

# Villa College

## Research Digest

ISSUE 5 (JUNE 2021)

VC Research Digest provides updates on current and ongoing research projects of Villa College staff and students, and provides fresh research ideas and snippets to help expand the horizon of research and inquiry.



### EDITORIAL

#### STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS: LITERATURE REVIEW AS IT SHOULD BE

One key aspect of research that often goes without sufficient attention is literature review. Researchers are invariably required to develop a comprehensive review of academic literature that captures the 'state-of-the-art' of knowledge in the chosen topic and to map the current theoretical and conceptual terrain of the selected area of study in the form of a literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to demonstrate that the researcher is building upon where the other researchers have left, rather than 're-inventing the wheel'. This approach is crucial for the continued expansion and enrichment of various domains of human discovery and knowledge.

So, what are the most fundamental considerations in doing a proper literature review? While there is no one best method to do it, let me list down some core considerations that are vital to any literature review:

- 1. Get the right literature sources:** Academic researchers must pay serious attention in selecting the right literature sources. Not all literature sources are created equal. It is essential that proper 'academic' sources such as books, journal articles, monographs, etc. are selected. To do so requires moving away from a simple Google search - (anyone?). Use proper academic databases such as JStor, Scopus, ProQuest, LexisNexis, and Emerald, etc. At the least, use Google Scholar or your library search functions. This will give you an edge in locating the most relevant academic sources. Once you have located the articles or book chapters, make sure that they are recent and sufficiently relevant to your area of research interest and context.
- 2. Read and understand:** In order to capture the essence of the literature sources that you intend to use as part of the literature review, you must read them. I would say, TINS – "there is no shortcut". Do not simply cut and paste sentences or paragraphs from the article without understanding the big picture argument and the main thesis of the article or the book. One must properly read and understand the writing before elements or aspects of that writing can be meaningfully used in constructing another argument.
- 3. Compare and contrast:** It is essential that the literature sources are grouped, compared and contrasted to locate and position them in their proper place in the knowledge domain. You must develop a good understanding of the core argument of each source against each other. This way, you will be able to identify the comparative value of each source and how they could be used in your literature review.
- 4. Critique what you read:** Make sure that you develop a habit of critical reading. You don't have to take everything as it is and accept everything you read as true. In other words, do not be credulous. Develop a habit of critically reviewing everything you read so that you will be able to find their strengths and weakness from an academic perspective. Don't be afraid to judge what you read – as long as you use proper and objective approaches to do so.
- 5. Synthesise and develop new concepts:** This should be one key outcome of any literature review. If you are able to properly synthesise different concepts from multiple sources, you must be able to come up with some new concepts or original ideas based on what you have reviewed. Such emergent elements add value to your research and in most cases would form the basis of your research – including your conceptual framework.

By following the above, your chance of doing a proper literature review is likely to improve. Always remember: the purpose of writing a literature review is to set the ground for new discoveries of knowledge. To do so, you must learn to 'stand on the shoulders of giants' – to paraphrase Isaac Newton.



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#### PUBLISHED BY

Institute for Research and Innovation

Villa College

#### EDITORS

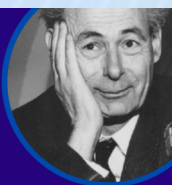
Editor: Dr. Ahmed Shahid

Sub-editors: Dr. Fazeela Ibrahim

Dr. Sheema Saeed

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“Sooner or later, those who win are those who think they can.”



— Paul Tourenier

Dr. Ahmed Shahid  
Editor (VC Research Digest)

# Crafting A Research Problem Statement

Dr. Aishath Nasheeda

*Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, Villa College*

Many students are excited about choosing a research topic, as this is something they get to decide. It is important to choose a topic that can sustain the researcher's interest throughout the many months that it takes to complete the project. A good research project has several crucial characteristics which makes it stand out. What is most common among all good research proposals is the alignment between the components of the research; hypothesis or research question, methodology, data collection, and the transparency of reporting the findings (Newman & Covrig, 2013). The alignment of title, background, problem, purpose, and the research questions help to capture the main ideas of the research and helps the researcher to define the problem statement. Hence careful wording and adequate thought needs to be put into formulating all these components.

Even though students are able to identify a research title, many struggle to translate the title into a problem that is descriptive enough to highlight the importance of the research topic chosen for study. This article is a guide on how to craft a problem statement. A well-crafted problem statement helps the readers to anticipate the goals of the study. Failing to articulate the research problem leads to unclear research objectives, research questions, and vague methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **What is a problem statement?**

A problem statement is a clear and concise description of the issues that need to be addressed. When describing the problem, it is important to highlight what the problem is, and why it is a problem in the first place. In other words, describe the issues and the context that gave rise to the topic by summarizing what the problem is and how the researcher wants to address the problem.

## **Why is the problem statement so important?**

The problem statement emphasizes issues or concerns that the researcher plans to address. In other words, why is the topic of concern an issue. The reasons could arise from several sources such as personal experiences of the issue, job related or an everyday societal issue that we are struggling to make sense of. The need may also arise due to lack of information in the existing literature – deficiencies (gaps) in knowledge, and lack of policies or ineffective strategies. It could also be an unanswered

question or an unanswered issue. In a nutshell, the problem statement justifies the reason why a study is relevant and important. It helps in organizing the problem by comparing what work has been carried out in the area of interest and what needs to be done. The problem statement not only points out the gaps and the deficiencies but also helps in aligning the research objectives and research question with the topic of interest.

