



The Dissertation Research Proposal Process: A Systematic Approach

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Abstract

A dissertation research proposal is more than just a document that represents the foundation of a doctoral candidate's research journey. It is essential to communicate the study's intent to be undertaken and to gain approval from an academic committee. The present analysis provides a systematic approach to writing a dissertation proposal, offering insights and strategies that align with contemporary research practices. From framing the research with an introduction and formulating research questions to outlining the methodology, this guide highlights the key components contributing to a successful proposal. Emphasizing clarity, originality, and scholarly rigor, this guide also draws from current academic literature and offers practical, actionable advice for doctoral candidates.

Keywords: Dissertation Proposal, Systematic Approach, Doctoral Research, Methodology, Academic Writing

Introduction

A dissertation research proposal is a detailed plan of action for doctoral research, encompassing key components such as an introduction, problem statement, research objectives, literature review, methodology, expected outcomes, limitations, and a timeline (Seng & Leong, 2024; Singh, 2021; Terrell, 2022). The introduction clearly defines the research problem, while the problem statement identifies gaps in the literature (Pecher et al., 2020; Terrell, 2022). The literature review contextualizes the study within broader scholarly conversations (Chigbu et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2022), and the methodology outlines data collection and analysis approaches (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022). Expected outcomes detail the anticipated findings or contributions of the research (Hiebert et al., 2023), with limitations identifying the constraints or challenges that may affect the study (Hiebert et al., 2023; Stötzel, 2024). A well-structured timeline ensures the research is conducted systematically, while a comprehensive reference list upholds academic integrity (Chew, 2019; Monrroy & Franco, 2022).

For example, Durkin (2020) and Singh (2021) emphasized the importance of clarity, coherence, and originality in crafting research proposals, stressing aligning each section—such as the introduction, literature review, and methodology—with academic standards to highlight the research's potential contributions. Terrell (2022) provided step-by-step guidance on constructing dissertation proposals, using practical examples and case studies to illustrate key concepts. Tabatabaei and Tayebi (2022) and Terrell (2022) highlighted the strength of demonstrating the significance of research, the potential impact on the field being studied, and how it may contribute to existing knowledge in research proposals. Thus, the present analysis will illustrate these principles, offering practical insights into constructing a well-rounded and impactful research proposal and emphasizing its importance in advancing scholarly discourse.

In Durkin (2020), common challenges such as writer's block and time management are addressed, providing practical tips to ensure the dissertation is methodologically sound and impactful. More importantly, Khosa and Makuvire (2020) stipulated a reflective perspective, emphasizing doctoral candidates' emotional and intellectual journey and the significance of support systems and effective mentorship, viewing the proposal writing process as both a technical and personal and professional learning experience. Tabatabaei and Tayebi (2022) and Toyon (2023) asserted the value of ethical considerations in the research proposal process, calling for a focus on the potential ethical issues related to the research design, data collection, and participant involvement and underscoring that a well-prepared proposal should thoroughly examine ethical implications, ensuring that the research adheres to established ethical standards and guidelines.

The introduction element of a research proposal is crucial. It sets the stage for the entire research study, outlining the problem statement, research questions, and objectives. An introduction frames the research, engaging the reader and setting a solid foundation for the study. According to Tavakol and O'Brien (2023), a well-constructed introduction should capture the reader's interest, establish the relevance of the research, and smoothly transition into the study's objectives. For Terrell (2022), a strong introduction provides a clear and compelling rationale for the study, explaining why the research is necessary and how it contributes to the existing body of knowledge. Tabatabaei and Tayebi (2022) suggested establishing a well-defined research problem grounded in the relevant literature and clearly linked to the proposed methodology.

Singh (2021) further argued that the introduction should be concise yet comprehensive and, like Tavakol and O'Brien (2023), capture the reader's interest while providing sufficient context to understand the significance of the research. Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) and Seng and Leong (2024) added that the introduction must articulate the research questions or hypotheses clearly and, in accordance with Terrell (2022), ensure that the scope of the study is well-defined. Khosa and Makuvire (2020) offered a reflective perspective, highlighting how the introduction is a technical component and a significant part of the researchers' intellectual journey, requiring deep engagement with the topic and a clear vision of the intended impact of the research.

Critical Elements of the Introduction

- State the Problem - Clearly define the research problem and explain why it matters. As Tavakol and O'Brien (2023) argued, the research problem must be both significant and researchable, capable of contributing to the existing body of knowledge.
- Contextualize the Research - Situate the research within the broader academic landscape, referencing key studies addressing similar issues (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).
- Outline the Approach - Briefly describe the methodology you will use to address the research questions, providing a roadmap for the rest of the proposal (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022; Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Introduction

Do's

- Do present the research problem clearly and concisely.
- Do justify the relevance of the research by providing background context.
- Do outline the research objectives and questions.

Don'ts

- Do not start with broad, vague statements. Be specific and focused.
- Do not overload the introduction with too much detail. Save that for the literature review.

