

# RESEARCH PROPOSAL- PROCEDURE AND COMPONENTS

**Ms. Aksha Memon**

*University of Mumbai, Andheri west, Mumbai, India*

## **Abstract**

***A research proposal is a pre-written document which gives an overview of the research tactics. It gives a general idea of the objectives to be achieved and the ways and means to achieve it. Writing research proposal is however a challenging feat. Due to lack of clear guidance from any source, there are many sub-standard research proposals which are placed before evaluation committee. The researcher came across various people who had no clear understanding of the process and structure of research proposal or research design. This problem has led the researcher to develop a framework to guide the prospective researchers in framing their research design based on the following research questions. 1) what is the procedure of writing the research proposal 2) what are the components of the research proposal. So, to give a clear picture about the problem the paper is divided into two parts I) Procedure of writing the research proposal II) Components of the research proposal. The procedure for writing the research proposal is discussed with regards to: 1) Identifying the problem 2) Deciding on the topic 3) Deciding the locale of study 4) Deciding on the data needs 5) Planning the source of data collection 6) Plotting down ways to collect data 7) Identifying methods for analyzing data collection 8) Establishing a basis for designing the Proposal. While the components of research proposal are discussed with regards to : 1) Cover page 2) Abstract 3) Keywords 4) Introduction 5) Review of literature 6) Statement of problem 7) Objectives of the study 8) Hypothesis of the study 9) Period of study 10) Methodology 11) Data analysis 12) Limitation of the study 13) Chapter framework 14) References 15) Appendices.***

***Keyword: Research Proposal, Attributes, Process, Structure, Guidelines***

## **1. BACKGROUND AND PROLOGUE**

Research as the word itself says to research something which already exists. It is response to a query. (William, 1976) points out that "it is an organised inquiry". Research leads to inferences, finding of universal laws and enhances knowledge on the concerned area under discussion. The basic objectives (Kalkoti, 2016) of research are 1) to identify problems and solutions thereupon 2) to validate the existing laws 3) to acquire pertinent information 4) to propagate new theories 5) to forecast future happenings 6) to establish inter-relationships 7) to bring out new thoughts 8) to add to the wealth of knowledge 9) to verify implementation and recommendations 10) to assess the success of implemented recommendations.

A research proposal is a pre-written document which gives an overview of the research tactics. It gives a general idea of the objectives to be achieved and the ways and means to achieve it. "It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data" (Bernard, 1966). As we know a very famous saying first impression is the last impression a research proposal creates the first impression so research proposal should create the best impression as the project or student would be selected on the basis of this document. Research proposal plays a very important role in creating the overall impression about the research project. "A research proposal usually consists of the sections including introductory, literature review, research design, research method, data analysis and protection of human subject section, and timeline." (Gall & Gall, 1996)

A research proposal also known as research design is a plan which provides a layout of the study to be

conducted. Basically the research design should be able to answer the following questions:

1)	What are you researching	6)	How much time you will require for study
2)	Why are you researching	7)	From Whom will you collect data i.e Sample
3)	Where will you research	8)	What would be the ways and means of data collection
4)	What would be your data requirement	9)	How will you evaluate the data
5)	Where will you find the data	10)	What would be style of report

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

“Research is a systematic and critical investigation into a phenomenon”(Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2007) which is a long and methodical process. The researcher came across various people who had no clear understanding of the process and structure of research proposal or research design. This problem has led the researcher to develop a framework to guide the prospective researchers in framing their research design based on the following research questions. 1) what is the procedure of writing the research proposal 2) what are the components of the research proposal. This paper is basically being presented with a view to give a basic understanding of the process of research design and the structure or layout of the research proposal. So, to give a clear picture about the problem the paper is divided into two parts I) Procedure of writing the research proposal II) Components of the research proposal