## **Here are some tips on crafting a problem statement**

Start with a basic structure, emphasizing on the key points such as context, issues, relevance, and objective. However, a problem statement is not listing key points but rather describing the context, the issue, relevance, and objective. Crafting a problem statement begins by creating a rationale for the need for studying the problem. Here is a four-step guide to crafting a problem statement.

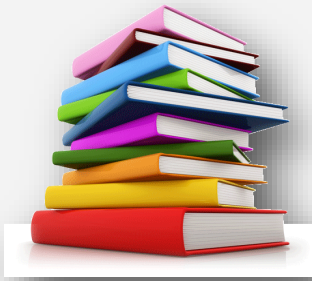
**Step 1 – Narrative hook** - A good first sentence known as narrative hook creates reader interest. Narrative hooks in a sentence include key controversies around the topic of interest, numbers or statistics or citing a leading study.

**Step 2 – Discuss** the issues that is of concern as in why it matters. Present the readers with information from different sources such as literature, personal experiences, existing gaps and deficiencies. Deficiencies can be easily located from the existing scholarly literature by reviewing the future research section or introduction sections in published articles. It is also important to understand that the need for the study arise due to the lack of awareness and the need to create dialogue on the topic.

**Step 3 – Ask questions** such as has anyone studied this problem? If so, in what context? Were the studies conducted in local context or international context. How was the problem studied -quantitatively or qualitatively? In other words, critically evaluate the scholarly articles on the topic of interest and identify the gaps. If there are no articles addressing the topic of interest discuss the extend the literature that is closest to the topic.

**Step 4 – Emphasize** on the deficiencies from the literature. Justify what and how gaps exist in understanding the issue. For example, students may use





## FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

### The discourse of social innovation and gender equality

Johanna Lauri

#### ABSTRACT

In Swedish government discourse, social entrepreneurship and social innovation have come to be articulated as the solutions to a wide array of societal challenges and social problems. Within this discourse of social innovation, gender equality is articulated as a key determinant in conquering all societal challenges defined in the UN's Agenda 2030. The aim of this paper is to analyse the Swedish government's discourse on social innovation, and how it intertwines with gender equality in select government texts and media material. The analysis starts from the assertion that the dominant discourse on social innovation and social entrepreneurs is part of generating the possibilities and limits of social change. Earlier research on social innovation discourse has shown a strong bias towards private market solutions, and that social innovation has become an essential trait in the neoliberal reforming of the state. Because of their particular influence, governments' public endorsement of social entrepreneurs and social innovation in their work is one of the factors shaping the understanding of what social change and gender equality are and how they can be achieved. The analysis shows that the government discourse of social innovation produces an understanding of businesses as having a strong desire and capacity for social change and an altruistic agency. From a discursive point of view, this could be read as if the public sector is lacking such qualities and thus the responsibility for social change is placed in the hands of private corporations. Social change and gender equality are hence made intelligible within an economic logic, equating social change with doing business and gender equality with making profit. Gender equality is thus articulated through the discourse of social innovation, as a means to an end.

Lauri, J., 2021. The discourse of social innovation and gender equality. *Prometheus*, 37(1), pp.27-43.

Read on... <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/prometheus.37.1.0027>

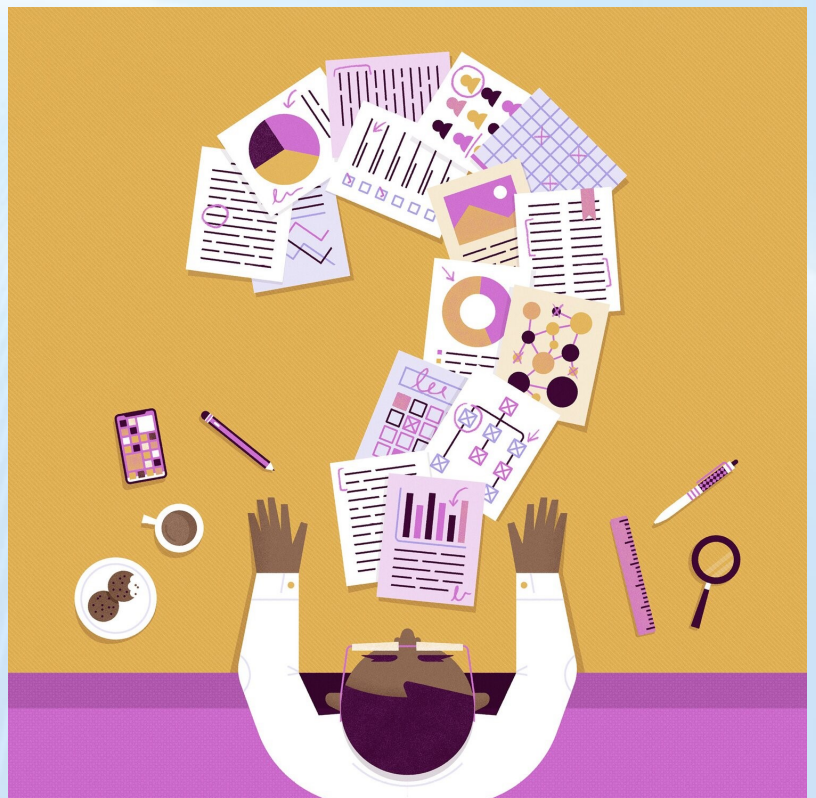


words such as: *there is inadequate research, lack of studies, limited research conducted*. Avoid using words like no research is conducted, instead use few studies directly addressed the issues at hand.

