

CHAPTER - 3 THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

3.1 The value of proposals

3.2 Types of research proposals

3.3 Structure of the research proposal

MEANING OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION:

All researchers should be able to prepare a proposal for a research topic to a professional standard. Being able to produce such a proposal is an important skill. Intending doctoral students are required to prepare such a proposal when applying for studentships and seeking formal registration for their project. Such requirements are also common on many university Masters Courses.

Outside of the academic arena, there are also many organizations that provide funding for social research. Where this is the case, how do you convince a funding body that may be assessing a large number of competing proposals that your research is worthy of support in preference to the others that it will look at? You may have a great idea that immediately captures the imagination, but are you capable of transforming this idea into a feasible project?

A research proposal is essentially a ‘game plan’ of what will be done. It can vary in length from a single page to as many as 20 pages, depending on the size and complexity of a research project.

The research proposal is the means by which we are able to demonstrate and able to do this. As such, it allows us to spell out what exactly is the research problem that we are intending to investigate, why this is worthy of investigation, and how we intend to carry out the research. In putting such a proposal together we shall not only need to demonstrate our knowledge of the area in which we are interested, but also be required to show that we have the necessary methodological competence and sensitivity to carry out the research.

Meaning of Research Proposal:

The **research proposal** is a written statement of the research design. It always includes a statement explaining the purpose of the study (research objectives) or a definition of the problem. It systematically outlines the particular research methodology and details the procedures that will be utilized at each stage of the research process. Normally a schedule of costs and deadlines will be included in the research proposal.

Preparation of a research proposal forces the researcher to critically think through each stage of the research process. Vague plans, Abstract ideas, and sweeping generalizations about problems or procedures must become concrete and precise statements about specific events. What information will be obtained and what research procedures will be implemented have to be clearly specified so other may understand their exact implication. All ambiguities about why and how the research will be conducted must be clarified before the proposal is complete.

A well written research proposal will answer any questions that management, other employees, or board members might have about the research that is to be conducted. These questions would include

- I. Why? The subject of the research
- II. How? Which research method will be used
- III. When? The time the research will take
- IV. Where? The place or contact method
- V. What? The documentation that will be presented at the end of the research

In other words, The **Research Proposal** is an application that is prepared by a research student, university academic or professional researcher for support prior to embarking upon a research study.

At one level, the **objectives of a research proposal** may be seen as providing a statement about the purposes of the research, how it is to be carried out, the resource implications of the proposed investigation, as well as the timescale for completion. At another level, however, the research proposal is an argument. Through the document, you are presenting a case, in which the intention is to convince others of the general merits and feasibility of the proposed study.

The research proposal should therefore aim to convey three key aspects of an intended research project:

1. **Its objectives and scholarly significance;**
2. **Your technical qualifications; and**
3. **The level of funding required.**

Reasons for writing a research proposal

In summary, there are important reasons why the research proposal should always be written before research starts.

- ✓ First, it is the plan of action or the ‘map’ of what is to be accomplished. Just as it is a good idea to have a road map before beginning a journey to make sure that the desired destination is reached, a research proposal will ensure that researchers end up with the desired information.
- ✓ Second, it is the basis of a contract. A research proposal ensures that everyone agrees on what is to be accomplished, at an estimated cost, and with the necessary resources.
- ✓ Third, it is a method of accountability that can be used to keep research on track.

Types of Research Proposal:

Research proposals can be generally classified into **student, internal and external**. Student research proposals range between term paper and senior essay that are least complex to M.Sc. thesis and Ph.D. dissertation that are most complex. The form and content of student research proposal differs according to complexity of the student research. For instance, term papers are meant for teaching students as to how to do research where as senior essay, thesis or dissertation are supposed to develop students’ knowledge on a specialized field.

