

# 7 Developing the Purpose Statement

## Objective

- Readers will be able to:
  1. Develop a purpose statement

## Introduction

The purpose statement is a key component in the development of your study. The craft of developing your purpose statement follows the development of the problem statement. The purpose statement is a type of go-between for the problem statement and the research statement with research questions. In my experience of working with doctoral students, they sometimes do not make the connection between these aforementioned items. This causes them to have trouble connecting the dots, which affects the alignment of their study. This is a common issue for novice researchers and doctoral students.

Researchers must think of the purpose statement as a continuation of the problem statement. The purpose statement acts as a support for the problem statement. If novice researchers can view the purpose statement this way, it will save a considerable amount of time when developing it. The purpose statement is a key component of the study and must be developed carefully. Again, the craft of research has some foundation of making them align and connect. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the importance of developing the problem statement.

## Purpose Statement: Definition and Meaning

The *purpose statement* is defined as a declarative statement that describes the goal and objective of the study. The purpose statement has two key questions: (1) What is the overall objective of the study?; and (2) What are the specific objectives of the study (Miles & Scott, 2017)? Again, many doctoral students have considerable trouble writing the purpose statement. The reasons stem from a poor research objective leading to a poor significance statement. The research purpose is a statement of “why” the study is being conducted, or the goal of the study. Also, the purpose statement follows the description and analysis of the problem. The purpose

statement identifies the variables, population and setting for a study. Every study has an explicit or implicit purpose statement. The research purpose statement should be stated objectively or in a way that does not reflect particular biases or values of the researcher (Long et al., 1985; Jacobs, 2011; Abbas, 2020).

A well-written purpose statement defines the purpose and helps identify the variables investigated in the study. The purpose statement (a) provides the rationale for the study and (b) uses data and research to confirm the need to address the purpose in the study (Long et al., 1985).

Based on goals to alleviate or reduce the problem, you can create your purpose statement (Weintraub, 2016). For example, it would be written something like this: “The purpose of this study is to discover what tools are needed to better prepare high school students for the AP Spanish exam and to measure the level of efficacy of those tools” (Weintraub, 2016).

Another way to look at the purpose statement is to view it as a restatement. For example, the purpose of the study can be described as a succinct restatement of the problem statement. The purpose of the study offers a precise summation of the study’s overall purpose. There are some cases where the purpose statement may include several subcategories: research questions, hypotheses, limitations, delimitations and definitions of the key terms. The researcher must state the purpose and provide a rationale that supports this purpose. Thus, it acts as a precursor to the questions. The purpose of the study also includes the variables studied and the primary unit of analysis (Calabrese, 2006, 2009).

Another approach to developing the purpose statement is to begin with a declarative statement. This would be an economical way of grounding the study in a context. An example would be: *This study will analyze or study or explore or be about ...*. A paragraph or two is sufficient. A researcher wants to keep the purpose statement short, direct and to the point (Bryant, 2003).

The research purpose is a statement of “why” the investigation is being conducted or the objective of the examination. The objective of the research may be to distinguish or depict an idea or to elucidate or foresee a circumstance or answer for a circumstance that shows the kind of concentration to be directed (Singh, 2020). The research purpose is generally classified into three research methods: descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. As the research question can be both explanatory and descriptive, the research project may have more than one reason (Singh, 2020).

## **Purpose Statements Based on the Research Methodology**

### ***Development of the Purpose Statement for Quantitative Studies***

Another approach to developing the purpose statement is to base it on the methodology. The purpose statement tends to tell the reader the overarching focus or goal of the study, with the methodology (quantitative and qualitative) included. For example, the quantitative purpose statement includes variables, participants and sometimes the specific location of the problem being investigated (Terrell, 2015). In

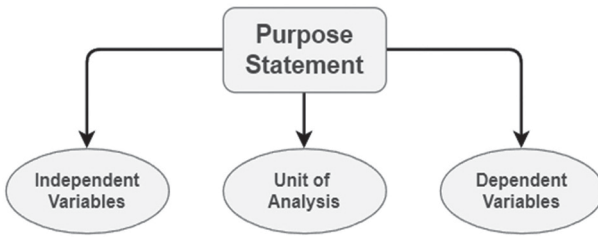


Figure 7.1 The quantitative purpose statement components.