## 3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

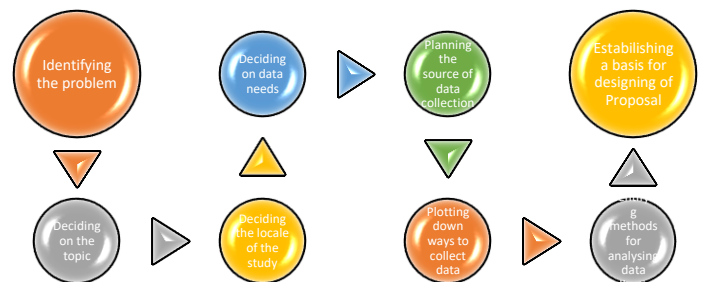
In this study we would discuss significant considerations in the development of Research Proposal. This piece of article will provide as a guide to aspiring researchers about the procedure and components of the research proposal. As in the initial stage to present the proposal about the study there are no instruction provided this article is formed with a viewpoint of providing a guide

to researchers in various faculties who are new in the research field. This study will help the prospective researchers in getting the general idea about the designing and the basic meaning of research terms. It will give a direction and help in easy implementation of the technical terms.

## 4. PART I

### 4.1. Procedure of writing the research proposal

Figure 1: Source prepared by researcher



#### 4.1.1. Identifying the problem

Identification of the problem is the very initial stage for the research. In general, a research problem should be understood as some complexity, vague state of affairs which a researcher experiences and wants to obtain a concrete clarification, explanation or offer answer to it. For the researcher the problem may be as a result of his own experience, or his colleague’s experience in the area of specialization. Before starting or deciding on any research, a researcher should first decide on the major area of interest mostly the area in which a researcher is specialized. For example: Social Sciences, Humanities etc.

#### 4.1.2. Deciding on the topic

Decision on the topic is very important to take the study further. Once you have decided on the major area of interest the next step is to narrow it down. For example in Social Sciences it could belong to any of its branch that is Commerce, Management, Accountancy and so on. Start with reading and searching as many articles and books on the problems which you have identified to get a broader perspective to the problems. Ideally after aggressive reading and understanding a rough topic can be decided upon. In the beginning researcher

should identify two topics for from the identified research problems and then he should evaluate the topics based on various factors like resources, importance, value, genuineness, credibility, etc. One of the joys and privileges of research is being able to follow your curiosity; if you are truly curious about your topic, and authentically driven to find out as much as you can, then even the articles you don't find interesting will be useful for a future project, and no energy will be wasted. (Cunningham)

#### ***4.1.3. Deciding the locale of study***

Decision on the locale of the study is very important. In short deciding where the study will be carried out, as deciding the locale will help the researcher get more idea about the problem. Locale is nothing but the geographic location of the conduct of the study. The researcher needs to roughly figure out the locale for example a) Study relating to particular organization b) Study relating to specific human beings c) Study pertaining to some territorial area like Mumbai, Delhi, or Andheri, Dadar, etc

#### ***4.1.4. Deciding on the data needs***

Exploring for answers of research query is called collection of data. A broad analysis of data needs to be decided which can later be narrow down depending on the nature, scope and purpose of study. The researcher also needs to consider the resources available like time limit of the study and funds available for the study while deciding the data needs. The importance, adequacy and consistency of data determine the quality of the study. Major components of the study are dependent on the data collection. The measurement, analysis, testing and conclusions cannot be instituted without data. The researcher needs to note down the data which the study would require.

#### ***4.1.5. Planning the source of data collection***

Data can be collected from two sources a) Primary source b) Secondary source.

**Primary sources** are the sources from where the researcher collects the data. Primary data are initial furnished information collected through various methods such as Surveying, Interviewing, Observation, Experiences, and Experiments etc

**Secondary sources** are the sources where the data are already collected, analyzed and presented for some other reason. "The secondary sources consist of readily available compendia and already compiled statistical statements and reports whose data may be used by the researchers for their studies, e.g. census reports, annual reports and financial statements of companies, statistical statements, reports of Government Departments, Annual reports on currency etc."(Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2007)

The researcher needs to decide the sources depending on his data needs. A rough plan of data needs to be planned out by the researcher which can be modified later.

#### ***4.1.6. Plotting down ways to collect data***

Ways of collection of data would vary depending on the study for example if the researcher wants to find out the preference of the customer and the reason for the same so a questionnaire method can be used and simultaneously interview method can be implemented. The researcher needs to make a sketch of how the data would be collected.

