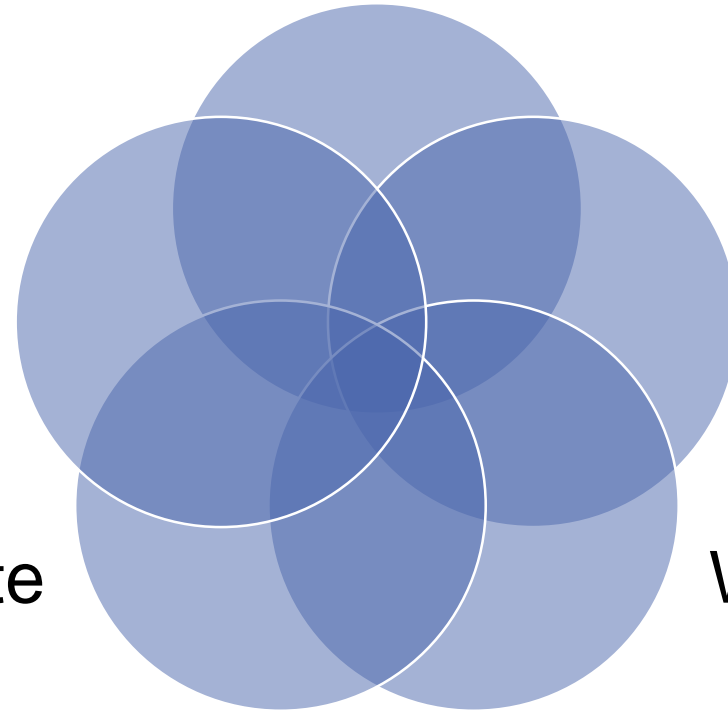# Contents

How to Write a Better Thesis?

Tips in Writing

Process of Writing

What to write in the Problem Statement?

What to write in the Background of the study?

MRR

2

What am I going to write?

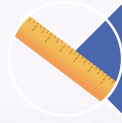Where do I start?

Am I doing right?

How long do I write?

