

# **AN OUTLINE OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A research may be defined as a careful study or investigation in order to discover new facts or information. The main purpose of research work is based on finding facts and truth. A research can contribute a lot to the society, institution or a country. The findings of a research are of substantial importance for planner, policymakers and administrators. A research provides managers, administrators and policymakers with necessary information for formulating policies and implement programs. This way, it works as a basic guideline for planning.

There are various types of research. Some of them are based on historical facts. A historical research is related to the collection of facts about the past events and their systematic description. It is the critical investigation of events, developments and experiences of the past. In historical research 'time' is an important element.

A scientific research has no time reference. It seeks to discover natural laws that are uninfluenced by time (Mohsin, 1984:2). A scientific research starts with observation. The objective of such research is to use observation as a basis for answering question of interest. A scientific research tries to establish relation among facts.

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A social research may be defined as a scientific understanding which by means of logical and systematized methods, aims to discover new facts or old facts, and to analyze their sequences, interrelationships, casual explanation's and the natural laws which govern them (mukerji, 1985:1). Similarly, social research is the investigation of the underlying processes operative in the lives of persons who are in association. Social research deals with the study of human relationships. The main purpose of this article is to focus attention on the major components/elements of a research proposal. They are explained with examples.

#### **COMPONENTS OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

The major components of a research proposal may be listed as:

1. Identification and Definition of a Problem
2. Justification for Selecting the Problem
3. Objectives and Hypotheses
4. Methodology
5. Limitations of the Study
6. Organization of the Study/Chapter Plan
7. Working Schedule
8. Budget Estimate

#### **IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITION OF A PROBLEM**

This is the first step of preparing a research proposal. The most important task of researcher or investigator is to identify the problem. A problem should be identified and defined in a clear-cut form. If it is not identified clearly, it creates a confusion. It is said that 50% of the research is completed if the problem is well identified.

All of the problems are not fit for research. A situation of research arises when the three conditions exist (Fisher and et. al., 1983:3):

- (i) a perceived discrepancy between what is and what should be
- (ii) a question about why the discrepancy exists
- (iii) at least two possible and plausible answers to the question.

Of the above mentioned conditions the last one is the most important. It is said that there should be at least two possible answers to the research question. If there is only one answer to the question, there is no need of research. After the identification of problem we have to define it. A small paragraph dealing with the problem should be written. Sometimes, the problem may also be stated in the form of questions.

There are various problems existing in our society. We have to select them on priority basis. Here some of the problems on ' Geography Education' and 'Population Aspects' have been listed.

**GROUP A: PROBLEM ON GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

- (i) Selection of Geography as an optional subject
- (ii) Performance of Geographic Skills in Secondary School Students
- (iii) Problems of Geography Teaching in Secondary Schools
- (iv) An Analytical Study of the Secondary School Geography Text books.
- (v) Attitudes of teachers and students towards Geography Teaching at secondary level.
- (vi) A study of performance of Geographic skills in the students of Grade VIII.
- (vii) An Analytical study of secondary school Geography Syllabus.

**GROUP B : PROBLEMS ON POPULATION ASPECTS**

- (i) Fertility Behavior of Women in the Limbu Society
- (ii) Impact of Education on Fertility
- (iii) Fertility Behavior of working and Non-working women.
- (iv) Socio-economic Determinants of Fertility.
- (v) Impact of Infant and child Mortality on Fertility.
- (vi) Socioeconomic Determinants of Mortality.
- (vii) Demographic and Socioeconomic Variables of Desired Family Size.
- (viii) Socio-psychological Determinants of Fertility.
- (ix) Age at marriage and Fertility.
- (x) Health and mortality Status in the Tharu Community.
- (xi) Factors Affecting Fertility in Rural and Urban Areas.

The problems are of varied nature. The selection of problem depends on the need of society and interest of researcher. However, the problem should be very specific.

**JUSTIFICATION FOR SELECTING THE PROBLEM**

After the identification of problem it should be justified. This section is also termed as 'significance of the study'. It takes a lot of time and budget for the completion of research work. So, we should be very careful in selecting the problem. A consideration should be made on whether the selected problem can make any contribution to the society or institution. In this section the researcher should explain the importance of the study. In short the problem is selected in such a way that it should make contribution to the existing situation.

## **OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

Objectives work as the guideline for conducting a research. Objectives should be clearly stated. In a research there are two types of objectives: ultimate objectives and intermediate objective. Ultimate objectives describe the expected result of the research. It is not the realistic objective. It helps researcher relate the proposed research to social, economic or educational aspects. For example-fertility reduction, human welfare, change in quality of education may be ultimate objectives. It is obvious that only one research cannot bring total changes in the existing situation. By realising this, a researcher should formulate specific objectives related to his problem. Such objectives are also termed as immediate objectives. These objectives state 'what will happen ?' These are directly related to the research problem. They indicate the variables that will be examined and measured. It is a promise by the researcher.

After formulating objectives, hypotheses are also stated in the research proposal. If the research is expected to be based only on descriptive analysis there will be no need of testing hypotheses. If someone wants to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables, the hypotheses must be formulated. A hypothesis is a statement about an expected relationship between two or more variable, that permits empirical testing (Fisher and et. al., 1983:11).

Before formulating hypotheses we should have a clear-cut idea about dependent and independent variables. Most of the students of master's level engaged in writing dissertation have no clear idea about dependent and independent variables.

However, they complete the dissertation and secure good Marks. An independent variable causes or influences the dependent variable. There is another type of variable which is known as intervening variable. The independent variable acts upon dependent variable through intervening variables. The examples are given for clarification.

