APA Style JARS
Journal Article Reporting Standards

JARS–**Qual** | Table 2
Qualitative Meta-Analysis Article Reporting Standards
Information Recommended for Inclusion in Manuscripts Reporting Qualitative Meta-Analyses

Title and Title Page

Title

- Indicate the key issues/topic under consideration.
- Indicate that the work is a form of meta-analysis (e.g., qualitative metasynthesis, meta-ethnography, critical interpretive synthesis, review).

Author Note

- Acknowledge funding sources or contributors.
- Acknowledge conflicts of interest.

Abstract

- State the problem/question/objectives under investigation.
- Indicate the study design, the types of literature reviewed, analytic strategy, main results/findings, and main implications/significance.
- Identify five keywords.

Guidance for Authors

- Consider using one keyword that describes the meta-analytic strategy and one that describes the problem addressed.
- Consider describing your approach to inquiry when it will facilitate the review process and intelligibility of your paper. If your work is not grounded in a specific approach to inquiry, or your approach would be too complicated to explain in the allotted word count, however, it would not be advisable to provide explication on this point in the abstract.

Introduction

Description of Research Problem/Question

- State the problem/question the meta-analysis addresses.
- Describe what literature is to be included and synthesized and the relevant debates, theoretical frameworks, and issues contained therein.
- Describe the importance or relevance of the meta-analysis to clarify barriers, knowledge gaps, or practical needs.

Study Objectives/Research Goals

- Describe the meta-analytic method (e.g., metasynthesis, meta-analysis, meta-ethnography, thematic synthesis, narrative synthesis, or critical interpretive analysis).
- Identify the purpose/goals of the study.

Study Objectives/Research Goals (*continued*)

- Describe the approach to inquiry, if it illuminates the *objectives* and meta-research rationale (e.g., descriptive, interpretive, feminist, psychoanalytic, postpositivist, critical, postmodern, constructivist, or pragmatic approaches).
- Describe the contribution to be made.

Method

Research Design Overview

- Summarize the research design, including data-collection strategies, data- or meta-analytic strategies, and, if illuminating, approaches to inquiry (e.g., descriptive, interpretive, feminist, psychoanalytic, postpositivist, critical, postmodern, constructivist, or pragmatic approaches).
- Provide the rationale for the design selected.

Guidance for Reviewers

- This section may be combined into the same section as the objectives statement.

Study Data Sources

Researcher Description

- Describe the researchers' backgrounds in approaching the study, emphasizing their prior understandings of the phenomena under study (e.g., interviewers, analysts or research team).
- Describe how prior understandings of the phenomena were managed and/or influenced the research (e.g., enhancing, limiting, or structuring data collection and meta-analysis).

Guidance for Authors

- Prior understandings relevant to the meta-analysis could include, but are not limited to, descriptions of researchers' demographic–cultural characteristics, credentials, experience with the phenomenon, training, values, and decisions in selecting archives or material to analyze.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Researchers differ in the extensiveness of reflexive self-description in reports. It may not be possible for authors to estimate the depth of description desired by reviewers without guidance.

Study Selection

- Provide a detailed description of how studies to be reviewed were selected, including search strategies and criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and rationale.
- Describe search parameters (e.g., thematic, population, and/or method).
- Identify the electronic databases searched, web searches, or other search processes (e.g., calls for papers).
- Indicate the final number of studies reviewed and how it was reached.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Qualitative meta-analyses may seek to review the literature comprehensively or may use iterative or purposive sampling strategies (e.g., maximum variation sampling, theoretical sampling, saturation seeking). In any case, the strategy should be described as well as the rationale for its use.

Studies Reviewed

- Present, when possible, the following:
  - year of publication of studies
  - disciplinary affiliation of primary author
  - geographic location of study
  - language of study
  - method of data collection (e.g., interview, focus group, online)
  - method of analysis of study (e.g., thematic analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory)
  - purpose of primary studies and differences (if any) from the main questions of the meta-analysis
  - number of participants
  - recruitment method of study (snowball, convenience, purposive, etc.)

