

APA 7th EDITION RESEARCH PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS

- Font: Times New Roman, 12pt (or Arial 11pt, Calibri 11pt)
 - Margins: 1 inch on all sides
 - Line Spacing: Double-space throughout entire document
 - Alignment: Left-aligned (not justified)
 - Paragraph Indentation: 0.5 inch first line indent
 - Page Numbers: Top right corner, starting from title page
-

TITLE PAGE (Page 1)

[Center vertically - approximately 3-4 lines from top]

[Your Research Proposal Title in Bold Title Case: Maximum Two Lines if Needed]

[Your Full Name] [Department Name, Institution Name] [Course Number: Course Name]
[Instructor Name] [Month Day, Year]

ABSTRACT (Page 2)

Abstract

[150-250 word paragraph, NO indentation, single paragraph format]

This study investigates [research problem/topic]. [Provide 1-2 sentences of background context]. The primary research question asks: [state main research question]. This [qualitative/quantitative/mixed-methods] study will employ research design with a sample of [number] [participants/subjects] recruited from [population]. Data will be collected using [instruments/methods] and analyzed using [analysis techniques]. Expected findings include [anticipated results]. This research contributes to [theoretical contribution] and has practical implications for [stakeholders/applications]. The study addresses a significant gap in [field/literature] by [unique contribution].

Keywords: [keyword 1], [keyword 2], [keyword 3], [keyword 4], [keyword 5]

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INTRODUCTION (Start on new page after abstract/TOC)

Introduction

Background and Context

[Begin with an engaging opening that establishes the importance of your research topic. Include relevant statistics, recent trends, or compelling facts that demonstrate why this research matters. Provide 2-3 paragraphs of context.]

[Paragraph 1: Hook and broad context - 4-6 sentences introducing the general area and its importance.]

[Paragraph 2-3: Narrow the focus - Provide more specific background information about your particular topic area. Define key concepts and terms. Establish what is currently known.]

Problem Statement

[Clearly articulate the research problem. Explain what gap exists in current knowledge or practice. Describe why this problem needs investigation. 2-3 paragraphs, approximately 200-300 words.]

[Paragraph 1: Identify the specific problem and its scope.]

[Paragraph 2: Explain why this problem matters - who is affected and how.]

[Paragraph 3: Describe current limitations in addressing this problem.]

Research Questions and Objectives

[State your research questions clearly and specifically. List primary and secondary questions.]

The primary research question guiding this study is: [State your main research question]

Secondary research questions include:

1. [Secondary research question 1]
2. [Secondary research question 2]
3. [Secondary research question 3]

The specific objectives of this research are to:

4. [Objective 1 - must be specific and measurable]
5. [Objective 2 - must be specific and measurable]
6. [Objective 3 - must be specific and measurable]

Significance and Rationale

[Explain why this research is important. Address both theoretical contributions and practical applications. 2-3 paragraphs.]

Theoretical Significance

[Explain how your research will contribute to academic knowledge in your field. What theories will it advance, test, or refine? How will it fill the identified gap?]

Practical Significance

[Describe real-world applications and who will benefit from your findings. Include specific stakeholders: practitioners, policymakers, organizations, communities, etc.]

Scope and Limitations

[Define the boundaries of your study. What is included and excluded? What limitations do you acknowledge? 1-2 paragraphs.]

This study focuses on [specific population, context, timeframe, variables]. It examines [specific aspects] while acknowledging limitations regarding [constraints such as generalizability, sample characteristics, timeframe, resources, etc.].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

[Introduction paragraph: Preview the organization of your literature review. Indicate the major themes or topics you'll cover.]

This literature review examines [number] major areas relevant to this research: [list 3-4 themes]. The review synthesizes current knowledge, identifies methodological approaches, and establishes the research gap this study addresses.

Theoretical Framework

[Describe the theoretical lens through which you're approaching your research. Explain the key theory/theories and how they apply to your study. 2-3 paragraphs.]

This research is grounded in [Name of Theory/Framework] (Author, Year), which posits that [brief explanation of theory]. This framework is particularly relevant because [explain relevance to your study]. Previous applications of this theory include [cite relevant studies].

[Theme 1: First Major Topic Area]

[Organize your literature thematically, not chronologically. Each theme should have 2-4 paragraphs synthesizing multiple sources.]