Sample Introduction

The rising prevalence of mental health disorders among adolescents has become a pressing public health issue (HHS, n.d.; Kapadia, 2024; WHO, 2021). According to the WHO (2021), one in seven 10-19-year-olds globally experience a mental disorder, accounting for

approximately 14% or 1 in 7 of the global disease burden in this age group. In the U.S., in recent studies, nearly 20% of teenagers are affected by some form of mental illness. Also, over 30% of adolescents reported poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kapadia, 2024). This research explores the impact of school-based mental health interventions on improving adolescent well-being (Clarke et al., 2021; HHS, n.d.). The research questions will focus on these interventions' effectiveness and long-term benefits. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to analyze the issue comprehensively.

Problem Statement

A substantial problem statement is the cornerstone of a compelling dissertation proposal (Pecher et al., 2020; Terrell, 2022). Pecher et al. (2020) focused on transforming research questions into a well-constructed problem statement, underscoring the importance of clearly defining the research problem within the context of a study, outlining a methodical approach for developing research questions that naturally evolves into a concise problem statement, illustrating how this transformation anchors the study's direction and rationale. The authors asserted that a strong problem statement must be specific, researchable, and directly linked to the study's objectives. In carefully refining research questions, scholars can craft a problem statement that effectively articulates the research gap and establishes the foundation for their study (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022). In addition to identifying the gaps in the current literature, Grande et al. (2022) and Pecher et al. (2020) suggested that the problem statement should justify further investigation. This section should also explain the implications of not addressing the problem, reinforcing the study's potential contributions to the field.

Tips for Writing a Problem Statement

- Be Specific - Avoid broad generalizations. Focus on a particular aspect of the issue that is researchable and significant (Pecher et al., 2020).
- Identify the Gap - Clearly define what is missing in the existing research and how the study will address this gap (Grande et al., 2022; Pecher, 2021).
- Provide Context - Reference existing studies to demonstrate how the research builds on or challenges current knowledge (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Problem Statement

Do's

- Do identify a gap in the existing research.
- Do ensure the problem statement is specific and researchable.
- Do link the problem statement to the larger context of the field.

Don'ts

- Do not state the problem in overly broad terms. Keep it focused on a particular issue.
- Do not ignore existing research. Show that you are building on it.

Sample Problem Statement

Despite the growing awareness of adolescent mental health, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the effectiveness of school-based interventions (Clarke et al., 2021; Grande et al., 2022). Studies have focused on the prevalence of mental health issues, but few have thoroughly examined how these interventions influence long-term mental well-being (Clarke et al., 2021; Grande et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). In conducting a meta-analysis, Zhang et al. (2023) found that these interventions are generally effective at reducing depression and anxiety symptoms. While the current findings are promising, significant gaps and limitations persist in the literature.

For example, the long-term effectiveness of interventions is not well-established, and there is limited evidence on interventions targeting specific mental health issues, such as suicide prevention (Grande et al., 2022). Additionally, more research is needed to assess the effectiveness of interventions for diverse populations and minority ethnic groups (Clarke et al., 2021). The impact of these interventions on academic outcomes remains underexplored, and there is a call for more rigorous randomized controlled trials with larger sample sizes to strengthen the evidence base (Zhang et al., 2023). The present study will address this gap by investigating the impact of these interventions over five years, offering insights that could shape future mental health policies.

Research Objectives/Questions

The research objectives and questions guided the direction of the study and were required to be clear, focused, and researchable. Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) and Pecher et al. (2020) underscored the crucial role of research questions in guiding the development of a

problem statement. They proposed a method for systematically transforming research questions into a clear and concise problem statement, illustrating that well-formulated research questions were foundational to the research problem.

Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) outlined key considerations for developing questions that addressed both theoretical and practical concerns in the field of design. They provided a structured approach that helped researchers align their inquiries with broader design challenges. Further, Goldschmidt and Matthews discussed how well-formulated questions drove meaningful design exploration and innovation, contributing to academic and professional discourse.

The authors asserted that research questions must be specific, researchable, and aligned with the study's objectives. In refining and focusing on these questions, researchers created a problem statement that clearly articulated the study's direction and relevance within the broader academic context. The formulation of research questions was done carefully to ensure they aligned with the chosen methodology and could be addressed within the scope of the study (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022). Terrell (2022) also underscored the importance of consulting with advisors to refine these questions as the proposal developed. Consulting with advisors leveraged their expertise to enhance the quality and feasibility of the research while also helping students avoid common pitfalls.

Best Practices for Developing Research Questions

- Align with the Problem Statement - Ensure the research questions are directly related to the identified problem (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022; Pecher et al., 2020).
- Be Precise - Avoid vague or overly broad questions. Aim for clarity and specificity (Durkin, 2020; Singh, 2021).
- Consult Scholarly Literature - Draw on existing research to formulate relevant and timely questions (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Research Objectives/Questions

Do's

- Do align the research questions with the problem statement.
- Do ensure the research questions are precise and focused on the study's objectives.
- Do consult with advisors to refine the questions.

Don'ts

- Do not formulate questions that are too broad or unmanageable.
- Do not propose research objectives that cannot be realistically achieved.

Sample Research Objectives/Questions

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based mental health interventions. The following research questions will guide the study:

1. How do school-based mental health interventions impact adolescent well-being?
2. How do these interventions influence academic performance and social interactions?
3. What factors contribute to the long-term success of these interventions?