Guidance for Reviewers

- This information might be best presented in a tabular format but should also be summarized in the text.

Analysis

Data-Analytic Strategies

- Describe the approach to extracting study findings. This description may include the following:
  - coders or analysts and training, if not already described (interrater reliability, if used)
  - which parts of studies were assessed or appraised (e.g. abstract, Discussion, Conclusions, full article)
  - units for coding (words, concepts, interpretations)
  - software, if used
  - team or collaborative discussions relevant to determining what constitutes findings of studies, how inconsistencies among analysts were managed, and how consensus was determined
  - whether coding categories emerged from the analyses or were developed a priori

Data-Analytic Strategies (*continued*)

- Describe the process of arriving at an analytic scheme, if applicable (e.g., if one was developed before or during the analysis or was emergent throughout).
- Describe how issues of consistency were addressed with regard to the analytic processes (e.g., analysts may use demonstrations of analyses to support consistency, describe their development of a stable perspective, interrater reliability, or consensus) or how inconsistencies were addressed.
- Describe the appraisal process in cases in which some studies were considered to be more consequential in the interpretive process or others discounted.
- Describe how illustrations or other artistic products (if any) were developed from the analytic process.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Findings of qualitative primary studies may be presented in disparate ways and researchers should be transparent in making clear how they identified and extracted findings from primary reports.
- Typically, qualitative researchers do not assign numerical weights to findings in qualitative meta-analyses as the analyses are not statistical in nature.

Methodological Integrity

- See the JARS–Qual Standards.
- Meta-analyses should describe the integrity of their secondary analyses as well as comment on the integrity of the primary studies under review.

Findings/Results

Findings/Results Subsections

- Describe the research findings and the meaning and understandings that the researcher has derived from the analysis of the studies.
- Provide quotations from the primary studies to illustrate and ground the themes or codes identified, when relevant.
- Explore whether differences in themes across primary studies appear to reflect differences in the phenomena under study or differences in the rhetoric or conceptual stances of the researchers.
- Present findings in a manner that is coherent within the study design and goals (e.g., common themes, common interpretations, situated differences).
- Consider the contexts of the meta-analytic findings as well as contradictions and ambiguities among the reviewed studies so that findings are presented in a coherent manner or discrepancies are addressed.
- Present synthesizing illustrations (e.g., diagrams, tables, models) if helpful in organizing and conveying findings.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Results section tends to be longer than in quantitative meta-analyses because of the demonstrative rhetoric needed to permit the evaluation of the meta-analytic method.
- Findings may or may not include the quantified presentation of relevant codes, depending on the study goals, approach to inquiry, and study characteristics.

Situatedness

- Reflect on the situatedness of the studies reviewed (e.g., the positions and contexts of the primary researchers and their studies).
- Simplify the complexity of displaying trends in studies by using tables as is helpful.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Situatedness can be considered in the Results or Discussion section.

Discussion

Discussion Subsections

- Provide a discussion of findings that interpretively goes beyond a summary of the existing studies.
- Include reflections on alternative explanations in relation to findings, as relevant.
- Discuss the contributions that the meta-analysis presents to the literature (e.g., challenging, elaborating on, and supporting prior research or theory in the literature).
- Draw links to existing scholarship or disputes in the literature that the meta-analysis is designed to address.
- Describe the significance of the study and how findings can be best utilized.
- Identify the strengths and limitations of the meta-study (e.g., consider how the quality or source or types of the data or analytic process might support or weaken its methodological integrity).
- Describe the limits of the scope of transferability (e.g., what readers should bear in mind when using findings across contexts).
- Consider implications for future research, policy, or practice.

Guidance for Reviewers

- Rather than having only one possible set of findings, meta-analyses could lead to multiple insights and understandings of the literature that each have methodological integrity.