To craft a concise and a descriptive problem statement requires effort, critical evaluation of existing literature, identifying deficiencies and presenting the problem of interest in a meaningful way so that it describes gaps (knowledge, theoretical and practical), why the stated problem needs to be addressed and how and in what ways will the proposed research make a contribution to the field of study. When the problem statement is clearly articulated it ensures the consistency of characteristics of good research components such as purpose of the study, formulation of sound research questions, methodological rigor, and transparency of reporting the findings.

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# Teaching Tips Part 3: Testing's gotta come from the heart if you want it to work...

*David Mingay*

*Visiting Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, Villa College*

In the last of my three-part exploration of modern teaching methods in higher education, here are some ideas I came across which might help make assessing students' learning more varied, interesting and relevant to real life.

## **Assessment weighting**

This is something which has been the subject of debate forever: how much should coursework and exams count towards students' final grade? Some students do better showing what they've learned as they go along, while others are better at cramming and getting it all out in one big splurge. But however we decide the weighting of each component, we're not really helping any actual students — we're just making it equally unfair for all of them.

So, why not let them decide, within a range, what the weighting will be for each of the assessments on our course? 10-14% for term essays, 25-29% for lab reports, 40-49% for the final exam, and so on? Students who like exams can maximise the marks they get from that form of assessment, and students who perform better on coursework can do likewise. A simple spreadsheet will make it easy for us to give each student a personally-weighted result.

## **Exam questions**

I'm sure we all agree with the principle that the more control students have over their learning, the more they'll learn. So, why not extend this to assessments?

Getting students (in groups, perhaps) to come up with a selection of exam questions for you to make the final choice from — and the final list should allow them a choice, too — gets them involved and engaged, and it also forces them to review the course they're taking and think about what's important.

Of course, this flexibility may be limited in courses where lives are at risk if students haven't mastered a core set of important skills — surgery and civil engineering spring to mind — but even then, if students don't suggest that these are included in the exam, you may not have emphasised their importance enough!

## **Cumulative testing**

We often teach students something and then test them on it. Then we move on to the next topic and test them on that. However, the very first experiment by the inventor of memory research, Hermann Ebbinghaus, back in 1895, showed that it was repeatedly learning and remembering

things that made them easier to recall. That sounds like common sense, really, but we often ignore it in testing. So, if you have regular tests, make at least a part of them about previous topics that you've covered.

## **Final exams**

Instead of the traditional three-hour regurgitation session, maybe we'd find out what students actually understand, rather than simply know, if we made them do something creative with the knowledge they should have accumulated over the course.

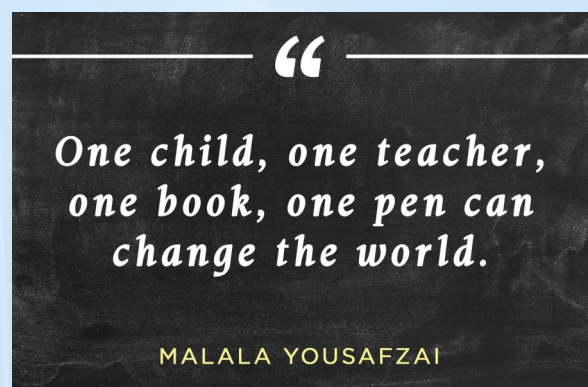
You could ask a single open-ended, and possibly ambiguous question about a stimulus item, or get them to do a three-hour research project from scratch with data you've provided, or require them to apply what they know to a novel scenario. A good question will require as much effort to work out what the question means before they even have to embark on an answer. Give them an experience they're remember forever.

Vygotsky, the great education researcher, said that people perform better when they work together. So why do we test them individually? (Something to do with 'cheating', I expect.) It's no wonder, then, that employers complain about graduates' inability to work effectively in teams. It shouldn't be too hard to devise tasks where we can see who has contributed what to the final production. Or make it a two-stage test — first they work in teams, but then do the last part on their own...or vice versa.

Anyway, I hope you've found these tips as useful as I have. If you have any others I can add to my repertoire, please do email them to me on [dmingay@icloud.com](mailto:dmingay@icloud.com).

## **Happy teaching!**

More details and readings at: <http://thejoyofconcrete.org/lectures>





# Theoretical/Conceptual Framework Quandary

*Dr. Fazeela Ibrahim*

*Research Associate, Institute for Research and Innovation, Villa College*

During the research support sessions with research students, the theoretical and conceptual framework comes up more frequently than any other. Of course, the theoretical framework is essential. Still, many students find it challenging to address these sections that require answers to "how do researchers support their study relationship based on a theoretical and conceptual framework?".

## **What is a theoretical framework?**

A theoretical framework consists of theories that serve as the building blocks or skeleton for the foundation or basis of the study. The theoretical framework strengthens the research study by a) showing how a researcher defines his/her study philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically and analytically; b) situating and contextualizing formal theories into their studies as a guide; and c) guiding the kind of data to be collected for a particular study. In other words, theoretical framework is a framework based on an existing theory or theories in a field of inquiry that is related and/or reflects the research question/hypothesis of a study. The theoretical framework serves as a blueprint that is often 'borrowed' by the researcher to build his/her own research inquiry (Adom, et.al., 2018).

Max Lempriere compares the theoretical framework in such a simple way, referring the theoretical framework to a 'toolbox' where researchers highlight the problem that needs 'fixing.' Hence, the 'toolbox' (theoretical framework) details the theories, propositions, and concepts (referred to as the 'tools') that the researcher will use to address or make sense of the selected problem (Lempriere, 2019).

