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ANALYSIS OF KEY STEPS TO PREPARE SYNOPSIS OF A LEGAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

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ABSTRACT

This abstract encapsulates a comprehensive synopsis focusing on the identification of a viable research topic and an effective strategic approach. It provides a succinct overview of the existing knowledge within the research domain while highlighting the evident gaps that have propelled this study forward. The delineation of research objectives and the strategic methodology employed to accomplish these objectives form a pivotal part of this summary. Moreover, this abstract underscores the significant contributions of the research endeavor and presents pivotal conclusions drawn from the study. Emphasizing brevity and clarity, the abstract avoids redundancy and repetition while providing sufficient details to manifest a well-structured plan for research, reflective of its acceptable academic merit pivotal part of this summary. Moreover, this abstract underscores the significant contributions of the research endeavor and presents pivotal conclusions drawn from the study. Emphasizing brevity and clarity, the abstract avoids redundancy and repetition while providing sufficient details to manifest a well-structured plan for research, reflective of its acceptable academic merit.

Key Words: Research, Synopsis, synopsis structure.

I. INTRODUCTION:

A research report in the field of law may be compared with the final writing of judgement by the Judges.¹ Report writing is the most important part of research work. The work is incomplete until the report of the labour put in is reduced into writing with a view to communicate others. It includes the purpose, the importance, the limitations, the procedure, the findings and the conclusion of the study.²

¹ P.S. Bhatnagar, "Data Interpretation and Report Writing", 24 *JILI* 784 (1982).

² Dr H. N. Tiwari, *Legal Research Methodology* 222 (Allahabad law Agency, Faridabad, 2006).

When we get a research assignment, we might be tempted to begin the assignment by going directly to the library to see what authority we can find. In fact, searching for authority right away is not the best way to start. Thought and planning, before we head for library, help us in several ways. Research can be done more efficiently if we have a coherent research plan to follow and such research will be more accurate. Searching haphazardly can cause to miss important authorities, and nothing is more disconcerting than feeling as though you came across relevant authority by accident. Following an organized plan will help ensure that you can check all the appropriate places for authority on your issue and will give you confidence that your research is correct and complete.³

Furthermore, it is essential for any reader of a research report to be sufficiently informed about the study's details, enabling them to contextualize it within the broader scientific framework, assess the appropriateness of its methodologies, and consequently, develop a perspective on the credibility of the findings. This underscores the necessity of structuring the report appropriately. The layout of the report refers to the essential components that a research report should encompass.⁴

The term synopsis, according to Black's Law Dictionary means a brief or partial survey, a summary or an outline.⁵

The structure of outlines can differ based on the investigator's individual preferences. Nevertheless, there is a consensus within the scientific community that all proposals should include, at a minimum: the problem statement with its rationale, both general and specific objectives, a section dedicated to methodology, the proposed analysis plan, and details regarding the schedule and budget.⁶

A research proposal, regardless of the field, encompassing natural sciences, social sciences, languages, medicine, or engineering, should comprise fundamental elements that address specific inquiries. These include: the rationale for conducting research on the chosen topic and the anticipated benefits, a review of previous work in this or related fields, and a delineation of the

³ Amy E. Sloan, *Basic Legal Research: Tools and Strategies* 333(ASPEN Publishers, New York, 3rd Ed. 2006).

⁴ C.P.Kothari, *Research Methodology : Methods and Techniques* 348 (New Age international Publishers, 2nd Ed. 2012).

⁵ Bryan A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary* 1464 (7th Ed.)

⁶ Pan American Health Organization, *Guide for Writing a Research Protocol* 3(PAHO, USA, 2012).

study's objectives and the methods proposed to accomplish them.

This research piece provides guidelines for preparing a research synopsis. The research synopsis is the plan for a research project. It provides the rationale for the research, the research objectives, the proposed methods for data collection and recording formats and/or questionnaires and interview guides. The synopsis is based on the information collected from various sources of information.

II. OBJECTIVES OF SYNOPSIS:

The outline of the report is the skeleton of the text. It should include all important aspects and be elaborate.⁷The objectives of writing research report may be summed up as follows:

- i) The Investigator clarifies and systematizes his work;
- ii) Future researchers are guided by the report earlier written;
- iii) If the findings are of practical use it can be incorporated into statutory law;
- iv) It can be used by the Courts for arriving at a conclusion different from the earlier one either to reform an existing law or to mould the course of social movement.

III. WHAT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND

A synopsis is the brief of what a researcher is going to write in his research report. It should be of such a nature that it gives a clear cut idea to the reader about the research and must also be impressive, so that it can attract the reader. The important thing is what does the person want or need to know about the study? How can this information be presented in the simple and lucid manner. Therefore, few things should be kept in mind while preparing the synopsis which is as follows:

- i) Be brief, accurate and to the point.
- ii) Avoid repetition or duplication of ideas.
- iii) Let the synopsis speak for itself. It should be of such that the text should be confined to it or its meaning.
- iv) Spare and allow enough time for writing a synopsis.
- v) Use a simple, direct style which is condensed, but not so condensed as to be cryptic or sacrifices precision and clarity of results.

