



FORMULA FOR PREPARING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

What is a Problem Statement?

Simply put, a problem statement addresses “something that is going wrong” (Ellis & Levy, 2008, p.28), and serves as the center of your dissertation study. The problem must be one that is research-worthy and contributes to the literature that has already been published on your topic of study. This guide will walk you through the steps for writing the problem statement, which is broken down, as follows:

1. Background information
2. General problem statement
3. Scholarly support
4. Specific problem statement
5. Concluding commentary

Background Information

In two to three sentences, introduce the problem by sharing background information; this area serves as the foundation of the problem statement. Note that the writer specified **who**, **what**, and **where**:

In the **United States**, the primary non-litigious method of resolving formal conflict is mediation. Mediation is a conflict resolution process facilitated by a neutral third party mediator (Boulle, Colatrella, & Picchioni, 2008). **Mediators** are professionals who **assist disputing parties** to reach mutually acceptable conflict resolution outcomes. Wissler (2002) noted a positive correlation between mediator experience and successful conflict resolution, confirming that a mediator's proficiency optimized improved after facilitating approximately 35 mediation sessions.

General Problem Statement

The general problem statement is just that: a single sentence that begins: “The general problem is _____ resulting in _____.” In the **first area**, be prepared to state the general problem that your project is designed to examine; and, in the **second blank**, isolate the negative consequences of the problem, as modeled below:

The general problem is **the supply of mediators outweighs the demand for mediation in the general population** resulting in **limited opportunities for mediators to gain experience** (Velikonja, 2009).

Scholarly Support and Transition

In one or two sentences, support the problem by addressing the impact or adversity of the general problem statement. Additionally, include a sentence or two that transitions readers to the specific problem statement as shown here:

Velikonja (2009) noted that most mediators are “constantly scrambling for work” (p. 258). Without available sessions, these mediators may struggle to reach the 35 mediation sessions known to improve performance.

**Specific Problem Statement**

The specific problem statement begins, "The specific problem is _____ resulting in _____." In the **first area**, be prepared to state the specific problem that your project is designed to examine; and, in the **second blank**, isolate the negative consequences of the problem, as modeled below.

The specific problem is that **in addition to limited opportunities to practice mediation, mediators are subject to long delays between mediations, resulting in lower practice frequency, and lower quality of work** (Wissler, 2002).

Concluding Commentary and Final Statement

In the final portion of your problem statement, include one or two sentences that address the impact or adversity of the specific problem. Think about how this specific problem impacts people, society, organizations, etc. Remember to use scholarly research to support your ideas.

Velikonja (2009) reported that mediators often practice for years before mediating 35 cases. Wissler (2002) suggested successful conflict resolution outcomes increase if mediators have more, rather than less, mediation experience. The results of this study examining the relationship between mediation experience, practice frequency, time between mediations, and successful conflict resolution outcomes could have a significant influence on the formalization of mediator practice frequency and proficiency standards.

Your Turn!

Use [this](#) interactive formula to write your own problem statement.

Completed Problem Statement

In the United States, the primary non-litigious method of resolving formal conflict is mediation. Mediation is a conflict resolution process facilitated by a neutral third party mediator (Boulle, Colatrella, & Picchioni, 2008). Mediators are professionals who assist disputing parties to reach mutually acceptable conflict resolution outcomes. Wissler (2002) noted a positive correlation between mediator experience and successful conflict resolution, confirming that a mediator's proficiency optimized after facilitating approximately 35 mediation sessions. **The general problem is the supply of mediators outweighs the demand for mediation in the general population resulting in limited opportunities for mediators to gain experience (Velikonja, 2009).**

Velikonja (2009) noted that most mediators are "constantly scrambling for work" (p. 258). Without available sessions, these mediators may struggle to reach the 35 mediation sessions known to improve performance.

The specific problem is that in addition to limited opportunities to practice mediation, mediators are subject to long delays between mediations, resulting in lower practice frequency, and lower quality of work (Wissler, 2002). Velikonja (2009) reported that mediators often practice for years before mediating 35 cases. Wissler (2002) suggested successful conflict resolution outcomes increase if mediators have more, rather than less, mediation experience. The results of this study examining the relationship between mediation experience, practice frequency, time between mediations, and successful conflict resolution outcomes could have a significant influence on the formalization of mediator practice frequency and proficiency standards.