Literature Review

A literature review is an essential component of scholarly research, as it establishes the researcher's knowledge of the field, positions the study within the broader academic discourse, and creates a theoretical framework for the proposed research (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023). Literature reviews serve as a foundation for scholarly inquiry, synthesizing existing research to highlight gaps and contextualize new studies within the prevailing body of knowledge. For example, Tavakol and O'Brien (2023) asserted that an effective literature review must go beyond mere summarization, requiring critical engagement with the existing research. This involves identifying gaps in the literature, synthesizing findings, and creating a coherent narrative that advances understanding in the field.

In their study, Chigbu et al. (2023) outlined a systematic approach to literature reviews within four key stages: searching, identifying, selecting, and synthesizing relevant research. This approach ensures methodological rigor and scholarly credibility, allowing researchers to contribute meaningfully to academic discourse. Chigbu et al. argued that researchers can develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic by systematically engaging with literature, leading to a robust theoretical foundation for their studies.

Similarly, Lim et al. (2022) underscored the importance of literature reviews in advancing academic knowledge by outlining the 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' of contributing through literature reviews. They asserted that a well-conducted literature review sets the stage for future research by identifying gaps, synthesizing existing knowledge, and offering fresh insights or theoretical

advancements. Lim et al. also provided practical strategies for conducting impactful reviews, such as selecting appropriate topics, applying rigorous methodologies, and ensuring that the review is transparent and methodologically sound. These strategies are crucial for producing literature reviews that contribute to the field and push the boundaries of academic discourse.

Dekkers et al. (2022) extended this discussion by providing a multidisciplinary guide to conducting systematic literature reviews. Their book explained that a structured, methodical approach to reviewing literature ensures that research is organized and synthesized effectively. They asserted the need for thoroughness and clarity in the review process, offering practical tips on searching, selecting, and evaluating sources across various disciplines. Following a structured methodology, researchers can create high-quality literature reviews that contribute meaningfully to their fields, ensuring their work is rigorous and impactful.

Critical Considerations for Writing a Literature Review

- Synthesize, do not summarize - Rather than merely listing studies, critically engage with the literature to identify trends, gaps, and areas of agreement or disagreement (Grande et al., 2022; Pecher et al., 2020; Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).
- Focus on Relevance - Select studies directly related to the research questions and problem statement (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022).
- Establish a Framework - Use the literature review to build the theoretical foundation for the study, linking previous research to the research objectives (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Literature Review

Do's

- Do organize the literature review thematically or chronologically.
- Do critically engage with literature rather than merely summarizing it.
- Do identify gaps in the literature that the study will address.

Don'ts

- Do not treat the literature review as a list of references. Synthesize and evaluate the findings.
- Do not ignore conflicting research. Address it in the review.

Sample Literature Review

Recent research has brought to the forefront the growing importance of mental health interventions in schools, demonstrating promising short-term outcomes such as reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, improved emotional regulation, and increased help-seeking behaviors among students (Clarke et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). A systematic review by Clarke et al. (2021) assessed the effectiveness of school-based interventions for adolescent mental health, finding that well-structured, cognitive-behavioral programs can be particularly beneficial. However, the effectiveness varies depending on factors like the type of intervention and its implementation quality, with successful outcomes tied to proper teacher training and program integration. In a meta-analysis, Zhang et al. (2023) found that school-based interventions targeting depression or anxiety had a small but significant positive effect, with cognitive behavioral therapy approaches and clinician-delivered interventions showing powerful results at the secondary school level (Clarke et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

However, significant gaps remain in understanding the long-term impact and sustainability of these programs. Most studies only evaluate interventions over short periods, typically 6-12 months, and high school staff turnover rates make it challenging to sustain long-term programs (Moore et al., 2022). Shifting priorities and funding constraints often lead to interventions being discontinued after initial implementation periods (Moore et al., 2022). Clarke et al. (2021) identified gaps in the research, such as the need for more long-term studies, recommending adopting evidence-based programs, and ensuring high-quality implementation to support adolescent mental health in schools effectively. Additionally, the lack of longitudinal research examining the sustainability of school mental health programs beyond initial funding and study periods limits our understanding of whether short-term gains are maintained over time.

To address these limitations, researchers have called for a more holistic approach that considers embedding mental health promotion into overall school culture and policies, addressing staff wellbeing, examining external factors such as family support and community resources, and securing longer-term funding (Clarke et al., 2021; Fazel et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2022). Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs, implementation science approaches, mixed-methods research incorporating qualitative data, and economic evaluations to build a more substantial evidence base for sustainable and effective school-based mental health

interventions (Fazel et al., 2014). Accordingly, this literature review will critically engage with existing research, identifying the need for a more comprehensive approach that considers long-term outcomes and the influence of external factors such as family support and community resources.