NO IDEA

NO SPECIFIC MANUAL

NOT CONFIDENT

NO SPECIFIC STANDARD

MRR

3

MRR

MRR
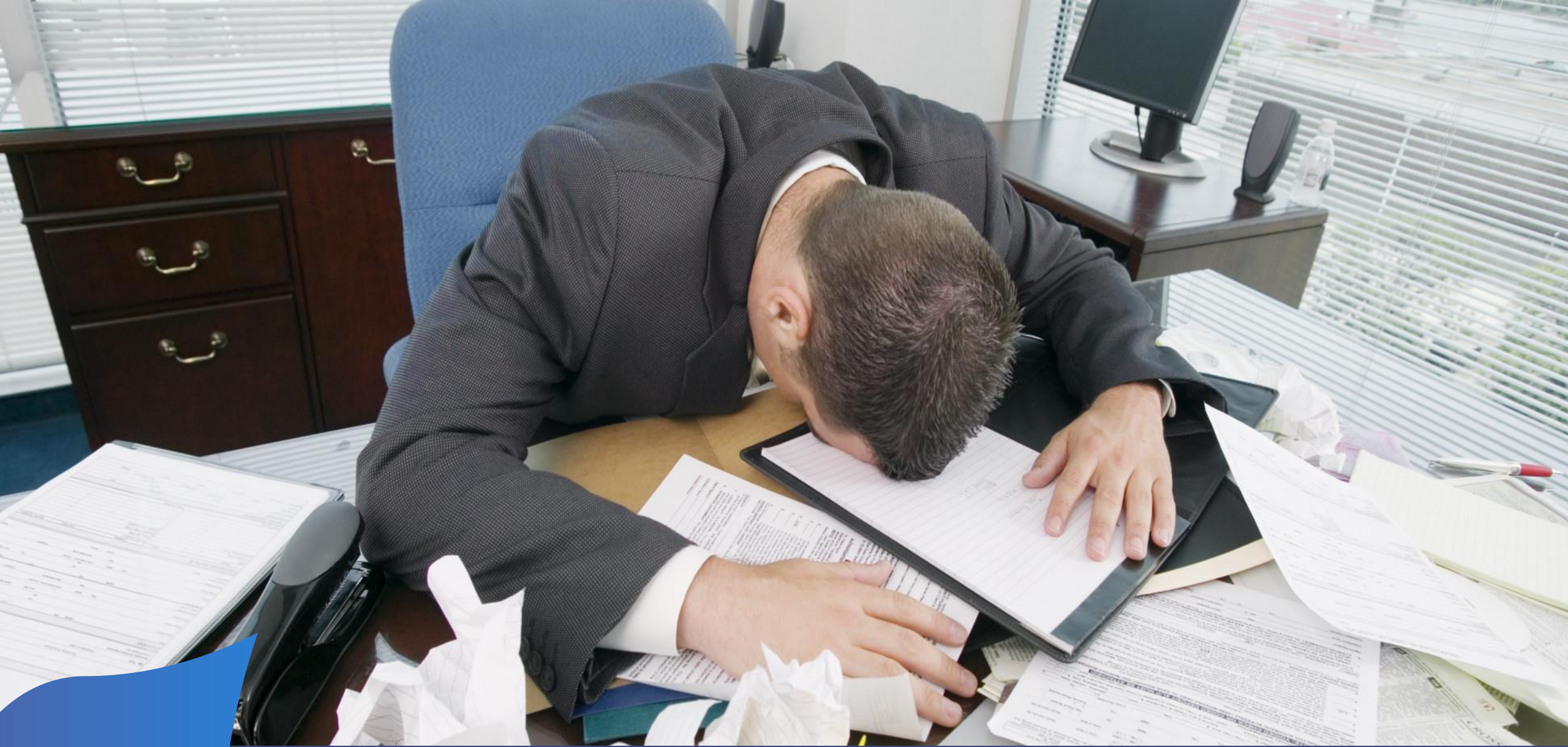
WRITER'S BLOCK

David Evans · Paul Gruba
Justin Zobel

How to Write a Thesis

Third Edition

Springer

"Completion of a thesis, especially a PhD thesis, involves mastery of a range of technical accomplishments, from learning an appropriate writing style to managing references, and from developing techniques for writing quickly to being effective at self-criticism and at criticizing the work of others".

What is a thesis?

Simply defined, a thesis is an extended argument.

To pass, a thesis must demonstrate logical, structured, and defensible reasoning based on credible and verifiable evidence presented in such a way that it makes an original contribution to knowledge, as judged by experts in the field.

THESIS STATEMENT

TOPIC + OPINION = THESIS
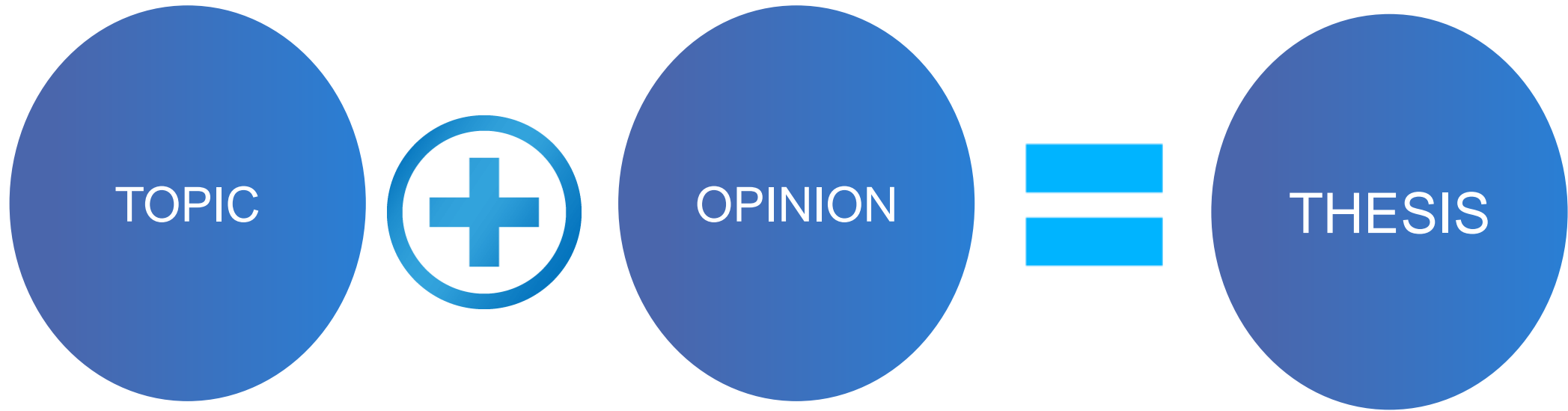
GO GREEN

EXPENSIVE

CHEAP

GOING GREEN IS EXPENSIVE TO COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA

GOING GREEN IS CHEAP TO COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA

Why do you write a thesis?

examiners read your thesis to assess whether or not you have demonstrated your fitness to be admitted to a community of scholars

What are the examiners are looking for in a thesis?

sufficient familiarity with, and understanding and critical appraisal of, the relevant literature.

sufficient comprehensive investigation of the topic

Appropriate method are applied

results suitably set out and accompanied by adequate exposition and interpretation

conclusions and implications appropriately developed and clearly linked to the nature and content of the research framework and findings

research questions in fact been tested.

literary quality and general presentation of the thesis of a suitably high standard

substantive original contribution to knowledge in the subject area

10

MRR

Process of Writing a Thesis

Introduction

Background of the study

Problem Statement

Chapter 2 LR

Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter 4 Findings

Chapter 5 Conclusion

11
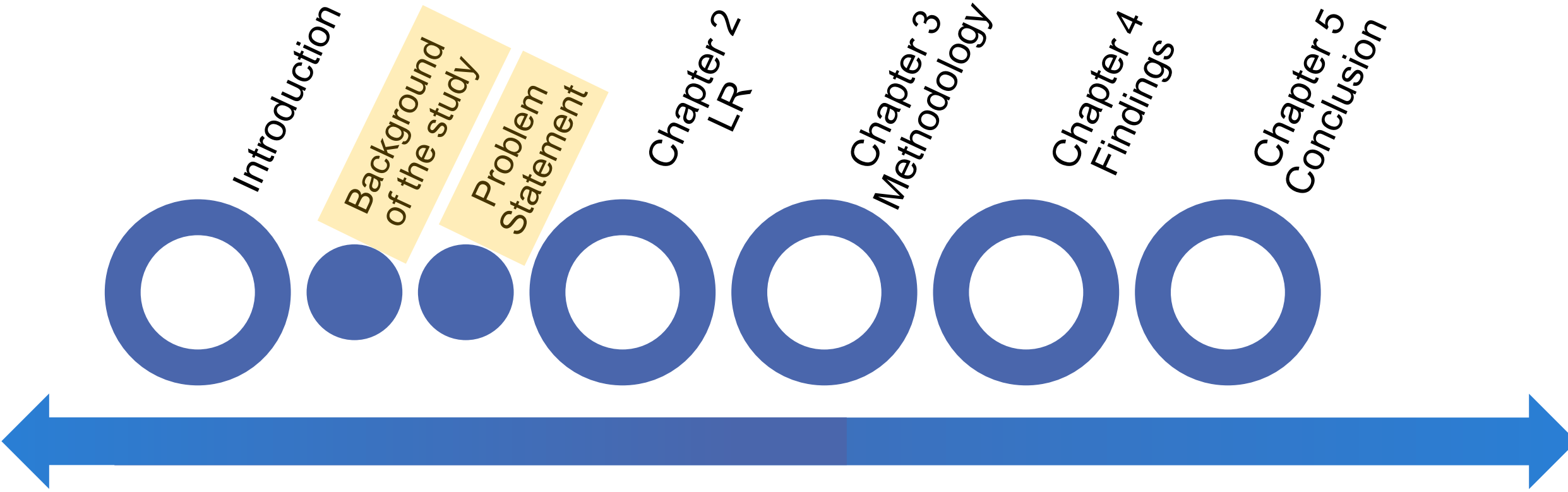
Year 1-2

Year 2

Year 3-4

You are asked to cook instant Noodle vs to make a pizza.

You are ask to go to the mall vs the dean office

Which one is more challenging to you? Why?

VARSITY MALL

MRR

12

What should you do?

FEAR OF MAKING A FALSE START LEADS TO WASTING TIME Creating Structure!!!

