

Proposal Writing

Unit 4

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4.1. What is a research proposal?

- A research proposal is a document written by a researcher that provides a **detailed description** of the proposed program.
- It serves as an outline of the entire **research process**, offering a summary of the information to be discussed in a project.
- Essentially, it is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted, acting as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.
- It's like a **blueprint** of a building plan before construction starts for any medical research or epidemiological study.
- A good research proposal is based on **scientific facts** and on the art of clear communication

4.1. What is a research proposal?

More explicitly, the research proposal concentrates on the following issues

- What is the study about?
- Why is the study being made?
- Where will the study be carried out?
- What type of data is required?
- Where can be the required data found?
- What periods of time will the study include?
- What will be the sample design?
- What techniques of data collection will be used?
- How will the data be analyzed?
- In what style will the report be prepared?

4.2. Need of a Research Proposal

- Here are the key reasons why a research proposal is needed:
 - It facilitates **smooth operations and efficiency**. By preparing a proposal, research operations can proceed smoothly, leading to maximal information with minimal expenditure of effort, time, and money.
 - It provides a **conceptual structure** for the research. This structure acts as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, similar to a building plan before construction begins.
 - It helps researchers **order their thoughts**.
 - Present **preparatory material** in a logical way.
 - It assists in defining the **boundaries of the study** and the concepts to be included.
 - It highlights the **interrelationship between** different sections of the research.
 - It enables more **effective time management** by sorting out ideas at the preliminary stage.
 - Entrance to higher level studies

4.3. Components of a Research Proposal

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Table of Contents, List Figures, List of Tables, and Abbreviations
4. Introduction
5. Literature review
6. Research problem and Solution
7. Methodology
8. Data Analysis and Findings
9. Discussions and Conclusion
10. Contributions and Future Works
11. Reference list/bibliography
12. Annexes

Title Page

A proposal title page is the first page of a document that provides key information about the proposal and the project it outlines. It serves as an introduction and should clearly and concisely present essential details such as the proposal's title, the author(s), the organization, and the date.

- Title: A strong, informative title that captures the essence of the proposal.
- Your Name/Organization: Clearly state who is submitting the proposal.
- Contact Information: Include your phone number, email address, and potentially your mailing address.
- Date: Specify the date the proposal is submitted or due.
- Recipient's Name/Organization: If applicable, include who the proposal is intended for.
- Proposal Number: If required by the client or organization, include the proposal number.

Title Page

- The research title should be
 - specific, direct, concise, meaningful, and easily understandable;
 - not more than one or two lines;
 - must accurately represent the objective and indicate the purpose of the study.

Abstract

An abstract of a research proposal serves as a summary of its contents.

Here's what an abstract of a research proposal entails:

- It is a brief, clear, and accurate overview of the proposed study.
- Similar to the function of a "Conclusion" section in a proposal, an abstract aims to provide a brief recap of the entire study.
- It should emphasize:
 - Why the study was done or why it is being proposed (its importance and significance).
 - The specific purpose of the study and the research questions it attempts to answer.
 - The research design and methods that will be used.
 - The potential implications emerging from the proposed study of the research problem.
 - How your study fits within the broader scholarship about the research problem and advances knowledge.
- It should be concise, typically "only one paragraphs long".

Table of Contents, List Figures, List of Tables, and Abbreviations

Table of Contents:

- Lists all sections and subsections of the proposal.
- Helps reviewers quickly navigate to specific parts.

List of Figures:

- Enumerates all visual figures (graphs, illustrations, etc.).
- Includes figure numbers, titles, and page references.
- Useful for visual references during proposal evaluation.

List of Tables:

- Lists all tables used in the proposal.
- Includes table titles and corresponding page numbers.
- Enhances clarity and quick referencing of data presentations.

List of Abbreviations (alphabetical order):

- Defines shortened forms used throughout the proposal.
- Ensures readers unfamiliar with technical terms can follow along.

Introduction

The **Introduction** section of a research proposal sets the foundation for your study, clarifying its purpose, importance, and approach.

Here's a concise breakdown of its key components:

Rationale/Background

- Reflects an extensive literature review.
- Outlines what is already known about the topic, including knowledge gaps or "lacunae".
- It involves critically engaging with existing literature (citing, comparing, contrasting, and critiquing) and connecting it to your own research.

Problem and Motivation

- Introduces the specific problem proposed to be studied.
- Its importance and relevance should be clearly understood by the reader.
- Explains the unexplored character or knowledge gap and the reasons for undertaking the study.
- Aims to answer "what question is being addressed and why that question is worth addressing?".

