

# Writing Effective Research Proposals: A Practical Guide for Higher Education Students and Researchers

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## ABSTRACT

The section provides an overview of the essential components of a research proposal for academicians in higher education. It includes guidance on developing a research question, identifying key sources and literature, and outlining the research methodology. Additionally, it covers the importance of effective abstracts and keywords in a research proposal. The chapter provides measures for creating a clear and concise proposal that effectively communicates the goals of the research. This section also discusses the key elements of a research proposal for academicians in higher education, including the research question, literature review, methodology, and outcomes. It gives elaborate understanding of the keywords which the readers require to understand the research proposal. The research proposal is the skeleton or backbone of the research as it is structured in such a way that indicates what the researcher intends to do. The mission of having a chapter on writing a research proposal is to provide higher education students and researchers with the tools, knowledge and skills.

**Keywords:** Research Proposal, Research Methodology, Research Question, Literature Review, Research Design, Theoretical Framework, Higher Education, Academic Research.

## INTRODUCTION

A research proposal is a formal document that outlines a research project, including its objectives, methodology, significance, and expected outcomes. A research proposal is a vital tool that can help scholars and university students complete a dissertation, receive funding for projects or fulfil course requirements. It serves as a blueprint for the research project, guiding in planning, conducting, and reporting the study. A good research proposal should clearly articulate the research question or problem that the researcher aims to investigate, justify the importance of the study, and outline the methods to be used to collect and analyse data (Lee et al., 2023). It should also demonstrate the researcher's understanding of the existing literature on the topic, highlight the gaps in current knowledge that the study aims to address, and propose a plan for disseminating the study findings. By writing a strong research proposal, the researcher can ensure that the research project is well-planned, well-executed, and ultimately contributes meaningfully to the field of study. There are several reasons why researchers need a proposal before carrying out the main research. A proposal helps to clearly define the research objectives, ensuring that everyone involved in the research project, including the researcher, stakeholders, and potential funders, understand what the project aims to achieve. A proposal provides a clear direction for the research project, helping to guide the research design, methodology, and analysis. Research methodology clarity is outlined by a proposal, including the data collection and analysis methods, which ensure that the research is well-planned and feasible. The resources needed to carry out the research, including personnel, equipment, funding, and facilities are identified by a proposal. A well-written proposal is often required to secure funding or support for the research project from institutions, organisations, or government agencies. A proposal provides a framework for evaluating the success of the research project and holding the researcher accountable for its outcomes. A proposal serves as a communication tool, allowing researchers to share their ideas and plans with others, including collaborators, supervisors, and stakeholders. In terms of time management, a proposal helps researchers plan and manage their time effectively, ensuring that they can complete the project within the given timeframe. A proposal helps researchers identify potential risks and limitations associated with the project,

allowing them to develop contingency plans and mitigate potential problems (Kafu, 2023; Nehru, Pasoloran, Pongsapan et al., 2023; Padmadewi et al., 2023; Sanak et al., 2023).

Overall, a proposal is an essential step in the research process because it allows researchers to clarify their ideas, plan their work, and ensure that their project is feasible, well-managed, and productive. Research proposals are important for funding and quality control. Many research projects require funding, and research proposals are typically required to apply for funding from grant agencies, universities, or other sources. A strong research proposal will help to convince funders that your project is worthwhile and will have a positive impact. Research proposals help to ensure the quality of research by providing a framework for planning and carrying out the study. They provide a structure for the research and help to ensure that the study is well-designed and appropriate for the research question.

## TYPES OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

- Academic Proposals: Academic proposals are generally written as part of the initial requirements of writing a thesis, research paper, or dissertation Assumptions.
- Nursing research proposal: This is a clear and concise proposal that outlines the problem being addressed and the purpose of the research
- Mixed methods proposal: Mixed methods proposal combines qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a topic
- Project proposals: A Project proposal is a document that defines the objectives and requirements of a project
- Continuation proposal: This is a proposal that outlines the scope, objectives, and timeline of a project that is being continued from a previous iteration.