MRR

Starting your thesis

1. Write early, and write often. Keep your research in parallel with your writing so they grow in parallel. Begin to develop your thesis as part of the process of initiating your research. Create a table of contents as early as possible.

2. If you do delay writing until after you have done your own work—although this is not the safest way to produce a strong thesis!—make sure that you are writing to the structure advocated above.

3. Start with confidence. Write your introductory chapter first, then put it aside while you work on other parts of your study. Come back from time to time to revise your aim and scope so that they align with the changes you make as you go along.

4. Some chapters are harder to write than others. A concrete chapter on your analysis, say, may be easy to produce and give you a sense of accomplishment; completing the background chapter will mean that the most difficult part of the thesis writing is behind you

5. In the early stages, your research questions may develop or change. This is a good thing.

6. Let your writing drive your development of a literature review. Make sure that it is structured and critical. Use a rich mix of strategies for exploring the literature, including online academic tools, traditional libraries, and non-academic resources such as Wikipedia.

Within individual chapters:

Start with an introduction that tells the reader why this chapter is included in the thesis, what you intend to achieve in it, and how you intend to do this.

Develop the chapter in an appropriate and logical way to achieve the aim stated in the introduction. Avoid applying the same rigid template to every writing problem.

Write a formal conclusions or summary section. Make sure that conclusions include a statement of the implications of the findings.

Check that you have argued for the conclusions or findings in the body of the chapter.

Check that these conclusions respond to the aim stated in the introduction to the chapter.

15

MRR

What to write in your Introduction?

UUM Guidelines

2.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction
- Background of the Study
- Problem Statement
- Research Questions
- Research Objectives
- Scope and Limitations of the Study
- Definition of Key Terms
- Organization of the Thesis

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Examiner's Comments for Master Thesis

Table 3

Occurrence and Ratings of Examiners' Comments

Dissertation Component	Occurrence f	Occurrence %	Appropriate f	Appropriate %	Neutral f	Neutral %	Inappropriate f	Inappropriate %
Title	75	25.0	36	48.0	0	0.0	39	52.0
Originality	61	20.3	50	9.8	6	82.0	5	8.2
Abstract	244	81.3	72	29.5	107	43.9	65	26.6
Background	273	91.0	36	13.2	76	27.8	161	59.0
Statement of Problem	234	78.0	28	12.0	50	21.4	156	66.7
Objectives	206	68.7	88	42.7	48	23.3	70	34.0
Research Questions	62	20.7	11	17.7	13	21.0	38	61.3
Hypotheses	52	17.3	13	25.0	4	7.7	35	67.3
Conceptual Framework	153	51.0	18	11.8	80	52.3	55	35.9
Theoretical Framework	20	6.7	3	15.0	11	55.0	6	30.0
Scope	116	38.7	9	7.8	49	42.2	58	50.0
Significance	57	19.0	2	3.5	13	22.8	40	70.2
Literature Review	295	98.3	32	10.8	118	40.0	145	49.2
Referencing	163	54.3	12	7.4	15	9.2	136	83.4
Research Design	240	80.0	112	46.7	60	25.0	68	28.3
Population	111	37.0	21	18.9	50	45.0	40	36.0
Sampling	218	72.7	37	17.0	22	10.1	159	72.9
Instruments	161	53.7	23	14.3	77	47.8	61	37.9
Validity	106	35.3	23	21.7	17	16.0	66	62.3
Reliability	116	38.7	18	15.5	11	9.5	87	75.0
Quantitative Presentation	245	81.7	86	35.1	80	32.7	79	32.2
Qualitative Presentation	31	10.3	4	12.9	8	25.8	19	61.3
Quantitative Analysis	174	58.0	17	9.8	33	19.0	124	71.3
Qualitative Analysis	51	17.0	6	11.8	5	9.8	40	78.4
Interpretations	97	32.3	12	12.4	14	14.4	71	73.2
Discussion	117	39.0	14	12.0	21	17.9	82	70.1
Conclusion	199	66.3	47	23.6	40	20.1	112	56.3
Recommendations	168	56.0	39	23.2	41	24.4	88	52.4