Introduction

- Aim and Objectives of Research
 - Central to the study; guides everything else.
 - Should be clear, specific, achievable, and measurable.
 - Objectives should be limited (low in quantity) (there should not be too many)
 - Can include research questions or hypotheses.
- Significance of Research
 - Explains why the study is important.
 - Shows how it can be applied in real life.
 - Highlights how it contributes to solving problems or informing policies.
- Scope of Research
 - Defines what the study will focus on.
 - Lists key indicators, variables, and questions.
- Limitation
 - Describes the boundaries and constraints of the study.
 - Includes study location and reasons for limits.
 - Mentions any concerns about reliability or trustworthiness.

Literature Review

A literature review is an extensive examination of existing knowledge to identify what is known and pinpoint knowledge gaps.

It grounds the study by critically engaging with prior research

It demonstrate that the researcher is aware of previous work done on the problem and that their proposed research is not a duplication of effort

Research Problem and Solution

Research Problem

- Specific issue to be investigated.
- Highlights its importance and existing knowledge gaps.

Solution

- Aims to discover answers through clear, measurable objectives.
- Justifies significance by contributing new knowledge and practical applications.
- Outlines methodology to achieve objectives and details expected useful results.

Methodology

- The methodology section of a research proposal acts as the blueprint for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data, providing a systematic plan to solve the research problem.
- It details what the researcher will do from developing the hypothesis to the final data analysis.
- Reviewers assess if the methods are capable of answering the research questions.
- Methodology is also mostly shown in a graphical representation.

Methodology

The methodology of a research proposal must have the following components:

- **Research Design:** A specific plan or protocol that is appropriate for achieving study objectives and answering research questions.
- **Participants:** Describes the study population, how subjects are selected (e.g., sampling technique, randomization), and the minimum sample size required with its justification.
- **Data Collection Methods:** Details the methods and tools used (e.g., instrumentation, specific procedures, questionnaires), how variables will be measured, and how data quality will be ensured.
- **Data Analysis Techniques:** Explains how data will be processed (e.g., statistical packages) and what statistical tests or analytical procedures will be used, ensuring they are appropriate for the data and study type.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Confirms the study is ethical and lawful, has ethics committee approval, ensures informed consent, maintains confidentiality, and that benefits outweigh risks to participants.
- **Validation Techniques:** Addresses the validity of measurement methods, plans for assessing validity, ensuring data quality, and identifies limitations or trustworthiness issues.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data Analysis

- Details how data will be processed, often including statistical software.
- Specifies statistical tests or analytical procedures to be used.
- Ensures chosen methods are appropriate for the study and data collected and that researchers have the tools and capability for analysis.
- Addresses how bias and confounding will be handled during analysis.

Expected Results/Outcomes

- Anticipated Findings: Describes what the study expects to discover or achieve.
- Significance: Explains how these anticipated results will contribute new knowledge, provide practical applications, solve problems, or inform policy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion and conclusion reiterate the importance or significance of your proposal and provide a brief recap of the entire study. This section should be only one or two paragraphs long, emphasizing why your research study is unique, why it advances knowledge, and why the research problem is worth investigating.

Someone reading this section should come away with an understanding of:

- **Why the study was done;**
- **The specific purpose of the study and the research questions it attempted to answer;**
- **The research design and methods used;**
- **The potential implications emerging from your proposed study of the research problem; and**
- A sense of how your study fits within the broader scholarship about the research problem.

Contribution and Future Works

Contribution:

- The proposal details the relevance and importance of the study, explaining how its new knowledge will solve practical problems and be useful for policy formulation.

Future Works:

- The potential implications emerging from the proposed study's findings, suggesting broader applications or avenues for future efforts.

Reference list/bibliography

As with any scholarly research paper, you must cite the sources you used in composing your proposal.

- References - lists only the literature that you actually used or cited in your proposal.
- Bibliography - lists everything you used or cited in your proposal with additional citations of any key sources relevant to understanding the research problem.

Annexes

- Support Documents: Annexes, also referred to as appendices, are applicable support documents.
- Purpose & Presentation: They should be included and satisfactory, providing additional relevant information, and sections like references, which function similarly, normally do not count towards the total length of your proposal.

4.4. A case study on any research paper/project

Task:

- Choose a real research proposal and analyze it.

Instructions:

- Explore how the proposal is structured.
- Focus on key components: background, objectives, methodology, etc.
- Reflect on strengths and areas for improvement.