Research proposals are internal if they target an entity or organization and are prepared by individual or a team of researchers who are part of the entity or organization. For instance, academic and administrative staff research proposals of Madda walabu University addressing efficiency and effectiveness of the university are internal proposals. The organization or entity

usually provide budget for large scale internal research projects even though it is also not uncommon for the researcher to self-sponsor small scale internal research projects.

Research proposals that are not either in the student or internal proposal categories are external research proposals. External research proposals are either solicited or unsolicited. Solicited research proposals are when the customer asks for a proposal.

FUNCTIONS OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The Research Proposal is a clearly outlined plan submitted to management for acceptance or rejection; it initially performs a **communication function**; it serves as a mechanism that allows managers to evaluate the details of the proposed research design and determine if alterations are necessary. The proposal helps managers decide if the proper information will be obtained and if the proposed research will accomplish what is desired. If the business problem has not been adequately translated into a set of specific research objectives and research design, the client's assessment of the proposal will help ensure that the researchers revise the proposal to meet the client's information needs.

The proposal needs to communicate exactly what information will be obtained, where it will be obtained, and how it will be obtained. For this reason, proposals must be explicit about sample selection, measurement, fieldwork, and so on. For instance, most survey proposals will include a copy of the proposed questionnaire, at bare minimum some sample questions, to ensure **that managers and researchers agree on the information to be obtained and how questions should be worded.**

In business one often hears the adage "Don't say it, write it." This is wise advice for the researcher who is proposing a research project to management. Misstatements and faulty communication may occur if the parties rely only on each individual's memory of what occurred at a planning meeting. **Writing the research design in a proposal format, specifying exactly what will be done, creates a record to which everyone can refer and eliminated many problems that might arise after the research has been conducted.** Finding out after the fact (after the research) that information related to a particular variable was omitted or that the sample size was too small for a particular subgroup is less likely to occur with written proposals. Further, as a statement of agreement between the executives and researchers, the formal proposal

will reduce the tendency for someone reading the results to say, “Shouldn’t we have had a larger sample?” or “Why didn’t you do it this way?” As a record of the researcher’s obligation, the proposal also provides a **standard for determining if the actual research was conducted as originally planned.**

GENERAL FORMAT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

An outline of the major components of the research proposal:

i) Cover Page:

- ✓ Research Title on the top of cover page
- ✓ Logo
- ✓ Purpose why the research is conducted
- ✓ Name and Address of the investigator (Student researcher)
- ✓ Name and Address of the advisor and co-advisor
- ✓ Month and Place where the proposal is written

Inside the proposal

- ✓ Acknowledgement
- ✓ Approval sheet for proposal submission
- ✓ Table of Contents
- ✓ List of Tables
- ✓ List of Figures
- ✓ List of Acronyms

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Background of the study: General to specific or deductive order is recommended

- Definitions and concepts related to the topic
- Global issues and trends about the topic
- Situations in less developed countries or in an industry
- National level
- Regional level
- Organizational level (Supported by Review of Literature)

1.2 Statement of the problem: (Justification of the study)

- Facts that motivated the investigator to conduct the research
- Exactly specifying and measuring the gap
- Hard facts or quantitative data about the topic for some previous years.
- State the problems in the study organization clearly.

1.3 Significance of the study:

- What study gap is there? Discuss that study gap and tell to your readers that you are conducting the research to bridge that gap.
- Benefits of the study (Who may use findings?)
 - User organizations
 - Other researchers
 - The society or the community

1.4 Research Objectives – Specific objectives or information needs must be specified clearly and concisely. These objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely)

Ends to be met in conducting the research

- ❖ This shows what the investigator will analyze and how;
- ❖ What comparisons to make and at what level

1.4.1 General Objective: Often one statement directly related to the study topic.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives: Often 4-8

- What the researcher want to achieve
- What to analyze and compare
- Emanate from general objective

1.4.3 Research Questions – Questions to be answered to meet the research objectives or produce implications of the hypothesis. Research questions emanate from specific objectives.