## COMPONENTS OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

### Choosing a Title

A title in a research proposal is a concise phrase that clearly summarizes the main topic and focus of the proposed research study, essentially acting as a headline that captures the essence of the project. Several researchers explain how to choose a research title. They observe that a title should be a reflection of the contents of the document, fully explanatory when standing alone. It should not contain redundancies such as 'a study of....' or 'an investigation of...! Abbreviations should not appear in the title. Scientific names should be in italics. Choosing a title for the research proposal can be a challenging task, as it sets the tone for the entire project. Choosing a title that is effective, clear, and engaging, should be concise and specific. A title should be brief, but it should also accurately convey the focus and scope of the research. Avoid using overly long or jargon-heavy phrases. Consider the target audience, that is, the title should be appropriate for intended readers, even if they are academics. The key elements that typically make up a research title are specific aspects of the topic that are the focus of research. The scope is another element and it spells the geographical location of the study. If the research is focused on a specific geographic region, the title may include a description of the location. For example, "Water Quality in the Great Lakes Region." Spell out the methodology approach or methods used in the research, if relevant. If the research involves collecting data from a specific group of people, such as patients, students, or employees, the title may include a description of the respondents. For example, "Attitudes towards Climate Change among College Students" (Abdullah, 2023; Jalongo, 2023; Khan, 2023; Padmadewi et al., 2023).

### A Proposal's Cover Page

A cover page, also known as a title page, is the first page of a proposal document and serves as an introduction to the proposal. The essential elements to include on a cover page are:

- Title of the proposal: A clear and concise title that accurately reflects the purpose and scope of the proposal.

- Title of the organisation: The name of the organisation, company, or institution, including any relevant logos or branding elements.
- Name and other information of the researcher: Researcher's name, and any other relevant contact information.
- Student Matriculation number
- Name of the supervisor (if applicable)
- The date when the proposal is submitted

It is important to customise the cover page according to the organisation's specific needs and the type of proposal to be submitted.

## Introduction To The Research Proposal

In a research proposal, the Introduction is the initial section that sets the context for the study, providing background information about the research topic, outlining the research problem or question, explaining its significance, and establishing the need for the proposed research, essentially "pitching" the idea and why it is important to investigate further (Li et al., 2021). A good introduction is essential in setting the stage for the rest of the proposal and ensuring that readers understand the importance of the study (Kim et al., 2021).

A good introduction should provide a clear and concise overview of the research problem, its significance, and the research question or hypothesis (Smith et al., 2022). Tips for constructing an effective introduction include starting with a hook, which is a sentence or two that grabs the reader's attention and sets the stage for the rest of the paper. After providing context, the researcher should introduce the research statement. This is a single sentence that summarises the main argument or point of the paper. It should be concise and clear, and establish the focus of the paper (Taylor et al., 2022). Additionally, an introduction should explain why the topic under discussion is important and why the research is necessary. This helps to establish the relevance and significance of the research. The introduction also summarises the relevant literature on the topic, including previous research and scholarship. This assists in contextualising the research and demonstrates the researcher's knowledge of the field. If the research is based on a particular theoretical framework, it should be introduced at this stage. Introducing the theoretical framework at the introductory stage situates the research within a broader scholarly context and shows that the research is grounded in theory. The heading numbering starts from the introduction of the research proposal as 1.0; 1.1; 1.2; 1.3 and so on. Under these headings, the researcher can have sub-titles such as under 1.1 one, can have 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.1.3, and so on

## Background Of The Study

The background of the study provides context and rationale for your research topic, explaining the existing knowledge on the subject, highlighting any gaps or controversies, and ultimately justifying why your proposed study is necessary and relevant; it essentially sets the stage for your research question by outlining the broader picture surrounding it.

The background of the study gives a summary of key studies, theories, and findings related to your research topic, identifying areas where more research is needed, clearly defining the issue or problem your research aims to address, including its significance and impact, identifying areas where current knowledge is lacking or where conflicting findings exist, which your study will aim to address, if applicable, explain the theories or concepts that will guide your research and providing relevant background information about the topic, including key events or developments that led to the current situation (Morgan et al., 2024).

