



IHCM

International Journal of Human Capital
Management (IJHCM)

Vol 1(1), pp 1-26, September 2021

**IDENTIFYING AND CONSTRUCTING RESEARCH PROBLEM IN MANAGEMENT
SCIENCES; AN ANALYSIS**

BY

PROF. OYADIRAN PHILLIP A., DR. MUSA F. ISHAQ, DR. YUSUF LAWAL

**Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
University of Abuja, Nigeria.**

AND

OTU JOSEPH AYI

**PhD Student, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
University of Abuja, Nigeria.**

Abstract

Research is essentially a problem-driven process. It starts and focuses on a specific problem or phenomenon. During the research process, data is collected and theories are elaborated to explain the problem. In other words, identifying and determining the problem to study is the first and the most important aspect to deal with in undertaking research. Thus, the research problem is the foundation of a research project. If the foundation is shaky the entire project is doomed to failure. The paper examined the procedures in identifying and constructing research problems in management sciences. The paper was written to state the accepted guidelines in constructing research problem in the field of management sciences as well as identify loopholes in the research problems of projects/dissertation of students. Content analysis was used whereby scholarly works on research problem was reviewed. Also, six (6) undergraduate and postgraduate projects were reviewed to identify errors in writing research problem in academic projects. It was revealed from the findings that some students have little or no idea about writing research problems. The paper recommended that project supervisors should play key role in ensuring their supervisees follow the guidelines in writing research problem in the field of management sciences. Research problem should be measurable, consists of at least two variables and must be linked to the research questions.

Keywords: Research, Research problem, research question, management science, dissertation

INTRODUCTION

A research problem (also called a phenomenon in various forms of qualitative research) is an issue that narrows the topic down to something reasonable for conducting a study. It is the general question you are trying to answer in your study. Typically, it is a concern, controversy, or a troubling question existing in academic literature, in theory, or in practice that requires meaningful understanding. It can also be a condition to be improved, a difficulty to be eliminated, or a challenge you are interested in that points to the need for an intentional inquiry. One way to satisfactorily understand research problems is by distinguishing them from three other closely related parts: research topic, research purpose, and research question. A research topic is a broad subject or issue addressed by a study. It is a part of a research area, while a research area is a part of a research field

Despite its critical importance, identifying and stating a research problem are the most challenging aspects of undertaking research, especially for novice researchers. This might be due to an insufficient understanding of how to identify and write for a study. The research problem is one of the fundamental sections of a complete project or dissertation. Choosing a topic and identifying and stating the core problems motivating the researcher can be a tasking. Several factors such as collection data, analysis and interpretation can be a daunting task and more so difficult to achieve when the research problem is not properly captured (Ujo, 2004).

For Obasi (1999), Anikweze (2013), research problem constitutes an important aspect of research because it is the section that embodies and leads to the objectives and hypotheses of every research and this would have influence on the choice of methods of collecting and analyzing data.

Research problems in management sciences, especially in public administration, are questions about the state of affairs in government or government agencies. The concept of research problem is one of the fundamental issues in research especially in the field of management sciences. Problems exist in various forms in the society in which we live and solutions to these problems are often times derived through research undertaking. One of the major roles of a

researcher is to identify problems and create a systematic procedure of solving such problems through techniques widely agreed upon by scholars in the field of management sciences. Anikweze (2013) conceived that identifying and constructing research problems is not an easy task for student researchers. Relatively, a research purpose is the major intent, or objective, or the overall focus that directs a study. The purpose statement clearly defines what is being explored or studied, how it is being explored, and where it is being explored. Research questions are the specific questions intended to answer or address in the study. They are narrowed down from the research purpose.

The study therefore seeks to examine and analyse the procedures in identifying and constructing research problem in management sciences.