#### ***4.1.7. Identifying methods for analyzing data collection:***

Analyzing the data refers to compiling the raw data in clear, comprehensible, logical, explicable manner so that it is easily understandable and can draw inferences. It can be in the form of tables, graphs, Charts, Diagrams, etc. The researcher needs to identify the method in which the data would be analyzed there are various ways of method of data analysis like :

- a. Measures of central tendency – Mean, Median, Mode, Geometric mean,
- b. Measures of Dispersion – Ranges, Deviation, Standard Deviation
- c. Measures of relation – Factor analysis, Correlation, Regression, Chi-Square
- d. Analysis of Variance – ANOVO, MANOVA, and analysis of covariance
- e. Time series analysis - Trend analysis, Cyclical analysis, Seasonal analysis, Erratic variation

#### **4.1.8. Establishing a basis for designing the Proposal**

Once the above elements are decided designing of proposal can be started. Designing the proposal requires a thoughtful and considerate approach. For understanding how the proposal should be written it is advisable for the researcher to read proposal of other researchers. The proposals are easily available on the internet or the researcher can go through the first chapter of the thesis which is generally the research proposal. The only point the researcher should keep in mind is the Research proposal will be in future tense where as the thesis chapter will be in past tense because the research proposal is what the researcher intends to do and the chapter is what the researcher has already done for e.g : The research proposal will have the sentence "The researcher intends to use ANOVO, Trend analysis etc for analysis of the data" Whereas the First chapter of thesis will have the statement "The researcher have used ANOVO, Trend analysis for analysis of data"

### **5.PART II**

#### **5.1. Components of Research Proposal**

##### **5.1.1. Cover page**

A document with a cover page looks more professional .Official documents generally have a cover page.Research paper cover page is the opening to your research project. The cover page can be considered as the actual introduction of the research study.This is one of thatattributeof every academic research project in which the readerswill get a first and lasting impression about the researcher, but which they will use to establish the value of the content of your research study. The research project cover page offers anopportunity of presenting work in a proficientapproach. There are many ways of presenting the cover page of research study. The type of cover page will depend on the research project style used by the researcher. For example, you can write using the MLA research paper format or the APA research paper format and all these will present different or similar ways of writing the cover page.

**MLA Page format:**(Academictips.org)

- This page is double spaced and the letters are centered.

- Type the name of your university or college.
- Skip to about one-third of the page and type your research paper title, include a subtitle if you have.
- Skip several lines down and type your name, your course name and number, your instructor name.

**APA Page format:** (Academictips.org, <https://academictips.org/mla-format/apa-format-title-page/>)

**Running head:** Place the running head in your page's header:

- use label "Running head:" then your shortened title (IN UPPERCASE LETTERS), align left
- place the page number in this same header, but align right, begin with page number 1
- this header should be 1 inch from the top. Some teachers say 1/2 inch is okay too.

- **Paper title:** Place your paper's title in the upper half of the page, centered, capitalize the first letter of important words in your title.
- **Name:**Place your name below your paper's title, centered, double-space. If your paper has two or more authors, place the word "and" without quote between the names.
- **Subject :** Subject of your research.e.g Commerce, Accounts etc
- **University:** Place your University's name below your name, double-space.
- **Research Guide:** Put the name of research guide and his education qualification



