
Introduction and Abstract

Three-Step Pattern

- Step 1. Describe the research problem
 - Step 3. Identify a gap
 - Step 4. State the purpose
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Step 1. Describe the Research Problem

- State the research problem clearly
- Show that it is significant
- Review relevant literature to show the current state of knowledge about the problem or the prevalent academic understanding of the problem

Suggested length: 1-2 pages

The state of current knowledge:

Studies of privatization **point to two crucial factors** that may determine the outcome of poverty reform – ideology (Borg, 2005) and the distribution of power (Abduganiev, 2003; Cheng, 2004; Lee, 2003).

The prevailing academic understanding:

It is **generally argued** that South-African countries lack the institutional capacity to combat poverty (e.g., Hashima & Ota, 2005; King, 2000).

Step 2. Identify a Gap

Identifying a gap justifies your study.

- Overlooked variables
 - Populations that have not been studied
 - Methodological problems
 - Unexplored settings
 - Few studies on the topic
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How to Identify a Gap

Quasi-negative subjects:

- However, little information....

Contrastive statements:

- The research has tended to focus on... rather than on...

Indirect questions:

- However, it remains unclear whether...
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Quasi-negative verbs:

Previous research has...

- disregarded
 - failed to consider
 - ignored
 - been limited to
 - misinterpreted
 - overlooked
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Quasi-negative adjectives:

Previous research has been...

- controversial
 - incomplete
 - inconclusive
 - misguided
 - questionable
 - unsatisfactory
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Step 3. State the Purpose

Outline the purpose of the study:

- The aim of this paper is to...
 - This paper reports on the results obtained...
 - This paper describes...
 - The present work extends the use of...
 - The primary focus of this paper is on...
 - The aim of this investigation was to test...
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List research questions:

- This paper attempts to answer these questions...
 - The following questions have been formulated....
 - The research questions in this study are...
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Which Tense to Use for the Purpose?

When referring to the ***text***, use the present tense:

- The aim of this paper is to...
- This paper describes...

When referring to the ***investigation***, use the present or past tense:

- This study evaluates...
 - This study traced...
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The Abstract

An abstract for a **quantitative** work should include:

- Research problem (optional)
 - Purpose
 - Methodology
 - Findings
 - Implications and/or applications
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An abstract for a **qualitative** work may include:

- Research problem
 - Purpose
 - Findings or main argument
 - Implication and/or applications
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