METHODOLOGY

This paper made use of content analysis which entails the review of literatures and analysis of academic projects in the field of management sciences. Six (6) undergraduate and postgraduate projects were reviewed. The projects were analyzed to critically pin point faulty and accurate ways of identifying and constructing research problems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identification theories hold that free acts are actions caused by states of the agent with which she identifies. Identification may be cognitive: an agent may be said to identify with a state if she has the right beliefs (or lacks the wrong beliefs) with regard to it. Alternatively, identification may be a matter of wanting that the state in question produce action. Identification theories are usually compatibilist theories, motivated by the thought that what matters for freedom is not whether one's mental states are caused by processes over which the agent, ultimately, lacks control, but whether the agent is satisfied with the states which cause their actions. Identification theories have been extremely influential as accounts of autonomy, as well as freedom.

The major landmark in this terrain is undoubtedly Frankfurt 1971. In this influential article, Frankfurt argued that a free action is caused by a first-order desire which the agent wants to be their will. In later work, Frankfurt has developed and modified this view to avoid objections, and in the process proposed somewhat different accounts of identification; see Frankfurt 1988. Watson 1975 develops a rival account of what identification consists in which has also been influential: for him, we identify with actions if they are in accordance with our *values*. Watson 1987 rejects this account as a necessary condition of free will. Bratman 2007 has developed an account of agency that builds on the insights of identification theories: for him, it is the mesh between our actions and our plans and intentions that is important.

Theory of Problem Solving

When it comes to problem-solving, solutions need enough tools and information to get the job done. Undefined and well-defined issues fall into two distinct categories, and each is dealt with using a different strategy. Unlike poorly defined issues, which lack clear end objectives and expected solutions, well-defined problems do. Early planning is more possible with well-defined problems than with poorly-defined ones. Sometimes dealing with pragmatics, or how context affects meaning, and semantics, or how the problem is interpreted, is necessary to solve a problem. The secret to fixing an issue is being able to see what the objective of the situation is and what guidelines may be used. Sometimes solving the issue calls for using abstract reasoning or coming up with a unique solution. Most of the time, experts like lawyers, surgeons, and consultants tackle problems that require technical expertise and knowledge beyond what is generally acceptable. The more pervasive and uncomfortable the problem, the greater the possibility of building a scalable solution. This is how many organizations have discovered lucrative markets. Engineering, business, health, math, computer science, philosophy, and social organization are a few of the numerous specialized problem-solving strategies and methodologies.

Psychology and cognitive sciences investigate how people think through, analyze, and solve issues. In addition, a lot of studies have been done on the psychological barriers that inhibit people from solving problems— Confirmation bias, mental set, and functional fixity are obstacles

International Journal of Human Capital Management

to problem-solving. The "problem-solving cycle" is a series of actions for overcoming challenges in accomplishing a goal. Common processes in this cycle include identifying the issue, defining it, coming up with a plan of attack, gathering the information and materials at hand, tracking the development, and assessing the efficacy of the solution. After an issue is solved, another one typically surfaces, and the cycle repeats. Insight is the spontaneous solution to a dilemma or the emergence of a new notion to clarify a difficult circumstance. The answers obtained via insight are frequently more precise than those obtained through a step-by-step study. The ability to choose effective actions at various phases of the problem-solving cycle is necessary for a speedy solution process. There is no agreed-upon definition of an insight issue, unlike the formal definition of a moving problem provided by Newell and Simon.

The above theories form the framework through which the issues relating to the identification and construction of the statement of problem in research can be properly understood. The problem well identified and stated doesn't defile solution. This provides adequate direction through which appropriate quantitative and qualitative data can be accessed to drive outcomes.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Research Problem

Research problem is the most fundamental introductory issue in any kind of research. It is a definite or clear expression about an area of concern, a condition to be improved upon, a difficulty to be eliminated, or a troubling question that exists in scholarly literature, in theory, or within existing practice that points to a need for meaningful understanding and deliberation. Obasi (1999) succinctly conceive research problem as the fundamental question that requires an answer. The research problem refers to the specific reason why a study is under investigation. The research problem is termed fundamental because the research questions, hypotheses and objectives of any research are derived from it. A research problem in research is a statement about area of concern, or a condition that can be improved upon, a difficulty to be eradicated, or a disturbing question that exists in scholarly literature, in theory, or in practice that demands

meaningful understanding and detailed investigation. In social or management sciences, the research problem is usually accompanied with questions.