The theoretical framework can be written by following three easy steps. First and foremost, examine the research problem statement, purpose, significance, and research questions of a study. Secondly, review your related literature and choose the theory/theories applicable to your study. Finally, consider the guiding principles of the study and situate the problem in relation to the theory. In discussing the chosen theory, include the title of theory, author, or proponent. Also, explain the theoretical principle behind the theory, and in the concluding part of your theoretical framework, discuss the relationship and relevance of the chosen theory to your study (McCombes, 2020).

The theoretical framework is a tricky section to write, mainly because the choice available to researchers is huge. Hence, a researcher's job in the theoretical framework is to take the theories, propositions, and concepts they need for their project from the most relevant theory/theories and package them up into their theoretical framework. Along the way, the researcher needs to convince the reader that they have picked and applied the most appropriate tools possible, given the aims and objectives of the study (Lempriere, 2019).

## **What is a conceptual framework?**

When writing the literature review, the key is to show researcher's understanding of the theory and define the key concepts, both the existing literature and the research questions and problem statement. A theory contains several concepts. So, researcher or researchers will need to explain which concepts they would be drawing upon and providing justification for selecting these concepts and how the concepts relate to the aims and objectives of their study.

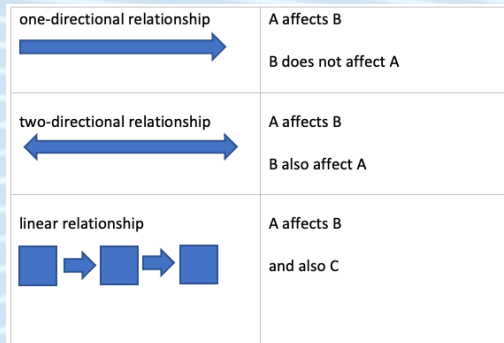
A conceptual framework illustrates what the researcher expects to find in the research and guides the researcher by giving clear directions to the research. The framework explains the study's major variables and is a visual representation of the relationship or connections of variables. In research, the easiest, simplest, and most effective way to explain complex relationships among the variables is through a particular diagram – the "Conceptual Framework." (Smyth, 2004).

You do not just create a conceptual framework out of nowhere. First of all, you will need to consider your research title to choose the variables and explain how these variables are related or connected. Next, the research question is an essential part of your conceptual framework. For your overall research, this is what put the focus and path of your research study. It avoids the chances of getting lost as you write the paper. Another important aspect that should be considered in making your conceptual framework is a review of related literature and studies. Reviewing the literature narrows down what you will be putting in your conceptual framework (McCombes, 2020).

How researchers illustrate their diagram will differ on a case-to-case basis depending on their research paradigm



and approach, but generally, variable names have to be laid out clearly and put into boxes, and connected with lines and arrows. The arrowhead will differ depending on the nature of the relationship. The lines and arrows do not have to be limited to connecting only two variables. It can also show some relationships between or among more variables (Smyth, 2004).



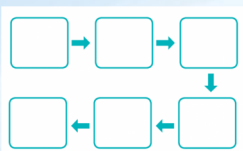
The general forms that a conceptual framework take depends on the research questions and can take on as either of the two frameworks identified as (Smyth, 2004):

**Process frameworks:** These relate to the "how?" questions, sets the stages through which action moves from initiation to conclusion.

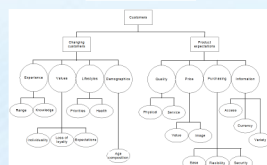
**Content frameworks:** These answer the "Why?" questions, set out the variables, and possibly the relationship (with relative strengths) between them.

Possibilities for conceptual framework include:

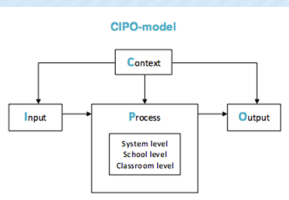
**Flow charts**  
Largely used in research studies that propose a program, experiment or any intervention measure



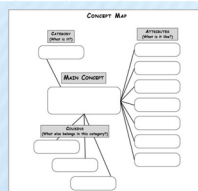
**Tree diagrams**  
Largely used to show simple relationships between ideas (usually one-to-one)



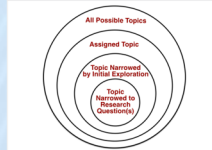
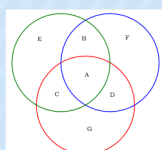
**Shape based diagrams**  
Largely used to isolate the factor or major variable that cause the problem/phenomenon under investigation



**Mind maps**  
Largely used to show many-to-many relationship between concepts, explained by how they connect with each other.



**Soft systems**  
Largely used to visualize the hierarchy of evidence (evidence pyramid) or the similarities and differences between concepts (overlapping circles) or investigate people's relationships with other people, objects, or phenomena (concentric circles)



Conceptual frameworks: a) assists the researcher in identifying and constructing his/her worldview on the phenomenon to be investigated; b) presents his/her asserted remedies to the problem s/he has defined; and c) accentuates the reasons why a research topic is worth studying, the assumptions of a researcher, the scholars s/he agrees with and disagrees with and how s/he conceptually grounds his/her approach (Adom, et.al., 2018).

Conceptual frameworks, however, also have problems in that the framework is influenced by the experience and knowledge of the individual (initial bias). Once developed, the conceptual framework will influence the researcher's thinking and may result in some things being given prominence and others being ignored (ongoing bias). The solution is to revisit the conceptual framework, particularly when evaluating your work (Smyth, 2004).

