

50 Research Gap Sentence Starters

for Postgraduate Students

Writing a convincing research gap is one of the most important — and most challenging — tasks in postgraduate research. A well-argued gap does not simply point to what is missing from the literature. It tells your reader what is known, what remains unaddressed, why that matters, and how your study intends to fill it.

This resource provides 50 sentence starters organized across five common research gap types. Each starter is a scaffold — replace the blanks with your topic, variables, population, methodology, or context, and adapt the language to suit your field and academic voice.

How to Use This Resource

1. Identify which gap type best reflects the argument your study is making.
2. Select the sentence starter that most closely aligns with your research focus.
3. Replace each blank (_____) with your specific topic, variable, population, method, or context.
4. Integrate the sentence into your introduction or literature review alongside supporting citations.
5. Revise as needed to match the conventions and language of your discipline.

SECTION 01



Context or Location Gap

WHEN TO USE THIS SECTION

Use this section when your study addresses a geographical region, country, institution, or setting that has been overlooked or underrepresented in the existing literature. Your location is not just a backdrop — it is the argument.

SENTENCE STARTERS

1. However, little is known about _____ in the context of _____.
2. Despite existing studies, there is limited evidence on _____ in _____.
3. While _____ has been studied extensively in Western contexts, research within _____ remains scarce.
4. Most studies on _____ have focused on _____, neglecting the realities of _____.
5. There is a notable absence of research on _____ within the _____ setting.
6. Existing literature provides little insight into _____ as it relates to _____ in _____.
7. Although _____ has been explored globally, its application within _____ has yet to be examined.
8. The effect of _____ on _____ in _____ remains largely unexplored.
9. No known study has investigated _____ among _____ in _____.
10. Current studies on _____ have not accounted for the unique contextual factors of _____.



Population or Group Gap

WHEN TO USE THIS SECTION

Use this section when your study centres a specific group of people — whether defined by age, gender, ethnicity, profession, disability, socioeconomic status, or lived experience — who have been overlooked, underrepresented, or homogenised within existing research.

SENTENCE STARTERS

11. However, the experiences of _____ regarding _____ have not been adequately addressed in the literature.
 12. Previous studies have largely focused on _____, with limited attention given to _____.
 13. There is insufficient research on _____ among _____, particularly within _____.
 14. The impact of _____ on _____ within the _____ population remains poorly understood.
 15. Most literature on _____ centres on adults, leaving the experiences of _____ largely understudied.
 16. Despite the growing number of _____, research exploring _____ remains limited.
 17. Studies have not examined how _____ affects _____ among _____.
 18. There is a notable scarcity of data on _____ in relation to _____.
 19. The perspective of _____ on _____ has been largely absent from the literature.
 20. While _____ is well documented in mainstream populations, little attention has been given to _____.
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Methodological Gap

WHEN TO USE THIS SECTION

Use this section when existing research on your topic has relied on methods that limit the depth, scope, or validity of findings — and your study intends to address this through a more rigorous, innovative, or appropriate methodological approach.

SENTENCE STARTERS

21. Most existing studies have adopted _____ but have not utilised _____, limiting the generalisability of findings.
22. Previous research relied predominantly on qualitative methods, with limited quantitative evidence available on _____.
23. While _____ has been studied using _____, a mixed-methods approach to understanding _____ is notably absent.
24. There is a need for empirical studies employing _____ to examine _____ more rigorously.
25. Existing literature on _____ is largely theoretical, with limited experimental or field-based studies available.
26. Prior studies have not employed _____ in investigating _____, representing a significant methodological oversight.
27. The application of _____ as a methodological tool in the study of _____ remains underexplored.
28. Most available studies are cross-sectional in design, while longitudinal investigations of _____ remain scarce.
29. Existing studies on _____ demonstrate limited methodological rigour, particularly with respect to _____.
30. A gap exists in the use of _____ as a validated instrument for measuring _____ within this context.



Variable or Conceptual Gap

WHEN TO USE THIS SECTION

Use this section when the relationship between two or more variables, constructs, or theoretical concepts has not been sufficiently examined in the literature — either in isolation or in combination. This gap is particularly common in interdisciplinary or emerging fields.

SENTENCE STARTERS

31. Although _____ and _____ have been studied independently, the nature of their relationship remains unclear.
32. There is limited understanding of how _____ influences _____ within the context of _____.
33. The mediating role of _____ in the relationship between _____ and _____ has yet to be explored.
34. Studies have not examined the combined effect of _____ and _____ on _____.
35. The moderating effect of _____ on _____ remains under-researched in the existing literature.
36. While the effect of _____ is well established, its specific impact on _____ has not been determined.
37. There is a gap in the literature regarding _____ as a significant predictor of _____.
38. The interplay between _____ and _____ has not been adequately investigated, despite its theoretical relevance.
39. Existing studies have focused on _____ while consistently neglecting the role of _____.
40. The extent to which _____ contributes to _____ remains insufficiently documented in the literature.



Time or Emerging Trend Gap

WHEN TO USE THIS SECTION

Use this section when the existing body of research is outdated, was conducted before a significant event or development, or has not kept pace with changes in technology, policy, society, or practice. Your study is not just adding to the literature — it is updating it.

SENTENCE STARTERS

41. Despite notable technological advancements in _____, recent empirical studies on _____ remain limited.
42. Most studies on _____ were conducted prior to _____ and may no longer reflect the current landscape.
43. There is a pressing need for current evidence on _____ in light of recent developments in _____.
44. Recent shifts in _____ warrant a critical re-examination of _____.
45. The post-COVID-19 implications of _____ for _____ remain largely underexplored in the literature.
46. Given the rapid rise of _____, there is a notable absence of research examining its effect on _____.
47. Existing literature does not adequately reflect the current realities of _____ within the context of _____.
48. There is a lack of recent empirical evidence on _____, with most studies dating back more than a decade.
49. While _____ was widely studied in the early _____, its continued relevance to _____ has not been re-examined.
50. This study seeks to address the temporal gap in the literature by providing up-to-date evidence on _____.

Before You Submit:

What Every Strong Research Gap Must Do

✓ **Establish what is already known.**

Ground your gap in the existing literature. Cite the key studies that have come before yours — this is not weakness; it is scholarly credibility.

✓ **Identify what is missing or insufficient.**

Be specific. Name the gap type, the population, the method, the context, or the variable relationship that has been overlooked. Vague gaps produce vague arguments.

✓ **Explain why the gap matters.**

Connect the absence of research to a real consequence — for practice, for policy, for a community, or for theory. If it does not matter, it is not a gap worth filling.

✓ **State clearly how your study will address it.**

Your gap statement should lead directly into your research purpose, questions, and objectives. The gap is the "why"; your study is the "so what."

Need personalized support with your research gap or literature review?

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