According to Pardede (2022) After identifying research problem, one should also consider whether it matches your research approach—quantitative or qualitative—because certain research problems are best suited for qualitative research, while other problems match quantitative research. *Qualitative research* is principally exploratory which addresses questions, such as “How?” or “Why?” to (1) gain an understanding of underlying motivations, reasons, and opinions; or (2) to uncover trends in thought and opinions. *Quantitative research* is primarily explanatory which gathers numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics to answer questions such as “What?”, “When?”, and “Where?” It aims to be more conclusive and generalize results to larger populations. Thus, if research problem requires one to (1) learn about individuals’ views; (2) assess a process over time; (3) gain detailed information about several people or research sites; or (4) produce theories based on participants' perceptions, it matches to qualitative research. But if your research problem requires one to (1) measure variables; (2) assess the impact of the variables on an outcome; (3) test theories; or (4) pertain the results to a large population, it better fits quantitative research (Creswell, 2014).

IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research problems can arise from two main sources: **personal or professional experiences**, and **the literature**. Daily personal or professional experience may lead you to identify a problem that necessitates a solution. or questions you would like to answer. While searching and reviewing the literature (journal articles, conference proceedings, thesis, dissertation, books, and government documents) and media (like television, and newspapers) you can encounter conflicting theories, problems that currently have no solution, and gaps in information and knowledge that require to be bridged. (Pardede 2022)

A problem is researchable if it meets some indicators abbreviated as feasible, interesting, novel, ethical, and relevant.

The first indicator, **feasibility**, indicates that to research a problem you must be certain that it can be studied by considering the followings:

- (1) you can access the research participants (subjects) and sites throughout a specific period. It is useless to plan a study in Papua unless you have the means to go there;
- (2) the equipment, materials, and logistics required are available; and
- (3) you have the skills, expertise, resources (including budget), and time needed to study the issue.

The next indicator, **interest**, should be taken as an important consideration because a research endeavor is usually time-consuming, and involves hard work and possible unexpected problems. If you choose a problem that does not significantly interest you, it might be very difficult to sustain the required enthusiasm to successfully conduct the research project.

Novelty, the third indicator, is the core of every research endeavor. A research project having no novelty factor is not worth carrying out. However, it does not mean that your research should be 100% novel in every aspect. In the research context, novelty means something unique or completely different in one or more aspects so that the research result will add unique information to the current body of knowledge. It can be a new design or methodology set to acquire new knowledge, or a new approach purposefully used to gain a broader or deeper understanding of the existing knowledge base. In terms of a research problem, novelty can be created by putting a new and original spin on a problem that has been studied in the past. This could be done by changing the participants, using different sites, or changing the form of the variables. To ensure that your modified problem is novel or not could be done by surveying relevant previous research and comparing your idea with what is already out there on the subject.

Thus, you should be familiar with the newly published articles in the field of research, and this could be facilitated through the second step of the research process, i.e. the literature review.

The fourth indicator, **ethical issues**, refers to a set of principles that guide your research plans and practices. Adhering to a certain code of conduct during the research undertaking in general and in collecting data from people in particular, is a must.

Anikweze (2002) identified six criteria that students' researchers should consider while making efforts to choosing a research problem.

- 1. Criterion of added theoretical value:** This simply refers to the extent to which the solution to the problem will enhance the body of existing knowledge. The implication of this criterion is the expectation that the outcome of every topic for investigation should be able to add value to existing knowledge in the particular subject area otherwise, the study may not be regarded a purposeful research. Tuckman (1999) described this criterion as theoretical value. The essence of research problem should be well thought out and should be a solution of filling a gap in literature. Simply put, does the outcome of the research be of good publishing material? This suggests that problem should be in key areas in social and management sciences.
- 2. Workability criterion:** A research problem in social or management sciences should not be too broad: neither should it be too narrow. It is expedient for the research to spend ample time to recognize the problem that will be workable and realistic (Anikweze, 2013). Research should be time bound, that is, the researcher should evaluate the research problem so as to have a better knowledge on whether the problem can be solved within a workable time frame or not.
- 3. Criterion of Variables:** Tuckman (1999) posits that the research problem should involve a relationship between two or more variables. These variables consist of both independent and dependent. For example, in the topic: motivation and employees performance. Here, the independent variable is motivation while the dependent variable is employees performance.

