

# Research Proposal Writing Instruction

School of Finance, Zhejiang Gongshang University\*

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## 1 Introduction

When social scientists desire to conduct an experiment, they first develop a proposal. A proposal introduces the problem, purpose, and significance of a study as well as the experimenter's research question and hypothesis. It also gives a brief explanation of the theory guiding the study, a review of relevant literature pertaining to the theory, and the procedure for the experiment. Without an elaborate Introduction, the experimenter will leave his or her readers wondering what exactly the purpose of the experiment is. The introduction explains in detail several components of the experiment that must be included in any proposal. After reading the Introduction, the reader should conclude why the experimenter is conducting the research and how this research will affect the academic community and society at large. For this paragraph in particular,

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\*The instruction is largely borrowed from Dallas Baptist University, Jeff Frieden, Stanford University

it is sufficient to grab the reader's attention, introduce the topic at hand, and provide a brief definition of the theory from which the study is based.

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The "Statement of the Problem" is an imperative part of the proposal, for in order for research to be conducted, one must notice a problem in the existing literature that has not been previously addressed. For this section, the following questions should be answered: *Why does this research study need to be conducted? What specific issues does this study raise that have not been observed in other literature pertaining to the topic?* Answering these questions will allow readers to understand why this particular study is important and how the study will attempt to answer new, never-before asked questions.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

It is appropriate include a sentence saying "The purpose of this study is ..." under this section. Clearly identify the goal of the study in one precise sentence. For example, the sentence could look like this: "the purpose of this study is to determine whether the decision of first semester male students to live with or reject living with their roommates is related to whether their roommates affirm their self-views or not." Why is this an important area of study? Answer this question under this section. Also, identify the unit of analysis or specific inquiry used. Examples of different units of analysis include self-report surveys, observational studies, etc.

## **1.3 Research Question/Hypothesis**

Research questions ask what relationships exist between the different variables in the study, while the hypothesis predicts the relationship between variables. List all the research questions in the study, and then include the researcher's hypothesis for the study. Format this section as seen below. For the purpose of this study, the following question were addressed:

1. List the research question here. For example, based on self-verification theory, will a college student's preference to stay with his roommate increase or decrease depending on whether his roommate sees him as he sees himself?

As part of this study, investigation included one research hypothesis:

1. List the study's hypothesis here: The more invested college students are in their selfviews, the more they will express a desire to verify these self-views by preferring roommates who see them as they see themselves.

## **1.4 Definition of Terms**

In experimental research, it is essential that one defines the central ideas or concepts of the research study. Therefore, carefully define each concept/variable

that will be used in the study, citing other research studies as much as needed. List each term, italicize it, and use a hyphen to define the term as seen below:

1. Target self-views - the target's "thoughts and feelings about themselves that are derived from past experiences, especially the reactions of others" (Swann & Read, 1981, p. 352).

2. Perceiver self-views - the perceiver's "thoughts and feelings about themselves that are derived from past experiences, especially the reactions of others" (Swann & Read, 1981, p. 352).

## **2 Literature Review**

The Literature Review provides the background for the research problem and illustrates to the reader that the researcher is knowledgeable about the scope of the theory. Research as many studies pertaining to the theory as possible, and summarize them in a succinct manner. Review various dissertations, as they may help one to understand how to write and summarize previous research. When writing the literature review, it is wise to separate the various studies one finds into different categories. Do not catalog a "he said-she said" chronology; synthesize the existing literature.

## **3 Theoretical Framework**

This section will detail the theory that is guiding the proposed study. From this theory, the researcher is able to inform the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the questions and hypothesis, the choice of instruments, and methodology of the study. In this section, explain the major tenants of the theory as well as how the theory relates to the proposed study. Remember that the eventual findings will be discussed in terms of how they relate to the theory. It should be a brief explanation of the theory.

## **4 Methodology**

The "Methodology" section is the most important section in the entire proposal, as it explains each step the experimenter will take in order to conduct his or her research. This section discusses what measures the researcher will take in order to test the study's hypothesis. In this section, it is vital to include the following subheadings while expanding on them in as much detail as possible.

### **4.1 Research Design**

Include the proposed research design of the study, whether it is a survey, experiment, observation, secondary data of analysis, etc. Then, explain how this design will derive results. Briefly discuss how the data will be administered and collected, including how the subjects will participate in the study.

Also, briefly discuss which theoretical model will guide this study and what the model predicts will be the results of the study.

## **4.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Explain the general plan for how the data will be collected, especially how the letter of consent will be administered and collected. Include any survey, interview, or observation procedures, and identify any incentives for students participating in the study. Also, include what statistics or analytical tools will be used for analyzing the data, such as ANOVA, SPSS, or SAS statistics, if applicable.

## **4.3 Instrumentation**

In this paragraph, briefly outline the instruments that will be used in the study, including any and all surveys, interviews, or observation grids. Discuss how the instrument(s) will measure the study's independent and dependent variables.

## **5 Timetable**

Indicate the time frame for each broad stage considering literature surveys, data collection, production, modelling, review, analysis, testing, reporting, chapter and thesis writing, and thesis submission date.

## **6 Reference**

List reference mentioned in your proposal here.

## **Other Materials**

This is another good reference for writing a good research proposal. <http://www.ais.up.ac.za/health/blocks/block2/researchproposal.pdf>