Appropriate	Inappropriate
Background	
Good; conceptualised; linked variables; clear; comprehensive; meaningful; adequate; relevant; appropriate; evidence presented; situation analysis given; gap presented; extensive; adequate: geographical, conceptual, historical, and contextual backgrounds; key variables introduced; proper citation; policy indicated; justified; motivating	Not critical; unclear/ inconsistent/ wrong/ unfocussed concepts; confused the concepts; undiscussed variables; poor sentence construction; incomplete and sweeping statements; repetitions; jumbled information; incoherent paragraphs; hanging/ isolated/ unbridged ideas; too lengthy; no transition; no logical flow; verbose; citations-references author mismatch; uncoordinated literature; no/ scanty/ mixed-up: contextual, geographical, historical, and conceptual backgrounds; unconvincing data; lack of/ inappropriate/ outdated empirical evidence and sources; not aligned with topic; lack of gist/ magnitude/ implication in problem; prejudged/ pre-emptive; needed policy; inaccurate statistics; redundant data; more of literature review; no gap; incomprehensive; unestablished/ conflicting allegations; inarticulate justification; poor: grammar, formatting and organisation; simply cut-and-paste; typographical errors

Appropriate	Inappropriate
Problem statement	
Fine; clear; core concern identified; appropriate; phenomena reflected; problem manifested; reality, ideal and consequence scenarios clear; well captured; succinct; concise; articulated; well substantiated; case given; rooted in background	Unconvincing; absence of/ outdated empirical evidence; sketchy; self-contradictory; unsubstantiated/ speculative/ baseless allegations; lack of sources and justification; no gap; no magnitude; made independent variable (IV) the problem; dependent variable (DV) not captured; repetitions; judgmental; hard to measure concepts; not aligned with topic/ background; repeat of background; vague, too general; unlinked variables; sweeping, contradicting statements; unfocused; lengthy; confusing terms; not contextualized; poor language/ grammar; problem not underpinned; major components not spelt out; not articulate; ideal-reality scenario mismatch; core not touched; pre-emptive

Some answers of scholars in the Researchgate (What is background of the study)

A

The background to the study is the first part of the research and so, gives the reader a first impression. The background should explain the meaning of the concepts/variables; paying particular attention to the dependent variable; state its importance; then linking or relating it to the independent variables with appropriate references; but proceeding from general to specifics, It is what gives the reader the impression that the researcher has a good understanding of the research topic; and of course, the subject matter.

B

as part of background in your study, you need to give a general concept of the issue then narrowed it to the specific by indicating the need to focus on the specific issue. Clear a ground by identifying where you need to aim and why. These could be achieved only by providing supports from other scholars and if possibly, theory to underpin the study.

MRR

What to Write in the Background of the study?

- What you study is all about (DV)

- Provide context of your study before you tell the real problem.

- Imagine you come late in a meeting – you will be clueless if they don't tell you what they are talking about!
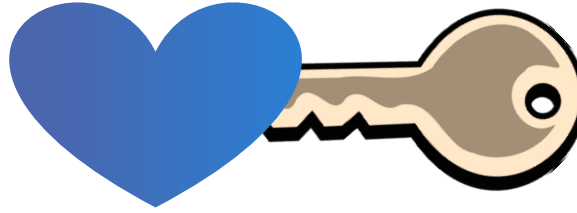
Put yourself in the reader's shoes

FIRST IMPRESSION

Problem Statement

"The research problem is among the most difficult task of the research proposal or dissertation. The reasons behind this is it provides focus and direction for the study".

What to Write in the Problem Statement?

A well-written problem statement defines the problem and helps identify the variables investigated in the study. The problem statement provides the: (a) rationale for the study; and (b) uses data and research to confirm the need to address the problem in the study.
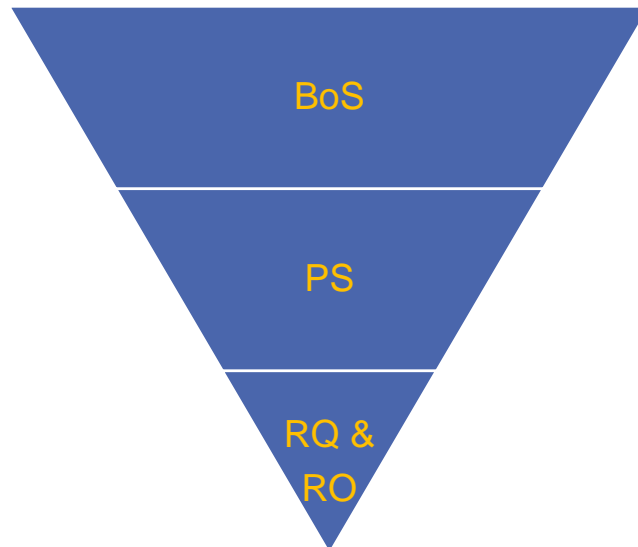
(Miles, 2016a).