4. **Criterion of ethical considerations:** Ethical consideration is one of the important aspect in research. In this aspect, it is advisable for a researcher to avoid choosing a problem violates moral, religious or ethnic positions. For instance, religion is very sensitive topic in Nigeria. Researchers who choose thematic areas in religion should be very careful so as not to create tension or aggression from those who differ from the researcher's point of view.
5. **Criterion of measurability or quantification:** The social problem to be investigated should be the one that involves data collection and will be statistically tested to arrive at an informed conclusion. Also, the researcher should ensure the sample for the study is adequately representative.
6. **Criterion of adequate representative sample:** Choosing a research problem is not only dependent on the attractiveness of the topic. The researcher must consider the population and sample size as this would determine data collection, analysis and drawing of conclusion.

Other criteria include:

7. A research problem should not be too broad
8. A research problem should be time bound.
9. Tuckman (1999) posits that research problem should involve relationship between variables.

Bryman and Bell (2007) list ten most important principles related to ethical considerations in research:

- (1) research participants should not be subjected to harm in any way whatsoever;
- (2) prioritizing a respect for the dignity of research participants;
- (3) obtaining full consent from the participants before the study;

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

- (4) ensuring the protection of the privacy of research participants has to be ensured;
- (5) ensuring an adequate level of confidentiality of the research data;
- (6) ensuring anonymity of the participants (individuals and/or organizations);
- (7) avoiding any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research;
- (8) declaring affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests;
- (9) honesty and transparency in any type of communication concerning the research; and
- (10) avoiding any type of misleading information and bias in representation of primary data findings. (Pardede 2022)

According to him, your problem is relevant if drives your research project to potentially

- (1) advance your scientific field by adding new information to the existing body of knowledge, bridging current gaps in the literature, or leading to further research; and
- (2) help practitioners do their job more effectively,

SOURCES OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

There are various sources of research problem available to a student researcher. Anikweze (2013) suggested five (5) sources and they are as follows:

- i. Deduction from theories:** Many theories in management sciences are subjects to experimental investigations or verification therefore issues in the field of management science can be investigated through experiments.

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

- ii. **Findings from review of related literature:** The review of related literature sometimes reveals spurious findings which needed to be investigated thereby leading to fresh research problem. Thus, readings in a particular area of research interest may help a student to crystallize a research problem (Ary et al., 2002).
- iii. **Suggestions from supervisors and funding agents:** Sometimes research problems can be suggested to a student by his/her supervisor based on the wealth of experience of the supervisor. Also, government and charitable agencies serving as funding agents advertize research areas of public interest. Students usually capitalize on these opportunities to pick a research problem (Anikweze, 2013).
- iv. **Personal experience:** Personal experiences and observations serve as good source for acquiring knowledge. A student can identify a research problem from his/her personal experiences.
- (f) **Developments in a country:** Developments in the country which originally are not related to the discipline of the researcher could lead to a source of research problems (Ary et al, 2002).

Neel (2012) posits that the first step in a meaningful research undertaking is identification of a problem. The focus of the study majorly lies on statement of the problem. Problem that may be identified must be within the purview of the researcher's discipline (Nwana, 1992). Anikweze (2013) submit tips to identification of research which he gave as:

- i. How pressing is the problem?
- ii. What is the value of the issue to the society?

- iii. Does the student have the capacity to investigate the problem?
- iv. Has anybody researched into the problem in the past?

WAYS TO CONSTRUCT A RESEARCH PROBLEM/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

When you have identified a research problem, determined that it meets the criteria of a good research problem, and designated that it suits either the quantitative or the qualitative approach, you can proceed to write it down in the 'statement of the problem' that build the introduction section of a research proposal or report. Besides the research problem, however, the statement of the problem also includes four other aspects. These five elements are presented in the following sequence: (1) topic; (2) research problem; (3) a rationale (or justification of the importance) of the problem as found in the past research and practice; (4) deficiencies in existing knowledge about the problem; and (5) the audiences that will benefit from a study of the problem (Creswell, 2014). If these five elements are properly pointed out, you will be able to write good introductions for your research proposal. (Pardede 2022)