## CASE. 1 FERTILITY ANALYSIS

S.N.	Variable		Abbrevi-ation	Measurement
1.	Women's education	( $x_1$ )	WE	1 = literate
2.	Age at marriage	( $x_2$ )	AM	2 = illiterate Completed years total number
3.	Number of living sons	( $x_3$ )	NLS	Total number
4.	Occupation of women	( $x_4$ )	OW	1 = household 2 = service 3 = business
5.	Religion	( $x_5$ )	RN	1 = Hindu 2 = Buddha 3 = Islam
6.	Ethnicity	( $x_6$ )	EY	4 = Chsistian 1 = Brahmin 2 = Newar
7.	Use of contraception	( $x_7$ )	UC	3 = Tharu 1 = Yes 2 = No
8.	Children Ever Born (Dependent variable)	( $x_8$ )	CEB	Number of children Born

In the above example the CEB (children ever born) has been treated as dependent variable. It is affected by other variables or it depends on others. Women's education, age at marriage, number of living sons, occupation of women, religion, ethnicity, and use of contraception have been treated as independent variables which will have direct or indirect effect on fertility. They are symbolized as  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6$ , and  $x_7$ , and abbreviated as WE, AM, NLS, OW, RN, EY and UC.

**CASE-2 SELECTION OF GEOGRAPHY AS AN OPTIONAL SUBJECT**

<i>S.N.</i>	<i>Variable</i>		<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1.	Father's Education	(x <sub>1</sub> )	FE	1 = Primary 2 = Secondary 3 = Higher 4 = No Education
2.	Mother's Education	(x <sub>2</sub> )	ME	1 = Primary 2 = Secondary 3 = Higher 4 = No Education
3.	Father's Occupation	(x <sub>3</sub> )	FO	1 = Agriculture 2 = Service 3 = Business
4.	Ethnicity	(x <sub>4</sub> )	EY	1 = Brahmin 2 = Newar 3 = Rai/Limbu 4 = Tharu
5.	Economic Status	(x <sub>5</sub> )	ES	1 = High 2 = Medium 3 = Low

In case-2, the situation is different. The problem is related with geography teaching. Here the 'selection of Geography' has been treated as 'dependent variable' and it may be affected by other variables. The dependent variables in this case are father's education (x<sub>1</sub>), mother's education (x<sub>2</sub>), father's occupation (x<sub>3</sub>), ethnicity (x<sub>4</sub>) and economic status (x<sub>5</sub>). They are abbreviated as FE, ME, FO, EY and ES.

After the selection of dependent and independent variables hypotheses are formulated. The example of some hypotheses is given below:

## **HYPOTHESES**

1. There is an inverse relationship between age at marriage and CED.
2. Higher the socioeconomic status of family lower will be the fertility.
3. Educated parents have less number of children compared to their counterparts.
4. Higher the use of contraception, lower will be the desired family size (DFS).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **(A) STUDY DESIGN**

There are various types of study that we follow in the research work. In this section we have to explain the nature of study such as non-experimental or experimental. The non-experimental studies are based on descriptive information. These are small case studies of a particular area, group or situation. In experimental study we deal with the application of new approach or technique to the research. These are also known as "intervention studies". They bring changes in the existing situation.

### **(B) DATA COLLECTION**

After considering the type of study we have to collect data. We can gather primary as well as secondary data for the completion of a research work. In this section we have to mention the techniques and procedures of data collection. If we want to give real pictures we have to conduct field survey. We can adopt various approaches and techniques such as participant observation, formal and informal interviews and case study method in anthropological research. The questionnaire is used as a major instrument of data collection in demographic research. In administering the questionnaire either we have to cover the whole households of the area or select some of them. In this sense we have to explain whether the study will be based on census or sampling. Again we have to mention sampling techniques.



**(C) DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The techniques of data analysis and interpretation may be descriptive or qualitative. In some cases they may be quantitative or statistical by the application of which we can examine relationship between facts. In such case we can adopt chi-squared distribution, correlation and regression to show the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Similarly, we can adopt cartographic tools in some studies. Whatever procedures we follow should be explained here.

**LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

No study is free from its limitations. If time and funds are very limited data collected may be of questionable quality. In this situation the quality of the research will also be questionable. The data should be reliable and valid. The researcher should recognize and identify the major limitations of his study.

**WORKING SCHEDULE**

The investigator or researcher has to give an outline of his working schedule. He should divide the duration of time into different sections if a research is to be completed within a period of 6 months. The working schedule may be given as follows :

**WORKING SCHEDULE**

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|--|----------|
| 1. Survey of Related Literature            | 1 month  |
| 2. Construction of Questionnaire           | 1 week   |
| 3. Pretesting and Redrafting Questionnaire | 1 week   |
| 4. Field Survey                            | 2 months |
| 5. Classification and Tabulation of data   | 2 weeks  |
| 5. Analysis and Interpretation of Data     | 1 months |
| 7. Report writing                          | 1 month  |

## BUDGET ESTIMATE

An outline of budget should be mentioned in a research proposal if it has been funded by any agency or institution. For an amount of Rs 10,000 the division of budget may be outlined as:

### BUDGET ESTIMATE

1. Researcher	Rs. 5,000/-
2. Photo copy, map and calculator	Rs. 1,000/-
3. Research Assistants	Rs. 1,000/-
4. Stationary	Rs. 1,000/-
5. Typing and Binding	<u>Rs. 2,000/-</u>
Total	Rs. 10,000/-

### CHAPTER PLAN/ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

An outline of chapter organization of the study may be as follows:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Review of Literature and conceptual Framework
- Chapter 3 Methodology
- Chapter 4 An Introduction to the Study Area
- Chapter 5 Data Analysis and Interpretation
- Chapter 6 Findings, conclusions and Recommendations.

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