



WESTMINSTER
International University in Tashkent

Choosing your topic

Bakhrom Mirkasimov

Association of Sociologists of Uzbekistan

Research is hard!

- It is hard for everyone, even the best researchers.
- There is no template: you have to learn it by trial and error. Mostly error!
- There are no clear rules!
- Most ideas fail. This means it's important to generate many ideas, sort out the good from the bad ones, and not be frustrated.
- Talk to people. Your fellow students, faculty, but also non-economists, etc.

How do I find a topic, idea?

- Go to research seminars
- Read published papers, working papers, conference proceedings, etc. (but don't read too much)
- Read survey articles in your research field
- Read old journals / Read bad journals
- Read journals in other social sciences
- Read the newspaper
- Talk to each other
- Talk to non-economists about issues that interest you as an economist
- Read codebooks
- For empirical work: you come across a good instrument
- Never take anything for granted
- Why did you study economics in the first place?

Talking to your supervisor

- Don't expect to get a good topic from your advisor. If it's a good topic, they will work on it themselves.
- Your supervisor (and other faculty) may shoot down many of your ideas but remember: we are your friends, and we help you save time.
- You don't want your ideas being shot down in a job market seminar or a thesis exam!

Main questions in empirical research

- What is the policy question?
- What is the causal relationship of interest?
- What is the dependent variable and how is it measured?
- What is (are) the key independent variable(s)?
- What is the data source?
- What is the identification strategy?
- What is the mode of statistical inference?
- What are the main findings?

Common flaws in methodology

Failure to:

- Establish the reason for the research
- Provide clear & concise objectives
- Provide complete reference to prior research on the subject and methods
- Lack of understanding for the conceptual and theoretical basis of the research
- Selection of analytical structural model for mere empirical convenience (or familiarity)
- Presenting conclusions that are merely restatements of analytical findings (i.e. results)

Examples of 'bad' methodology

- Unclear about the research problem
- Unclear about the objectives
- Lack thorough awareness of previous work
- Incomplete conceptualization of the problem
- Confusing research means with ends

Data: sources and types (quantitative)

- Experimental versus observational data
- Cross-sectional data: data on different entities for a single period of time
- Time-series data: data on a single entity collected at multiple time periods
- Panel or longitudinal data: data for multiple entities in which each entity is observed at two or more time periods

Hypotheses in empirical research

- Construction of research hypotheses is an important step in applied economics research
- Hypotheses argue that one phenomenon or behavior causes or is associated with another phenomenon or behavior
 - These phenomena are called constructs
- Various sources of support routinely used to develop hypotheses
 - Theory and logical analysis (intuition)
 - Past studies: authority and consensus
 - Real life experiences and observations

Sources

- <https://www.resakss-asia.org/2018/06/20/regional-training-course-summer-school-on-applied-econometric-analysis-training-materials/>
- https://www.resakss-asia.org/files/2018/06/Session-2-Presentation1_Tashkent2018.pdf
- <https://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/spischke/phds/How%20to%20start.pdf>



Thank you and good luck