[Paragraph 1: Introduce the theme and its relevance to your research.]

[Paragraphs 2-3: Synthesize findings from multiple studies. Use citations like: (Author, Year) or Author (Year). Compare and contrast findings. Identify patterns and contradictions.]

[Paragraph 4: Evaluate methodological approaches used in these studies. Discuss strengths and limitations.]

[Theme 2: Second Major Topic Area]

[Follow same structure as Theme 1]

[Theme 3: Third Major Topic Area]

[Follow same structure as Theme 1]

Research Gap and Study Justification

[Explicitly identify what hasn't been studied. Explain contradictions or limitations in existing research. Show how your study fills this gap. 2-3 paragraphs.]

Despite substantial research on [general topic], significant gaps remain regarding [specific gap]. Existing studies have primarily focused on [what's been studied], overlooking [what hasn't been studied]. Additionally, methodological limitations such as [limitation 1] and [limitation 2] restrict current understanding.

This study addresses these gaps by [explain how your research fills the gap]. Unlike previous research, this study will [unique contribution].

METHOD

Method

[Introduction paragraph: Provide overview of your methodological approach.]

This [qualitative/quantitative/mixed-methods] study employs a [specific research design] to investigate [research questions]. The following sections detail the research design, participant selection, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

[Describe your overall research approach and justify your choice. 2-3 paragraphs.]

This research utilizes a [experimental/quasi-experimental/correlational/descriptive/case study/ethnographic/phenomenological/etc.] design. [Explain the design and why it's appropriate for your research questions.]

[For quantitative research: Describe independent and dependent variables, control variables, etc.]

[For qualitative research: Describe the specific qualitative approach and philosophical assumptions.]

Participants

Target Population

[Define your target population clearly.]

The target population for this study consists of [describe population characteristics: age range, demographics, relevant characteristics].

Sample and Sampling Method

[Describe your sample size and sampling approach.]

A sample of [number] participants will be recruited using [random sampling/stratified sampling/convenience sampling/purposive sampling/snowball sampling]. [Justify your sampling method and sample size.]

[For quantitative research, include power analysis:]

Sample size was determined through *G*Power analysis ($\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80, effect size = [value]), indicating [number] participants needed. To account for approximately [percentage]% attrition, [number] participants will be recruited.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

1. [Criterion 1]
2. [Criterion 2]
3. [Criterion 3]

Exclusion criteria:

4. [Criterion 1]
5. [Criterion 2]

Materials/Instruments

[Describe each measurement instrument or material in detail. For standardized instruments, include citations, psychometric properties, and sample items.]

[Instrument 1 Name]

[Describe the instrument, number of items, response format, scoring, reliability (Cronbach's α), validity evidence, and citation.]

Example: The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a 21-item self-report questionnaire measuring depression, anxiety, and stress. Participants respond on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = *did not apply to me at all* to 3 = *applied to me very much*). Scores range from 0-63 for each subscale. The DASS-21 demonstrates strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .87-.94$) and validity in college populations (Henry & Crawford, 2005).

[Instrument 2 Name]

[Follow same format as Instrument 1]

Procedure

[Provide step-by-step description of what participants will do and when. Include timeline for each phase.]

Data collection will occur over [timeframe]. The procedure involves the following steps:

1. **Recruitment** (Week 1-2): Participants will be recruited through method. [Describe recruitment procedures.]
2. **Screening** (Week 2-3): Interested individuals will complete a brief screening survey to determine eligibility based on inclusion/exclusion criteria.
3. **Informed Consent** (Week 3): Eligible participants will receive detailed study information and provide written informed consent before participation.
4. **Baseline Assessment** (Week 4): Participants will complete [list

instruments/procedures]. Sessions will last approximately [duration].

5. [Continue with additional steps as relevant to your study]
6. **Debriefing:** Following completion, participants will be debriefed about study purposes and provided with [relevant resources/contact information].

Data Analysis

[Specify exactly what statistical or qualitative analyses you'll conduct. Match each analysis to specific research questions.]

Preliminary Analyses

Data will be screened for [missing values, outliers, normality, etc.]. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) will be calculated for all variables.

Primary Analyses

[For quantitative research:]
To address Research Question 1, [specific statistical test] will be conducted to examine [relationship/difference/etc.]. Assumptions for [test name] will be evaluated through [specific procedures].

