



**'ELEMENTS OF QUALITY RESEARCH PROPOSAL'
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE SURVEY RESEARCHERS
(INFORMATIVE ARTICLE)**

MENGISTIE MOSSIE

UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR, ETHIOPIA



MENGISTIE MOSSIE

Section 1. How to Write a Good Research Proposal

What is a research proposal?

- Research proposal is coined from two words research and proposal.

Research is defined as original and creative intellectual activity, carried out in the laboratory, or the field, which tries to discover new facts and to appraise and interpret them properly in the light of previous knowledge. **Proposal** basically means a course of action, activity etc. proposed.

Thus:

A research proposal may be defined as a written document requesting both authorization and funds to undertake a specific project in the laboratory, in the field, etc.

Or it is the presentation of an idea that you wish to pursue. Or it is a plan to carry out certain research.

A good research proposal presumes that you have already thought about your project and have devoted some time and effort in gathering information, reading and then organizing your thoughts.

Research Proposal Structure and components:

- i. Title (Cover page)
 - ii. Table of Content
 - iii. List of Tables
 - iv. List of Figures
 - v. Abbreviations and Acronyms
 - vi. Abstract (optional in academic proposal but mandatory in project proposal and research)
1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Back ground of the study
 - 1.2 Statement of the problem
 - 1.3 Objectives of the Study
 - 1.4 Research Question (if Hypothesis there in one proposal or research paper it can be left)
 - 1.5 Significance of the Study
 - 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study
 2. Literature Review
 - 2.1 Definition and concepts of terms
 - 2.2 Theoretical Perspective
 - 2.3 Importance of the researchable problem
 - 2.4 Conceptual Framework
 3. Research Methodology
 - 3.1 Description of the Study area
 - 3.2 Research Design
 - 3.3 Data Sources and Method of Data Collection
 - 3.4 Sampling Techniques and Procedures
 - 3.5 Method of Data Analysis



3.6 Variables and Hypothesis (Hypothesized Variables)

4. Delivers or Expected output (this can be common in project proposal but not in academia)

5. PLAN OF ACTIVITIES/ WORK PLAN

6. Budget/ Logistics

7. References

A description of the sections of the research proposal is as follows:

1. Cover Page

The cover page should be informative and consist of the names of the institution, the title of the research proposal, the name/s of the researcher, and the advisors. The month and year followed by the location are the last items on the cover page. Title case letters are recommended in the style of writing although the names of institution should be in bold capital letters in 14 point font size.

Title:

- ✓ The title of the research proposal should be descriptive, clear, specific, concise and short.
- ✓ The title should accurately capture and reflect the main theme of the proposed study.
- ✓ Scientific, botanical and medical words and phrases can be included in the title.
- ✓ Should capture and reflect the content of the research proposal.
- ✓ It should include the location or locations.

2. Acknowledgements (optional)

The acknowledgements section recognizes the persons and/or institutions the student is grateful to for guidance or assistance received and those to whom the researcher extends thanks for special aid or support in the preparation of the proposal.

3. Abbreviations and Acronyms

The Abbreviations and Acronyms section follows in alphabetical order; it lists the items first written in the abbreviation or acronym followed by the full name. Standard International (S.I.) units of measurement should be used in the proposal. In the narrative, each abbreviation other than S.I. units and each acronym should be defined in full when it is first used and then followed by its abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. Standard units and internationally known abbreviations do not need to be listed. Abbreviations and symbols such as i.e. and etc. should not be italicized.

4. Table of Contents

All of the headings and entries in the Table of Contents should correspond exactly in wording, font and case with the headings or entries as they appear in the text of the proposal. Do not use "title" and "page" at the top of the page in the Table of Contents. Also, there should be no dotted lines connecting headings and respective pages. Subdivisions of headings should not exceed four levels.

5. List of Tables (if any)

It should be noted that a list of tables rarely occurs in a research proposal.

6. List of Figures (if any)

The list of figures also seldom appears in the research proposal.

1. Introduction

The introduction of the research proposal provides pertinent background information on the research project and should be as brief as possible. Ideally, it should not exceed four pages in length. Using the future tense as appropriate, the introduction includes:

- a) Clear statement of the problem, nature, symptoms, and extent of the problem and variables influencing the problem, thus leading to a clear set of research objectives.
- b) Objectives that specify the goals of the research, research information to be gathered, and research questions to be answered.



- ❖ Writing the introduction with dividing it into sub-headings is preferred and may include subheadings in the following sequence.

1.1 Background

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.3 Objectives of the Study (General Objective and Specific Objectives)

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.5 Scope and limitation

1. Background

- Provides readers with the background information for the research reported in the paper.
- Establishes a framework for the research, so that readers can understand how it is related to other research.
- In the background, you should
 - ✓ create reader interest in the topic,
 - ✓ lay the broad foundation for the problem that leads to the study,
 - ✓ place the study within the larger context of the scholarly literature, and
 - ✓ reach out to a specific audience
 - ✓ In general, discuss the issue and relevance of your topic. What have current and previous studies found on the issues to be studied?

