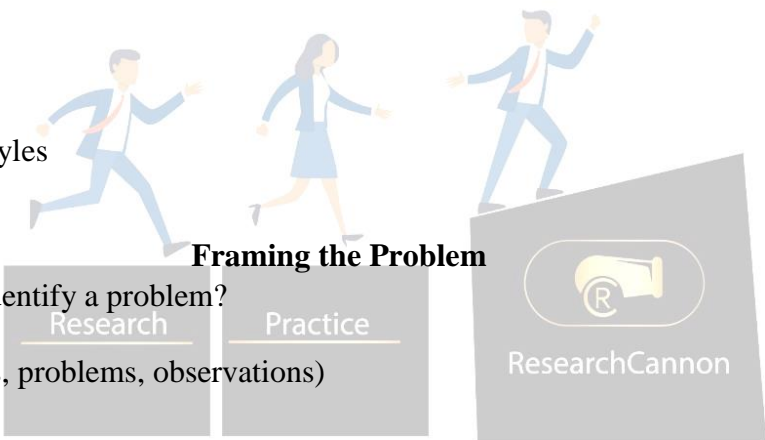# How to Write a Research Proposal

Concepts

- Framing the problem;

- Choosing and defending a method;

- Delimiting the scope of the study;

- Describing the stages of research;

- Identifying research objectives/outcomes.

- Writing styles

- Citation styles

- Referencing styles

Framing the Problem

1. How do you identify a problem?

   (Topics, theories, problems, observations)

2. Formulation
3. Expounding the problem
4. What is it a case of?
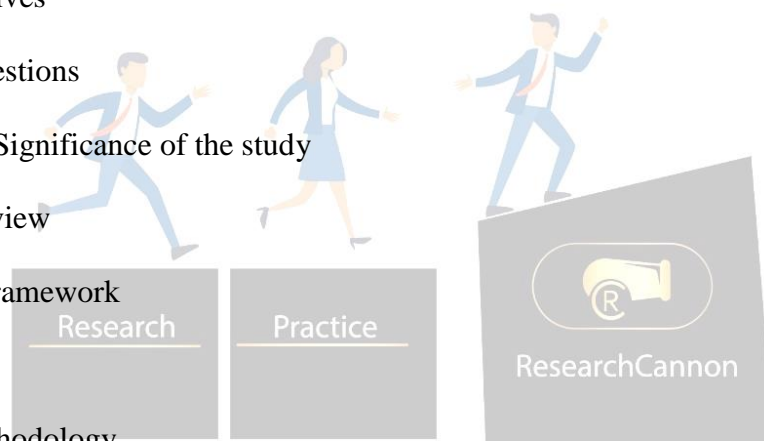
Choosing and Defending a Method

- What is the best method for investigating your problem?

- Justification for the method (knowledge, cost, audience)

- Methodology to be used

- Techniques?

- Has it been used before to carry out related work?

Delimiting the Scope of the Study

- What will your study capture or not capture and why?

   i. Design

   ii. Cost

   iii. Time

- Bound your study

The Stages of Research

1. Background of study

2. Statement of the Problem

3. Study Objectives

4. Research Questions

5. Justification /Significance of the study

6. Literature Review

7. Theoretical Framework

8. Hypothesis

9. Research Methodology

10. References/Bibliography

Background of the Study

- Explains the case being studied

- Explains the general scenario

- Is the case worth studying?

- Use at least 5 key references to establish a trend

- Prepares pathway for identifying a trend worth following

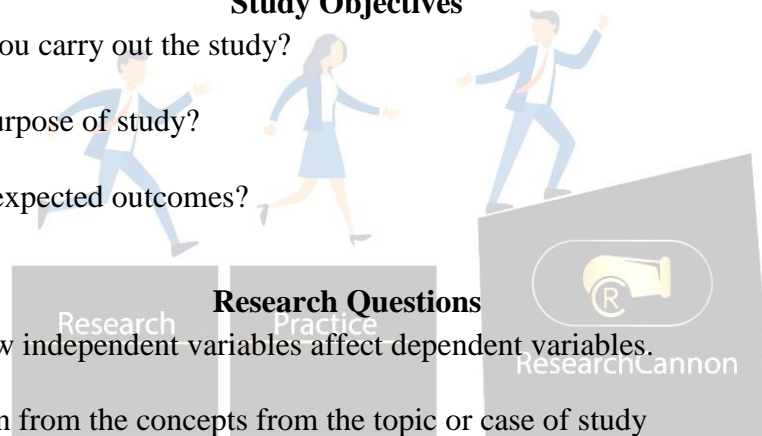- The isolated problem become the basis for careful analysis

- Is a background to the case study/problem to be studied?