Overall, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks assist in formulating research by providing both direction and motivation to the research inquiry. An inappropriate application of a suitable theoretical framework and/or conceptual framework blurs the the purpose of the study, the importance of the study and the scholars the researcher engages with, whether in agreement or disagreement.

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Source: Conceptual Model Building Overview Felicia HillBriggs, PhD. <https://slidetodoc.com/conceptual-model-building-overview-felicia-hillbriggs-ph-d/>

"Make everyday a little less ordinary."



# Addictive Behaviours

*Ismail Shafeeu*

*Student (S1902028), Bachelor of Psychology (Jan 2020, Batch), Villa College*

## Introduction

Problematic substance use behaviour is one of the biggest current social problems in the Maldives. The first ever drug related incident is dated back to 1977 when an arrest was made, and 350 grams of hashish was confiscated (Ageel, 2006). Substance misuse refers to the consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, illegal drugs, inhalants, thinners, over the counter or prescription medications in a way they are not meant to be used. Substance misuse is a problem because continued use of these substances can cause harm to the body, and the user can become addicted to the substance. The addiction can also make the person homeless, a social outcast and unemployed. The addiction often controls the addict's life, leading to early death ("Substance Use", 2019). Addiction is said to be attributable to environmental and genetic factors (Bart et al., 2004, Tsuang et al., 2001). The number of substances using individuals (to a problematic level) has increased drastically over time. Opioids are a class of drugs that include illegal drug heroin, opium and synthetically manufactured drugs for medical use such as morphine and codeine.

Heroin is becoming the most commonly used illegal drug in the Maldives (Ahmed, 2020); hence this paper will focus on the addictive behaviours of heroin use.

## What is Addiction?

People of all ages suffer the harmful consequences of substance abuse and addiction, such as: problems in higher order functions of thinking, recalling memories, solving problems, decision making, and focusing (Volkow, 2014). Addiction is caused by risky substance use that may alter the brain functions and the body by a combination of biological, behavioural, and environmental factors that requires intensive treatment(s) and aftercare. Ongoing monitoring, family and peer support is required for addicts to stay in recovery and live a healthy lifestyle ("Understanding Drug Use and Addiction DrugFacts", 2018).

## Heroin Addiction in the Maldivian Context

According to the National Drug Use survey conducted by UNODC in 2012, Maldives had 43% heroin users and 34% cannabinoids users (United Nations Office on Drug Use and Crime (UNODC), 2012). Drug related crimes are the third most commonly reported crimes to the police (Maldives Police Service (MPS), 2012). A very

high percentage of drug users are at the age of 15 to 25 years of age. Amongst students, 67% of those who had experimented with drugs had done so during early adolescence, around the age of 13. 70% of the jail inmates are sentenced for drug-related offences, 69.1% of them were incarcerated for heroin use (United Nations Office on Drug Use and Crime (UNODC), 2012). There are no previous studies carried out in the Maldives through which any identification can be made on the most significant factors that precipitate the initiation or relapse processes.

## Theories to understand addiction, including the process involved in addictive behaviours.

Addiction can be explored by combining biological theory, psychological theory, and social context theory into a biopsychosocial framework (Teesson et al., 2002). Biopsychosocial theory (also known as mixed-model) explains addiction as the subjective experiences of craving and problem behaviours such as overwhelming, pathological drug use, an intense desire for drugs, and lack of control over drug use (Teesson et al., 2002).

Brain Disease Model of Addiction (BDMA) demonstrates the neurochemistry of chronic medications, claiming that addiction is a brain disease and that users lose control over the disease once they begin misusing the substance. The use of these drugs is likely to lead to chronic use that change the brain's balance and the functioning of the brain neurotransmitters (Teesson et al., 2002)

Social learning theory, emphasizes that the development of addiction is an outcome of impressions of other people engaged in addictive behaviour, and the process of imitating peer behaviour (observational learning/modelling) (Horvath et al., n.d.).

Social context theory involves a moral model that describes addiction as a moral value weakness. Teesson et al. (2002) claim that substance use problems are more probable to appear in individuals with antisocial behaviour, and conduct disorders than people without these disorders.

## The stages of substance use

Addiction and substance use usually involves 4 main stages. They are misuse (experimentation), maintenance (regular use), cessation (risky use/abuse), and relapse (addiction or dependency).



The initiation stage (experimentation, stage 1) is characterized as voluntary drug use without any adverse social or legal outcomes (Staff, 2009). Some people enter the maintenance stage (regular use, stage 2) without developing dependence (Staff, 2009), and thus, cessation from drugs become comparatively easier. When the regular use of drugs becomes addictive and risky use/abuse starts (stage 3), it causes several social and legal consequences (Staff, 2009). This stage is often called cessation because individuals attempt to cease use due to the dire outcomes. Relapse (stage 4) occurs when the dependency on drug, and drug addiction causes withdrawal symptoms due to the compulsive use of the drug with several negative consequences (Staff, 2009). Some other factors that may lead people to relapse include dishonesty, self-pity, relationship issues, becoming over-confident, and unrealistic expectations, and lack of continued lifetime professional support (Utti, 2016).

### Cessation/relapse of addictive behaviour

The Marlatt's Relapse Prevention Model (R.P. Model) found that emotions, events, and situations are significant factors to substance abuse relapse. The R.P. Model is useful for relapse prevention, and about 64% who completed the program were found to be able to abstain (Larimer et al., 1999). Another study conducted by Mohammadpoorasl et al. (2012) suggested that smoking, having drug users in the family, having little or no desire to quit, unemployment, and being connected to drug-using friends after quitting were the factors associated with relapse.

