

JCI Qualitative research guideline

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Part A. Overall Guidance

What is a qualitative study?

A qualitative study reports on a structured research inquiry of non-numerical and/or unstructured data (e.g., text, audio, video). Qualitative studies can be conducted using many different, well-established research designs (e.g. thematic analysis, narrative inquiry, phenomenological inquiry, meta-synthesis). In general, qualitative studies present themes, typologies, or narratives in order to characterise or make sense of qualitative data in new and clinically-meaningful ways.

Qualitative article types

JCI publishes qualitative research studies of two main types:

- **Standard type:** This is a standard scientific research paper using qualitative (or mixed-methods) data. These articles present a rigorous qualitative inquiry which includes a research design, theoretical process, and original contribution to the literature base. Within this rubric, we publish original research ranging from a single clinical case (n=1) up to larger cross-sectional and cohort designs (Max 10000 words). These articles should have the following format: 1) Abstract, 2) Introduction, 3) Method, 4) Findings/Results, 5) Discussion.
- **Review type:** This is a standard scientific review of existing qualitative literature. Systematic reviews of qualitative data can be conducted using various established methods (e.g., meta-synthesis; qualitative systematic review; meta-ethnography) (Max 10000 words). These articles should have the following format: 1) Abstract, 2) Introduction, 3) Method, 4) Findings/Results, 5) Discussion. A review flow chart should be included in review articles, such as COREQ or SRQR guidelines (or other best practice guidelines for qualitative systematic review).

Language and formatting

All articles should be written in English. Please use digital tools to make sure spelling and grammar is accurate. All submissions should furthermore be formatted according to the 7th edition of the APA Publication manual. You can find APA resources here:
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/manuscript-submission-guidelines>

Ethical principles

If the article includes retrospective descriptions of a real case or a real session transcript, written informed consent by the patient(s) should be obtained. See separate consent form. If

the article includes original prospective research on human subjects, all relevant permits by local review boards should be obtained and reported in the article. All raw data gathered for the article should be available throughout the editorial review process and for at least 5 years after the date of publication.

Author contribution statements

All articles are to provide a statement on the role of the different authors, describing their individual contributions to the work. Please follow the CRediT taxonomy: <https://credit.niso.org/contributor-roles-defined/>

Cover letter and masked review

Please provide a masked/anonymous copy of your manuscript, and put all the author identifying information in a cover letter that accompanies the submission. If you're unsure if you've removed all identifying information, you can find different guides by doing a google search for the terms "removing personal data from Word".

Review process and resubmission

If we accept your article for review, you will eventually be provided with two anonymous reviews. When resubmitting your article, please provide a letter with a detailed description of how you incorporated the feedback received.

Templates

At the JCI website, you can find templates for the different article types.

Submission

Please send the article by email to the managing editor, Johannes Kieding: johannes@acceleratedpsychotherapy.com Title the email "JCI SUBMISSION".

Part B. Manuscript guidance for qualitative research

Below we provide guidance for the structure of a manuscript reporting on qualitative research. It is intended for those who may be new to working with qualitative data. Please note that this guidance is a suggestion only, and each submission will be considered on its own merits in relation to overall quality, consistency, theoretical contribution, and/or clinical praxis significance.

Overall

A qualitative research paper includes the application of a *theoretical process* to qualitative data. In some cases, practice wisdom will be a primary focus of the inquiry, however a theoretical process and/or model must also be applied to ensure that it meets the standard of a research paper. A theoretical process involves:

- A specific research inquiry or aim

- A specific plan for how you will collect and analyse the data / approach the research inquiry
- Inclusion of specific methodological procedures designed to increase the rigour of the findings (see Method section below)
- Consideration of existent literature and/or theory at some point in the process

Introduction

Ensure that you:

- Outline the relevant background to the study
- State the purpose / goal / aim of the study (qualitative studies do not generally identify hypotheses, but research questions and goals)

Method

Depending on the design of your study, the method section of a qualitative paper should generally be organised to include mention of: Design, Participants, Data collection, Analytic Method.

Design

- Summarise the research design (data-collection strategies, data-analytic strategies)
- Mention any relevant frameworks or approaches to inquiry (e.g., descriptive, interpretive, exploratory, postpositivist, pragmatic)
- Explain the *rationale* for the design and frameworks selected (i.e., why make these specific design decisions in response to the research aims?)

Participants

- Describe the selection of participants/data sources (e.g., purposive sampling, convenience sampling, theoretical sampling)
- Describe any inclusion/exclusion criteria

Data Collection

- State the form of data collected (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, media, observation)
- Describe questions asked during data collection, if relevant
- Provide relevant contextual information (e.g., setting of study, timeframe)

Analytic Method

- Describe the process undertaken to analyse the data in sufficient detail that the reader can picture the process, even if the analytic method is well-established. *Note: The analytic method does not need to exactly replicate existing analytic methods, but rather should be described in sufficient detail that the reader is able to understand the process undertaken, the reasons why these analytic decisions were made by the researchers, and any methodological or philosophical frameworks utilised by the researchers. The goal is for the reader to have sufficient information with which to make their own determination about the nature and rigour of the outcomes presented in the paper.*

- To ensure qualitative research is of high quality, include a description of any procedures used to strengthen the rigour of the method and/or the analysis. Examples of procedures that can be used to strengthen qualitative rigour are listed below. We have included terms in parentheses that you can search for online if you want to learn more about each procedure:
 - Transcripts/data were returned to participants for feedback (participatory research; member checking)
 - Multiple sources of information, findings, or investigators were included (triangulation)
 - Member checks or participant feedback on findings (member checking)
 - In-depth and detailed description of findings, case examples, illustrations, use of quotes to substantiate themes (thick description)
 - Description of the researcher/s, relevant aspects of their backgrounds and skills, and how and when they were involved in the research process (reflexivity)

Findings / Results

Depending on the type of article, this section may include the findings or results of a research inquiry, and may be organised as a narrative or in relevant subsections. This section should be presented in a manner consistent with the stated method and research aims. Sub-headings may be helpful or necessary, depending on the design.

Discussion

- Identify the study's strengths and limitations
- Describe the limits of the scope of transferability (e.g., what should readers bear in mind when using findings across contexts).
- Consider the implications for future research, practice, or policy.