Obasi (1999) posits that the researcher is expected to examine 'the 'why' related issued under the statement of problem. It is a section where the researcher is expected to describe and pertinent questions that spur curiosity and expectation in terms of answer. Constructing a research problem has various styles. It can be done using argumentative approach by disregarding existing findings of research works. Research problem can also be constructed using assertive statements from an established theory or school of thought which are subject to further investigation. Another way of constructing research problem is in-depth analysis of the historical antecedence to a social problem or issue. In whatever ways, a researcher constructs the research problems, the research problem should be reduced to specific manageable research questions of three to five research questions (Obasi, 1999).

Writing the introduction or "statement of the problem" that builds the introduction section of your research proposal or report sets the stage for readers to understand your project and

appreciate its strong study orientation. As indicated from the discussion above, your statement of the problem should include five aspects: research topic, research problem, justification for the problem, deficiencies in the evidence, and beneficial audiences. As a practical guide, you can write each aspect in a paragraph. However, the aspects of justification for the problem, and deficiencies in the evidence naturally require longer spaces. Consequently, you can write each of these two in two or three paragraphs. Do not forget to cite and reference every source of information you include. The "statement of the problem" section published here might help you get more comprehensive ideas for writing your proposal/report introduction section. (Pardede 2022)

IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS

In a general term, problem Identification needs a systematic way of finding things that other researchers did, which are called research. Identifying a Research Problem is important because, as the issue in particular study motivates and guides the need for conducting the study. Problem Statement an essential step in research for the formulation of research problems. So, problem identification and formulation are very crucial before conducting research, and this is perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of any research undertaking. Since research is problem-driven, the first thing to deal in research is undertaking a study to identify and determine the problem. It lays the foundation for entire research work.

The essence of a good research is to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge. Identification of research problem should be restricted to the impact the results from the research would make in the field of social and management sciences. The statement of the problem gives the researcher a guide on how to frame relevant research questions, objectives of the study and hypotheses as the case may be. The research problem defines the target population and sample

frame of the research undertaking. Identifying and constructing Research Problem is advantageous in the following ways;

- Helps to understand in a better way:

A research problem is the primary step in conducting a food and nutrition research study. A research problem helps you to understand the Research Methodology in a better manner. Most of the beginners in the research think that a research problem is easy to formulate, but in reality, it is not so easy. A research problem needs a great thought on the part of the researcher to develop a scientific research problem. Problem Statement provides a research problem that is easily manageable and solved using scientific procedures.

- It helps to reach the objective of the study:

In actual the ultimate purpose of the Problem Identification is to determine the objective and intention of the research in the field of food and nutrition, in the absence of an aim or objective, you cannot determine the research methodology. Problem statement experts will be helpful for researchers to identify every step of the research process that is the study design, sampling strategy, instrument for research and research analysis procedure.

- Helps to know about the time, energy and money needed to conduct research:

The research problem identification effectively helps to find out the time, energy and fund needed to conduct research. It works by identifying and formulating a research problem for food and nutrition study. This identification step helps to have a gap in research and have an adequate formulation of prospects that leads to good manageable Research work. The Problem Statement Help provides clarity since the research process generates more questions. In the absence of a clear and well-defined problem, the researcher can become confused. Besides, the clarity it should have to be attractive so that the researcher become well engaged in your research.

- Make your research novel:

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

The research problem identified should be original and unique. A useful review of Literature can Help to determine whether the issue has already addressed in research with your particular sample. Talking to experts in Research problem Identification can illuminate a problem. Replication of existing study warrants a discussion of value elsewhere, but the novelty found in determining if an already solved problem holds in a new sample.

- Helps to find significant work:

Research problem should have an incredibly positive impact on the field where the study conducted. It can be practical, in the direct form of application in the results of research, where the work advances the field by filling a knowledge gap. New researchers do not find this process as an essential step and lose novelty in the work they carry out. Problem Statement consultation offers help not only to find a research gap but also provides a significant work that adds up the quality of the research undertaken in the field of food and nutrition.