When writing a background of the study in a research proposal, the researcher begins by introducing the overall topic and its relevance, gradually narrowing down to your specific research question, citing the relevant peer-reviewed studies and established literature to support your claims, organizing his/her information in a logical sequence, connecting different aspects of the existing knowledge to your research focus and explaining why his/her research is important and how it could contribute to the field. (Harris et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2024)

## Statement Of The Problem

A statement of the problem in a research proposal is a concise and clear explanation of the specific issue or gap in knowledge that your research aims to address, highlighting its significance and outlining why further investigation is necessary; essentially, it defines the problem your study will attempt to solve (Lee et al., 2023; Shunp et al., 2021; Kandaswamy et al., 2022).

When writing a statement of the problem, the researcher should tailor his/her language to be understood by both experts in your field and a broader audience, consider any potential ethical concerns related to the research topic, ensure that the problem that will be identified is within the scope of the research capabilities and resources, the statement of the problem should clearly state the exact problem being investigated, avoiding vague or broad language and should provide background information to explain the relevance of the problem within the field of study, it should also explain why addressing this problem is important and what potential impact the research could have and identify the existing knowledge gaps or areas where current understanding is lacking. Example of a statement of the problem in a research proposal is: "Despite the increasing adoption of renewable energy sources, there remains a significant gap in understanding the optimal integration strategies for solar power into the electricity grid, particularly in regions with high variability in solar radiation, leading to challenges in grid stability and efficient energy distribution. This research aims to investigate the factors influencing grid stability when integrating large-scale solar power generation and develop data-driven models to optimize grid operation under fluctuating solar conditions."

## Research Question

A research question in a research proposal is a focused, specific question that outlines the central issue or problem your study aims to answer, serving as the guiding force for the entire research process and defining the key area you want to investigate within your chosen topic (Hancock, et al., 2021).

When writing research questions, the researcher should be clear, concise, and directly address a single problem or issue, avoiding ambiguity. Consider if the question can be answered within the timeframe and resources available for your research, the question should be relevant to your field of study and have potential to contribute new knowledge or insights. The researcher should also clearly label the research questions using numbered points or subheadings to make them easy to follow and understand (Padmadewi et al., 2023; Mali, 2023; Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2022).

The main research question serves as the central focus of the study and guides the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. One of the key benefits of having a main research question is that it helps to give direction to the study and keeps the researcher focused on the most important issues (Hancock, et al., 2021). The main research question structures research by providing a framework for sub-research questions and hypotheses. Notably, the main research question assists in focusing the data collection process, ensuring that the researcher collects only the data that is relevant to answering the question. The main research question can be derived from several sources such as the statement of the problem. The main research question should be closely aligned with the problem or issue that the study is addressing. One can use the statement of the problem to identify the key issues that the study will explore. Reviewing the literature on the topic can help the researcher to identify gaps in knowledge or areas for further research. Thus, the researcher can use information from literature review to formulate a main research question. The theoretical framework may provide insight into the relationships between variables or the underlying mechanisms that drive the problem (Muthukrishna, & Henrich, 2019). Thus, an example of the research questions is as follows: "How does the implementation of project-based learning impact student engagement in high school science classes?"

The use of interrogative sentences is important for the research questions and words like "what," "why," "how," "when," or "to what extent" can be used in phrasing the questions. Research questions can be phrased at different levels of analysis, such as individual, societal, or environmental. The length of research questions can vary depending on the complexity of the research and the level of detail required. However, in general, it is advisable to keep research questions short and focused on a single aspect of the problem. For the main research question, the researcher should aim for a single sentence that is clear and precise. The researcher should ensure that the

sub-research questions are in line with the specific objectives and equal in number. It is also important to note that when introducing research questions, the researcher should clearly label the research questions using numbered points or subheadings to make them easy to follow and understand. For example, the research questions can be numbered (1, 2, 3...) and should be questions and not statements. (Padmadewi et al., 2023; Mali, 2023; Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2022).

## Objectives Of The Study

In a research proposal, the objectives of the study refer to specific, measurable statements that outline what the researcher aims to achieve through their research, essentially detailing the key goals and desired outcomes of the study, providing a clear roadmap for conducting the research and ensuring focus on the key aspects of the topic being investigated (Patel, et al., 2021; Khan Academy, n.d; MindTools, n.d).