Source : 1) <https://academictips.org/mla-format/mla-format-cover-page/>

2) <https://academictips.org/mla-format/apa-format-title-page/>

### 5.1.2. Abstract

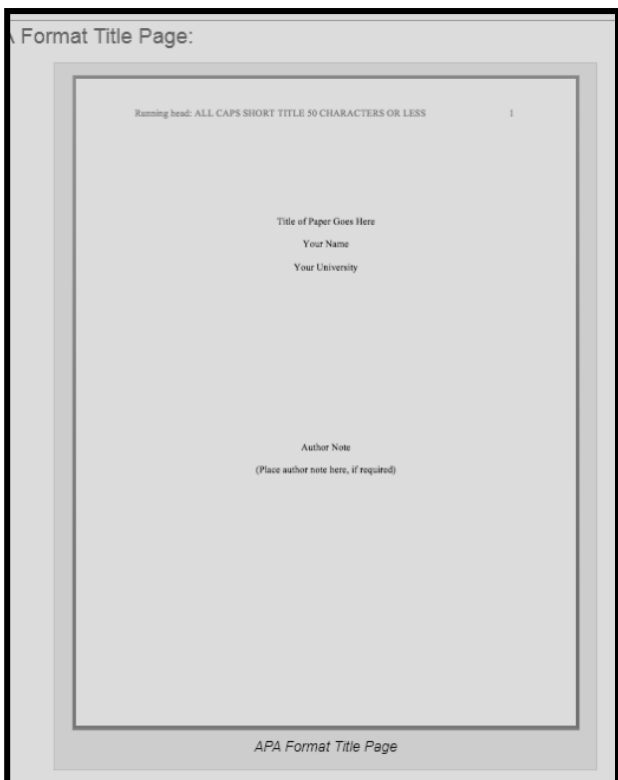
Abstract is the summary of entire research paper. It is placed first in the research paper but it is usually prepared last after the completion of the research proposal as it will be easier to acquire clarity about the process. It gives a general idea of the entire research project. The abstract is usually of 250-300 words but sometimes it can be of more words. The abstract should answer the questions like What, Why, When and How. The abstract speaks for the research proposal. To provide the necessary meaning of the proposal, the abstract should go over the main points covering the importance of the work, the hypothesis and major objectives of the project, the measures to be followed to accomplish the objectives, and the potential impact of the work.

The research proposal abstract should have the following content:

- a) Introduction
- b) Objectives of the study
- c) Problem statement
- d) Data source
- e) Methodology
- f) Findings
- g) Conclusion

### 5.1.3. Keywords

Keywords are the soul of the research proposal. Keywords are used to get more citations to the study, and the study can be easily searched through web with the help of Keywords. It highlights what the study is all about. Approximately 5-8 Keywords are required. Hence, it is very necessary to include keywords in proposal.



### **Steps to create relevant and effective keywords for your study:**

1. Search for words from the reader's point of view. Try to analyse the keywords which you would search as a reader and retrieve an article.
2. Keywords can be single words or phrases of 2-4 words which are important words in your research.
3. Keywords should contain words and phrases that relate to the topic. It can also include words and phrases that are closely associated to your topic. (For example, use words like blood, circulatory system stroke etc, if the study is about heart diseases.
4. Also use different terms or phrases that retrievers are likely to use (For example, Use words like spinal cord, vertebral column, backbone etc, if the paper is about spine disorders)
5. Abbreviations or acronyms should be included as well.

#### **5.1.4. Introduction**

The introduction can be the most challenging part of the paper to inscribe. In the beginning try to catch the attentions of the reader by starting with something fascinating like a quote or sayings. An introduction should broadcast the theme of the study; provide background and a rationale for research work, before research questions and hypothesis. Well-written introductions set the tone for the paper, catch the reader's interest, and communicate the hypothesis or thesis statement. The key aim of introduction is to introduce to the reader the purpose of your research. One cannot start with evidence, thoughts, opinion without clarification of what is the topic about. In the introduction, the researcher must indicate the hypothesis of the study. One must explain the requisite of the research, its urgency. The researcher must do immense background research on the topic. Do not start writing an introduction without having a thorough understanding about the problem that you are going to study. Prepare for introduction by analyzing facts available online and making notes of the same. Start with broader prospective and conclude by narrowing the topic. Some researchers include review of literature in the introduction while some place it separately that can vary depending on the researcher.

#### **5.1.5. Review of literature**

The LITERATURE REVIEW is an abstract of previous search on a subject. It is a process of locating, obtaining, reading and evaluating the literature in the area of interest. (Bordens & Abbott, 2007) The literature review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to a particular area of research or interest. Within the review the author provides a description, summary and critical evaluation of each source, i.e. the strengths and weaknesses. The literature review may also identify gaps or controversies in the literature and topics needing further research. The format of the literature review may vary from discipline to discipline, and from assignment to assignment, but the purpose is standard: critical analysis of a body of knowledge through summation and comparison. The literature review provides the historical background for your research; describes issues, debates, theories, concepts and related research in the field; and shows how your research will extend these or address a gap.