Statement of the Problem

- How was the situation originally?

- How has the trend continued to be?

- How has the case deviated from the original or expected?

- The deviation explains why the issue is problematic and worth studying

- Questions why the case is the way it is

- The basis for research questions and objectives of the study

Study Objectives

- Why should you carry out the study?

- What is the purpose of study?

- What are the expected outcomes?

Research Questions

- Shows the how independent variables affect dependent variables.

- Must be drawn from the concepts from the topic or case of study

- Must depict attributes or traits of the key variables

- Must be related to the study objectives

Justification/Significance of the Study

Why is the study necessary?

• Academic justifications

• Theoretical justification
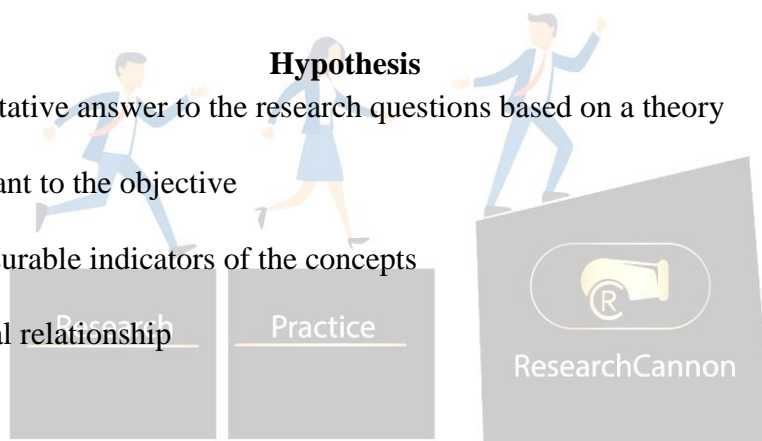
• Policy Justifications

• Practical purposes

Literature Review

- What is the purpose of the review?

- Review relevant literature to the objectives of the study

- Identify gaps

- Use at least 5 key references for every theme/objective being reviewed

- Relate the gaps to the study objectives and research questions

- Tentative answer to the gaps forms the hypotheses.

Hypothesis

- Provides a tentative answer to the research questions based on a theory

- Must be relevant to the objective

- Given in measurable indicators of the concepts

- Shows a causal relationship
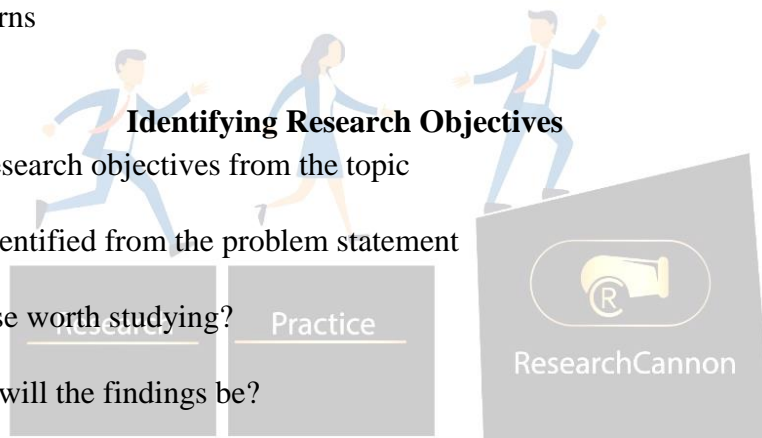
- Is directional

Theoretical Framework

- Based on a theory

- Explain relationships between outcomes and causes through a causal mechanism

- How do measurable indicators of an independent variables cause measurable indicators

  of the dependent variables to cause the stated outcome?

- How is it applied to your case of study?

- Provide key proponents of the theory and key assumptions

- You may use a conceptual framework to complement explanation

Research Methodology

- What is the research Design?

- Methodology

- Methods

- Study Population and Sampling

- Data Collection

- Data Measurement

- Data Analysis

- Reliability and Validity

- Ethical Concerns

Identifying Research Objectives

- We identify research objectives from the topic

- Can also be identified from the problem statement

- Why is the case worth studying?

- How relevant will the findings be?