When writing the objectives of the study, the researcher should make his/her objectives should be clearly defined, actionable, and have quantifiable elements so progress can be tracked and success evaluated, ensure that each objective should directly relate to the central research question, providing a pathway to answer it. The researcher should use active verbs like "identify," "examine," "assess," "compare," and "evaluate" when phrasing objectives and also ensure that objectives help determine the appropriate methodology, data collection methods, and analysis techniques needed to achieve the study goals (Adeoye & Adong, 2023; Maxwell, 2016; Sreekumar, 2023; Maharani & Santoso, 2023).

### *Example of research objectives include:*

- a. To identify the factors contributing to employee burnout within a healthcare setting.
- b. To assess the impact of a new educational program on student learning outcomes.
- c. To compare the effectiveness of two different treatment approaches for a specific medical condition.
- d. To explore the relationship between social media usage and mental health among adolescents.

## Statement Of Hypotheses

A Hypothesis is a statement or assumption about an association between variables made based on limited evidence, which should be tested in a study (Kumar et al., 2024). Hypotheses should be clear, specific, concise, and testable, and should be grounded in the existing literature (Bryman& Bell, 2020; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2020, Harris et al., 2023; Morgan et al., 2024).

A good hypothesis should be grounded in theory and should provide a clear direction for the research (Kumar et al., 2020). This can help to ensure that the study is methodologically sound and that the findings are meaningful and generalizable (Mertens et al., 2020). It should avoid unnecessary variables and focusing on the most critical factors that affect the outcome (Santos et al., 2024). For example, you might formulate a hypothesis that "educators' provision psychosocial support services to adolescent male learners with behavioural problems will lead to minimal behaviour problems among male learners in secondary schools." This hypothesis can then be tested and evaluated using data and analysis. When writing a hypothesis, researchers should consider the research question or statement of the problem and the purpose of the study (Gall et al., 2020). The hypothesis should be a logical extension of the research question or statement of the problem and should be testable through the proposed methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Hypotheses can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research, although they are more commonly associated with quantitative research. In quantitative re-search, hypotheses are typically presented at the start of the research design section, after the researcher has introduced the research question and reviewed the relevant literature. In qualitative research, hypotheses are often not used in the same way as they are in quantitative research. Instead, the researcher may use theoretical frame-works or guiding questions to structure the research. Hypotheses are important in research as they provide a guide for the research, helping the researcher to focus on specific relationships between variables and to design the research accordingly. Hypotheses help to promote objectivity and rigor in research.

## Significance Of The Study

In a research proposal, the significance of the study refers to a statement explaining why the proposed research is important and relevant, highlighting how the findings could contribute to the field of study, potentially impacting practice, policy, or theoretical understanding within the relevant area; essentially, it outlines the value and reason for conducting the research University of California. (2020); Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2020) and Steinbrecher et al., (2016).

The significance of the study explains the importance and clarifies why the research question is worth investigating and how the results could make a meaningful difference, identifies knowledge gaps and points out areas where current knowledge is lacking, demonstrating the need for the proposed study, describes potential impact and outlines how the research findings could benefit different stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers, or the academic community and connects to broader context, situating the research within the larger field of study, highlighting its relevance to existing theories and practices.

## Scope Of The Study

In a research proposal, the "scope of the study" refers to the boundaries and extent of the research area that will be explored, outlining the specific parameters within which the study will operate, including the target population, geographical location, timeframe, variables investigated, and the methods used, essentially defining what will be included and excluded from the research to ensure a focused and manageable investigation.

In the scope of the study of a research proposal, the researcher talks about the:

- Research question focus: The specific research question(s) the study will address.
- Population and sample: The specific group of individuals or entities that will be studied, including any inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Geographical location: The specific area or region where the study will be conducted.
- Timeframe: The duration of the study period.
- Variables: The key factors or characteristics that will be investigated and measured.
- Methodology: The research methods that will be used to collect and analyze data (e.g., surveys, interviews, experiments).

When writing the scope of the study, there should be focus and clarity which helps the researcher stay focused on the research objectives and avoid unnecessary tangents. There should be Feasibility which outlines the parameters that ensures the study is achievable within the given time and resource constraints. There should be transparency which clearly communicates to readers what the study will cover and what it will not.

