

The Problem Statement

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The problem statement is one of the most important components of your study. After reading the problem statement, the reader will know why you are doing (or did) this study and be convinced of its importance. In 180 -250 words you need to convince the reader that this study **MUST** be done (or **HAD** to be done). Society or one of its institutions has some pressing problem that needs (needed) closer examination. **YOUR** study will answer (answered) some part of this serious problem in a unique and clever way.

The problem statement also explicates the paradigm (qualitative/quantitative/mixed) and the methodology (correlation, evaluative, phenomenological, Delphi, historical, experimental, etc.). A problem might be defined as an issue that exists in theory or practice that leads (lead) to the need for your study. Never stray too far away from your problem as you conduct, or discuss your research. Your dissertation will be judged on how well you solved the problem posed, and how well you obtained your purpose.

The following template can be used to put your initial draft of your problem statement together. This can then be converted into a lucid, scholarly, and clear problem statement that meets all the items in the checklist that follows.

Template for initial draft of problem statement

There is a problem in _____(societal organization). Despite _____(something that should be happening) _____ is occurring (provide supporting evidence). This problem has negatively impacted _____(victims of problem) because _____. A possible cause of this problem is _____. Perhaps a study which investigates _____ by a _____(paradigm/method) could remedy the situation.

"I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand"
John Dewey on Experiential Learning.

PROBLEM STATEMENT Average of ½ - ¾ page 180-250 words	√
1. General Problem/Observation identifying the need for the study, with sufficient current evidence to support the extent of the problem. This can be current literature or current statistics.	
2. Specific “Problem” proposed for research. Evidence is provided that this is a current problem. However the words <i>current</i> or <i>today</i> should not be in the problem statement. A time reference can be included.	
3. Introductory words describing the paradigm (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), the method, and research design are given and are appropriate to the “problem.”	
4. General population group affected by the problem is identified.	
5. The geographic area where the problem exists is identified, if appropriate.	
6. The gap in the literature is explained. The gap in the literature is not sufficient reason to conduct a doctoral study and is not, in itself, a problem, but it explains where your study will fit in with other scholarly research.	
7. The problem statement is written in a scholarly voice with APA formatting and no grammatical errors. There are no, or a minimum number of, quotations in the problem statement.	
8. Sufficient evidence is provided to convince the reader that the problem is real and solvable.	
9. The problem statement is clear, concise, and in accord with the purpose statement. The possible resolution is in accord with the chosen methodology.	
10. There are no unnecessary words. The problems statement does not exceed 250 words.	

An Example Follows.

Example:

Bullying is one of the most critical issues facing middle school education in the 21st century. When conflicts arise children can use their expertise with interactive technologies to humiliate and bully their peers online, in what is referred to as *cyberbullying*, and avoid reprimand from adults or foes. Parents often plead technological ignorance regarding cyberbullying, and many schools decline to discipline *off-campus* behavior.

Beane (2008) found that approximately 28% of middle school students are subjected to cyberbullying, and that this affects about ten million middle school children each year. E-mail messages and Web sites have increasingly become vehicles to threaten, tease, and humiliate other students. Incidents of online bullying can be just as hurtful as face to face bullying, yet are less likely to be detected or prevented by adults. To date there has been little, if any, formal evaluation of how cyberbullying has been addressed. In order to understand the complexities of online bullying, it is important that a mixed-method case study be conducted to determine the ill effects of online bullying and examine a case where online bullying was detected and dealt with.