



The Dissertation Proposal Guide

The Public Policy Student Guide

THE INTRODUCTION

Genesis of the Problem

- History of the problem
- Origin of the problem
- Past and Current Standing Conditions

Statement of the Problem

- Research Gap
- Identify with clarity the problem being investigated.

Purpose of the Study

- Must bring clarity.
- What is the aim of the study?.

Research Questions & Hypothesis

- Must relate to the problem, be focused, concise and testable
- Includes the Hypothesis

Logic Model

- Graphically and Schematically summarize the problem.
- Demonstrates the knowledge and understanding the researcher possesses in addressing the problem

Definition of Terms

- Define terms as they relate to this project.

GENESIS OR BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

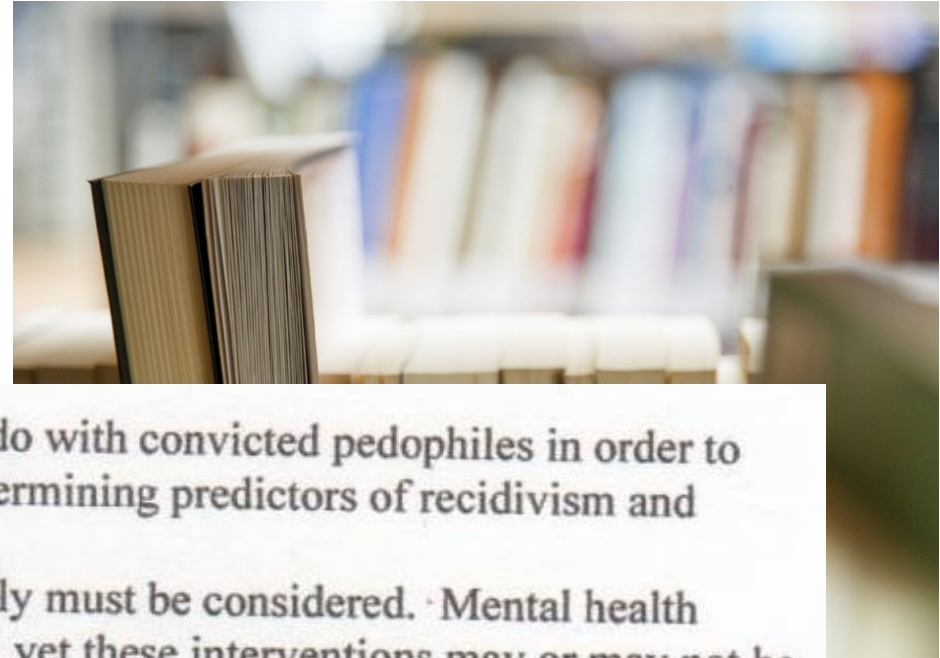
This section discusses the history of the problem, the origin of the problem, its past and current standing or conditions. Successes and failures recorded in addressing the problem. What is the current standing of the problem to be investigated? Citations are required to support the factual presentation of the problem and issues surrounding the problem. Based on the successes or failure of the problem as presented, the researcher indicates what aspect of the problem the researcher plans to address or investigate. This paragraph leads to the statement of the problem. The genesis must relate to the topic of the paper.

THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The **statement of purpose** clearly summarizes “why” the study should be done – the reason for conducting the research. What is the purpose?

The statement of the problem should include the gap in research after discussing the status of the problem in the genesis. This should lead to the statement of the problem. This paragraph must identify with clarity what the problem is that is being investigated. The statement of the problem must be stated with clarity so that anybody reading the paper must understand what is the problem that is being investigated – with no ambiguity. It could be a sentence or a paragraph- whatever it takes to bring out the clarity.

SAMPLE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM



The penal system is taxed with the dilemma of what to do with convicted pedophiles in order to best protect society. The greatest challenge is accurately determining predictors of recidivism and addressing them appropriately.

The fact that pedophiles will not be locked up indefinitely must be considered. Mental health providers are obligated to implement treatment interventions, yet these interventions may or may not be effective in eliminating recidivism. It is important to consider that the majority of sex offenders don't even have access to adequate treatment. To exasperate the problem, a number of sex offenders suffer from certain personality disorders that many professionals consider to be untreatable.

It is conceivable that without treatment interventions, convicted pedophiles are not properly equipped to successfully transition back into society. Therefore, the proposed study involves analyzing the respective personality characteristics in conjunction with residential and community-based treatment interventions in order to predict and ultimately help reduce the rate of recidivism.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

– like the statement of the problem, must bring clarity in declaring the purpose/s of the study. What are/is the aim of the study? State with clarity and preciseness the purpose – for example, the purpose of the study is to investigate, to analyze, to compare, to synthesize, to evaluate, to explain a phenomenon, etc. The purpose must be amenable to analysis with data.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions must relate to the problem, and be focused, concise and must be amenable to testing. There must be data to test the questions (see examples that follow). Any research question that can be answered with one or two sentences is not a good research question. Again, research questions must be clear and focused; the research questions must be amenable to data collection for evaluation or analysis, must be amenable to empirical testing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

EXAMPLE I

Research Questions:

Why was Government Street overrun by chickens for the second time last year? This question is not focused or precise and can be easily answered in one or two sentences.