1.5 Research Hypothesis (Optional) – Tentative propositions to be tested in the research.

1.6 Research Methodology:

The Methodology', would explain the research methodology including the approach and method that will be used to answer the research question and the data collection plan. It should not be assumed that those reading the proposal are familiar with research terms and methods. Therefore, when discussing the methodology it is important that a proposal both explains and clarifies the meaning of such terms as 'descriptive', 'exploratory' and 'causal', as these words might be used differently by managers. If researchers suggest that research should be conducted with more than one approach and method, it is especially important for a proposal to explain the reasons for doing so.

For example, a research problem might state the need to determine why consumers do not subscribe to satellite radio. The proposed methodology might include both exploratory qualitative research to obtain information on the reasons, followed by descriptive survey research to confirm the focus group findings. Consumer research might start with exploratory focus group research. The data from this research might suggest that people are unaware of the service and may also provide a number of promotional ideas that would build awareness and encourage subscription. The next step in the plan might be to conduct descriptive research using a survey to

determine which specific promotional ideas will result in the most subscribers. It would be important to explain why both approaches were needed to meet the objectives of the research and answer the research question.

- 1.6.1 Description of the study area
- 1.6.2 Research design
- 1.6.3 Types and sources of data
- 1.6.4 Study population; Population is the aggregate of all the units which have the data for the research. clearly define it.
- 1.6.5 Sample design
- 1.6.6 Data collection methods;- Researcher should define in the research design which instrument he/ she will use for data collection in proposed research project. Data collection instrument includes questionnaire, observation form, or experimentation etc.
- 1.6.7 Data Analysis and presentation

Data Processing and Analysis:

Analysis and Findings', describes how the data will be analyzed and reported. This section would include information on how the coding of transcripts or notes from focus groups will be used to find common responses and themes. It would also include how survey data will be analyzed, including any software packages that will be used.

- Manual V/s Mechanical
- Editing: Field V/s In-House Editing (Include reasons)
- Recording / Data entry / or Keyboarding
- Methods of Analysis
 - Qualitative V/s Quantitative
 - Descriptive (tools to be used)

- Explanatory
- Statistical tools to be used for the analysis.
- **N.B. 1.6 1.6.7 can be taken to chapter 3 separately.**

1.7 Scope of the study:

- Scope provides the boundary or framework
- Conceptual scope of the study
- Geographical scope of the study.
- Time scope of the study, and
- Methodological scope of the study

1.8 Limitations of the study and delimitation of the study

Limitation is the implication or effect of the scope. A Limitation identifies potential weaknesses of the study. Think about your analysis, the nature of self-report, your instruments, the sample, etc. Think about threats to internal validity that may have been impossible to avoid or minimize-explain.

Delimitation addresses how a study will be narrowed in scope, that is, how it is bounded. This is the place to explain the things that you are not doing and why you have chosen not to do them- the literature you will not review (and why not), the population you are not studying (and why not. The delimitation should have to include conceptual scope, methodological scope, time scope and geographical scope.

1.9 Scheme of Chapterization:

- Organization of the chapters to be written. Such as,

Chapter One: this chapter deals with the introductory part. It involves introduction, background of the study organization, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypothesis, scope of the study, limitations of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature: conceptual and empirical literature

Chapter Three : Research methodology

Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and recommendations.

1.9 TIME SCHEDULE AND BUDGET FRAME:

19.1 Time Schedule:

Try to put reasonable and realistic time on the basis of

- The scope of the study
- The research objectives to be achieved
- The methods and techniques to be used

1.9.2 Budget Frame:

Realistic and detailed to reflect the activity schedule and convincing for the reader or possibly the financier; reflect real budget.

The research proposal will only be accepted if an organization believes that the cost of doing the research is more than covered by the value of the information received.

Appendices: After the main text of the research proposal as described above, some other material may be added as appendixes to impress the client. This might include the list of the research work done previously, reference letters from the companies for whom you have already completed some research projects, bio-data of the personnel that will be working on this project etc.