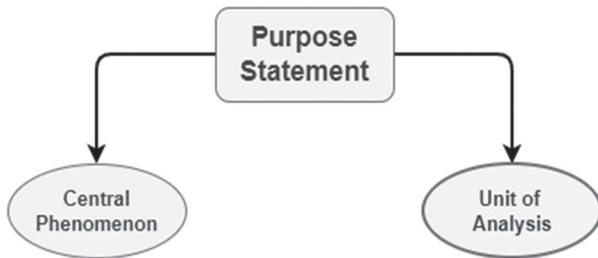


Figure 7.2 The qualitative purpose statement components.

addition, the purpose statement identifies the unit of analysis, which is the who or what the researcher is studying. Lastly, the purpose statement allows the researcher the opportunity to identify the independent variables and dependent variables. More specifically, the independent variable is the “cause” and the dependent variable is the “effect” in the study (Terrell, 2015) (see Figure 7.1).

### ***Development of the Purpose Statement for Qualitative Studies***

For qualitative studies, there is a different approach to developing the purpose statement. For example, when developing the purpose statement for qualitative studies, you include the participants and location of the study. However, rather than focus on the variables and unit of analysis, the researcher focuses on the central phenomenon of the study. The central phenomenon for the qualitative purpose of the study is clear (Terrell, 2015) (see Figure 7.2).

In a qualitative study, these two components are very important in developing the purpose statement. This is a completely different approach compared to the quantitative study.

So, when a researcher chooses a particular methodology, understanding the different characteristics of the two methodologies will be a tremendous help in developing the purpose statement. In a qualitative study, the purpose statement is developed from both the phenomenon and unit of analysis.

### The Most Powerful Purpose Statement Verbs

One of the key problems that novice researchers face is not only how to develop the purpose statement but also what verbs to use. Not knowing the most powerful verbs to use is one of the biggest issues when it comes to the development of the problem statement. Remember, the purpose statement is a declarative statement that defines the goal and objective of the study. Using the right verbs and terminology is key to developing a good purpose statement. I like to help novice researchers with this particular area. Table 7.1 shows the most powerful purpose statement verbs. I really do like the proactive trait of these purpose statement verbs.

I like to advise students to use verbs such as *analyze, compare, define, examine, investigate* and *interpret*. When the researcher uses these types of verbs, it makes them sound like a researcher. However, one word that I do not recommend novice researchers use is *understand*. In my opinion, the word *understand* is a weak purpose statement verb. So, if the researcher uses some of the verbs in Table 7.1, this will help them develop their purpose statement.

### Writing Up the Purpose Statement

When developing the purpose statement, we will use the *Statement Grid*. Again, the Statement Grid is a helpful tool that aids students visually with the purpose statement. This tool helps doctoral students when they have trouble coming up with their purpose statement. It helps them with their thought process and describes three possible subproblems as a basis for their research (see Table 7.2).

#### Directions

**First**, write the overall purpose statement. **Second**, divide the purpose to be investigated into two or three objectives (or subpurposes) that align with the issues (subproblems) of the problem statement (see Table 7.2). Please note, use

Table 7.1 *A list of the 40 most powerful purpose statement verbs*

analyze	compare	define	examine	interpret
apply	conceptualize	demonstrate	explain	investigate
appraise	consolidate	design	evaluate	justify
argue	construct	describe	formulate	propose
calculate	contrast	develop	identify	recommend
categorize	criticize	differentiate	illustrate	relate
challenge	debate	dissolve	indicate	review
clarify	deduce	establish	integrate	suggest

Source: Miles and Scott (2017).