To address Research Question 2, [statistical test] will be used with [IV] as the independent variable and [DV] as the dependent variable. Effect sizes will be reported as [Cohen's d /partial eta-squared/etc.].

[For qualitative research:]
Interview transcripts will be analyzed using [thematic analysis/grounded theory/phenomenological analysis/etc.] following [Author's] approach. The analysis process includes: (1) [step 1], (2) [step 2], (3) [step 3], etc.

[Specify software:]
All quantitative analyses will be conducted using [SPSS Version X/R/SAS/Stata]. [Or: Qualitative analysis will be conducted using NVivo 14/ATLAS.ti/MAXQDA.]

Reliability and Validity

[For quantitative research: Describe internal validity, external validity, reliability measures]

[For qualitative research: Describe credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation]

Ethical Considerations

[Address all ethical aspects of your research.]

This research will be conducted in accordance with [Institution] Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. IRB approval will be obtained before data collection begins [or: "IRB approval is pending" or "IRB approval was obtained on [date], Protocol #XXXXX"].

Informed Consent

All participants will provide written informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about study purposes, procedures, risks, benefits, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw.

Confidentiality and Data Security

Participant data will be de-identified using unique ID codes. All data will be stored on password-protected, encrypted servers accessible only to authorized research team members. Physical documents will be secured in locked filing cabinets. Audio/video recordings will be destroyed after transcription and verification.

Risks and Benefits

Potential risks include [describe any risks, even if minimal]. These will be mitigated through [describe safeguards]. Participants will receive [compensation/benefits] for their time. [If applicable: Participants will be provided with referral information for [relevant resources].]

Vulnerable Populations

[If applicable: Describe additional protections for vulnerable populations such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, etc.]

EXPECTED RESULTS

Expected Results

[Describe what you anticipate finding based on theory and previous research. Use cautious language like "expected," "anticipated," "likely."]

Anticipated Findings

Based on existing literature and theoretical predictions, several outcomes are anticipated. First, it is expected that [predicted finding 1] will occur. Specifically, [more detailed prediction with tentative effect sizes or patterns].

Second, [predicted finding 2]. This expectation is based on [cite relevant theory or studies].

Third, [predicted finding 3 if applicable].

Theoretical Implications

These expected findings will contribute to [theoretical framework] by [specific theoretical contribution]. The results will [support/challenge/refine/extend] current theoretical understanding of [phenomenon].

Practical Implications

Anticipated findings have important practical applications for [stakeholders]. Specifically:

- 1. [Implication 1]: [Explain how finding will inform practice/policy]
- 2. [Implication 2]: [Explain practical application]
- 3. [Implication 3]: [Explain real-world benefit]

Results will provide evidence-based guidance for [practitioners/policymakers/organizations] regarding [specific applications].

Potential Alternative Outcomes

While the literature supports the predicted findings, alternative outcomes are possible. If results differ from expectations, this would suggest [alternative interpretation], requiring [future research direction or theoretical revision].

TIMELINE

Timeline

This research project will be completed over [timeframe: e.g., 18 months]. The following timeline outlines major phases and milestones:

Phase 1: Preparation and IRB Approval (Months 1-2) - Complete literature review - Finalize research instruments - Submit IRB application - Develop recruitment materials

Phase 2: Pilot Testing (Month 3) - Conduct pilot study with [number] participants - Refine instruments and procedures based on feedback - Train research assistants

Phase 3: Participant Recruitment (Months 4-5) - Implement recruitment strategies - Screen potential participants - Obtain informed consent - Schedule data collection sessions

Phase 4: Data Collection (Months 6-11) - Conduct [baseline/intervention/follow-up] assessments - Monitor data quality and participant retention - Maintain regular contact with participants

Phase 5: Data Analysis (Months 12-15) - Clean and prepare data for analysis - Conduct preliminary and primary analyses - Interpret findings in context of literature

Phase 6: Dissemination (Months 16-18) - Write dissertation/thesis chapters - Prepare manuscript for publication - Present findings at [conference name] - Complete final revisions and defense

Contingency Planning: Built-in buffer time accounts for potential delays in IRB approval, participant recruitment, or data collection challenges.