Problem Statement

- Something that is not known but possible to find out.

- Should be interesting, significant, and feasible (Merill, 2011).

- Link to the background section to identify the current gaps in previous studies.

Dr Guy E White – The DissertationMentor.com

- 3 important steps:

1. Do a true review of the literature -100 articles, 400 references

2. Understand Chapter 1 structure

3. Write the problem statement
   1. What we know
   2. What we don't know
   3. What the research community wants us to know

BoS

PS

RQ & RO

Problem statement / Motivation for the Study

- You believe that the present way of doing things is inadequate in some way, or that existing theory does not explain the observable behaviour of a system satisfactorily.

- there is an expectation that the problem statement expresses the relationship between two or more measurable properties and thus can be empirically tested.

- the statement of the problem sets out the reason the research is worth tackling.

- It acts as the precursor to the research aim.

- Over the course of your research, return to your problem statement on a regular basis and continue to refine it.

MRR

4 Parts of Problem Statement

A brief history of the issue at hand	• ('Since the early 1950s, there has been …').
A recent increase of the issue	• ('Recently, however, an increase in the …').
Dissatisfaction with current knowledge	• ('To date, however, the lack of …').
An identification of specific set of factors	• ('In particular, a focus on …').

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How to find problem statement in a thesis or an article?

Problem	Challenge	Issues	Difficult
Barrier	Gap	Needs or should provide	Lack of
	Limited	Necessary to	However, But

28

Gist of the Problem Statement

- Does IV1 affect the DV?

- Does the number of paper clips on the nose of a paper airplane affect the distance that it can fly?

- Does gender affect the time to arrive to the office?

Example

Does stakeholder engagement promote sustainable innovation orientation?

Silvia Ayuso

School of International Trade (ESCI), Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain

Miguel Ángel Rodríguez

Responsabilidad y Sostenibilidad, Barcelona, Spain

Roberto García-Castro

Managerial Decision Sciences, IESE Business School, Madrid, Spain, and

Miguel Ángel Ariño

IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Barcelona, Spain

Introduction

In the context of increasing social and environmental pressure, innovation is one of the primary means by which companies can achieve sustainable development. However, the pursuit of more sustainable products, processes and business models will require some fundamental changes in traditional innovation approaches (Senge and Carstedt, 2001). For instance, Hart and Milstein (1999) argue that managers must fundamentally rethink their views about strategy, technology and markets in order to capture sustainable business opportunities. Hall and Vredenburg (2003) affirm that sustainable development innovation is more complex than conventional, market-driven innovation, because it has to consider a wider range of stakeholders and their often contradictory demands.

In essence, today's companies need to innovate by reinventing the way they relate to their multiple stakeholders: employees, customers, suppliers, NGOs/activists, communities, governments, competitors, etc. But at the same time, the actively managed relationships with stakeholders can become an important source of ideas for innovations that address stakeholder expectations and ultimately contribute to the welfare of the social and natural environment. Through stakeholder engagement companies can anticipate, understand, and respond faster and more easily to changes in the rapidly changing business environment. Dialogue with stakeholders also brings opportunities for generating new creative solutions, beneficial for both the company and the stakeholders.

Despite the potential of stakeholder engagement as a source for innovation, there has been very little research on this topic. In addition, studies conducted so far in the intersection of innovation and sustainable development/corporate social responsibility have mostly been qualitative case studies (Hockerts *et al.*, 2009; Holmes and Smart, 2009; MacGregor and Fontrodona, 2008). The main contribution of the present research is to prove quantitatively that engagement with different stakeholders is a valid mechanism for promoting sustainable innovation within firms. This is done with a unique dataset – the SAM Group database – probably the best externally based assessment currently available of large corporations worldwide in sustainability issues. In addition, the present study will advance understanding on firm's sustainable innovation processes by framing this phenomenon as an organizational capability.