Table 7.2 The Statement Grid for purpose statement development

<b>The Purpose Statement:</b>		
<b>Objective 1:</b>	<b>Objective 2:</b>	<b>Objective 3:</b>

Table 7.3 Example: The Statement Grid for purpose statement development

<b>The Purpose Statement:</b>		
<i>The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues affecting the job satisfaction of nursing faculty members in metropolitan New York. Interviewing and questioning nursing faculty living in metropolitan New York provides insight into their personal experiences of job satisfaction while working in the nurse educator role. The researcher has identified three primary objectives as a basis for this study.</i>		
<b>Objective 1:</b>	<b>Objective 2:</b>	<b>Objective 3:</b>
First, ...	Second, ...	Last, ...

Table 7.4 Example: The Statement Grid for purpose statement development

<b>The Purpose Statement:</b>		
<i>The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues affecting the job satisfaction of nursing faculty members in metropolitan New York. Interviewing and questioning nursing faculty living in metropolitan New York provides insight into their personal experiences of job satisfaction while working in the nurse educator role. The researcher has identified three primary objectives as a basis for this study.</i>		
<b>Objective 1:</b>	<b>Objective 2:</b>	<b>Objective 3:</b>
First, the objective of this study is to examine the issue of job satisfaction among the nursing faculty.	Second, the objective of this study is to investigate the impact of low wages on the nursing faculty.	Lastly, the objective of this study is to examine the complexities of the nursing faculty role (Cook, 2017).

the word *objective* when writing the subpurpose. It is done this way to prevent misinterpretation of the objectives as four separate purpose statements (Tables 7.3 and 7.4).

Here is another example using the Statement Grid for purpose statement development (see Table 7.5). Also provided are examples in paragraph form from actual dissertations .

Table 7.5 Example: The Statement Grid for purpose statement development

**The Purpose Statement:**

*The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between leadership self-perceptions of communal or agentic attributes and follower perceptions of authentic leadership in different industry sectors. The researcher has identified three primary objectives as a basis for this quantitative study.*

**Objective 1:**

First, the objective of this study is to measure leader self-perceptions of communal or agentic attributes.

**Objective 2:**

Second, the objective of this study is to measure follower perceptions of leader identity.

**Objective 3:**

Last, the objective of this study is to perform a study focusing on the relationship between leadership self-perceptions of communal (or agentic) attributes and follower perceptions of authentic leadership, since the previous study used transformational leadership theory (Hemmi, 2020).

**Example 7.1**

The purpose of this study is to examine if there is a statistically significant difference among K–12 performing arts and non-performing arts teachers' opinions on the necessity of music education in the Southern part of the US. The researcher has identified two primary objectives as a basis for this study.

The first objective of this study is to examine if there is a statistically significant difference among K–12 performing arts and non-performing arts teachers' opinions on the necessity of music education in school. Analyzing performing art teachers' opinions versus non-performing arts teachers' opinions will be interesting for the study. Performing arts teachers have a direct relationship with the music education curriculum because of the courses they teach (Daykin & Stickle, 2015). Non-performing arts teachers can consist of core, physical education and vocational teachers that are not governed by the music education curriculum.

The second objective of this study is to determine if there is a statistically significant difference among K–12 elementary, middle and high school teachers' opinions on the necessity of music education in school. Teachers who teach at different grade levels will probably contain different opinions. Elementary teachers begin the molding process of their students and can be over-protective because the students cannot cognitively depend on themselves. Middle school teachers are teaching the students to use their minds more and

become more self-sufficient. High school teachers are pushing students to be more mature and to think critically. The different focuses and approaches that these teachers are using can directly impact their opinion towards music education (Jefferson, 2022).

### **Example 7.2**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how veterans describe the challenges, if any, of limited transferability and second-career preparedness in making the transition from active duty to the teaching profession in the Southeast. The researcher identified two phenomena of the study, which are the challenges that active-duty military veterans encounter with their limited transferability and preparedness. The researcher has identified two primary objectives for this study.