- It takes the research to fetch current needs:

Developing a Research Problem is the critical step to carry out, but it adds high value to the undertaking research. This process will be helpful to have a current trend knowledge in the field of food and nutrition. Explore what topics covered in current journals in the area. Look at calls from relevant disciplinary organizations. Problem Identification reviews your research centre plan and focus on issues and create a best working approach to solve the problem in the field of food and nutrition. Research problems solved through the scientific method, which means research ability or feasibility of the problem is more important than all of the above characteristics.

The research problem is the heart of a study. It drives the research questions and provides the framework for understanding the research findings. Problem Identification assists you with where to look for your research problem and how to evaluate when a research problem for success.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS IN MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

This study reviewed the research problem section of twenty (20) undergraduate projects in the field of social and management sciences just to ascertain whether students understand how to construct research problems.

Sample 1

Topic: Delegation of Authority as a managerial tool for improving workers morale in Gwagwalada Area Council

Project Type: Undergraduate (Public Administration)

Date: July, 2015

Statement of the Problem

Most of the efforts of delegation are abstract in nature therefore may be difficult to assess. The problem is that how genuine the informants will be, if it happens that authority has not been delegated to them before. To avoid this problem, the following research questions become relevant which shall be treated in this study:

- i. How true is it that delegation of authority improves the morale of workers?
- ii. To what extent has delegation of authority affected the performance of subordinates in Gwagwalada Area Council?
- iii. What measures can be adopted to enhance delegation of authority and reduce dissatisfaction of workers?

The Analysis of Sample 1

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

The researcher failed to clearly highlight the specific problems motivating his investigation. The statement of the problem discussion is very short and does not match the topic. Specific variables regarding the topic were not captured. The research questions in this study were framed outside the statement of the problem.

Sample 2:

Topic: An Assessment of the effect of staff training on productivity of Zenith Bank Plc

Project Type: Undergraduate

Date: February, 2016

Statement of Research Problem

Before the establishment of Central Bank in 1959, training of Nigerian bankers was not taken seriously by most banks especially the indigenous banks. In every organisation all over the world, the management set up the organizations goals and ways of achieving set goals (Ejiakor, 1981). In this regard, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- (a) Are there training processes in Zenith Bank International Plc?
- (b) Are there effects of training on the productivity of staff of Zenith Bank International Plc?
- (c) Are there challenges of staff training in Zenith Bank International Plc?
- (d) Are there any measures that can be adopted to improve workers productivity in Zenith Bank International Plc?

Analysis of Sample 2

The sample 2 fell short of the guidelines and procedures for identifying and constructing research problem/research questions. The statement of problem was not specific to the pertinent issues affecting staff training and productivity in Zenith Bank Plc. Also, the statement of the problem

was too short and void of basic criteria influencing the selection of research problem. The research questions were not framed according to the statement of the problem.

Sample 3:

Topic: Poor Revenue Generation and Development in Local Government: Case study of Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State

Project Type: Undergraduate

Date: January, 2017

Statement of the Problem

The local government council take direct care of the grassroots people, that is the people in the rural areas. This group of people sometimes lacks essential facilities and conclusion of modern civilization. They lack pipe borne water to drink, do not have electricity, accessible roads, poor educational infrastructure and facilities to mention a few.

This is one of the major reasons of rural-urban migration of movement. This has made our cities to be congested and increase many criminal activities. Based on the above and foregoing assertions, it is obvious that the poor revenue generation and development of the rural area is a serious problem. This might be as a result of poor revenue generation. If Nigeria is to achieve her desired goal of vision 2020 and possibly meet the millennium goals (MDG) target, the issues of revenue generation must be addressed adequately.

Hence the researcher is bothered to find out the impact of poor of revenue generation in the lives of people at the rural area and how it has affected development in general especially in Karu Local Government Area.