### *Example of a scope statement:*

This study will investigate the impact of online learning platforms on student engagement among undergraduate students enrolled in public administration at a public university in the metropolitan area of Abuja, Nigeria, during the academic year 2023-2024. The research will focus on analyzing student usage patterns, perceived learning outcomes, and factors influencing engagement, using a mixed-methods approach including surveys and focus group interviews.

## Limitations Of The Study

In a research proposal, limitations of the study refer to the constraints or shortcomings of the research design that could potentially affect the generalizability or accuracy of the findings, often arising from factors like sample size, access to data, time constraints, or methodological choices, which the researcher acknowledges and explains as potential limitations to the study's scope and conclusions.

When writing limitations of the study, there should be:

- Transparency and credibility: Acknowledging limitations demonstrates that the researcher has considered potential challenges and is being transparent about the study's boundaries, enhancing the credibility of the proposal.
- Areas for future research: Discussing limitations can highlight areas where further research is needed to address the gaps in knowledge not covered by the current study.

There are different types of limitations in a research proposal which includes:

- Sample size limitations: In a research proposal, a small sample size may limit the ability to generalize findings to a larger population.
- Data access limitations: Restrictions on accessing certain data sources could restrict the scope of analysis.
- Methodological limitations: Certain research methods may have inherent limitations, like relying on self-reported data or using surveys with potential biases.
- Geographic limitations: Studying a specific region may limit the applicability of findings to other contexts.

## Definitions Of Terms

The purpose of this section is to provide clear and concise definitions for key terms used throughout the research proposal. To ensure a thorough understanding of the study's methodology, findings, and implications, it is essential to establish a shared understanding of the technical terms and concepts used in this proposal. Definitions are necessary because they provide clarity and consistency in the use of language, which is particularly important in academic and scientific writing (Brown et al, 2023; Harris et al, 2023; Kumar et al., 2024; Morgan et al., 2024; T Santos et al., 2024). By defining key terms, the researcher can avoid confusion and miscommunication that may arise from using technical jargon or ambiguous language. Furthermore, providing definitions allows readers to quickly grasp the essence of the study and its significance, which is crucial for understanding the research question, methodology, and conclusions. The definitions will be used consistently throughout the proposal to ensure a clear and accurate presentation of the research design, methods, and results. By providing these definitions, the researcher aims to promote transparency, clarity, and rigor in presentation of the research. The researcher should ensure that terms that are specific to the study or field of research are defined. Use plain language and avoiding jargon is paramount. Keeping the definitions concise and focusing on the main concepts is necessary. Organise the definitions in a logical order (e.g., alphabetical order). By providing clear definitions, the researcher can ensure that readers understand the research questions and objectives. One can facilitate communication among team members or collaborators. The credibility and rigor of the research proposal are also enhanced making the proposal more accessible to non-experts in the field.

## Literature Review

A literature review in a research proposal is a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the existing research on a specific topic or issue (Liao, et al., 2017). It provides an overview of the current state of knowledge, identifies gaps and limitations in the existing research, and sets the stage for the proposed study (National Science Foundation, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gray, 2017). A literature review in a research proposal typically includes background information which is a brief overview of the research topic, its significance, and relevance to the proposed study. It is a summary of the main findings and conclusions from previous studies, including their methodologies, results, and implications (Snyder, 2019). Literature is also an analysis of the strengths and limitations of previous studies, identification of gaps and areas for future research, and an integration of findings from multiple studies to form a cohesive picture. Relationship to the proposed study is the explanation of how the proposed study builds upon previous research, addresses gaps or limitations, and contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

Including a literature review in the research proposal is essential because it shows that the researcher has thoroughly investigated the topic and has a deep understanding of the existing knowledge base (Snyder, 2019). The literature review provides context for the proposed study, allowing readers to understand its significance, relevance, and potential impact (Liao, et al., 2017; Snyder, et al., 2019). The literature review helps identify gaps

in existing research, which can inform the research questions, methodology, and expected outcomes. The literature review sets the stage for the proposed study by highlighting areas that need further exploration and providing a framework for investigation. A well-conducted literature review enhances the credibility of the proposed study by demonstrating that the researcher has thoroughly researched the topic and is aware of its complexities (Afful, et al, 2022; van Riel & Snyder, 2024). An example of a literature review in a research proposal: "The existing literature on [topic] suggests that [key findings]. However, [gaps or limitations]. This study aims to [research question] by [methodology]. By addressing [gap or limitation], this study will contribute to the understanding of [topic] and provide insights for [practice or policy]." The researcher needs to tailor the literature review to a specific research proposal and audience, ensuring that it is concise, well-organized, and relevant to the proposed study.

## Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework in a research proposal is a structured representation of the key concepts, variables, and relationships within a study area, essentially acting as a roadmap that outlines how the researcher intends to investigate the research problem by defining the theoretical foundation and guiding the research process, data collection, and analysis; it helps to explain how different elements within the study are expected to interact with one another.

Conceptual framework in a research proposal provides a logical structure to understand the research topic by identifying key concepts, defining their relationships, and explaining how they might influence each other. It can be presented visually through diagrams, models, or flowcharts to clearly illustrate the relationships between variables and shows how the research questions align with the theoretical foundation. Conceptual framework clearly outlines the independent and dependent variables that will be studied, it helps determine the appropriate methods for collecting and analyzing data and researchers typically draw on established theories or models relevant to their research area to build their conceptual framework.

The researcher should also review relevant literature by thoroughly examine existing research on the topic to identify key concepts and theories, identify key variables by determining the important variables that will be studied and how they relate to each other, establish relationships by defining the expected relationships between variables, including potential causal links or mediating factors and visualize the framework by creating a diagram or graphic to illustrate the conceptual model.

## Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework in a research proposal is a structured explanation of existing theories and concepts that will guide the research study, providing a lens through which the researcher will analyze and interpret their data, essentially outlining the foundation of knowledge upon which the research is built and how it connects to broader scholarly understanding within the field. Theoretical framework helps to clearly define the research question, identify relevant variables, and explain how they are expected to relate to each other based on established theories.

A theoretical framework gives a clear direction for the research by outlining the theoretical underpinnings, ensures the research is grounded in established knowledge and not just based on personal opinions and helps in interpreting the results and drawing meaningful conclusions based on the chosen theoretical lens.

### *Components of theoretical framework are as follows:*

- Relevant theories: Identify the primary theories that are most applicable to his/her research topic.
- Key concepts: Define the key concepts from those theories that are central to his/her study.
- Relationships between concepts: The Explain how these concepts are interconnected and how they might influence each other in the context of his/her research.

Example of a theoretical framework in a research proposal:

- **Research topic:** Impact of leadership style on employee motivation
- **Theoretical framework:** "This study will be guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that leaders who inspire and empower their employees through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are more likely to foster high levels of employee motivation."

## Empirical Literature Review

An empirical literature review within a research proposal refers to a detailed analysis of previous research studies that have used quantitative data collection methods (like experiments, surveys, or observations) to examine a specific topic, aiming to identify gaps in knowledge, key findings, and theoretical frameworks relevant to the proposed research question, thereby justifying the need for the current study.

When writing an empirical literature review, the researcher should:

- a. Focus on quantitative data: Unlike a general literature review, this section primarily examines studies that rely on measurable data and statistical analysis to support their findings.
- b. Identifying research gaps: The primary goal is to pinpoint areas where existing research is lacking, providing a strong rationale for the proposed study.
- c. Critical evaluation of methodology: Assessing the strengths and limitations of previous studies, including their research design, sampling methods, data collection techniques, and analysis procedures.
- d. Synthesis of key findings: Summarizing the major conclusions and trends emerging from the reviewed studies, highlighting consistent patterns and conflicting results.
- e. Theoretical grounding: Connecting the empirical findings to relevant theories or conceptual frameworks within the field of study.

### *An example of empirical literature review:*

"While numerous studies have investigated the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, most have focused on large organizations, leaving a gap in understanding how leadership behaviors impact motivation in small businesses. Our study will address this gap by examining the influence of transformational leadership on employee motivation within a sample of small enterprises using a quantitative survey design."

## Research Methodology

In a research proposal, Research Methodology outlines the approach and procedures that will be used to conduct the study. It describes how the researcher will collect, analyze and interpret data to answer the research questions or test the hypothesis.

