

Writing Research Proposal

Guidelines

CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION
<p>Introductory Paragraphs</p>	<p>Chapter I begins with a few short introductory paragraphs (a couple of pages at most). The primary goal of the introductory paragraphs is to catch the attention of the readers and to get them "turned on" about the subject. It sets the stage for the paper and puts your topic in perspective. The introduction often contains dramatic and general statements about the need for the study. It uses dramatic illustrations or quotes to set the tone. When writing the introduction, put yourself in your reader's position – and then ask yourself, "would you continue reading?"</p>
<p>Statement of the Problem</p>	<p>The statement of the problem is the focal point of your research. It is just one sentence (with several paragraphs of elaboration).</p> <p>You are looking for something wrong. or something that needs close attention or existing methods that no longer seem to be working.</p> <p>Example of a problem statement:</p> <p>"The frequency of job layoffs is creating fear, anxiety, and a loss of productivity in middle management workers."</p> <p>While the problem statement itself is just one sentence, it is always accompanied by several paragraphs that elaborate on the problem. Present persuasive arguments why the problem is important enough to study. Include the opinions of others (politicians, futurists, other professionals). Explain how the problem relates to business, social or political trends by presenting data that demonstrates the scope and depth of the problem. Try to give dramatic and concrete illustrations of the problem. After writing this section, make sure you can easily identify the single sentence that is the problem statement.</p>
<p>Purpose of the study</p>	<p>The purpose of the study is a single statement or paragraph that explains what the study intends to accomplish.</p> <p>A few typical statements are:</p> <p>The goal of this study is to... ... overcome the difficulty with discover what understand the causes or effects of refine our current understanding of provide a new interpretation of understand what makes ___ successful or unsuccessful</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Significance of the Study</p>	<p>You can check if you've given enough credit to the significance. The following points can be helpful.</p> <p>This section creates a perspective for looking at the problem. It points out how your study relates to the larger issues and uses a persuasive rationale to justify the reason for your study. It makes the purpose worth pursuing. The significance of the study answers the questions:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Why is your study important?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To whom is it important?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What benefit(s) will occur if your study is done?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Research Questions and/or Hypotheses and/or Null Hypotheses</p>	<p>Chapter 1 lists the research questions (although it is equally acceptable to present the hypotheses or null hypotheses). No elaboration is included in this section.</p> <p>An example would be:</p> <p>The research questions for this study will be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the attitudes of... 2. Is there a significant difference between... 3. Is there a significant relationship between... <p>Or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Is there a significant impact of variable X on variable Y</p> <p>Hypothesis is mainly mono-directional or one-sided, i.e., either positive or negative</p> <p>An example would be: Method A is significantly (reliably) more effective than Method B.</p> <p>Null-hypothesis is basically neutral, so it is a two-way street.</p> <p>An example would be: There is no significant difference between the effectiveness of Method A and Method B. There is no significant relationship between X and Y</p>
<p>CHAPTER II</p>	<p>BACKGROUND</p>
	<p>Chapter II is a review of the literature. It is important because it shows what previous researchers have discovered. It is usually quite long and primarily depending upon how much research has previously been done in the area you are planning to investigate. If you are planning to explore a relatively new area, the literature review should cite similar areas of study or studies that lead up to the current research. Never say that your area is so new that no research exists. It is one of the key elements that proposal readers look at when deciding whether or not to approve a proposal.</p>

	<p>Chapter II should also contain a definition of terms section when appropriate. Include it if your paper uses special terms that are unique to your field of inquiry or that might not be understood by the general reader. "Operational definitions" (definitions that you have formulated for the study) should also be included. An example of an operational definition is: "For the purpose of this research, improvement is operationally defined as posttest score minus pretest score".</p>
CHAPTER III	METHODOLOGY
Introduction	<p>The methodology section describes your basic research plan. It usually begins with a few short introductory paragraphs that restate purpose and research questions. The phraseology should be identical to that used in Chapter I. Keep the wording of your research questions consistent throughout the document.</p>
Population and Sampling	<p>The basic research paradigm is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define the population 2) Draw a representative sample from the population 3) Do the research on the sample 4) Infer your results from the sample back to the population <p>As you can see, it all begins with a precise definition of the population. The whole idea of inferential research (using a sample to represent the entire population) depends upon an accurate description of the population. When you've finished your research and you make statements based on the results, who will they apply to? Usually, just one sentence is necessary to define the population. Examples are: "The population for this study is defined as all adult customers who make a purchase in our stores during the sampling time frame", or "...all home owners in the city of Minneapolis", or "...all potential consumers of our product".</p> <p>While the population can usually be defined by a single statement, the sampling procedure needs to be described in extensive detail. There are numerous sampling methods from which to choose. Describe in minute detail, how you will select the sample. Use specific names, places, times, etc. Don't omit any details. This is extremely important because the reader of the paper must decide if your sample will sufficiently represent the population.</p>
Instrumentation	<p>If you are using a survey that was designed by someone else, state the source of the survey. Describe the theoretical constructs that the survey is attempting to measure. Include a copy of the actual survey in the appendix and state that a copy of the survey is in the appendix.</p>
Procedure and time frame	<p>State exactly when the research will begin and when it will end. Describe any special procedures that will be followed (e.g.,</p>