This paper is structured as follows: in the next sections we lay out the theoretical framework on stakeholders and innovation and develop the hypotheses that we are going to test. Following this, we present the research methodology and the data. The results of the empirical analysis and their implications are discussed next, and a concluding section summarizes the research findings.

The Statement Grid by D. ANTHONY MILES

Overall Problem Statement:
Write and describe the overall problem as identified by the researcher. Then write, *The central problem to be researched by the proposed study is XXXX.* Last write, *As a basis for this study, the researcher identified the problem to be* (number of issues). Or write, *The researcher identified three major problems as a basis for this study.*

Sub-Problem 1	Sub-Problem 2	Sub-Problem 3

Source: Miles, D.A. (2017) Workshop: Confessions of a Dissertation Chair Part 1: The Six Mistakes Doctoral Students Make With the Dissertation. Presented at the 5th Annual 2017 Black Doctoral Network Conference in Atlanta, GA on October 26-29 2017. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333648926_ARTICLE_Research_Methods_and_Strategies_Problem_Statement_Development_How_to_Write_a_Problem_Statement_in_A_Dissertation [accessed Apr 08 2021].

MRR

Example of Problem Statement

The central problem to be researched by the proposed study is the issue of organizational performance. As a basis for this study, the researcher identified three key problems demanded this investigation. The first major issue identified as a basis for this study is the issue regarding customer and market focus and operational performance in air transportation organizations. Market orientation strategies in the organization has been shown to have a positive relationship to organizational performance and profitability (Balas, Gokus, & Colakoglu, 2014). Market oriented strategies improve operational effectiveness (Mokhtar, Yusoff, & Ahmad, 2014). Pekovic, Rolland, and Gatignon (2016) stated that customer orientation strategies permit the organization to identify and respond to customers while creating value for them.

The second major issue as a basis for this study is the concerns with employee empowerment and organization performance in air transportation organizations. Malik, Chugtai, Iqbal, and Ramzan (2013) in their study of the telecommunication sector in Pakistan, related to employee empowerment mentioned future researches might target other cities to conduct research about employee empowerment. Verhulst and Boks (2014), in their study related to employee empowerment in various Benelux firms mentioned that a larger study could look at firms within different countries and with companies who integrate sustainability in the entire company.

The last major issue identified as a foundation for this study is concerning leaders' openness to new business strategies and organizational performance in air transportation organizations. Organizational performance statistically measures how the organization is addressing their leaders-employees work relation, and employee empowerment towards the goals of the company. The problem identified in this study, based on prior research, is corporations and organizations in related industries have a limited knowledge on variables that strives on excellent organizational performance.

QUIZ: BACKGROUND & PROBLEM STMT

1. Albalaki, Faeq Malallah Mahmood (2019) *The effect of contingency factors and ABC implementation success on organizational performance in Iraqi manufacturing sector.* PhD. thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

2. Ali, Khan Sarfaraz (2019) *Job engagement as the mediator on the relationship between leadership styles, organizational structure, and organizational performance.* Doctoral thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

3. Alosani, Mohammed Saleh (2019) *The effect of continuous improvement tools on organizational performance of the Dubai police: the mediating role of innovation culture.* Doctoral thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

4. Hassan, Saad (2019) *The effect of organizational resources and capabilities on organizational performance of large scale manufacturing sector in Pakistan.* PhD. thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

5. Qaid, Gamal Abdualmajed Ali (2019) *Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, total quality management and organizational culture on performance of SMEs.* PhD. thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

**LOGIC
MULTIPLE CITATIONS
RECENT CITATIONS (2-3YRS)
RELEVANT RECENT STATISTICS**

COMPELLING

*Background & problem
Statement*

Final Tips in Writing

- From the start, be aware of how your style of writing,
  - go to several top journals in your field and note the way that their contributors write. Imitate them.

- When people criticize your writing, DON'T be defensive. Instead, thank them, and set about to improve your work.

- reluctance to acknowledge faults meant that one could NOT develop as a researcher.

Mohd Rizal Razalli (MRR)

0174977783

rizal@uum.edu.my