[OPTIONAL: Include Gantt Chart or Visual Timeline]

BUDGET (If Required)

Budget

[If your proposal requires a budget for funding purposes, include detailed justification for all costs]

Personnel Costs - Principal Investigator (% effort × months) \$XX,XXX - Graduate Research Assistant (hours × rate) \$XX,XXX - Undergraduate Research Assistants (2 × hours × rate). \$X,XXX - Statistical Consultant (hours × rate) \$X,XXX - Transcription Services (hours × rate) \$X,XXX **Personnel Subtotal: \$XX,XXX**

Equipment and Materials - Survey platform subscription (Qualtrics annual) \$X,XXX - Statistical software license (SPSS/NVivo) \$X,XXX - Audio recording equipment \$XXX - [Specific equipment needed] \$X,XXX - Office supplies and printing \$XXX **Equipment Subtotal: \$X,XXX**

Participant Costs - Participant compensation (\$XX per participant × N) ... \$X,XXX - Gift cards/incentives \$XXX - Travel reimbursement (if applicable) \$XXX **Participant Subtotal: \$X,XXX**

Travel and Dissemination - Conference registration and travel \$X,XXX - Open-access publication fees \$X,XXX **Travel Subtotal: \$X,XXX**

Other Costs - IRB application fees \$XXX - Miscellaneous/contingency (5% of total) \$X,XXX **Other Subtotal: \$X,XXX**

TOTAL BUDGET: \$XX,XXX

Budget Justification

[Provide paragraph-form justification for major budget items, explaining why each is necessary for successful project completion]

REFERENCES

References

[Start on new page. Use hanging indent (0.5 inch). Double-space all entries. Alphabetize by first author’s last name.]

[Follow APA 7th edition format for all references. Include DOI when available.]

Journal Article Example: Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article in sentence case. *Title of Journal in Title Case and Italics, Volume*(Issue), page-page. <https://doi.org/xx.xxxx/xxxxx>

Book Example: Author, A. A. (Year). *Title of book in sentence case and italics* (Edition). Publisher Name.

Chapter in Edited Book Example: Author, A. A. (Year). Title of chapter in sentence case. In E. E. Editor & F. F. Editor (Eds.), *Title of book in sentence case and italics* (pp. xx-xx). Publisher Name.

Website Example: Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). *Title of webpage in sentence case and italics*. Website Name. <https://www.url.com>

Report Example: Organization Name. (Year). *Title of report in sentence case and italics* (Report No. XXX). Publisher. <https://doi.org/xxxxx>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: [Title of First Appendix]

[Include survey instruments, interview protocols, consent forms, or other supplementary materials]

Appendix B: [Title of Second Appendix]

[Additional materials]

Appendix C: [Title of Third Appendix]

[Additional materials]

FORMATTING CHECKLIST

Before submitting, verify:

- ☐ 1-inch margins on all sides
- ☐ Times New Roman 12pt font (or approved alternative)
- ☐ Double-spacing throughout entire document
- ☐ Page numbers in top right corner starting from title page
- ☐ 0.5-inch first-line paragraph indentation
- ☐ Hanging indent (0.5 inch) for reference entries
- ☐ All headings follow APA 7th edition format (Level 1-5)
- ☐ In-text citations in correct APA format
- ☐ References page formatted correctly and alphabetized
- ☐ All tables and figures numbered and titled
- ☐ Abstract is 150-250 words
- ☐ No extra spacing between paragraphs (just double-space)
- ☐ Proper capitalization (sentence case vs. title case)

☐ All required sections included

NOTES FOR USERS

How to Use This Template:

1. Replace all [bracketed placeholder text] with your own content
2. Delete instructional text in [brackets] before submitting
3. Adjust section lengths based on your institution's requirements
4. Add or remove sections as needed for your specific proposal
5. Maintain consistent APA 7th edition formatting throughout
6. Have your advisor review before final submission

Word Count Guidelines: - Total proposal: 2,500-5,000 words typically - Abstract: 150-250 words - Introduction: 500-800 words (15-20%) - Literature Review: 800-1,200 words (25-30%) - Method: 1,000-1,500 words (30-40%) ← MOST IMPORTANT - Expected Results: 300-500 words (10%) - Timeline: 200-300 words (5%)

Always check your institution's specific requirements, as they may differ from these general guidelines.

END OF TEMPLATE