, you need to dissect and specify your research broad study area into some subareas. You would consult with your supervisor in this regard. Write down subareas. For example- if you select unemployment as your broad study area, then dissect it into unemployment & social stability, unemployment & crime, unemployment

& individual frustration, etc. In this case, your research title may be how unemployment produces criminal activities. Or how it creates frustration in mind among unemployed people.

3. Mark-up your Interest

It is almost impossible to study all subareas. That's why you must identify your area of interest. You should select issues about which you are passionate. Your interest must be the most important determinant of your research study. Once you selected your research study of interest, you should delete other subareas in which you do not feel interested. Keep in mind that if you lose interest in your research study it won't bring any results eventually.

4. Study Research Questions

In this step in formulating a research problem, you would point out your research questions under the area of interest as you decided in the previous stage. If you select unemployment as your study area, your questions might be "how unemployment impacts individual social status?" "How it affects social stability?" "How it creates frustration on individuals?" Define what research problem or question you are going to study? The more you study the research problem it will be just as relevant and fruitful to solve the problem indeed.

5. Set Out Objectives

Set out conspicuously your research root objectives and sub-objectives. Research objectives essentially come from research questions. If you do study "Impact of unemployment on individual social status" as your research problem or research question. Then, set out what would you like to explore to address. For Example- your main objective might be to examine the unemployment status in a particular society or state. And sub-objectives would be their effects on individuals' social life. Setting out specific main and sub-objectives are so crucial.

6. Assess your Objectives

Now, you should evaluate your objectives to make sure of the possibility of attaining them through your research study. Assess your objectives in terms of time, budget, resources, and technical expertise at your hand. You should also assess your research questions in light of reality. Determine what outcome will bring your study. If you can assess accurately the purpose of the research study it will bring significant results in the long run. In fact, research objectives determine the value of the study you are going to work out.

7. Check Back

Before you go on research work you should review all steps in formulating a research problem and all the things that you have done till now for the purpose of your research study. Then, ask yourself about your enthusiasm. Do you have enough resources to step up? If you are quite satisfied, then you forward to undertake your research work. You can change any of your plans in the light of reality if requires.

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6 thoughts on “7 Basic Steps in Formulating a Research Problem”



Daniel February 25, 2020 at 5:32 pm

Nice!

REPLY

Campus Career Club February 26, 2020 at 9:17 am

Thank you Daniel.

REPLY

Naula Hellen April 14, 2020 at 7:24 am

Wow! It was helpful. Thanks in

REPLY

Campus Career Club April 14, 2020 at 7:41 am

We are grateful if can help people. Welcome, Naula Hellen to [Campus Career Club](#).

REPLY

Gajen chemjong July 8, 2021 at 9:05 am

It was fruitful. Much benefited.

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Belta Thomas July 21, 2021 at 11:23 am

Was helpful and easy to understand

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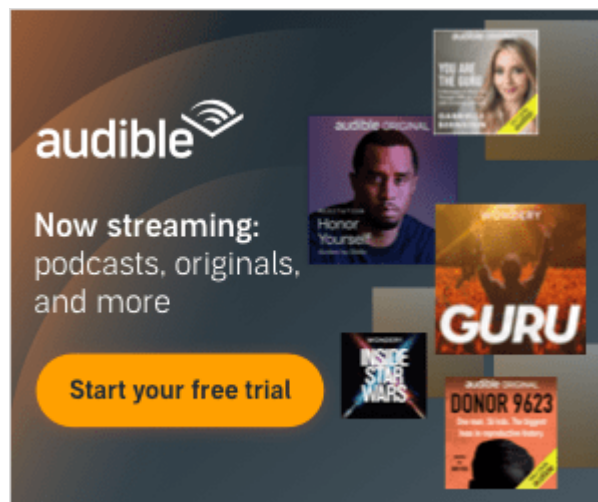
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