Methodology

The methodology section is a critical component of a research proposal, serving as a roadmap for how the study will be conducted. The methodology must align with the research questions and objectives, ensuring that the chosen methods are appropriate for addressing the core aims of the study, justifying how each component will contribute to answering the research questions, outlining whether the study will utilize quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods, including detailing specific data collection techniques such as surveys, interviews, or experiments, as well as the sampling strategy for selecting participants or data sources and the analytical techniques to be employed (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

It is crucial to ensure the proposed methodology is feasible, given available resources, time constraints, and the researcher's skills. The methodology should be realistic and achievable within the scope of the dissertation. Researchers must provide clear rationales for their methodological decisions, drawing on relevant literature to support their choices and demonstrating a thoughtful and informed approach to research design. A robust methodology anticipates potential obstacles and outlines strategies for addressing them, helping maintain the research's integrity and rigor (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The nature of the research questions should guide the choice between qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Qualitative methods are suited for exploring complex phenomena, uncovering meanings, and generating theories, while quantitative methods are appropriate for testing hypotheses, measuring variables, and identifying patterns across larger samples. Mixed methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding by combining both approaches. In carefully considering these elements, researchers can develop a methodology that offers a solid foundation for the proposal, ensuring that the research is rigorous, ethical, and capable of addressing the study's objectives (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022; Tabatabaei & Tayebi, 2022; Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023; Toyon, 2023).

Critical Elements of the Methodology

- Research Design - Clearly describe the research design, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods. Justify the choice based on the research questions (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023; Toyon, 2023).
- Data Collection and Analysis - Explain how you will collect and analyze data, ensuring the methods are appropriate for the study (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023; Toyon, 2023).
- Ethical Considerations - Address any ethical issues and explain how you will handle them (Tabatabaei & Tayebi, 2022; Toyon, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Methodology

Do's

- Do justify the methods and explain why they suit the research.
- Do address any ethical considerations related to the research.
- Do consider limitations and how you will manage them.

Don'ts

- Do not choose a methodology without justifying the choices.
- Do not ignore potential challenges in data collection or analysis.

Sample Methodology

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to explore mental health interventions in schools. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with school counselors and students, allowing in-depth exploration of perspectives on these interventions. Data from these interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes. The quantitative component consists of surveys distributed to students in participating schools, measuring changes in well-being, academic performance, and social interactions, with statistical methods used for data analysis. A mixed-methods design offers several strengths, including triangulation of findings, complementarity of data, and a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, will be prioritized throughout the research process (Tabatabaei & Tayebi, 2022; Toyon, 2023). The suggested approach is well-suited to address complex questions surrounding mental health interventions, providing valuable insights that inform policy and practice in educational settings.

Significance of the Study

In this section, Tavakol and O'Brien (2023) recommended outlining the potential contributions of the research to the field. It is an opportunity to explain why the study matters and what impact it may have on both theory and practice. Tavakol and O'Brien noted that this section should directly connect to the research questions and objectives, providing a clear picture of the anticipated impact of the research. Tavakol and O'Brien also believe in articulating the study's significance and explaining how it will advance knowledge in the field. Correspondingly, Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) emphasized the critical role of well-formulated research questions in the success of design research, as they shape the study's direction, methodology, and outcomes. Presenting the expected outcomes enhances the rigor and relevance of design research, ensuring that the questions posed are both meaningful and answerable within the scope of the research. In *The Write Stuff: Writing and Publishing Newsletter*, it is suggested that this section should also acknowledge potential research limitations, ensuring the researcher presents a balanced view of the study's contributions and challenges (The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, 2020).

Best Practices for Articulating Significance of the Study

- Connect to the Research Questions - Ensure that the expected outcomes directly address the research questions you have posed (Goldschmidt & Matthews, 2022).
- Emphasize Contributions - Demonstrate how the research will fill gaps in the literature or challenge existing assumptions (Grande et al., 2022; Pecher et al., 2020).
- Be Realistic - Avoid overestimating the significance of the findings. Focus on what the research can reasonably achieve (Tavakol & O'Brien, 2023).

The Do's and Don'ts of Significance of the Study

Do's

- Do connect the expected outcomes directly to the research questions.
- Do discuss both theoretical and practical contributions of the research.
- Do acknowledge potential limitations while reinforcing the significance of the study.

Don'ts

- Do not overstate the research's contributions. Be realistic about what you can achieve.
- Do not ignore the potential limitations of the research.

Sample Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of school-based mental health interventions. The findings could contribute to developing targeted and sustainable mental health programs in schools, ultimately improving student well-being and academic performance. In addressing the long-term impact of these interventions, this study aims to fill a critical gap in the literature and offer practical recommendations for policymakers and educators.

Limitations/Delimitations

Acknowledging the study's limitations and delimitations is essential for demonstrating that you have carefully considered the scope and constraints of the research. Ross et al. (2019) advised being transparent about the potential challenges and limitations of the study, as this enhances the credibility of the research. According to Ross et al., discussing limitations enhances the credibility of the proposal by showing that the researcher has considered potential weaknesses in the study. Ross also argued that acknowledging these limitations allows the researcher to set realistic expectations for the study's outcomes. Similarly, Ott (2024) underscored the importance of delimitations, which define the boundaries of the research. Ott also suggested clearly stating what the study will and will not cover, which helps manage its scope, ensuring it remains feasible. According to Ott, "Limitations and their number matter. The greater the number of limitations and ramifications of their effects, the more outcomes and conclusions are affected" (p. 1).