Analysis of Sample 3

This student failed to bring out research questions from the statement of the problem as this is against the tradition of research in management sciences. The student failed to critically state the main issues motivating his investigation. He/She only gave an open statement of the functions of local government without in-depth analysis of what motivates his investigation. Findings from other projects revealed that some students were able to identify and construct research problems/research questions correctly. However, the researcher discovered the following:

1. Some of the students do not know how to state research problems. They fail to examine the why-related issues in their study.
2. Some of the students failed to capture the variables under investigation.
3. The findings also revealed that some of the students fail to adopt argumentative approach which is a good way of stating research problems.
4. Also, it was revealed that some students were reviewing literatures under the section of statement of the problem.
5. Some students fail to adopt the style of assertive statement from a particular school of thought to support their studies.

Sample 4

Topic: Budgetary system as a tool for effective control in the Nigerian Immigration Service

Project Type: Undergraduate (Accounting Department)

Date: November, 2017

Statement of the problem

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

The decision as to how to distribute limited financial and non-financial resources, in an effective and efficient manner, is an important challenge in all organisations. In most large and complex organisations like the Nigerian Immigration Service, this task would be nearly impossible without budgeting. Without effective budget analysis and feedback about budgetary problems, many organizations would become bankrupt. There are various challenges for effective budgeting in public sector organisations such as Nigerian Immigration Service. These include: inadequate data to formulate and implement a proper budget, instability of revenue generation, shortage of professionals in the office of the budget, political instability and changes in policies and priorities, lack of budgetary discipline, bureaucratic bottleneck and corruption (Ojobo, 2011). The researcher seeks to find answers to the following fundamental research questions of the study:

- (a) Is there a budgetary system in operation in Nigerian Immigration system?
- (b) Has the use of budgetary system enhanced management control in Nigerian Immigration Service?
- (c) What are the factors affecting the performance of budgetary system in Nigerian Immigration Service, Abuja headquarters?

Analysis of Sample 4

The students' topic captured two variables (Budgetary system and effective control) which is one of the criteria in writing a research problem as opined by Tuckman (1999). However, the research questions, were not properly captured in the discussion of the statement of the problem. The discussion under the statement of the problem did not state the operations of budgeting process in Nigeria Immigration Service but it was itemized as a research question.

Sample 5

Topic: Implementation of Treasury Single Account (TSA) Policy in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

Project Type: Postgraduate

Date: October, 2020

Statement of the Problem

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is clear about the issue of handling of public revenue: all revenues should be paid into a consolidated revenue fund. To support the provisions of section 80(1) relating to consolidated revenue fund, the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007) accentuates the need for prudent fiscal management. In addition, there are financial rules, regulations and treasury circulars which give details about the protection of government financial assets. In spite of all these statutory bases, the implementation of Nigeria's fiscal policies has left much to be desired (Oti et al, 2016).

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) runs several academic programmes for students which have generated revenue for the institution. These funds have been used by the management to procure and maintain plants and machines, build and renovate dilapidated classrooms and offices for staff as well as pay the allowances of staff. The introduction of TSA policy which emphasise that all monies accrued to the institution be remitted to Central Bank of Nigeria negatively affected the source of revenue.

These arguments form the basis for this research, with a view to proffering solutions to identified gaps:

- (a) How has the implementation of TSA policy impacted on quick evacuation of cash from NOUN to the central treasury?
- (b) To what extent has the implementation of TSA policy affected access to research grants in NOUN?
- (c) How has the implementation of TSA policy facilitated easy access to cash for timely use in NOUN?
- (d) In what way has the implementation of TSA blocked financial leakages in NOUN?

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

Analysis of Sample 5

The author was able to capture some of the key points under the itemized research questions in the discussion under the statement of problem. Some of these issues include evacuation and facilitation of cash. However, the first paragraph was not necessary because it gave explanation to the concept of Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy. The statement of the problem is meant to specifically capture key problem areas and the motivation for carrying out the study.

Sample 6

Topic: The Impact of Human Resource Management in achieving organisational goals: A case study of University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Gwagwalada

Project Type: Undergraduate

Date: November, 2015

Statement of the Problem

Human resource is the most important element in an organization. Every organization is created for a purpose therefore human resource management is salient in achieving these goals. Despite the immense importance of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices towards the realization of organization goals and objectives, many organisations especially in Nigeria do not give emphasis to its effectiveness.