Research Methodology allows readers to understand the validity and reliability of the research by outlining the chosen data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis techniques, and any relevant ethical considerations. A well-defined methodology demonstrates the researcher's understanding of the research topic and their ability to produce reliable results and by clearly describing the methods, other researchers can replicate the study to verify findings. Research methodology also provide transparency about the research process, allowing readers to replicate or evaluate the study. (Lai, 2024; Rosser & Soler, 2024; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Other relevant subtitles to include in a methodology section are:

### *Tools of Research Methodology:*

- a. Research Design: This refers to the detailed plan outlining the methods and procedures you will use to collect and analyze data in your study, essentially acting as a blueprint for how you will answer your research questions, including the study population, data collection techniques, and data analysis strategies. (It is the overall structure of the study, including whether it's experimental, observational, or survey-based).

- b. **Population of the Study:** This refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that the researcher wants to draw conclusions about, essentially the larger group from which a sample will be drawn to collect data for the study; it defines the specific characteristics and parameters of the individuals or elements that are relevant to the research objectives.
- c. **Sampling Strategy:** Explains how participants will be selected, including sampling techniques (e. g. random sampling, convenience sampling and sample size determination). (Tutar, et al., 2024).
- d. **Data Collection Methods:** Outlines the specific strategies and techniques the researcher will use to gather data for their study, including details like the type of data (quantitative or qualitative), chosen data collection methods (surveys, interviews, observations), sampling procedures, and any relevant data collection instruments used, all tailored to answer the research questions effectively.
- e. **Data Analysis Method:** Outlines the method of data analysis in a research proposal, whether it is statistical or analytical techniques including any software or tools employed.
- f. **Administration of the Instrument:** Explanation how the researcher plans to distribute and collect data using the chosen research instrument (like a questionnaire, rating scales, interview guide, or observation checklist) to their study participants, including the process of recruitment, data collection procedures, and any necessary ethical considerations involved.
- g. **Data quality control:** Explain measures taken to ensure data quality, such as data cleaning, validation, and consistency checks.
- h. **Ethics and informed consent:** Address ethical considerations and informed consent procedures for human subjects or animals involved in the study.
- i. **Timeframe and timeline:** Provide a detailed timeline for data collection and analysis to ensure that the study is feasible and realistic (Robson, 2024).

## Referencing

When citing references in a student research proposal, you should include a dedicated "References" section at the end of your proposal, listing all sources cited within the text, following the appropriate citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) and providing complete bibliographic information for each source, including author, publication year, title, publisher, and page numbers where applicable.

The key points to remember when referencing are:

- **Relevance:** Prioritize the most recent and relevant research articles, particularly from peer-reviewed journals, to demonstrate a strong understanding of the field.
- **Accuracy:** Double-check all bibliographic details to ensure correct author names, publication dates, and page numbers.
- **Consistency:** Use a consistent citation style throughout your proposal, adhering to the guidelines provided by your institution.

Example reference formats (APA style):

- **Journal article:**
  - Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article. Journal Title, Volume(Issue), Pages.
- **Book:**
  - Author, A. A. (Year). Title of book [Edition, if applicable]. Publisher.
- **Website:**
  - Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of webpage. Website URL.

Important elements to include in each reference:

- **Author(s):** Full name(s) of the author(s)
- **Publication year:** Year the source was published
- **Title:** Title of the article, book, or webpage
- **Publication information:** Journal title, volume, issue, publisher, website URL
- **Page numbers (if applicable):** Specific page numbers relevant to your citation.

## CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the key issues and steps in writing a research proposal. The major components of a proposal have been highlighted in this chapter. These include choosing a title, cover page of a proposal, introducing the research proposal, statement of the problem/problem statement, purpose of study, research questions, research objectives, rationale of study/justification of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, literature review, research methodology, chapter organization/outline, timeline and Gantt chart. These main elements of the research proposal were well articulated, indicating the critical roles played by each component in proposal writing. It is envisaged that this chapter on research proposal writing is to provide higher education students and researchers with the knowledge and skills they need to complete this important step in the research process. By providing clear and accessible guidance on developing the stated elements, this chapter focuses on empowering students and researchers to produce superior research proposals that have the potential to make some significant contribution to shaping the proposed research study.

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