Critical Considerations for Addressing Limitations

- Identify Potential Challenges - Be honest about the research's limitations, whether related to methodology, sample size, or other factors (Ott, 2024; Ross et al., 2019).
- Explain Delimitations—Clearly define the study's boundaries and explain what it will and will not cover (Ott, 2024).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Limitations/Delimitations

Do's

- Do identify potential limitations that may impact the study.
- Do clarify the delimitations that define the boundaries of the research.
- Do explain how you will mitigate any limitations.

Don'ts

- Do not ignore possible limitations. Address them directly.
- Do not be overly defensive about limitations. Present them as natural aspects of any research process.

Sample Limitations/Delimitations

One limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Furthermore, the study's focus on a limited number of schools could affect the generalizability of the findings. To address these limitations, a mixed-methods approach will be employed to triangulate data from multiple sources, enhancing the study's credibility. The study's delimitations include a deliberate focus on school-based interventions, intentionally excluding other potential influences on adolescent mental health, such as family or community interventions, to maintain a manageable scope.

Timeline/Work Plan

A well-organized timeline demonstrates that the research is feasible and that you have a clear plan for completing the dissertation. Chew (2019) suggested breaking the research process into phases and setting realistic deadlines for each stage. A realistic timeline ensures that the research is completed within the required timeframe. According to Chew (2019), a well-structured work plan provides a roadmap for the researcher and demonstrates to the dissertation committee that the study is feasible. Monrroy and Franco (2022) proposed breaking the research process into manageable phases, including literature review, data collection, analysis, and writing. A detailed timeline also identifies potential bottlenecks, enabling the researcher to address them proactively; therefore, Monrroy and Franco suggested a Gantt chart that can be used to outline the timeline for the research activities, helping to demonstrate to reviewers that the project is well-planned and that the researcher has a realistic timeline for completing the various components of the study. Monrroy and Franco also advised that the timeline should be flexible enough to accommodate unexpected delays but structured enough to keep the research on track.

Tips for Creating a Timeline

- Be Detailed - Include specific tasks and deadlines for each phase of the research, from literature review to data analysis and writing (Chew, 2019; Monrroy & Franco, 2022).

- Build in Flexibility - Allow for unexpected delays, but ensure the timeline is still structured enough to keep you on track (Chew, 2019; Monrroy & Franco, 2022).
- Consult with Advisors - Regularly review the timeline with advisors to ensure it remains feasible (Chew, 2019; Monrroy & Franco, 2022).

The Do's and Don'ts of the Timeline/Work Plan

Do's

- Do create a realistic timeline with clear deadlines for each phase of the research.
- Do build flexibility into the timeline to account for unexpected delays.
- Do include time for revisions and feedback from advisors.

Don'ts

- Do not underestimate the time required for data collection or analysis.
- Do not ignore the need for flexibility in the timeline.

Sample Timeline/Work Plan

The research will be conducted over 12 months, with the following timeline:

- Months 1-2: Literature review and development of research instruments.
- Months 3-5: Data collection (interviews and surveys).
- Months 6-7: Data analysis.
- Months 8-9: Writing the results and discussion sections.
- Months 10-11: Final revisions and submission to the dissertation committee.
- Month 12: Defense preparation.

References

The reference list should include all the sources cited in the proposal and should follow the appropriate academic citation style. Monrroy et al. (2022) underscored that proper citation is essential for maintaining academic integrity and providing a foundation for the research. According to Monrroy et al., proper citation is essential for establishing credibility and avoiding plagiarism. In *Criteria of Formality and Structural Elements of Research Proposals*, Monrroy and Franco (2022) stressed the significance of following the preferred citation style of the institution (whether it be APA, MLA, or another writing format). Ensuring that all references are appropriately cited adheres to academic standards and allows readers to follow up on the sources used in the proposal.

Best Practices for Referencing

- **Follow Citation Guidelines** - Adhere to the citation style required by the institution, whether APA, MLA, or another writing format (Monrroy et al. (2022).
- **Be Thorough** - Ensure that all sources referenced in the proposal are included in the reference list (Monrroy et al. (2022).
- **Proofread** - Double-check the references for accuracy and consistency (Monrroy et al., 2022).

The Do's and Don'ts of the References

Do's

- Do ensure that all cited sources are included in the reference list.
- Do follow the institution's preferred citation style meticulously.
- Do proofread the references for accuracy.

Don'ts

- Do not include sources that are not cited in the proposal.
- Do not neglect to check for consistency in the reference formatting.

Sample References

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Appendices

Appendices are supplementary sections at the end of a proposal that provides additional information supporting the main content without cluttering the body of the document. In the present analysis, Appendices A – E serve this purpose, providing a space for supplementary materials like charts, graphs, survey instruments, or raw data, as examples, which are essential for the completeness and transparency of your work. In placing these items in the appendices, the main body of your document remains focused and concise while still providing readers with access to the in-depth information they may need for further analysis or verification. This enhances the credibility and thoroughness of your research (Sudheesh et al., 2016).

