

Writing a Research Proposal



Topics covered

- Purpose of a research proposal
- Proposals in quantitative and qualitative or mixed methods research
- Content of a research proposal



Purpose of a research proposal

- It is an overall plan, structure and strategy designed to obtain answers to the research questions
- A document for scientific scrutiny for others to judge the appropriateness of the project
- A reference document as to how the research was/will be carried out



Proposals in quantitative and qualitative or mixed methods research

- Follow the same structure
- Differ in content
- Differ in methodology
- Differ in proposed methods



Information about the study

- What the research is proposing to do
- How to find the answers to what is proposed
- Why the proposed strategies of investigation were selected



Content of a research proposal

- an introduction, including a brief literature review
- theoretical framework that underpins the study
- conceptual framework which constitutes the basis of the study
- objectives or research questions of the study
- hypotheses to be tested, if applicable
- study design that is proposed to be adopted
- setting for the study



Content of a research proposal continued

- research instrument(s)
- sampling design and sample size
- ethical issues involved and how they will be dealt with
- data processing procedures
- proposed chapters of the report
- problems and limitations of the study
- proposed time-frame for the project



Introduction

- an overview of the main area under study
- a historical perspective (development, growth, etc.) pertinent to the study area
- philosophical or ideological issues relating to the topic
- trends in terms of prevalence, if appropriate
- major theories, if any
- the main issues, problems and advances in the subject area under study
- important theoretical and practical issues relating to the central problem under study
- the main findings relating to the core issue(s)



The problem

- Identifying the issues that are the basis of the study
- Specifying the various aspects/perspectives on these issues
- Identifying the main gaps in the existing body of knowledge
- Raising some of the main research questions that will be answered through the study
- Identifying what the literature says concerning the research questions, specifying the differences of opinion, if any, in the literature regarding these questions
- develop a rationale for the study with particular reference to how the study will fill the identified gaps in the existing body of knowledge



Objective of the study

- The objectives of the study should be clearly stated and specific in nature
- Hypotheses are not essential but can be listed in this section for a quantitative study



Study design

- Who makes up the study population?
- What sampling method will be used?
- How will the selected sample be accessed?
- How will the sample's consent to participate in the study be sought?
- How will the data be collected (e.g. by interview, questionnaire or observation)?
- What other ethical issues need to be considered?
- How will the data be analysed?



Additional sections

- Proposed structure of the report: planning chapters around the topic
- Problem and limitations: communicating problems that could be encountered, e.g. availability of data, access to the sample
- Appendix: e.g. copy of research instrument, consent form, references
- Work schedule: developing a timeline of events
- Proposed budget: list of costing