⁷ Dr. S.R. Myneni, *Legal Research Methodology* 266 (Allahabad Law Agency, Faridabad, 4th Ed. 2009).

- vi) Organize the material in a logical sequence and not according to the order in which experiments were conducted.
- vii) Avoid long and complex headings.
- viii) Design suitable headings, sub-headings. The paragraphs and sentences should be short, to enable the reader to 'skin' the report for its general subject matter and to locate quickly and detailed part he/she seeks or is interested.
- ix) It should fulfill the consideration of chronology, topical unity, coherency and relevancy.⁸
- x) Revise the framework until it has unity, coherence, emphasis and accuracy, and so clear that it cannot be misunderstood.
- xi) Avoid unnecessary details. Also the outline should not be vague. The arrangement should be of such a nature that it tells the reader in nut-shell about the research report.

IV. STRUCTURE OF A SYNOPSIS

The structure of the synopsis varies on the basis of field of study and sometimes it depends on the institutions because some of the institutions provide specific guidelines for preparing a synopsis. Moreover, sometimes it may vary according to the preference of supervisor also. However, the it has agreed by most of the researchers and research institutions that all proposals should at least contain: The problem statement and justification for the research, the general and specific objectives, the chapter on methodology, the plan of analysis, and the timetable and budget.

Therefore, there is no hard and fast rule for preparing a synopsis but there are some standard components which should be provided in a synopsis. Generally, the legal research report synopsis consists of the following standard headings:

1.1. TITLE:

There has to be an idea which we want to research or investigate. Idea should be of such a nature which we can investigate i.e. it should be feasible to be investigated. Research is taken up broadly to explore something. The title of the research is basically an expressed form of that idea. The 'title' forms the first contact of the reader with the report. A good title should be short, accurate, and concise. It should make the central objectives and variables of the study clear to the reader (reviewer).

⁸ *Ibid.*

The title provides the 'key words' for the classification and indexing of the project. If it is possible without undue length, the title can give a preview of the report. The selection of a research topic demands careful consideration. It must be precise, reflecting the nature of the work involved to the greatest extent possible. The chosen topic should be concise, easily understandable, and directly aligned with the primary objective of the intended research. If required, a more detailed and descriptive sub-title can be incorporated to specify the primary methodology to be employed.

BOX 1 EXAMPLE OF A TITLE

How to Write Synopsis of a Legal Research Report.

Judicial Accountability: Contemporary Debates in India.

Therefore, in short we can say title is nothing but a condense form of a research Report.

1.2. ABSTRACT

The abstract serves as a concise summary, encapsulating the research's core elements within a limited word count of 150-250 words. It outlines the problem, main objective(s), and if applicable, the theories or conceptual framework employed. Additionally, it succinctly describes the method(s) utilized in the study. The aim is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the research's essence and key components exclusively within this brief section.

BOX 2 EXAMPLE OF AN ABSTRACT

Indian Pharmaceutical Industry is one of the major contributors in the nation's GDP leading to the prosperous growth of the economy. The practices followed in the pharma industry have a major impact both from the consumer and the market perspective. It is also very important to understand that pharmaceutical industry is an industry which works towards human welfare as the main purpose that is carried out in the industry is to manufacture lifesaving drugs and ensure the supply of those drugs in the form of medicines across the markets. In the present paper the researcher has focused upon the causes and possible reasons of monopolistic trade practices in the medical and pharmaceutical sector and the Role of CCI to overcome the same and have suggested methods by which the said practices can be eliminated to maintain a healthy competitive market environment.

Keywords: Anti-competitive, Regulations, Drug Control, Transparency, Health Care, Competition, Monopoly

underscore the project's significant contribution to the field. It is crucial to demonstrate the researcher's familiarity with established traditions and the current 'state of the art' research within that domain. This involves referencing pertinent examples of practice, especially if they set the context for the researcher's own work. For instance, when proposing pioneering work in interactive cinema, it is essential to outline both the accomplishments and limitations of predecessors in this field.

The primary objective of the literature review is to provide a focused and evaluative analysis, rather than presenting a mere list of readings. It should exhibit the researcher's grasp of existing work, showcasing a comprehensive understanding of the field to identify a specific area of inquiry or a launching point for their research. It is imperative to note that the literature review's purpose extends beyond innovation; it aims to establish the research's significance. Hence, it should delineate the parameters of the field in which the researcher intends to work and delve into significant works intersecting with the project.