While appendices are not always required, they are particularly beneficial when the proposal involves complex data or extensive background information. Including appendices can enhance the proposal's credibility by showing that thorough research has been conducted, and they allow reviewers to access detailed information without overwhelming the main narrative. However, it is critical to reference the appendices in the main text so that readers know where to find the supplementary materials if needed (Sudheesh et al., 2016).

Best Practices for Appendices

- Include Relevant Material - Ensure that the appendices include only supplementary information directly related to the proposal (Sudheesh et al., 2016).
- Reference in the Main Text - Where appropriate, reference each appendix within the main text so readers know where to find the additional information (Sudheesh et al., 2016). See appendices as reflected in the present analysis.

- Organize Logically - Arrange the appendices logically, often in the sequence in which they are mentioned in the main text, and provide clear titles or labels (Sudheesh et al., 2016). See sample Appendix A – E as reflected in the present analysis.

The Do's and Don'ts of the Appendices

Do's

- Do include only relevant supplementary materials that support the main content.
- Do reference each appendix clearly in the main text to guide the reader.
- Do organize the appendices in a logical order and label them clearly.

Don'ts

- Do not include unnecessary information that does not add value to the proposal.
- Do not fail to reference the appendices in the main text, leaving them disconnected from the proposal.
- Do not overlook the organization and labeling of appendices, which can confuse the reader.

Final Checklist for the Proposal

Bonnel and Smith (2021) suggested a comprehensive checklist to guide students through the proposal-writing process. This checklist should emphasize the value of reflecting on key components, including a clear problem statement, specific research objectives, a thorough literature review, and a detailed methodology. In regularly consulting a checklist, researchers can ensure their proposals are well-structured, meet academic standards, and are refined for successful submission. At the same time, while a checklist is highly beneficial during the writing process, it is generally not included in the final proposal document. Instead, it is a personal document to guide the development and review process, allowing focus on crafting the content while systematically verifying that all necessary elements are present and properly formatted.

Do's

- Do review the proposal to ensure that all required sections are included.
- Do check for coherence and logical flow throughout the proposal.
- Do ensure that all sources are correctly cited and referenced.

Don'ts

- Do not skip the final proofreading. Errors can undermine the credibility of the proposal.

- Do not submit the proposal without getting feedback from advisors.

Questions To Ask

1. Is the research problem clearly defined and significant, as Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022), Pecher et al. (2020), and Tavakol and O'Brien (2023) suggested?
2. Have you conducted a thorough literature review synthesizing existing research, as Chigbu et al. (2023) and Lim et al. (2022) recommended?
3. Are the research questions precise and researchable, following Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) guidelines?
4. Is the methodology appropriate for the research questions, as Goldschmidt and Matthews (2022) underscored?
5. Have you considered potential ethical issues and limitations in line with Tabatabaei and Tayebi's (2022) and Toyon's (2023) recommendations?
6. Does the proposal provide a realistic completion timeline, as Chew (2019) and Monrroy and Franco (2022) noted?
7. Have all appendices been included at the end of the document as provided in Sudheesh et al. (2016)?
8. Have you sought feedback from advisors and revised the proposal accordingly?

Conclusion

Writing a dissertation proposal is a complex and demanding process that requires careful planning, organization, and attention to detail. In following a structured approach and drawing on the best practices outlined in this guide, doctoral candidates can craft proposals that are not only well-structured but also feasible and impactful. Each section of the proposal, particularly the introduction, is crucial in establishing the study's foundation, engaging the reader, and articulating the research's significance and direction. In adhering to the guidelines provided, candidates can confidently navigate the proposal writing process, ensuring that their proposals effectively present a compelling case for their research and contribute meaningfully to their field.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