1.1. Statement of the Problem

- ❖ A problem might be defined as the issue that exists in the literature, theory, or practice that leads to a need for the study.
- ❖ Why this particular topic has been chosen or what type of interest has evinced the researcher to undertake (motivation)?
- ❖ What are the present gaps in knowledge?
- ❖ What makes the problem worth study? Why this study? /the need to study this problem.
- ❖ Discuss concerns of the study area.
- ❖ What do you intend to do to fill the gaps or solve the problem?

1.2. Objectives of the study

- What is to be achieved by the proposed investigation has to be plainly and concisely stated?
- Clearly identify and define the central concepts or ideas of the study.
- The purpose statement should provide a specific and accurate synopsis of the overall purpose of the study
- Must clearly state the target of the research activity, i.e., what kind of results are expected or sought from conducting research, the wording of the title and objectives must be clearly stated.
- **Example**

Title: Rating farmers' soil conservation practices in environment susceptible to erosion

General Objective:

- ✓ Test the effectiveness existing conservation and management systems in specific environment characterized by erosion hazards.

Specific objectives:

- What soil conservation and management measures do farmers practice?
- Which soil conservation and management measures are advocated by the ministry of agriculture?

NB: Objectives are normally a part and parcel of introduction.

1.3. Significance of the study



- ✓ How this study is useful and for whom? or indicates how your research will refine, revise, or extend existing knowledge in the area under investigation.
- ✓ Will results contribute to the solution of a problem facing the society?
- ✓ Will results influence the decision making process?
- ✓ How will results of the study be implemented, and what innovations will come about?

1.4. Limitation of the study

- ✓ May be resources (cost, logistics), time sample size, district etc.

2. Literature Review

- ✚ The literature review is chapter two.
- ✚ Review means see again, examine, examine clearly or deliberately, to give critical evaluations.
- ✚ Benefits from previous findings:
 - ✓ Dimensions of the problem
 - ✓ Potential difficulties in the areas of investigation
 - ✓ Unit context and potential contribution of the research project.
- ✚ It should be a critical analysis of the relevant existing knowledge on the proposed research topic.
- ✚ It includes the strengths, the limitations and gaps of previous studies.
- ✚ The literature review should be relevant with **recent citations** on the topic.
- ✚ Citations within the past five years are ideal and generally considered current.
- ✚ Citations ten years and older should be used sparingly and only when necessary.
- ✚ Unpublished documents and lay sources like encyclopedias are discouraged.
- ✚ Serious care must be given to avoid any possible consideration of plagiarism.
- ✚ This is done by the student carefully tracking and referencing each and every document used in the research.

3. Materials and Methods(Methodology)

- ✚ Chapter three may also be called "Methodology." It describes precisely what will be done and how it will be done, what data will be recorded, the proposed tools or instruments to be used in data collection and the methods of analyzing the data. In this section, the researcher should give clear, specific, appropriate and credible procedures that will be followed to attain the proposed objectives of the study. The research design planned for use should be clearly stated. The research methods should be appropriate to the problem area, i.e., the statement of the problem, the objectives and the hypotheses. In selecting appropriate research methods and techniques, the researcher should be able to answer the question: "Precisely how will I conduct the proposed research."

The researcher should consider affordability, time issues, feasibility of the study and availability of equipment and supplies. The researcher should also address the methods of data collection, data quality control and methods of data analysis.

Materials and Methods also called Methodology should also include:

1. Description of the Study Area or Experimental Site
2. Study Period when Data Will Be Collected
3. Study Design or Experimental Design
4. Description of Population. This includes inclusive and exclusive criteria, the source population, the study population and sample population (optional).
5. Sampling Methods. This includes sample size calculation and sampling methods (optional).
6. Data Collection. This includes questionnaires, use of observation, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, laboratory analysis and similar methods. The description should outline the data to be collected in the study, the methods of measurement and the units of measurement.



7. Data Analysis. The researcher should decide how the data generated will be analyzed. Descriptions of the data analytical methods, techniques, tools and statistical tests that will be used in analyzing the data should be provided. Software planned for use in statistical analysis may also be mentioned.

4. Plan of Activities/ Work Plan

This chapter five focuses on the budgeting of time for the implementation of the research project. he researcher assigns time frames for the completion of various activities of the proposed research. The plan of activities can be presented in the form of a table. Only major activities for accomplishing the research activities and corresponding time frames should be included in the table.

5. Logistics/Budget

The budget of a research proposal is clearly describes the financial resources required to conduct the project. This involves first discussing and then listing the necessary and required personnel, per diem days required to conduct research, travel, equipment, expendable supplies and materials and any associated services for the project.