An effective strategy involves commencing from the researcher's project and expanding outward. For instance, if examining a specific legislative provision or its deficiencies, the researcher should assess literature pertinent to the subject matter, explore analogous provisions in other existing laws, pinpoint international trends, and explore prevailing theoretical arguments influencing the provision.

The problem analysis derives from a critical evaluation of scientific literature encompassing commonly employed theories, available knowledge, and research methods with varying degrees of success. This review bolsters the rationale behind selecting the subject, thereby augmenting the Introduction section. Emphasizing recent literature is crucial, requiring a critical synthesis of knowledge within the addressed subject rather than a mere descriptive overview.

Conducting a critical review involves (i) systematically identifying relevant literature via comprehensive keyword-based searches in appropriate databases, (ii) critically analyzing the identified literature, assessing the rigor of research approaches and conclusions, and (iii) presenting significant approaches, conclusions, or discussions logically linked to the research objectives.

Literature review is of two types:

- i) Conceptual literature review which related to existing concepts and theories
- ii) Empirical literature review which relates to empirical research.

A researcher has to search relevant literature. For example a researcher has no idea about cyber-crimes. Then first, he should start with the conceptual aspect of the topic and consult the dictionaries. After understanding the concept of the topic, he should move towards the sources which provide comprehensive information for example the text books, reference books, journals or the legal databases etc.

Therefore, a researcher should keep in mind that the literature review does not mean studying all books and articles but reviewing only the relevant material. It should not be taken as compilation of books. It should show the distinctiveness in the research from earlier studies on the similar aspect.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives should be identified on the basis of the problem analysis. That means, after reading the problem analysis it should be immediate. The formulation of objectives is best done subsequent to the development of the theoretical framework, ensuring a logical flow between the central question and potential answers. This sequence is recommended because defining the objectives essentially translates the investigator's formulated hypotheses or answers into actionable steps.⁹ These objectives represent the intellectual activities that guide the investigator throughout the research process.¹⁰

Identifying objectives should be based on the problem analysis. Therefore, upon reviewing the problem analysis, it should be immediately apparent and justified why these objectives are chosen. They should directly address the concepts and issues highlighted in the problem analysis.

In any research proposal, there should be one overarching objective describing the broader contribution the research project intends to make to the subject area. Furthermore, there should be one or more specific objectives focusing on distinct tasks to be accomplished during the

⁹ It is recognized that not all research requires the formulation of a hypothesis for subsequent empirical verification. However, all research should explain its general and specific objectives.

¹⁰ *Supra* note 6 at 5.

research. It's important to note that the overall objective might signify a contribution rather than an ultimate resolution, and it should not merely compile the specific objectives. Each objective should stand independently, contributing to the overall purpose of the research. It is clear that the choice of objectives is relevant and justified. The objectives should focus on concepts and problems mentioned in the problem analysis. Each research proposal should contain one overall objective describing the general contribution that the research project makes to the subject area as well as one or more specific objectives focusing on discrete tasks that will be achieved during the research. The overall objective may be something that the study will contribute towards but not solve/finish; the overall objective should not be a compilation of the specific objectives.

BOX 3 EXAMPLE OF OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the present study is to contribute to an understanding of the actual and potential roles of Judges in improving legal education.

Therefore, the broad objectives as visualized to be achieved should be clearly outlined and these should be itemized. These objectives will indicate the major aspects of the study to be undertaken.

1.4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This constitutes the scientific rationale behind the study, highlighting the necessity for research aimed at augmenting existing knowledge. A research problem could manifest as a knowledge gap, an inexplicable observation, an unexplored aspect, or a phenomenon conflicting with established beliefs. Hence, the statement should be crafted to substantiate the situation empirically, pinpointing gaps in current understanding or presenting unresolved controversies and inconclusive evidence.

Furthermore, despite established knowledge, there might be instances where the researcher questions prevailing knowledge due to certain events they aim to scrutinize. The problem statement must convincingly argue the insufficiency of available knowledge in elucidating the problem and its potential alternative solutions. Alternatively, it should present a compelling case for testing established facts that might be challenged by new discoveries or circumstances.

The discussion within this section should evidence the investigator's thorough documentation of the problem and an exhaustive review of relevant literature on the subject matter. This comprehensive approach is crucial to substantiate the need for further exploration and investigation.

1.5. HYPOTHESES

We cannot take a single step forward in any inquiry unless we begin with a suggested explanation or solution of the difficulty which originated in it. Such tentative explanations are suggested to us by something in the subject matter and by our previous knowledge. When they are formulated as propositions, they are called hypotheses.¹¹

Therefore, hypotheses are predictions of the outcomes from the study. These are statement which is to be tested for possible acceptance or rejection. Hypotheses are of two types i.e. Null hypotheses and Alternative hypotheses. Null hypothesis is tested for possible rejection, whereas alternative hypothesis is tested for possible acceptance.¹²

Moreover, hypotheses are useful at the outset to specify the hypotheses in terms of the assumed relations between variables so as to clarify the position and pre-understanding of the researcher. If statistical tests are to be conducted formulation of hypotheses is a crucial element of the research design. Hypotheses can be derived from theory, experience or knowledge concerning contextual factors.

