Lecture Notes

# Chapter 5: How to Write a Research Proposal

## Learning Objectives

* 1. Answer in some depth the question “What is a research proposal?”
  2. Specify the components that must be included in a research proposal.
  3. Specify the kind of content included in each of the major components of a research proposal.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter prepares students to write a research proposal. Students will learn about the components of the proposal as well as strategies for writing

## Annotated Chapter Outline

1. The research proposal
   1. Is used to move the research idea to a research study
   2. Rationale for the study as well as thinking through each step of the study
2. Framework of the research proposal
   1. **Research proposal:** the written document that
      1. Summarizes prior literature
      2. Describes the procedure to be used to answer the research question(s)
   2. Used for multiple purposes
      1. Thesis or dissertation
      2. Grants and other funding sources
      3. Institutional Review Board review for use of human subjects.
   3. Different guidelines for different purposes.
      1. Table 5.1: different structures for proposals as indicated by their headings
   4. Discussion Question: Why might research proposal guidelines differ for different research purposes?
3. Strategies for Writing Each Section of the Research Proposal
   1. **Introduction:** the section that introduces the research topic and establishes its importance and significance.
      1. The purpose of this section is to introduce the research idea, establish its importance, and explain its significance.
      2. Start with a general introduction that defines the research topic and demonstrates its importance
      3. Next, review the relevant research literature
      4. Literature review should lead directly to a statement of purpose for the study and the research question(s).
      5. Discussion Question: Discuss the relationship among the introduction, statement of purpose for the study, and the research questions.
   2. **Method**: The section in a research proposal or report that tells the reader about the research design and the method(s) of data collection.
      1. Provides a written description of the specific actions, plan, or strategy the researcher will take to answer the research questions.
      2. It includes information about the proposed
         1. Research participants
         2. Design
         3. Apparatus or instruments
         4. Procedure
      3. Discussion Question: How does each section of the method section of a proposal relate to the purpose of the method section?
   3. **Research Participants:** the individuals who participate in the research study
      1. In the subsection of the method section, entitled “participants,” the researcher provides a written description of the individuals who will participate in the research study and how they will be recruited.
      2. Be sure to specify the following:
         1. Their demographic characteristics such as age and gender.
         2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria that will be used.
         3. Any inducements for participation that the researcher is planning to use.
         4. Where the participants are located
      3. Discussion question: Why is it important to describe the research participants in a research proposal?
   4. **Design:** The section in a research proposal or report that presents the plan or strategy used to investigate the research question(s)
      1. A separate design section must be included if the design is complicated.
      2. Often not needed for qualitative studies
      3. Strongly suggested to be used with mixed methods studies
      4. The following is included in the design section:
         1. Type of design and design layout of the study (e.g., a pretest–posttest control-group design).
         2. Description of all the variables being examined in the study.
         3. Description of how the variables are to be combined.
         4. Description of the points of measurement and manipulation in the design.
      5. Discussion Question: Review the information that must be included in the design section. Why is this information important?
   5. Apparatus and/or Instruments:
      1. Describe any apparatus and/or instruments he or she proposes to use in the research study.
      2. Picture may be helpful to diagram the study
      3. Include
         1. General description of the apparatus or instruments
         2. Variables measured by instruments
         3. Reliability and validity of instruments
         4. Why the instruments or apparatus are used.
         5. Reference indicating where apparatus or instruments can be obtained.
         6. Justification of why each is being used.
      4. Discussion Question: Review the information that must be included in the apparatus and/or instruments section. Why is this information important?
   6. **Procedure:** the section in a research proposal or report that describes how the study will be executed.
      1. If no separate design section, the research study design is described here.
      2. Detailed step-by-step description of how the study will be executed.
      3. The reader should know exactly what the researcher intends to do after reading this description. It should include enough information to tell the reader how to conduct the study if he or she wanted to replicate it.
      4. Discussion Question: What is the purpose of the Procedure section?
   7. **Data Analysis**: describes how the researcher proposes to analyze the data he or she plans on collecting.
      1. A quantitative study will use some type of statistical analysis. The researcher needs to specify those analyses.
      2. In a qualitative study, there is no one or “right” way of analyzing the data. The researcher must explain the approach he or she proposes to use and justify its use. In general, qualitative analysis will involve coding and searching for relationships and patterns in qualitative data.
      3. Mixed methods research studies explain proposed quantitative and qualitative analyses as well as integrated analyses that are planned.
      4. Discussion Question: Compare and contrast the analysis strategies used in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research.
   8. **Abstract:** a brief description of the essential characteristics of the study.
      1. Required in completed research studies; it is an optional section in a research proposal.
         1. Students will need to determine whether one is needed in their cases.
      2. Elements
         1. Concise statement of research hypothesis or research questions.
         2. Statement of expected number and characteristics of participants.
         3. Brief summary of procedure or way data will be collected.
         4. Brief statement of how the researcher will analyze results.
      3. Discussion Question: Have students debate the pros and cons of including an abstract in a research proposal.
4. Strategies for Evaluating your Research Proposal
   1. Carefully and critically evaluate it
   2. Technical quality
   3. Accuracy and clarity
   4. Future tense