

Developing Strong Research Questions

Building a strong research question is not so easy!

A research question is a short, clear, and testable question that serves as the focus of a particular research project. Elements of a strong research question:

- Includes two or three variables;
- Describes relationship between the variables in some way;
- Concepts are clear, objective, and measurable;
- Question is realistic given available resources; and
- The way it is worded provides information about what is known and what still remains.

Examples of strong research questions:

- What social and familial factors contribute to children's bullying behaviors?
- Do violent people watch violent television programs?

Creating a hypothesis for your question:

A hypothesis is an idea or theory that is not proven but that leads to further study or discussion. It is a description of what the researcher thinks will happen. A complete research question includes a hypothesis. Hypotheses describe the type of the relationship among variables and the direction of that relationship. For example, does one factor influence another in a positive way or as one increases, the other decreases? A strong research question should produce at least one hypothesis.

Examples of hypotheses:

- We hypothesize that children who report a history of violence within the family will exhibit bullying behaviors.
- We hypothesize that those who watch violent television programming will be more likely to exhibit violent behaviors than those with limited exposure to TV violence.