Suggested Guidelines for the Thesis Proposal

1. Title page

2. Abstract (optional)

   This should be an approximately 100-word summary of your hypothesis, the proposed methodology, a description of how you would analyze your data, and a brief statement concerning the implications of your research. In other words, it should be a short synopsis of your paper.

3. Introduction

   This section introduces the topic of your proposal, provides a short literature review of previous research on your topic, and ends with your statement of purpose or your hypothesis concerning your topic.

   a. Begin with a few sentences that describe the general area of psychology you want to investigate and the importance of the specific topic you’ve choose.

   b. Provide a literature review of the topic of your proposal. Your literature review should contain the following:

      • Discuss past research which develops the important theoretical issues related to your topic.
      • Summarize the approaches/methodologies that others have used to investigate those issues and the most important findings from previous research.
      • Summarize previous research for each of the variables you want to include in your thesis. Where past research has produced contradictory findings, your literature review should reflect that fact and should report which kind of result has occurred most often.
      • Provide some theoretical support of your hypotheses/research questions. Clearly demonstrate how your hypotheses/research questions were generated from this theoretical foundation.

   c. Describe your hypotheses. Be clear about which variables you will be studying and what pattern of results you expect to find. This should be consistent with the information presented in your literature review.

4. Method

   Describe each step of your methodology completely and comprehensively. Your description should be clear enough so that anyone reading your paper could replicate your study precisely by following your directions. Therefore, your method section should include the following:
a. **Participants/Subjects**

- Provide a description of your participants (how many, where you will get them, age range, race, etc.). Describe any eligibility requirements. Be sure that the estimated number of participants/subjects is consistent with the kind of data analysis you specify in the Design subsection.

b. **Materials:**

- Describe any equipment materials that would be used (computers, game machines, VCRs etc.).
- If you are using any tests or scales, describe the content of those measures. This includes the name of the test, what it is supposed to measure, the number of questions, examples of typical questions, the response options for the participant, and how those responses will be scored. Many tests have several subscales. Be sure to describe them and identify which ones you will be using or not using. The complete test/scale should be included as an appendix. Cite the source of each test/scale and describe any modifications you plan to make to those materials. Include information concerning the scales reliability and validity if possible.
- Describe any vignettes you’ve created for the study. Identify how your variables are used within the vignette. The entire set of vignettes should be included as an appendix.

c. **Procedure:**

- Provide a detailed, step-by-step account of the procedure you will use in the research.

d. **Design/Data Analysis**

- Identify your experimental design. Describe the statistical analyses you will use. Include the name of the tests, the predictor or independent variables that will be evaluated in these tests and the criterion or dependent variables in each analysis.

5. **References**

- Reference any sources you used for your proposal.

6. **Appendices**

- A copy of each scale/test and any vignettes you plan to use should be included as an appendix.