

MS/PhD Research Proposal Template

1. Topic

The research topic must be specific, clear, and comprehensive, avoiding generic or overly broad phrasing. If applicable, use a main title with an optional subtitle separated by a colon.

2. Introduction/ Background

In this section, the researcher is expected to provide a detailed introduction to the chosen topic, offering a comprehensive overview of its broader background and context. This entails clearly identifying and elaborating on the knowledge gap or pressing policy issue that the study aims to address. It is essential to articulate why the topic holds relevance and significance, particularly within the disciplines of Strategic Studies and International Relations. Furthermore, the researcher should situate his/her study within a historical and theoretical framework, ensuring that the discussion is precise rather than vague or generalized. This section should establish the foundation for the research by linking the topic to its intellectual and practical implications within the larger academic discourse.

3. Statement of the Problem

This section will provide a concise description of the issue or gap that the research seeks to address. It will explain clearly why the problem is significant, the type and sources (agency) of the problem, outline its context, and highlight its impacts. Clearly describe the problem in single meaning words as it sets the stage for the research objective(s), question(s), and hypothesis, establishing the rationale for the study.

4. Literature Review

This section will provide a summary of the state of the existing literature on the topic. It should not be a mere description; it should be a critical analysis and synthesis rather than just summarizing the recent and relevant academic sources. Demonstrate how your study will contribute theoretically, empirically, or methodologically. It should situate your study within the broader field of IR and strategic studies with the historical background of the issue identifying debates and

controversies that surround the topic, what evidence has been provided, and what is undiscovered or underexplored keeping in view the critiques and trends relevant to the field and topic. Organize the sources and maintain a logical flow – thematically, methodologically, or chronologically and identify the gaps your study aims to fill by connecting academic research with real-world issues. Make sure your literature review provides the evidence and basis for the research questions/and or hypothesis.

5. Objectives

Outline the primary objectives of your research, ensuring they are clearly defined, measurable, achievable, and relevant within the scope of the study, and crucially, time bound. Specify what you aim to identify, explore under-investigated phenomena, establish, examine causal relationships, or test theories or hypotheses within a specific socio-political context. Additionally, indicate if you plan to critically evaluate policies, and agreements, or assess the effectiveness of any existing arrangements.

6. Hypothesis

The hypothesis should essentially state the clear relationship between variables, or a precise expectation based on theory or observation. It should be testable through empirical data, clearly phrased, concise, and aligned with research objectives. It should be realistic in the scope of the study and straightforward, not vague and overly complex or general statement.

7. Research Questions

Research questions are fundamental to guiding and focusing a study. They set the boundaries, define the scope, guide methodology, and provide the direction for the theoretical framework or conceptualization of the research. Questions must be formulated clearly and precisely to qualify as researchable within the confinements of time, scope, and resources to convey the direction of the study.

8. Research Methodology

It refers to the method(s) and techniques used to conduct the study. investigate research. This section demonstrates your understanding of the research process by explaining why the chosen approach is suitable for testing the hypothesis or answering the questions. It should justify why the chosen methodology is consistent with objectives, nature of the problem, and existing literature on the topic. It outlines how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to achieve the study's objectives and answer the questions.

Research Design

Describe the overall approach and design of your study citing the overall strategy used to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way. Design is a blueprint that provides a framework for data collection and analysis. It focuses on the logic of the method, what evidence is needed how do researcher will obtain it.

Data

This section will outline the specification of the data sets consumed to conduct the study. Types of data such as primary or secondary along with identification of source are required for this section.

Sampling

Describe the process you will use to select your sample for data collection and explain why this sample is appropriate for addressing your research.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section explains how you intend to analyze the data you collect to address your research questions or test your hypotheses. It should showcase your knowledge of analytical techniques suitable for your study, ensuring that the chosen methods align with your research design and objectives.

9. Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework, outlining the theories, concepts, and models that guide and inform your research. It defines the key assumptions and concepts that will be operationalized in testing the hypothesis or addressing the research questions. The section will also

discuss how previous studies have applied this framework, supported by relevant literature, and explain how you will adapt it to your specific context and case. Additionally, it will illustrate how the chosen theory or theories shape the research design and methodology. Most importantly, the researcher must justify the selection of these particular theories, explaining why they are suited to addressing the research problem and why other frameworks were considered less appropriate.

10. Scope of Research

This section will identify the area or domain of application of the research such as policy, academia, organizations, etc.

11. Anticipated Limitations

Recognize any potential limitations or challenges that may arise in your research, such as issues with data collection, sample size, or access to participants. Demonstrating an understanding of these limitations reflects critical thinking and indicates that you've anticipated possible obstacles. Outline factors that could constrain the scope, accuracy, or generalizability of your study, which may involve methodological constraints, sample size, data collection issues, or external factors beyond your control.

12. Ethical Considerations

Highlight if your research involves human subjects and has some elements sensitive to the national interest, gender biases, sensitive to religious or sectarian biases/ideologies, ethical clearance from the department will be essential. It will address the principles and practices to ensure the research respects human rights, integrity, and academic standards.

13. Organization of the Study

It will outline how the research project will be structured. It provides a roadmap for the reader, showing how the study will be divided into sections or chapters and what each will address. All chapters will be aligned with the respective questions.

14. Bibliography and Sources of Data

List key sources that you have consulted for your research proposal.

15. Additional Information:

The document should have a word count of around 35,000 words for an MS thesis and around 75,000 words for a PhD dissertation, adhering to the Chicago citation style, 17th edition.