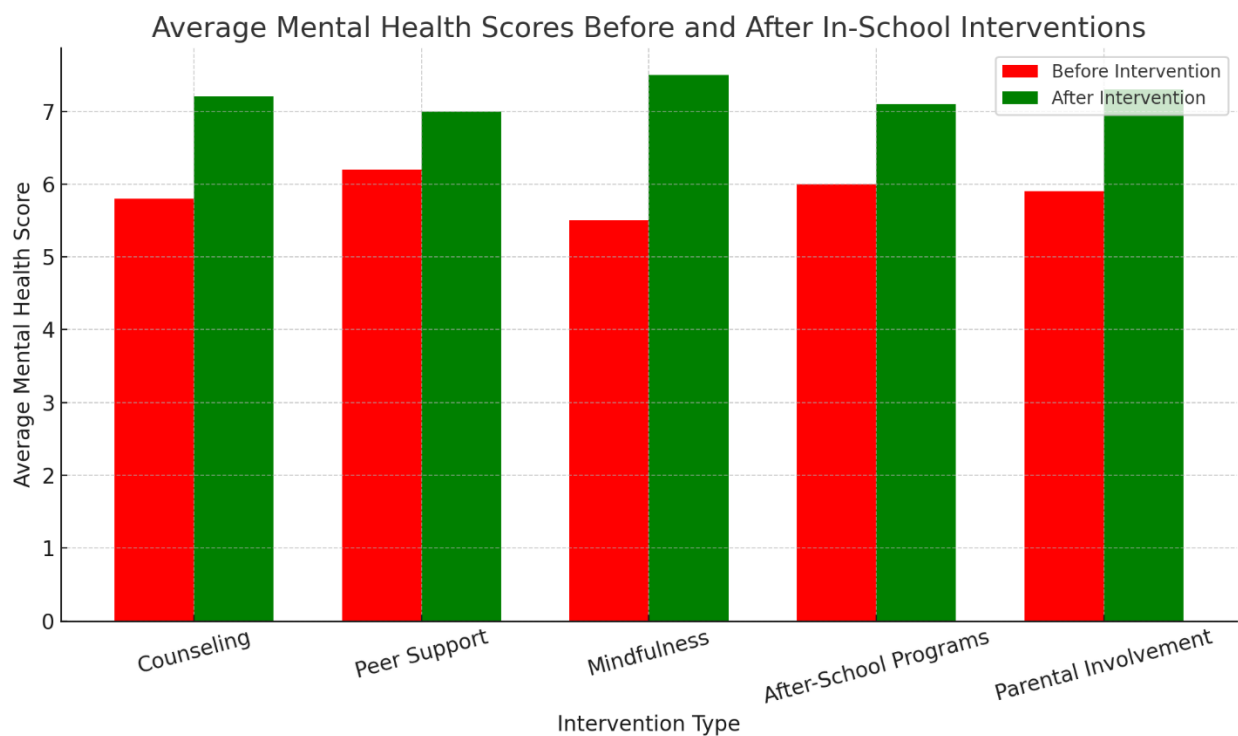
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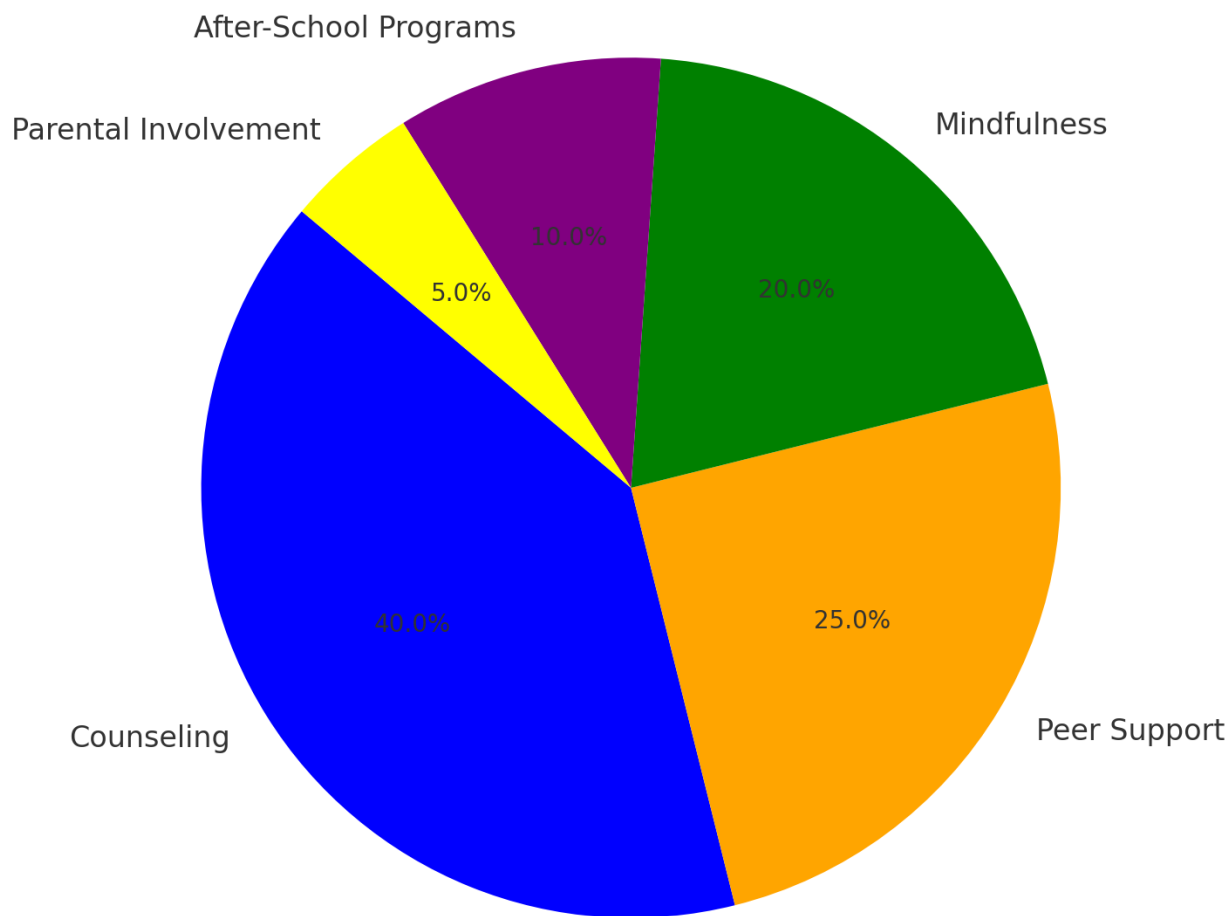
Appendix A



Bar Chart-This chart shows an example of adolescents' average mental health scores before and after different in-school interventions. The interventions include counseling, peer support, mindfulness, after-school programs, and parental involvement.

