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COURSE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY SEMINAR (RMS)

UNIT: HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Background of the Study
3. Statement of the Problem
4. Aims of the Study
5. Research Questions and Hypotheses
6. Research Methodology
7. Relevance and Significance of the Study
8. Structure of the Dissertation
9. Operational Definitions
10. List of References
11. Title
12. Language

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1. Introduction

Conducting a research study starts with a vague notion.

A **vague notion** → the formulation of a **researchable idea** and a set of specific **research questions** ↘ ↗ a **research study**

the development of a **research proposal**

2. Background of the Study

The problem statement is usually preceded by an introductory section about the background of the study. This part should include:

- A short review of the literature about key debates and developments in the field;
- A reference to a gap in current research to demonstrate that the topic being tackled is worthy of attention.

3. Statement of the Problem

Create← **C. A. R. S.** →**S**pace

↓ ↓

a **R**esearch

The problem addressed by a study should be clearly stated with:

- enough contextual detail and
- enough evidence

(hence the importance of doing a **preliminary study**)

In other words, in this section, the student researcher should answer two major questions:

1. What is the problem being investigated?
2. Why is it worth investigating?

4. Aims of the Study

This section is about what the student researcher wants to:

- analyse;
- investigate;
- examine;
- prove;
- test;
- demonstrate; etc.

There is/are (a) major aim(s) or focus(ci) and secondary or deriving aims

Where appropriate, the student should state not only what will be studied, but also what will be excluded from the study.

5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions point out that the research is adequately narrow and feasible.

The hypotheses are clear statements that the research is designed to test; they are not mandatory in some researches as exploratory qualitative studies.

Research **Topic**→	Research **Problem**→	Research **Purpose**→	Research **Question**→	Research **Hypothesis**
the broad subject matter area	the issue within a broad topic area	a statement of the intent	asking about the relation between variables (quantitative research) or about the issue to be explored (qualitative research)	a prediction of the relation that exists among the variables (quantitative research)

- **Quantitative** vs. **Qualitative** research

  - Quantitative research → quantitative or numerical data
  - Qualitative research → nonnumerical data such as words and pictures
  - Mixed research → both numerical and nonnumerical data

  - Qualitative research →1 or 2 research questions
  - Quantitative research →1 or 2 research questions and hypotheses
  - Mixed methods researches →depending on their aims

- A quantitative research question may be:
  - **Descriptive**: "How much …?", "How often …?", "What changes …?" or "What is the relationship between (variable 1) and (variable 2) …?"
  - **Predictive:** Does (variable 1) predict (variable 2) …?
  - **Causal**: Does change in (variable 1) produce change in (variable 2)?

- A qualitative research question:
  - is **general**, open-ended, and all-embracing.
  - is to a great extent, a restatement of the purpose of the study
  - should be narrowed to more **specific questions** which provide a specific focus to the study

6. Research Methodology: Design and Procedure

In this section, the student researcher should answer two main questions:

1. How is the research going to be conducted? i.e., describing **how to collect** data
2. How are the research findings going to be analysed? i.e., specifying **how to analyse** data.

Design → Plan/Strategy
What the researcher intends to do **+ the order** in which s/he intends to do it.

Procedure → how to **implement** the study design
→ **step-by-step** account of what both the researcher and the research participant will do: **sampling** procedure
what research **tool(s)**, **material(s)**to be used and **when**

The research methodology and tools chosen should be justified:

- Qualitative vs. Quantitative research
- (Quasi)Experimental vs. Non-Experimental research
- Tools: tests, questionnaires, inventories, interview procedures, observational procedures
- Materials: booklets, textbooks and manuals

(Reliability and validity are the two most important psychometric properties to consider when using a research tool)

As stated above, the student researcher might refer to the **timetable** to be followed.

An equally important point to discuss is the **population** and the **sample** of participants.

-***who*** the research participants will be
-***how many*** will participate (sample size)
-***their characteristics*** (e.g., age, gender, educational level, social background)
-***how*** they will be selected (sampling procedure)

The analysis of the findings depends on the type of the research paradigm and the research tools adopted; different procedures are used in different contexts.

- Quantitative study → statistical **tests**.
- Qualitative study → **coding** and searching for **categories**, relationships and patterns until a holistic picture emerges

7. Relevance and Significance of the Study

In this section, the student researcher should state why it is important or significant to do this research, and how the latter builds on the current state of knowledge in the field.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

A dissertation is organised in chapters; **chapters** are divided into **sections** and sections into **sub-sections**. The content and purpose of each part are to be described at this stage of the research proposal.

9. Operational Definitions

i.e., definition of key terms and concepts in the work.

10. List of References

This list should include key articles and books that are relevant to the present research, with a particular focus on recent ones.

11. Title

The title should be concise; it should point to the variables of the study.

12. Language

The quality of the research proposal depends partly on the quality of its language: the proposal should be written in a correct academic style and the writing should be coherent.

BIBLIOGRPHY AND RECOMMENDED READING

- Bloomberg, L. D. & M. F., Volpe. (2012). Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Christensen, L. B., Johnson, R. B., & Turner, L. A. (2014). Research methods, design, and analysis (12th ed.). Boston, NJ: Pearson

- Hart, C. (2003). Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Johnson, R. B. & L., Christensen. (2014). Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Rudestam, K. E. & R. R., Newton. (2015). Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process (4th ed.).. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.