- Research objectives are connected with outcomes through causal mechanism

- The explanation of outcomes is based on theories

- The theories link concepts
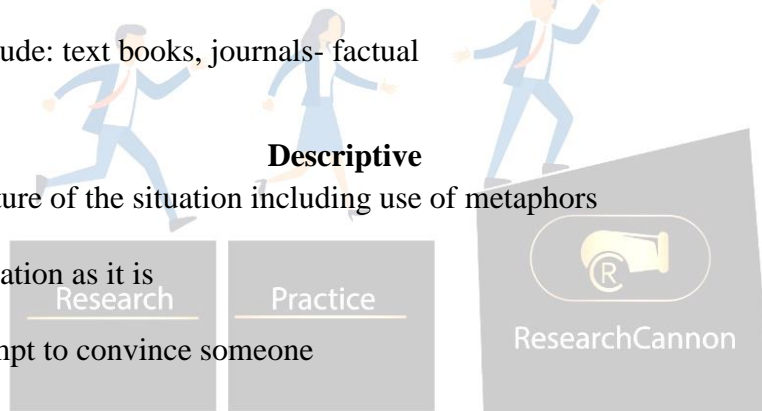
Writing Styles

Four main types:

- Expository

- Descriptive

- Persuasive

- Narratives

Expository

- Explains a position

- Does not include the author's opinions

- Focuses on accepted facts about a topic, including statistics or other evidence

- Examples include: text books, journals- factual

Descriptive

- Painting a picture of the situation including use of metaphors

- Presents a situation as it is

- Does not attempt to convince someone

- Examples include poetry, journalism, Fictions, novels, Diaries

Persuasive

- Main style of writing you will use in academic papers

- Convinces the audience about his views or opinions

- Provides justifications and reasons for his position

- Letters of recommendations, literature reviews, response to calls or advertisements

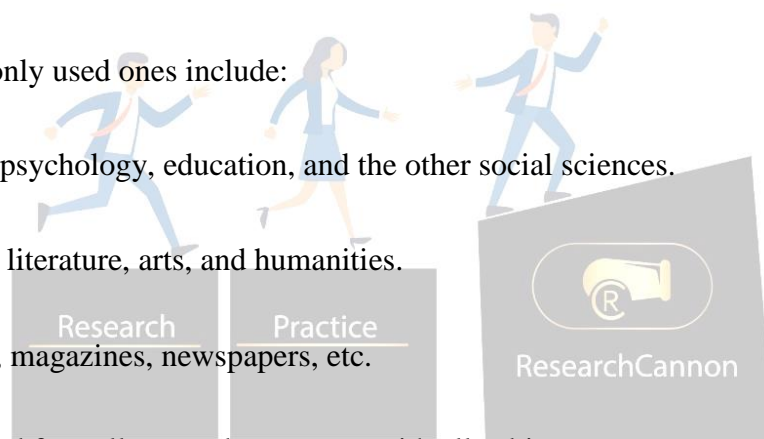- Every source of information must be cited and referenced

Narratives
- Can be either fiction or non-fiction

- Attempts to impart information

- Construct and communicate a story, complete with characters, conflict, and settings

- Examples include. Oral histories, Novels, Poetry and Short Stories

Citation Styles

Citation is a way of giving credit to authors of particular information

• Citation styles dictates what type of information that has to be captured, ordered and formatted

• Differs from discipline to discipline

• However, 4 commonly used ones include:

• APA for papers in psychology, education, and the other social sciences.

• MLA for papers in literature, arts, and humanities.

• Chicago for books, magazines, newspapers, etc.

• Turabian is designed for college students to use with all subjects.

• The chosen style must be used consistently throughout the article/chapter/book

Referencing Styles
- A way of acknowledging sources in academic work

- Mainly 2 systems of referencing: List of references and in-text references

- Whatever, the choice made, each student or scholar is advised to be consistent

- Styles are currently available digitally

- With the help of a computer referencing tools like Mendeley or Endnotes, a scholar is able to automatically manage referencing tasks

When should you Reference

- When you quote someone else's words (written or spoken), i.e. copy the words

- Re-word (paraphrase) or refer to someone else's ideas or findings

- Use factual data (e.g. facts, statistics, information from graphs) from other sources.

- Reprint a diagram, chart or other illustration.

- Use someone else's way of organizing or presenting information (e.g. a design).

- Need to show the reader that you have evidence for a statement or argument you have made

- Committing any of the above amounts to plagiarism

Systems of Referencing

- Two major systems: Notational and Parenthetical

- Notational may include footnote/endnote or series of numbered references Chicago/Turabian and Vancouver)

- Parenthetical has either Author page like in MLA or Author date like in APA, and Chicago

- Whatever the style, be consistent and accurate

- List of references vs Bibliography