Revised:

What are some of the environmental factors in Baton Rouge in 2019 that might have caused the chickens to cross Government Street in Baton Rouge? It is precise, focused and can be analyzed using environmental data

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESIS

EXAMPLE II

Research Questions:

Why are social net networking sites harmful? This question is unfocused, not precise. It also has taken the position that net workings are harmful.

Revised:

How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on such social networking sites as Facebook and Twitter?

Hypothesis:

H_0 : {Null}. Users of the networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are more likely to support regulation of the networking sites to safeguard privacy, abuses, false harmful propaganda to harm users and individuals and the public.

H_1 : [Alternative]. Users of the networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are not likely to support regulation of the networking sites to safeguard privacy, abuses, false harmful propaganda to harm users and individuals and the public.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

EXAMPLE III

Research Questions:

Are females smarter than males? This is not a good research question; how will intelligence be measured? It is not focused or precise.

Revised:

Do females aged 17-34 score higher than males aged 17-34 on the WAIS? [WAIS is a standardized intelligence test]. It is precise and amenable to data collection.

Finally, as you consider the kind of questions/problems you wish to address or research on, it should aim to accomplish one of these four goals:

- a) Define or measure a fact or gather facts about a specific phenomenon
- b) Match facts and theory
- c) Evaluate and compare two theories, models, or hypothesis/ programs or policies
- d) Affirm that a certain method is more effective than other methods

HYPOTHESIS

A Hypothesis is a statement or a proposition that expresses a relation between two or more variables that are measurable or capable of being operationalized.

HYPOTHESIS EXAMPLE

Hypothesis:

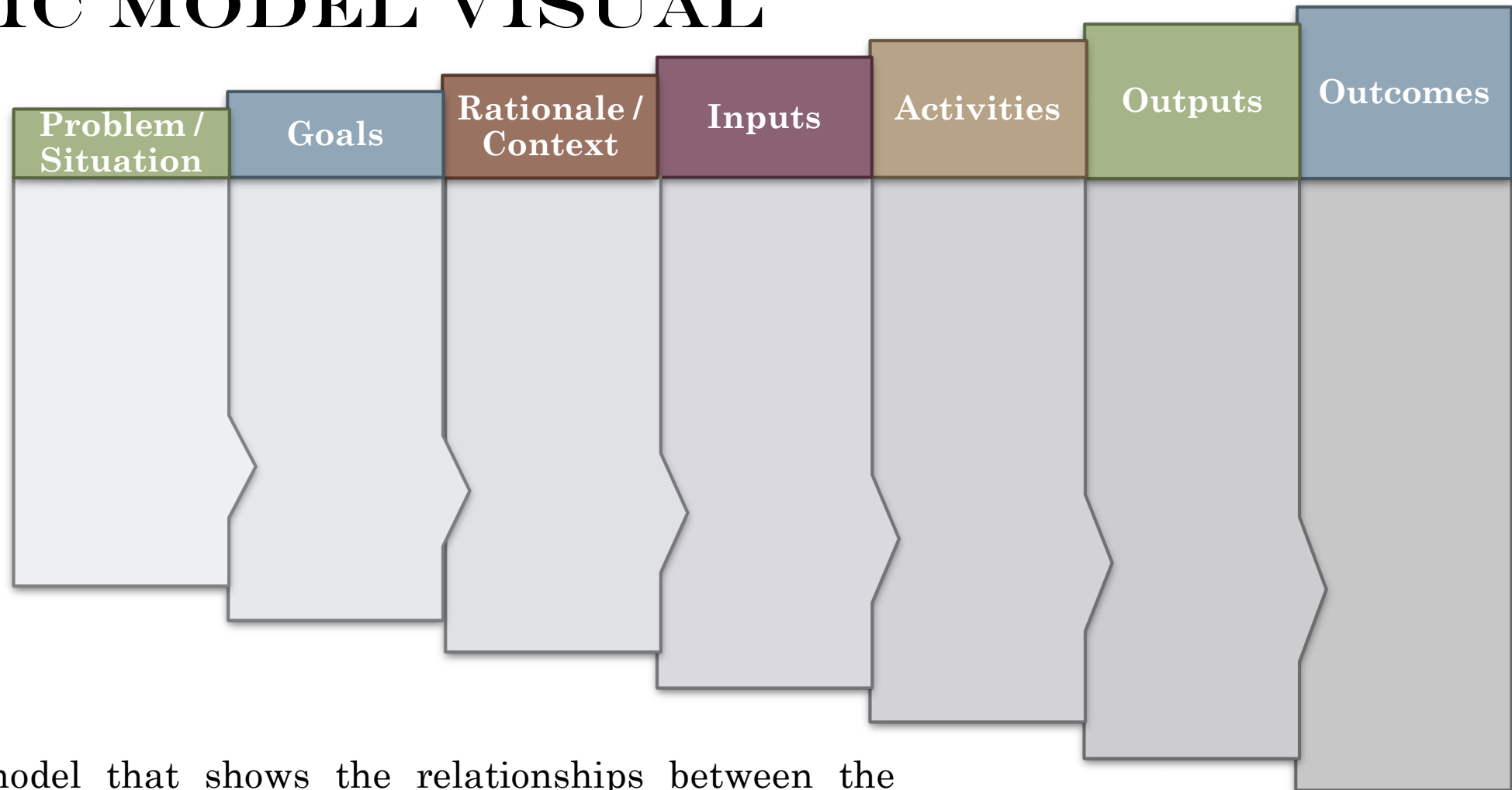
H_0 : [Null]. Are males aged 25-40 more likely to be promoted to managerial positions than females aged 25-40 because of intelligence, education, skills, and gender roles.