#### **Content of Review of literature:**

- a) Introduction
- b) Body
- c) Conclusions

#### **Procedure for literature review**

- 1) Reading the resources critically
- 2) Careful analysis of the content
- 3) Reviewing the content
- 4) Making a small abstract of the content reviewed

The abstract of Review may include a small introduction of the researcher and the topic, the research problems or objectives, hypothesis framed, methods of testing the hypothesis, procedure for analysis and findings and conclusions. Most importantly the researcher can go through the reference section of the article, book and find other sources for review of the topic.

### **5.1.6. Statement of problem**

The key stage of research is the initial understanding of the problem. Research begins with problem identification. Research problems are the statements which led the researcher to research. "Research problems do not come from nowhere, it lies in researchers personal biographies and their social contexts. The decision about the research problem depends on the researchers' practical interests and their involvement in certain social and historical context."(UWE, 2009 ).The problem needs to be stated with clear logic in a lucid manner for a lay reader to understand. The precise area of the examination should be properly given and justified. Once the problem is identified suggest the possible beneficiaries from your study. For framing Problem Statement focus on W's: "What", "When", "Who", "Where" and "Why". Drafting of research problem would require constant review. The more you read the better the problem would be understood and drafted.

### **5.1.7. Objectives of the study**

Study objectives define the specific aims of the study and should be clearly stated. The significance of research objective is they not only guide in following the procedure and design of the study but also in determining the universe and sample for the study. Problems, Objectives and Hypothesis are interrelated. Statement of problem serves as the goal of the researcher; the objectives provide appropriate description of achieving those goals. Try to make objectives in one sentence. The objectives should consists of one infinite sentence and be framed in a way that it help in drawing conclusions within the scope of the study. More accurately the objectives are framed; simpler it will be to describe the study type and the methods to be used. "You can refine your specific objective by clearly stating if your given action is to understand, analyse or create – in tune with the hierarchy of learning objectives and the key to the assessment of knowledge content as found in for example Bloom's taxonomy. In this way, your specific objectives will signal your level of ambition as well as where you will place the greatest effort in your thesis" (Online)

### **5.1.8. Hypothesis of the study**

The word hypothesis is derived from the Greek word "*hypotithenai*" which means "to put under". A research hypothesis is a statement of anticipation or forecast that will be tested by research. In other words hypothesis is a tentative statement that relates to a set of specifics about an observable situation existing in a given field.

Prior to formulation of research hypothesis, study about the subject of interest. Through reading of the subject, which may include articles, books, cases,thesis etc. gain adequate information about the topic narrow or get it to the point and articulate it as a research question. The research question comes out from the topic that you are taking into consideration. The research question, when presented as one sentence, becomes Research Hypothesis.It has two elements (variables) that are in relation to each other. Each hypothesis should contain the population of interest, Independent variable (s), Dependant Variable (s), and comparison of interest all of which should lead to the outcome of the study.Remember that, within the word "hypothesis" is the word "thesis." The entire thesis revolves around hypothesis.The hypothesis is what you offer to "prove" by research. Hypothesis must have a problem or question that cannot be answered solely by the discipline of law.All the terms used in hypothesis statement must be clearly stated and defined. This won't be your final hypothesis; it may be modified over time as the study moves ahead.

Points to be remembered while framing Hypothesis:

- Should be realistic.
- Should be understandable.
- Should be noteworthy.
- Should be ethical.
- Should be worth of investigating
- Should add information & value to the field
- Should improve educational practices
- Improve the human condition,
- Should be unique

### **5.1.9. Period of study**

Period of study consists of tentative time the study would take. Basically this place shows the duration of the data that would be collected.