6. References

The references chapter must include all works cited in the research proposal. All citations appearing in the narrative of the proposal must be included in the references chapter and vice versa.

7. Appendix (if any)

The appendix is the last chapter. It includes, for example, information such as drafts of questionnaires in English and other languages, observation check lists, pictures and specifications of the equipment used in the research, mathematical formulae or derivations, a map of the study area, a detailed description of the sample selection procedures and dummy tables.

Section 2. Style and Formatting

Scientific writing requires consistency in style and format in research proposals. Certain rules are followed consistently throughout these documents. These rules are presented below.

A. Font

- ✚ Times New Roman font is required throughout the documents.
- ✚ There should be no variation in the type of font used throughout the research proposal.
- ✚ The cover page of the proposal is presented in 14 point font size.
- ✚ The text in the cover page will be in bold face font.
- ✚ The first level headings in the research proposal will be in 14 point font size.
- ✚ Aside from this variation in font size, all of the narrative in the research proposals are in 12 point font size.

B. Margins

A margin of 3.0 cm on the left is for binding. A margin of 2.5 cm each on the right, top and bottom of the page is required. The same margins should be applied to all pages including those of the figures and tables.

C. Headings and Subheadings

Each of the titles of the preliminary sections and the chapters of the narrative should be written in bold upper case letters and be centered. The chapter headings of the narrative must be numbered with Arabic numerals starting from 1 for the Introduction and ending with 7 or 8 for the Appendix. The Arabic numerals shall be followed by a period, a space and the title of the chapter without the word "chapter." Note that the titles of the preliminary sections are not numbered. The second level headings, i.e. subheadings, are numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals in an outline numbering system (e.g., 1.1., 1.2., etc. for subheadings of Chapter 1;



2.1., 2.2., etc. for Chapter 2; etc.). Likewise, the outline numbering system will be used for lower level headings (e.g. 1.1.1., 1.1.2., etc. for subheadings under 1.1.; 2.1.1., 2.1.2., etc. for those under 2.1.1.; 1.1.1.1., 1.1.1.2., etc. for subheadings under 1.1.1; and 2.1.1.1., 2.1.1.2, etc. under 2.1.1.; etc.).

To have a numbered subheading, there ought to be at least two subheadings discussed under the higher level heading. It is unacceptable to number headings as 1.1., 1.1.1.,

1.1.1.1. etc. unless there is at least one heading to be numbered as 1.2., 1.1.2., 1.1.1.2., etc., respectively.

Second level headings are written in bold title case letters, i.e. the first letter of each major word of the headings is written in upper case letters. All remaining lower level headings are written in sentence case, i.e. only the first letter of the heading will be in upper case unless required by grammatical or nomenclature rules.

Second level headings and lower level headings should be flush left. An extra line should separate the headings from the narrative. No headings, subheadings or captions of tables or figures are underlined.

D. Line Spacing and Paragraph Format

The line spacing for all of the narrative is 1.5 although single line spacing is to be applied to captions of tables and figures. An extra line (1.5 spacing) is kept between paragraphs above and below all headings, sub-headings and captions. All paragraphs should be in block paragraph format.

E. Page Numbering and Set Up

Each component of the preliminary section, each chapter of the narrative, the References chapter and the Appendix must start on a new page. As a rule, each component of the preliminary section should be short and not exceed one page. Exceptions to the latter may be for the Table of Contents, Acronyms and Abbreviations and the List of Tables and List of Figures.

Except for the cover page, every page of the proposal is assigned a page number. The use of two different types of page numbering is recommended. Small Roman numerals such as ii, iii, etc. are used for the preliminary section from the title page to the page preceding the Introduction. However, a page number should not appear on the title page and the subsequent page will be numbered with ii. Arabic numerals such as 1, 2, 3, etc. are used from the first page of the Introduction to the last page of the Appendix. Page numbers are centered at the bottom of the page. Page numbers will not include periods or dashes.

G. Other Style and Formatting Issues

Where required, scientific names in any part of the research proposal should be written in italic font with the genus name starting with a capital letter. The species epithet will appear in a small letter. Similarly, no English language terminology such as words, nouns, or pronouns shall be italicized.

- All measurements should be given in metric units.
- Complicated, long or awkward sentences should be avoided.
- Correct grammatical rules should be followed.
- Contractions such as shouldn't, can't, and won't should not be used.
- The use of personal pronouns such as I, you and we should be avoided.
- Colloquial language (slang) should be avoided.
- Technical jargon should be minimized.
- There should be no misspelled words in a proposal. Nor should there be any grammatical errors. Students are strongly encouraged to use the "Spelling and Grammar" check in the Microsoft Word to avoid any such language problems.