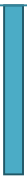


THESIS /RESEARCH PROPOSAL WRITING GUIDELINE



WHAT IS RESEARCH PROPOSAL? HOW WE CAN PREPARE IT?

Once a general strategy has been selected (either quantitative or qualitative), the next step is to describe in as much detail as possible the process by which the research will be completed. The document that describes the planned research process is called a research proposal.

Generally,

A research proposal has several features. It should clearly explain why the study you are proposing is a vital component of discovery in the field. In other words, the proposal should make a compelling case as to why your study is the “next best” study to conduct.

The proposal should also be very specific about methodology: the research participants you will study, what instruments or techniques you will use to study them, and how you will analyze the data collected. Finally, the proposal should answer the “so what” question:

Assuming the study goes forward, how will the findings from this study make a difference to other researchers (basic research study) or practitioners in the field (applied research study)? By the end of the proposal, the reader should have a clear idea of how the study will be conducted and why it is important. Your goal should be to make the reader as excited about reading the results of the research as you are about conducting the research.

THE COMPONENTS OF A PROPOSAL

The components of research proposal are same in many fields. However, how they are phrased and staged may vary by discipline. The following components can be regarded as steps in the writing of the research proposal. They are important and should be followed for the actual composition of the proposal. All students should include the following information on their research proposals.

1. Title

This should be short and explanatory. Ought to give a concise and definite indication of what is to come. The title of your research proposal should state your topic exactly in the smallest possible number of words. Put your name, the name of your university, program and school, the name of your advisor and date of deliver under the title.

2. Introduction/ Background

The introduction is the part of the proposal that provides readers with the background information for the research proposal. The introduction should provide sufficient background information to allow the reader to understand the context of the question you are trying to address. It should address the proper acknowledgement of the previous work on which you are building.

3. Statement of the problem

The question you should ask your self is: are there questions about this problem to which answers have not been found up to the present? Effective problem statement answer the question **“why does this research need to be conducted”**. You need to demonstrate that you know what you’re talking about and that you have knowledge of the literature surrounding this topic. If you’re unable to find any other research which deals specifically with your proposed project, you need to say so, illustrating how your proposed research will fill this gap. If there is other work which has covered this area, you need to show how your work will build on and add to the existing knowledge. Basically, you have to convince people that you know what you’re talking about and that the research is important.

4. Research questions/hypothesis

You have to prepare a research question that poses a relationship between two or more variables of your study. In short, you have to write the basic questions for which your study is going to find out answer. Your research questions should be derived from and related to your problem statement and objectives of your research.

5. Objectives of the study

The objective of your research should what is to be achieved by the study. Objectives should be closely related to your statement of the problem and research questions.

Objectives should be:

- Simple (not complex),
- Specific(not vague),
- Stated in advance(not after the research is done)
- Stated using “action verbs” that are specific enough to be measured

Commonly, research objectives are classified in to **general objective and specific objectives**. The general and specific objectives are logically connected to each other and the specific objectives are commonly considered as smaller portions of the general objective.

5.1.5 General objective:

- What exactly will be studied?
- General statements specifying the desired outcomes of your research.

5.1.2 Specific objectives:

- Specific statements summarizing the proposed activities and description of the outcomes.
- Identify in greater detail the specific aims of you research.

1.6 Scope of the study

You have to clearly specify the scope/boundary of your study. You may specify your scope through different dimensions. For example:

- Geographically,
- Time (year),
- Target population/Institutions/Organizations/Sector.

1.7 Significance of the study

You have to describe the specific importance/significance of your research to general reader or specific concerned body.

1.8 Methodology/methods

In this section you need to describe your proposed research methodology and methods and justify their use. Why have you decided upon your methodology? Why are other methods not appropriate? This section consists of a description of plans for collecting and analyzing the data. For qualitative studies, there should be an explanation of the purpose of observations and interviews. The description of the proposed methodology should contain enough detail to indicate that the writer knows what he/she is doing.

The methodology section needs to include details about:

1.8.1 Sampling techniques and sample size

- What sampling technique/s is planned to be used?
- Why have you decided to use those particular sampling techniques?
- What is your sample size?
- Numbers of people to be contacted.

1.8.2 Type and source of data

- What type/types of data are going to be collected?
- What/who are the sources of these data?

1.8.3 Methods of data collection

- What instruments will be used?
- Why are they appropriate for this study?
- Why have you decided to use those particular methods?
- How and to whom will they be administered?

1.8.4 Methods of data analysis

- What procedures will be followed in the data analysis?
- Methods of data analysis and ethical considerations.

1.9 Organization of the paper

You have to describe the way your paper is going to be organized under this part of your proposal. On the final paper, this part lists all chapters of the main text and different subtopics under each chapter.

❖ Citation style

In the body of your paper, when you describe and use the work and idea of other writers, you should follow the following example.

For one author:

.....local church-affiliated agencies also played a very significant role in provisions of emergency relief services (Clark 2000). **OR:**

According to Clark (2000), local church-affiliated agencies also played a very significant role in provisions of emergency relief services.

For two authors:

.....environmental agenda is one of the cross-cutting issues mainstreamed into programmes of all NGOs operating in rural areas (Zewde and Yitagesu, 2006). **OR:** According

to Zewde and Yitagesu (2006), environmental agenda is one of the cross-cutting issues mainstreamed into programmes of all NGOs operating in rural areas.

For more than two authors:

.....the NGO sector today has grown nearly fifty times from what it was in the decade of the 1980s (Dessalegn et al., 2007). **OR:**

According to Dessalegn et al., (2007), the NGO sector today has grown nearly fifty times from what it was in the decade of the 1980s.

❖ **References**

You must give reference to all the information that you obtain from books, articles, papers in journal, and other sources. You need to place a list of references alphabetically ordered at the end of your research proposal and final research.

As the general guideline there are certain items that must be included from each source reference.

For book give:

- The name of author,
- The years of publication,
- The title and edition number if there is one,
- The name of the publisher,

Example: Bowlin, A. (2002). *Research Methods in Health: Investigating Health and Health Services* (2ndEd). Berkshire: Open University Press.

For journal paper give:

- The name of the authors,
- The years of publication,
- The title of the paper,
- The volume number of the journal,

Example: Clayton, A. and Taylor, J. (2000). *Civil Society Organizations and Service Provision*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Civil society and Social Movement Programme Paper Number 2.

For an internet reference give:

- The author of the web page,
- The title of the item on the web page,

- The date the item was posted on the web page,
- The date the item was accessed from the web page,
- The complete and exact URL (address).

Example: International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (2009). *NGO Law Monitor: Ethiopia*.
www.ngomonitor@icnl.org(accessed March 25, 2012)

N.B: Every reference in your main text must appear in the list at the end of your proposal/research and every reference in the list must be mentioned and cited in your main text.

❖ **Appendices/Annexes**

Include in the appendices of your proposal any additional information you think might be helpful to research reviewer/reader. For example:

- Questionnaire and other collection instruments/forms
- Dummy tables
- Map of the study area/organizational structure etc.

A final note about good proposals

Quality writing is critical in all good proposals. It should be clear, concise, and free of jargon. There should be no spelling or grammatical errors, and the proposal should be easy to read. Sloppy proposals and proposals laden with jargon do not provide a positive image of the writer, nor do they lend confidence that solid research will follow. Proposals that are well-written and attractive are a pleasure to read, and they make a good impression with reviewers. If your hand writing is readable and not attractive, you are advised to use another means.

WORK PLAN AND COST BUDGET

- ♣ Plan your work starting from data collection up to the presentation of final paper.
- ♣ Show your cost outlays or the expenditures you will incur while doing your work.