Appendix B

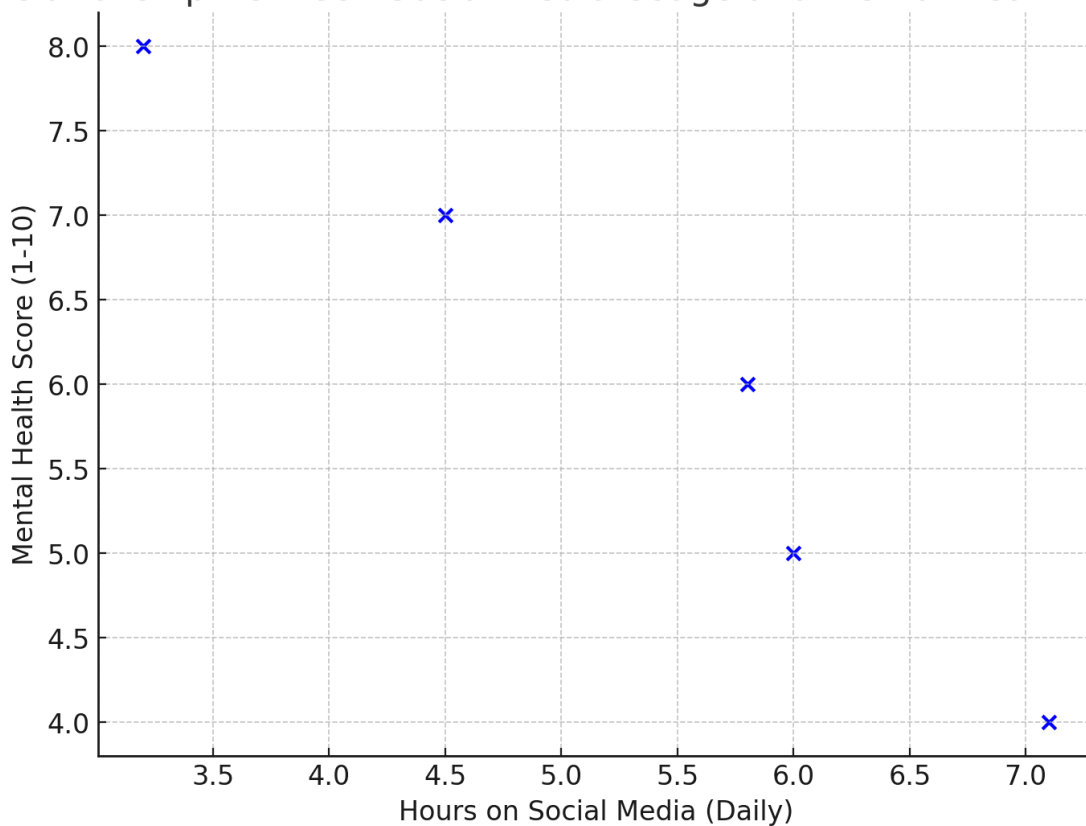
Distribution of In-School Intervention Types



Pie Chart-This pie chart represents an example of a distribution of different types of in-school interventions used in the study. It highlights the proportion of each intervention type, such as counseling and peer support.

Appendix C

Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Mental Health Scores



Scatter Plot-An example illustrating the relationship between hours spent on social media and mental health scores. The plot shows how these two variables might correlate.

Appendix D

Adolescent Mental Health Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

1. Age:

12 13 14 15 16 17 18

2. Gender:

Male Female Non-binary/Other Prefer not to say

3. Grade Level:

7th Grade 8th Grade 9th Grade 10th Grade 11th Grade 12th Grade

Section 1: General Mental Health

4. Over the past month, how often have you felt stressed?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

5. How often have you experienced difficulty sleeping due to worry or stress?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

6. How often have you felt hopeless or extremely sad?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

7. How often have you found it hard to concentrate on schoolwork because of your emotions?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Section 2: Coping and Support

8. When feeling upset or stressed, how often do you talk to someone about it?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

9. How supported do you feel by your family when you are having a tough time?

Not at all supported Slightly supported Moderately supported Very supported
Extremely supported

10. How supported do you feel by your friends when you are having a tough time?

Not at all supported Slightly supported Moderately supported Very supported
Extremely supported

11. How often do you engage in activities that help you relax (e.g., hobbies, sports, meditation)?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Appendix E

Sample Raw Data For Social Sciences Research Proposal						
	Participant ID	Age	Gender	Hours on Social Med	Mental Health Score	
1	001	15	Female	4.5	7	
2	002	17	Male	6.0	5	
3	003	16	Female	3.2	8	
4	004	18	Male	7.1	4	
5	005	15	Female	5.8	6	

Sample Raw Data for Social Sciences Research Proposal-A table displaying raw data, including participant IDs, age, gender, hours on social media daily, and mental health scores.