### Conclusion

The main categories of psychotropic substances which people tend to misuse have the potential for developing the complex disease of addiction. There is much contemporary thinking about the nature of substance use disorders such as biological theory (neurobiological effects of drugs), psychological theory (behavioural models and individual differences), social context theory (cultural and environmental factors on dependency), and biopsychosocial theory (biological, psychological, sociological, and behavioural components to addiction) which helps us understand the nature of substance abuse.

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# Radicalization in Maldives

*Dr. Amzath Ahmed*

*Research Associate, Institute for Research and Innovation, Villa College*

## Introduction

Radicalization has become a global issue and has etched its way into countries with a history of peace and harmony, like Maldives. This article focuses on the basics of radicalization, identifying the issues that are emerging to the surface and provide quick statistics of the radicalization issues in Maldives.

## Definition

Radicalization has taken different meanings in different time periods. Radicalization is derived from the word radical. As an adjective, radical means “going to the root or origin; fundamentalism” (Dictionary.com, 2021). This meaning has been extended and explained over the years by various academic scholars. The latest definition of the word “radical” given in the Dictionary (2021) is “believing or expressing the belief that there should be great or extreme social or political change”. In recent years, radicalization has adopted the recent definition of the word “radical”. Borum (2011) defines radicalization as the process of developing extreme ideologies and beliefs. From most of the literature, (Neumann, 2013; Aslam, Othman & Rosili, 2016; Cristina, 2019), it can be concluded that radicalization is a process in which someone adopts and extreme ideology and acts on it. The ideology may be social, economic, political, or religious.

Radical ideas changed the world in twentieth century. The current definition of radicalization has been coined as a result of the rise of violence in late twentieth century. This era has been defined by galloping inequalities in wealth distribution, automation, access to technology and globalization. The new definition has merged violence and extremism in the process of radicalization. A simple google search will give this definition of radicalization. “the action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues” (Oxford University Press, 2021). United Nations has also adopted similar definition of radicalization (Anurag, 2019). The most widely used definition is that radicalization is a process in which someone adopts a belief system that justify the use of violence to bring changes in the society (Jeffrey, 2014). Within this spectrum, it can be denoted that violent extremism and radicalization are two sides of the same coin.

## Forms

There are several forms of radicalization, and these include the right-wing Extremism, Politico-Religious Extremism, Left-wing Extremism and Single-Issue Extremism (CPRLV, 2021). Generally, in Maldives, radicalization is referred to as religious extremism. Radical ideas on economic and social issues are treated as reform movements. Dhivehi term “*Harukashi fikuru*” is used to express the idea of radicalization. Other terms used for radicalization are “*hadhdhu fahana elhun*”, “*harukashivun*” Google search engine found 46,800 results for the Dhivehi term “*Harukashi fikuru*”. Variety of available news reports, journals, review reports, and various other sources on radicalization in Maldives addresses religious radicalization. Particular emphasis is given on Islamic radicalization. The main reason for this is the extreme violence that takes place in Maldives is always associated with radical Islamic groups or scholars (MV+, 2021).

## Data

Data on radicalization, extremism, violence extremisms, and terrorism is exceedingly rare in Maldives. Bureau of counterterrorism (2015) reported there are about 50 radical extremist foreign fighters living in the Maldives. Country report on Terrorism in Maldives (Counterterrorism, 2019) shows that the number of Maldivians participating in Jihadi wars abroad has grown to more than 1400. However, radical religious groups may not be the fundamental reason for extreme violence in the Maldives. Most of the violence that occurs in the Maldives is gang-related violence (The Asia Foundation, 2012). This problem is very prominent in many populated islands, including the capital city Male’. In 2012 there were about 20-30 gangs in Male’ area, each gang had 400 -500 people (The Asia Foundation, 2012). UNData (2021) record showed that the population of men in 2012 was around 116,000. This shows that a significant number of the male population of the Maldives were affiliated with gangs. An extensive study is required to collect the basic indicators of the radicalization and extreme violence in Maldives.

## Conclusion

Maldives has adopted the religious version of radicalization. The most common form of radicalization



prevailed in Maldives is religious radicalization. Qualitative and quantitative data available on radicalization in Maldives is exceedingly rare. The available statistic from the literature gives evidence of significant involvement of Maldivians in radical, extremist, and violence promoting activities. Future research on radicalization is significantly important reduce extreme violence and radicalization in the Maldives.

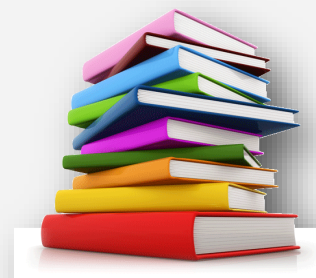
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### FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

#### Post-transitional housing systems: China and Russia compared

Wenjie Cai and Xinhai Lu

#### ABSTRACT

Existing housing regime theories are established in the Western marketised contexts and have limited applicability in post-transitional housing systems. This paper compares Chinese and Russian housing systems since transition to obtain more understanding of post-transitional housing systems and the housing challenges facing these economies currently. A conceptual framework that investigates housing system operation through the interaction between housing market operations and housing policies in three spheres - production, exchange and consumption - is used in the analysis. The comparison shows that different strategies applied in transition, particularly regarding the government's role, have contributed to different housing system outcomes in these two countries. It further supports existing research which shows that post-transitional housing systems are still transforming and are characterised by an essential deviation from Western marketised systems. Thus, housing systems in transitional economies are better understood from a more hybrid and dynamic view, rather than a single and static perspective.