H_1 : [Alternative]. There will be no difference amongst males and females aged 25-40 in promotion to managerial positions based on intelligence, education, skills, and gender roles.

THE LOGIC MODEL

- The Logic Model is simply a clean graphic presentation tool that provides the reader with a clean picture – graphically/schematically - summary of the problem, events, variables and order of sequence, relationships that will be considered in addressing the problem. The variables, events, steps, input, related to the problem and the expected outcome. Construct the logic model to reflect a clean summary of what you plan to do. Build your model to fit the problem. A good logic model demonstrates the knowledge and understanding the researcher possesses in addressing the problem.

LOGIC MODEL VISUAL



- Visual model that shows the relationships between the problem under investigation/situation and the processes or activities required to achieve the desired outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The problem statement, research questions, and review of related literature are the foundation of the theoretical framework. Here, the researcher uses theories that supports the research. This shows the research is grounded on established ideas.

The steps are focused on using theory-driven and emphasizing on the relation of a theory to a selected topic. You are advised to explore theories being used in completed dissertations, doctoral studies, encyclopedias, other literatures, and handbooks. This chapter may stand alone or combined with the literature review. Apply the steps below.

The steps are as follows:

1. Identify your key concepts and the key terms from your problem statement and research questions.
2. Identify policy frameworks that have been used.
3. List the constructs and variables that might be relevant to your study.
4. Have a list of theories and take notes on how and where they were used.
5. Review past related literature to find theories related to your research work.
6. Select a theory.
7. Test whether the theory fits your study.
8. Search out good seminal works related to those theories to learn how they were been used.
9. Show how your research fits in the selected theory.
10. You may combine different theories in a new and unique way, evaluating and explaining its relevance.
11. Use the theory as a basis for interpreting your research results.
12. Identify and learn more about relevant theories.

OUTLINE THE RELATED LITERATURE

Note the term related literature. The review must be related to the problem being investigated. This section in the proposal phase should outline literature you have reviewed that addresses the historical, past, the current issues, theories related to the problem being investigated. Past and present methodologies related to the study and gaps in the literature should be discovered during this phase of research. Again, note the emphasis on related and relevant literature. It must relate to the topic or problem being investigated. The issues and the gaps reviewed should provide rich fodder for developing or improving the hypothesis in relation to the problem identified in the statement of the problem. It's very important that a thorough knowledge of the literature is provided in the outline.

METHODOLOGY

Usually, it's after the literature review that the hypothesis is developed, and the variables identified. It may however be developed in chapter one.

Here, you are expected to outline **fully the steps** that will be utilized to answer the questions and the hypothesis posed. It may be necessary to restate the questions/hypothesis. In this chapter, the method and the explanation of the model that may be used are stated. The method and the steps that will be involved must be clearly presented. [You are expected to research deeply on different research methodologies]. In this section you are expected to clearly explain how you will answer your research questions.

The **methodology** must address the research questions or hypothesis. The methodology ties together the thread that began with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions or hypothesis together. They must be connected.

Types of Research

Applied Research: It involves immediate action to develop plans, programs, or activities – Develop a new program, improve a current program: When a current need is identified then research can be planned to satisfy it.

- **Action Research** – Action research seeks to find a solution to a current problem. Action is needed to make a change.
- **Quantitative** – Using numbers to conduct an analysis. By the researcher.
- **Qualitative Research Approach** – This research - Studies what is happening in a more complex manner. Subjectivity is the essence in interpreting what occurs within the study. Hence the research develops a specific hypothesis but not a null hypothesis.

Descriptive Research or Statistics

The research obtains data for analysis or testing. Descriptive Statistics do exactly that – describable values of a variable.

Four commonly used descriptive statistics include (a) central tendency (means, averages) (b) relative position (c) variation or dispersion and (d) correlation

Research Methodology do the following:

- 1) Indicate the instrument to be used or the equation if there is one. For example, the instrument might be a survey instrument, if so, state an example of the questions used in the survey, or the instrument might be using a Chi Square test, or a mean or mode to test the data. After indicating the instrument follow with procedure – explain the steps that will be used in conducting the study including data collection.