The first objective of the study is to investigate how active-duty veterans describe the challenges they encounter with the limited transferability of their Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) and skills. Service-members that perform combat occupations or military occupational specialties possess skills that are less transferable to civilian careers than those in non-combat MOSs (MacLean & Parsons, 2010; Mangum & Ball, 1987). The transferability of military veterans' MOSs and skills demonstrates the importance that these have transferred to the success of civilian occupational programs (Mangum & Ball, 1989). One such civilian occupational program that can benefit from this transferability is the teaching career field, which is not a career choice for military service members (Jones, 2017). Skills transfer is still a work in progress, and military veterans continue to encounter barriers to teaching and require additional training to earn state teacher certification (Doe & Doe, 2013; Moorhouse, 2014; Robertson & Brott, 2014).

The second objective of the study is to investigate how active-duty veterans describe the challenges they encounter with second-career preparedness as they transition from the military to the teaching profession. Military transition programs provide planning and logistical assistance for transitioning veterans; however, studies have shown that, emotionally, veterans feel they are unprepared to manage the transition to the civilian workforce (Wolpert, 2000; Baruch & Quick, 2009; Robertson & Brott, 2014). Research has also found that pre-retirement planning and preparation for retirement is essential to military personnel being better prepared for the successful transition into the civilian workplace (Shultz et al., 2003; Spiegel & Shultz, 2003; Vigoda-Gadot et al.,

2010). Despite documented improvements in the military's transition program in recent years, the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) remains the only preparation that service members receive prior to leaving the military (Zogas, 2017). The effectiveness of the program is hindered by its brevity, and by service members only being able to complete the training weeks before retirement (Zogas, 2017; Martinez, 2021).

[Note: In-text citations included for illustrative purposes only]

### **Example 7.3**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of parental involvement and how it contributes to the lives of their disabled children in special education classrooms in a Title 1 school in Brooklyn, New York. This is a qualitative research study using a phenomenological approach that will utilize semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to investigate participants' lived experiences of parental involvement in the lives of disabled students. The sample is derived from a population of parents of disabled children studying in Title 1 schools that offer special education in Brooklyn, New York. The study employs a sample size of 15 parents committed or involved with the educational activities of their disabled children. The participants' share their lived experiences through interviews that will focus on questions centered specifically on the six categories outlined by Joyce Epstein. Thus, the purpose of this study is to illustrate how the lived experiences of parental involvement contribute to the academic achievement of disabled children in special education classrooms in Brooklyn, New York. As a basis for the study, the researchers identified two primary objectives of the study.

The first objective is to examine the parents' lived experiences with disabled children in special education classrooms. Based on this objective, the researcher seeks to know how the parents' experiences influence the academic performance of their disabled children. Moreover, the objective is derived from categories of the Epstein Parental Involvement Model, whereby various involvement approaches are proposed and proven to influence the academic achievement of disabled children (Epstein, 1987).

The second objective is to investigate the lived experiences of parental involvement and its importance in developing the child. The development of children is determined by parental care and overall involvement in every other aspect of a child's life. This objective seeks to know how using the six categories of the Epstein Parental Involvement Model impacts on the overall development of children (Epstein, 1987; Hussain, 2020).

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## Summary

The development of the purpose statement is an integral part of the research endeavor. The foundation of research is based on providing a template for the purpose statement development. The development of the purpose statement can be a challenging endeavor. This chapter discussed the writing of the purpose statement for novice and burgeoning researchers. It also provided a conceptual model for developing the purpose statement as well as a conceptual model and tool for helping doctoral students and researchers to develop their purpose statement.

In this chapter, we covered four things. First, we discussed the definition of the purpose statement. Second, we illustrated how to develop and write the purpose statement. Third, we provided a model and a framework for developing the purpose statement. Fourth, we provided examples of how a purpose statement is written.

We hope that our proposed model and framework provided students and researchers with a template for developing a solid and clear purpose statement in their research projects and dissertations.

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