Cai, W. and Lu, X., 2017. Post-transitional housing systems: China and Russia compared. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 32(2), pp.191-209.

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# How to find inspiration to write!

*Mohamed Shafy Rasheed*

*Research Assistant, Institute for Research and Innovation, Villa College*

## **Creative inspiration – an introduction**

Writing and publishing papers have become the dictum and a prerequisite for all academics and researchers alike. Regardless of the academic and scientific disciplines, writing is an integral part of how information is disseminated within the respective fields of study.

The ontological and epistemological understandings (Scotland, 2012) can be of different paradigms in your writing. It can be from a post-positivist stance, where you try to determine the cause-and-effect of variables you are observing (Panhwar, et al., 2017). Or perhaps, your paper focuses on understanding multiple meanings or the complexity of a phenomenon occurring, by applying a constructivist perspective in your study (Ekpenyong, 2018). If you need to be a bit riskier and more controversial, perhaps you can focus on exposing the social reality of a phenomena using critical theory paradigm (Thompson, 2019). You can consider being pragmatic to seek solutions to the practicality of ‘what works’ in the phenomena studied (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Key idea to note here is, what you research is heavily reflected by yourself and how you understand the world. Your interests, perspectives on different phenomena, understanding of social constructs in place, and the dilemmas you encounter all shape your opinions and perspectives regarding reality. However, this is not limited, as there are multiple ways through which you can explore a research interest.

*A man should go on living - if only to satisfy his curiosity*  
- Yiddish proverb.

First, read on what you are trying to study. Ask yourself – what is the knowledge that you are seeking? Once you determine that, ask yourself: What is the best way to study the knowledge you are seeking? As our thought processes can be multi-dimensional, it is important to go through these questions systematically, so that our focus is fundamental to what we want to learn.

Imagine this – or perhaps you can put this into application right now. Grab a piece of empty paper, look at it, and think on for a couple of seconds – your mind would skip from ‘one file to the other’ in your brain. However, if you look at a descriptive text or an

illustrative image that has meaning, your focus is fixed on that context. This can activate thinking within the box but thinking outside that ‘box of reality’ is more crucial. At the end of the day, curiosity can create havoc in mind and pen, but it can also lead to forming truths.

This is where ‘inspiration’ matters. Human understanding of inspiration has been explored in the field of research, but it recalls different realities (Young, 1991; Kociatkiewicz & Kostera, 2001; Alagona & Simon, 2010). The truth behind your inspiration can be different from your colleague and this does not make you wrong in that matter. Greek philosophers and poets were inspired by the conduit revelations made by the ‘Gods’ (Peterson, 2020). Immanuel Kant’s (Guyer & Wood, 1998) Critique of Pure Reason published in 1781 provides an extensive elaboration on the limits and scope of metaphysics and was relatively inspired by empirical philosophers such as John Locke, and David Hume, and rationalist philosophers such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Christian Wolff. There is a multitude of lenses to be adopted, or in some cases created, to investigate the reality of what you are studying.

## **Finding inspiration**

The Art of Thought by Graham Wallas (Graham, 1926) outlined the creative thinking model which continues to be relevant to be considered and applied when conducting research. It is a useful way to understand your own creative process, particularly when writing scientific and academic papers. Wallas identified four different stages to follow when applying the dynamics of creative thinking.

1. Preparation – in this stage, you should reflect on your consciousness when working on problems.
2. Incubation – this is the time you spent away from working on the problem, where your unconscious thoughts continue.
3. Illumination – this is where you experience a flash of insight into the problem.
4. Verification – this is the context under which the solution you have come up with is tested.

However, it is important to note that this process is repetitive throughout the cycle where you may skip from



one stage to the other quite frequently depending on the thought process you apply.

Another concept that is used by those seeking inspiration, is the theory of 'flow' by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi published in 1975 (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). The theory was influenced by the experiences he had while growing up during World War II. His reflection is heavily based on seeing how people still managed to cope with the activities they did, despite the circumstances they went through.

Csikszentmihalyi elaborated that people who completely immerse themselves in a task can find gratitude and intense satisfaction. The concept of flow is distinctively recurrent among researchers and innovators regardless of the field of work they are from. To summarize the concept, there are seven characteristics to consider in the application of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow:

1. Complete concentration on task – there are clear goals every step of the way.
2. Clarity of goals and reward in mind and immediate feedback – immediate feedback to one's action is available through the stages.
3. Transformation of time (speeding up/slowing down) – the sense of time becomes distorted, and distractions are excluded from your consciousness.
4. Actions and awareness are merged when engaged in activities – losing yourself to self-conscious rumination.
5. The experience is intrinsically rewarding – there is no worry of failure due to effortlessness and ease of actions.
6. There is a balance between challenge and skills.
7. There is a feeling of control over the task – the activity becomes autotelic.

Seeking inspiration to write and complete papers is essential to be a productive academic. To support this, Todd M. Thrash and Andrew J. Elliot (2003) have summarized the process of 'finding inspiration' into three distinct characteristics:

1. **Transcendence** – this denotes that the writer has gained an insight into the problems explored in their study in forms of new or better possibilities.
2. **Evocation** – in other words, receptivity which involves identifying the point of inspiration derived by the researcher regarding the problem studied.
3. **Motivation** – deduces that inspiration is led by motivation. How compelled you are to bring new knowledge to transform the society.