### **5.1.10. Methodology**

Methodology plays a very important part in the research project it is very essential to plan out the methodology in the beginning of the research project. It is not necessary that the methods should be shown completely but a rough idea of methodological needs to be given in this section. There are various methods of research; the selection of the methods should be done properly as an incorrect method will lead to an inaccurate results. This in turn will lead to wrong interpretation of analysis. This section must properly explain the reason for choosing a particular procedure or technique and how it fits to the project

### **5.1.11. Data analysis**

Data analysis is a process of analyzing, demonstrating and evaluating data by applying some statistical tools. This particularly states the way in which the data collected will be tested. In the research proposal the researcher should mention the tools and techniques or methods of data analysis. There are various methods of data analysis and it varies depending upon the type of research i.e qualitative and quantitative analysis. "In qualitative researches using interviews, focus groups, experiments etc. data analysis is going to involve identifying common patterns within the responses and critically analyzing them in order to achieve research aims and objectives. Data analysis for quantitative studies, on the other hand, involves critical analysis and interpretation of figures and numbers, and attempts to find rationale behind the emergence of main findings. Comparisons of primary research findings to the findings of the literature review are critically important for both types of studies – qualitative and quantitative. Data analysis methods in the absence of primary data collection can involve discussing common patterns, as well as, controversies within secondary data directly related to the research area" (Dudovskiy, 2018).

### **5.1.12. Limitation of the study**

A researcher knows what resources are required for high-quality results, but if the researcher is not able to get all the resources and areas of coverage those become the limitation of the study. Listing out limitation do not give a negative impact on the reader, in fact it gives a room for other researchers to focus on those areas. Your limitation can become others persons Inspiration. On the other hand the supervisor also will understand that the researcher has critically thought about the product and before the supervisor could point out the researcher must list it to show the honesty.

### **5.1.13. Chapter framework**

It is the way the researcher intends to present the chapter in the thesis or dissertation. This section will have the detail about various chapters and the presentation of the same.

### **5.1.14. Bibliography**

This section consists of a complete list of work of other researcher that has been cited. The researcher while reading should keep a track of all the books, journals, online sources and later present the same below in the proposal. There are various formats which can be used like APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian etc. But most commonly used are APA and MLA format.

**a) APA (American Psychological Association):** This style of citation is used mostly in Social science. The page of citation is usually titled as "References". The titles in this style are usually in italics and important words are capitalized. In this style last name of author is used and only initials of first name are used. The text in citation used has name and year of publication with commas being used.

**b) MLA (Modern Language Association):** This style is commonly used in Humanities. The source page is named as "Works Cited". This style has titles underlined and all major words are capitalized. In this form the entire name of author is used, whereas the in text citation uses the name and page number without commas.

### **5.1.15. Appendices:**



Appendices are annexure that validate the text matter in the research proposal. This is generally used for letters of association and reprints of relevant articles if they are not available electronically. It can also consist tables, surveys, questionnaire, data collection instruments etc. It is usually named as A, B, C etc.

## 6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study gives an overview of general components of research proposal. The design of the research proposal can vary depending on the type of study. This structure won't be suitable for case study method.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In summary, the research proposal should present and justify the need to study a research problem, ways in which the research problem will be studied, and the tentative outcome of the study.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]Academictips.org. (n.d.).  
<https://academictips.org/mla-format/apa-format-title-page/>.
- [2]Academictips.org. (n.d.).  
<https://academictips.org/mla-format/apa-format-title-page/>.
- [3] Bernard, P. (1966). *Social Research strategy and Tactics* . London: Macmillillian publishing co., 2nd Edition .
- [4] Bordens, K. S., & Abbott, B. B. (2007). *Research Design and Methods*. Singapore: Mc.Graw-Hill.
- [5] Cunningham, N. (n.d.). Choosing and Narrowing a Topic to Write About (for Research Papers). *Tutorial* ,  
<https://www.sophia.org/tutorials/choosing-and-narrowing-a-topic-to-write-about-for> .
- [6] Dudovskiy, J. (2018). *E- Book The ultimate guide to write a dissertation in business studies*. Research Methodology.net.
- [7] Gall, M. B., & Gall, J. (1996). *Educational Research: An introduction* . White Plains: NY: Longman (sixth edition).
- [8] Kalkoti, G. (2016). *Research Methods For Business*. Mumbai : Sheth Publisher.

[9] Krishnaswami, O. R., & Ranganatham, M. (2007). *Methodology of Research in social sciences* . Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House .

[10] Online. <http://betterthesis.dk/getting-started/short-synopsis>.

[11] UWE, F. (2009 ). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. New Delhi: Sage Publication India Pvt. Ltd.

[12] William, E. (1976). *Business Research Methods*. Homewood: Illinios: Richard D. Irwin.