1.6. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

A plan of work describing the various aspects of the study in a logical sequence along with the methodologies to be employed, are the most important aspects of any research plan.¹³ It helps to demonstrate that the researcher has a fairly good idea about the nature of work likely to be involved. The methodology section delineates the methods and techniques employed in conducting the research. Its primary purpose is to provide comprehensive details to enable other researchers to replicate the study accurately. This section should offer a thorough explanation of the research design, data collection methods, analytical procedures, and any other pertinent techniques utilized during the study.

Key elements to include in the methodology section are:

- *Research Design:* Describe the overall approach to the research, such as qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, experimental, correlational, etc.

¹¹ Available at: www.chilot.wordpress.com

¹² National Defence University, *Guidelines for Synopsis and Thesis Preparation* (NDU, Islamabad, 2012).

¹³ University of Punjab, *Writing Synopsis for a Ph.D. Research Project* (PU, Chandigarh, 2012)

- *Participants or Sample:* Detail the characteristics of the participants or sample used in the study, including demographics, recruitment methods, and any inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- *Data Collection:* Explain the methods employed to gather data, whether through surveys, interviews, experiments, observations, archival research, etc. Provide specifics on tools, instruments, or technologies utilized.
- *Data Analysis:* Describe the techniques and procedures used to analyze the collected data. This might involve statistical analysis, content analysis, thematic coding, or other analytical methods.
- *Ethical Considerations:* Discuss any ethical issues or considerations involved in the research, such as informed consent, confidentiality, or participant protection measures.
- *Validity and Reliability:* Address the steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. This might involve measures to establish the credibility, dependability, confirmability, or transferability of the study.
- *Limitations:* Acknowledge any limitations or constraints encountered during the research process that might impact the validity or generalizability of the findings.
- *Replication Details:* Provide sufficient information to facilitate the replication of the study, including specifics on materials, procedures, data collection instruments, and analytical tools.

A well-documented methodology section is crucial for establishing the rigor and credibility of the research. Clarity, transparency, and thoroughness in detailing the research procedures enable other researchers to understand, assess, and potentially replicate the study, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

Within a given research methodology several data collection methods can be relevant, and both quantitative and qualitative methods may be used in the same study. A researcher should specify what research methodology is chosen to fulfill the research objectives. It should give the exact meaning of the measurement or terms used for the purpose. The method that was followed in selecting the sample should be presented. The researcher must prescribe the techniques and tools he has used in collecting, organizing, analyzing and interpreting the data. The source of data trapped, the channels prepared, adopted and utilized, the nature of data collected, their validity and reliability should be given in a clear and lucid manner. A copy of schedule or questionnaire, if any, should be included in annexure.

The description of data collection methods should always be as specific and realistic as possible. It should be clear that the chosen methods are appropriate and suitable for achieving the objective. A useful step in that regard is to identify what data is required to answer the specific objectives/research questions. To recapitulate: it is important to envision how all the information collected will be combined to provide a meaningful answer to the research objective. Therefore, the aim of researcher should be to demonstrate that the method chosen by the researcher or approach followed will serve to advance the thesis or argument.

1.7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyzed data, preferably in tables and charts. It is a good idea to organize the results logically, for example by first presenting background information like demographics and then continue with in a sequence reflecting the specific objectives. All tables and figure must be numbered and referred to in the text. Table headings go above the table, figure headings go below the figure. Traditionally, a researcher do not discuss the results in this section. That means, he does not explain why a specific number is an outlier, or why few people answered a specific question – it is left for the Discussion.

In Discussion, researcher discusses what the results mean in relation to the objectives. He also discusses the influence of the chosen methods on the results and what methodological problems may have been faced. Finally, he compares his own results with those of other studies to identify whether his study is in accordance or at odds with previous scientific studies. If the latter is the case this warrants special consideration.

V. CONCLUSION

The proposal is about identifying a viable topic and plan of attack. The synopsis should contain a brief account of the existing knowledge in the topic of research and the gaps in this knowledge which motivated the study. The objectives set out for the research should be listed and the methodology followed towards achieving these objectives must be described. Finally, the synopsis should clearly bring out the contributions of the research carried out and the salient conclusions arrived at. The synopsis should be concise as far as possible and avoid repetitions, it should also provide sufficient details on the various aspects mentioned above to show that the research involved has been well understood and planned, and it is of an acceptable academic merit.

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