The health sector is a very important one. There is popular saying that health is wealth. Many hospitals especially public hospitals e.g. University of Abuja Teaching Hospital has been marred by inapt service delivery. There are reported cases whereby medical personnel abandon their duty post, slow responses to emergency cases which led to patients in pains or in some cases leading to avoidable deaths. Furthermore, administrative staff and medical personnel lacked the basic advance technological skills to enhance speedy achievements to mention a few. In order to investigate these problems, the following research questions will be asked:

International Journal of Human Capital Management

<https://www.insthumcapman.org/journal/articles.php>

- (a) What are the factors impeding effective human resource management development in University of Abuja Teaching Hospital?
- (b) Is there any link between human resource management and organisational achievement?
- (c) To what extent can HRM affect organisational achievements?
- (d) Does the management of University of Abuja Teaching Hospital have the required human resource skills to attain desired organisational goals?
- (e) What are the measures that can be adopted to improve organisational achievements?

Analysis of Sample 6

The researcher made attempt to state the specific human resource management issues in the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital as it influences the accomplishment of organisational goals. However, the itemized research questions failed to specifically identify the discourse in the body of the statement of the problem. For instance, the factors impeding HRM as stated in number 1 seem bogus because specific variables were not mentioned. One of the key criteria of research question is that it should be specific and measurable.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Research is a cyclical process which means the process starts with identification of a problem. A problem statement is a critical component of the research project, as it provides a clear and concise roadmap for the research, and helps to ensure that the research is well-designed and addresses a significant and relevant issue. It is a statement that describes a specific problem or issue that the research project aims to address. It sets the foundation for the entire research project by clearly defining the research problem. This paper explored concepts and issues in identifying and constructing statement of problem. It expound the practical analysis and discussed appropriate procedures students can adopt in identifying and constructing research problems and research questions in the field of management sciences. The study concluded that majority of students have little or no knowledge of the techniques, criteria and rudiments in

identifying and formulating research problems in management sciences discipline, with the hope that such notable large gap will be filled or bridged to pave way for novelty and sound research value.

Based on the review of relevant scholarly works on identifying and construction of problem statement/research questions and findings from the analyzing undergraduate projects, the following recommendations are made:

1. Lecturers or the project supervisors have a role to play to ensure students or their supervisees understand the meaning and how to write research problem.
2. Students should desist from citing scholarly works under research problem. They can adopt the declarative statement or assertions from existing theories to guide them in formulating problem statements in their own investigations.
3. Students should practice how to link the research questions, objectives and objectives to the statement of the problem of their study.
4. The research questions derived from the statement of the problem should be measurable and ethically considered.
5. Students who find it difficult to identify and construct statements of the problem/research questions can seek from their project supervisors based on the experience, academic experience of the latter.

REFERENCES

- Anikweze, C.M. (2013). *Simplified approach to educational research*. Kaduna: Gofats Ventures limited.
- Anikweze, C.M. (2002). *Some drawbacks in educational research*. Onitsha: Lincel Ventures Ltd.
- Ary, D. Jacobs, L.C. and Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education*. Belmont: Wadworth/Thompson Learning.
- Nwana, O.C. (1981). *Introduction of education research*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007). *Business Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson.
- Nazara, S. (2019). The Effect of Using Short Stories on Secondary School Students' Critical Reading. In Pardede, P. (Ed.) English Education Department Collegiate Forum (EED CF) 2015-2018. Jakarta: UKI Press, 20-28.
- Obasi, I. N (1999). *Research methodology in political science*. Enugu: Academic Publishing Company.
- Pardede, P. (2007). Developing Critical Reading in the EFL Classroom. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329557401_Developing_Critical_Reading_in_EFL_Classroom
- Saunders , M., Thornhill , A., & Lewis , P. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. 5th ed. Rotolito Lombarda, Italy ISBN: 978-0-273-71686-0
- Sawilowsky, S. S. (2009). New effect size rules of thumb. *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods*, 8(2), 597 – 599
- Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: Our view of the state of the art. *Psychological Methods*, 7(2), 147–177. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.7.2.147>
- Tuckman, B. W. (1972). *Conducting educational research*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Ujo, A. A. (2004). *Understanding social research in Nigeria*. Kaduna: Joyce Graphic Printer and publishers.