	instructions that will be read to participants, presentation of an informed consent form, etc.).
Analysis plan	<p>The analysis plan should be described in detail. Each research question will usually require its own analysis. Thus, the research questions should be addressed one at a time followed by a description of the type of statistical tests that will be performed to answer that research question. Be specific. State what variables will be included in the analyses and identify the dependent and independent variables if such a relationship exists. Decision making criteria (e.g., the critical alpha level) should also be stated, as well as the computer software that will be used.</p>
Validity and reliability	<p>If the questionnaire, survey, or test you're using was designed by someone else, then describe the previous validity and reliability assessments. When using an existing instrument, you'll want to perform the same reliability measurement as the author of the instrument. If you've developed your own survey, then you must describe the steps you took to assess its validity and a description of how you will measure its reliability.</p> <p>Validity refers to the accuracy or truthfulness of a measurement. Are we measuring what we think we are? There are no statistical tests to measure validity. All assessments of validity are subjective opinions based on the judgment of the researcher. Nevertheless, there are at least three types of validity that should be addressed and you should state what steps you took to assess validity.</p> <p>Face validity refers to the likelihood that a question will be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Pretesting a survey is a good way to increase the likelihood of face validity. One method of establishing face validity is described here. How to make sure your survey is valid.</p> <p>Content validity refers to whether an instrument provides adequate coverage of a topic. Expert opinions, literature searches, and pretest open-ended questions help to establish content validity.</p> <p>Construct validity refers to the theoretical foundations underlying a particular scale or measurement. It looks at the underlying theories or constructs that explain a phenomenon. In other words, if you are using several survey items to measure a more global construct (e.g., a subscale of a survey), then you should describe why you believe the items comprise a construct. If a construct has been identified by previous researchers, then describe the criteria they used to validate the construct. A technique known as confirmatory factor analysis is often used to explore how individual survey items contribute to an overall construct measurement.</p> <p>Reliability is synonymous with repeatability or stability. A measurement that yields consistent results over time is said to be reliable. When a measurement is prone to random error, it lacks reliability.</p>

	<p>There are three basic methods to test reliability: test-retest, equivalent form, and internal consistency. Most research uses some form of internal consistency. When there is a scale of items all attempting to measure the same construct, then we would expect a large degree of coherence in the way people answer those items. Various statistical tests can measure the degree of coherence. Another way to test reliability is to ask the same question with slightly different wording in different parts of the survey. The correlation between the items is a measure of their reliability.</p>
Assumptions	<p>All research studies make assumptions. The most obvious is that the sample represents the population. The other common assumptions are that an instrument has validity and is measuring the desired constructs. Still another is that respondents will answer a survey truthfully. The important point is for the researcher to state specifically what assumptions are being made.</p>
Scope and limitations	<p>All research studies also have limitations and a finite scope. Limitations are often imposed by time and budget constraints. Precisely list the limitations of the study. Describe the extent to which you believe the limitations degrade the quality of the research.</p>
CHAPTER IV	RESULTS
Description of the sample	<p>Nearly all research collects various demographic information. It is important to report the descriptive statistics of the sample because it lets the reader decide if the sample is truly representative of the population.</p>
Analyses	<p>The analyses section is cut and dry. It precisely follows the analysis plan laid out in Chapter III. Each research question addressed individually. For each research question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Restate the research question using the exact wording as in Chapter I 2) If the research question is testable, state the null hypothesis 3) State the type of statistical test(s) performed 4) Report the statistics and conclusions, followed by any appropriate table(s) <p>Numbers and tables are not self-evident. If you use tables or graphs, refer to them in the text and explain what they say. An example is: "Table 4 shows a strong negative relationship between delivery time and customer satisfaction ($r=-.72$, $p=.03$)". All tables and figures have a number and a descriptive heading. For example:</p> <p>Table 4 The relationship between delivery time and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Avoid the use of trivial tables or graphs. If a graph or table does not add new information (i.e., information not explained in the text), then don't include it. Simply present the results. Do not attempt to explain the results in this chapter.</p>

CHAPTER V	CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS
Preamble	Begin the final chapter with a few paragraphs summarizing what you did and found (i.e., the conclusions from Chapter IV).
Discussion	Discuss the findings. Do your findings support existing theories? Explain why you think you found what you did. Present plausible reasons why the results might have turned out the way they did.
Recommendations	Present recommendations based on your findings. Avoid the temptation to present recommendations based on your own beliefs or biases that are not specifically supported by your data. Recommendations fall into two categories. The first is recommendations to the study sponsor. What actions do you recommend they take based upon the data. The second is recommendations to other researchers. There are almost always ways that a study could be improved or refined. What would you change if you were to do your study over again? These are the recommendations to other researchers.
References	List references in APA format alphabetically by author's last name
Appendix	Include a copy of any actual instruments. If used, include a copy of the informed consent form.

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