Defining the Research Problem, Questions, and Hypotheses

1. The Research Problem (The "Why")

The research problem is the heart of your thesis. It is the gap in existing knowledge or a real-world difficulty that needs a solution.

Identifying the Problem:

- **The "Gap":** What do we NOT know yet?
- **The "Conflict":** What theories or data contradict each other?
- **The "Problem Statement":** A concise description of the issue.

Useful Language & Examples:

- **Template:** "Despite the growth in X, little is known about Y."
  - *Example:* "Despite the growth in **e-commerce in Algeria**, little is known about **consumer trust in local payment gateways**."
- **Template:** "There is a lack of consensus regarding the impact of X on Y."
  - *Example:* "There is a lack of consensus regarding the impact of **remote work** on **employee productivity** in the banking sector."
- **Template:** "Previous studies have failed to address the issue of..."
  - *Example:* "Previous studies have failed to address the issue of **gender diversity** within **small-scale agricultural startups**."

2. Research Questions (The "What")

Research questions narrow your problem down to specific inquiries. In academic English, these must be **open-ended** (avoiding simple Yes/No answers).

Type	Example Phrasing	Applied Example
Descriptive	"What are the main characteristics of...?"	"What are the main characteristics of **successful fintech startups** in North Africa?"
Comparative	"What is the difference between X and Y...?"	"What is the difference between **public and private bank** customer loyalty programs?"
Causal	"To what extent does X influence Y...?"	"To what extent does **inflation** influence **consumer purchasing power** in Constantine?"

3. Research Objectives

Objectives use strong, measurable verbs to describe what you intend to achieve.
- **Primary Objective:** "The main aim of this study is to investigate the factors affecting the adoption of green marketing strategies."
- **Secondary Objectives:**
  - "To **examine** the relationship between supply chain transparency and brand trust."
  - "To **identify** the key barriers to digital transformation in traditional retail."
  - "To **evaluate** the effectiveness of current tax incentives for new entrepreneurs."

4. Hypotheses (The "Expected Answer")

A hypothesis is a tentative statement or prediction that can be tested. In Economics, we often use the **Null Hypothesis (H_0)** and the **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)**.

Language & Examples:

- **Correlation:** "There is a positive correlation between X and Y."
  - *Example:* "There is a positive correlation between **employee training** and **operational efficiency**."
- **Causality:** "We hypothesize that an increase in X leads to a decrease in Y."
  - *Example:* "We hypothesize that an increase in **interest rates** leads to a decrease in **private investment**."
- **Significance:** "It is expected that X will have a significant impact on Y."
  - *Example:* "It is expected that **social media advertising** will have a significant impact on **brand awareness among Gen Z**."

5. Practical Exercise: Developing Your Topic

Complete the following table based on your current research interest:

Element	Example Case Study	Your Draft (English)
Topic	Sustainable Tourism	
Problem	Lack of environmental regulations in rural areas.	
Question	How does unregulated tourism affect local biodiversity?	
Objective	To assess the impact of tourism on rural ecosystems.	
Hypothesis	High tourist volume leads to a decline in soil quality.	

6. Self-Check: FINER Criteria

Ensure your research problem/question is:
- **F**easible (Can you actually do it?)
- **I**nteresting (Is it worth the effort?)
- **N**ovel (Does it provide new info?)

- **E**thical (Does it follow research rules?)
- **R**elevant (Does it matter to your field?)