Therefore, to find inspiration, you will need to fulfill two

requirements: be inspired by an activity and be inspired to act upon an action. Here, being inspired by includes transcendence and evocation, and being inspired to integrates motivation of yourself.

Of course, inspiration cannot be forced but there are ways to stimulate a person's creative process. Inspiration can come from:

Browsing the field of knowledge, you are seeking.

Encountering the dilemmas and critical argument presented within the field of study.

Applying the decision-making strategy of satisficing where you search for information until you can meet an acceptable level of knowledge.

Serendipitous discoveries made while looking for something else in the first place.

## Conclusion

This article was written for the purpose of sparking discussions about understanding, finding, and fostering inspiration to write.

Writing is an exceptional way to understand oneself better. It can help you to be more critical about your own thoughts, looking from different angles of realities by exploring and harnessing your skills as an academic. It is important to note here that the thought of your inspiration and creativity is not limited to academic writings but also to the practical work you engage in. The modules that you are teaching, students you are supervising, the external projects you are working on, and so forth all needs calibration of your time and commitment. These are the points at which we will have to be inspired by, to be inspired to do our part in creating excellence in academia.

When and if you realize this truth, that is the point where curiosity of knowledge matters the most.

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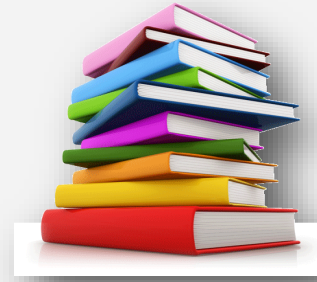
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*Anne Sweeny*



## FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic in Puerto Rico: Exceptionality, Corruption and State-Corporate Crimes**

*Jose Atilos Osoria*

#### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 global pandemic brings about a new episode in the multi-layered political, economic and humanitarian crisis affecting Puerto Rico since 2006. The 14-years-long crisis has been marked by the U.S. and P.R. governments' imposition of a permanent state of exception to deal with an economic crisis, bankruptcy, hurricanes, swarms of earthquakes and a pandemic. This paper argues that uses of the state of exception and executive orders created a regime of permission for corruption, state-corporate crimes and human rights violations, while exacerbating the impact of the pandemic, and manufacturing the conditions for further disasters. The paper engages in a sociolegal analysis of the cases of corruption and state-corporate crimes in the procurement of COVID-19 test-kits and medical equipment, and the role of the pharmaceutical corporations in undermining PR's capacity to react to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Atilos Osoria, J., 2021. The COVID-19 Pandemic in Puerto Rico: Exceptionality, Corruption and State-Corporate Crimes. *State Crime Journal*, 10(1), pp.104-125.

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# Want to submit an article to VC Research Digest?

We wish to publish at least one issue of VC Research Digest every two months. Hence, we invite all academics and students of Villa College to submit their papers/articles as soon as they are ready. There are no submission deadlines. We will review the submissions in the order they are received.

All submissions will be received through an online platform, as below.

Submissions to the VC Research Digest should meet the following guidelines:

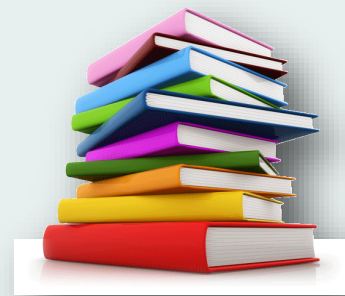
- Be between 700-850 words in length
- If a completed research project, it must at minimum include:
  - ◇ Research title
  - ◇ Research background and problem statement (including lit. review)
  - ◇ Aims and Objectives
  - ◇ Research question/hypothesis
  - ◇ Methodology
  - ◇ Findings
  - ◇ Conclusions
- If an ongoing research project, it must at minimum include:
  - ◇ Research title
  - ◇ Research background and problem statement (including lit. review)
  - ◇ Aims and Objectives
  - ◇ Research question/hypothesis
  - ◇ Methodology
  - ◇ Expected findings and implications
- Articles on research methods should focus on any one (or few) aspects of high quality research and provide in-depth and practical insights
- Contributors can also forward links or details of significant research articles published in refereed journals to be included in the Research Mesh section.
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Submit your papers/ articles by going to this link.

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## FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

### Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights: Kant's Perspective

*Rachel Bayefsky*

#### Abstract

Kant is often considered a key figure in a modern transition from social and political systems based on honour to those based on dignity, where "honour" is understood as a hierarchical measure of social value, and "dignity" is understood as the inherent and equal worth of every individual. The essay provides a richer account of Kant's contribution to the "politics of equal dignity" by examining his understanding of dignity and honour, and the interaction between these concepts. The essay argues that Kant appeals to multiple varieties of dignity and honour, that he does not reject honour in favour of dignity, and that he sees some versions of honour as conducive to respect for dignity. Furthermore, the complexity of Kant's views on dignity and honour has implications for the theory and practice of human rights in the current day.

Bayefsky, R., 2013. Dignity, honour, and human rights: Kant's perspective. *Political Theory*, 41(6), pp.809-837.

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## Institute for Research and Innovation Villa College

Male' Maldives

Email: [iri@villacollege.edu.mv](mailto:iri@villacollege.edu.mv)

Email: [researchdigest@villacollege.edu.mv](mailto:researchdigest@villacollege.edu.mv)

Website: <http://www.villacollege.edu.mv>

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