

APA releases new journal article reporting standards

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As part of its promotion of greater transparency and the assessment of rigor in psychological science, the American Psychological Association has released new Journal Article Reporting Standards for researchers seeking to publish in in scholarly journals.

One set of standards applies to quantitative research and is an expansion of standards first issued in 2008. This set focuses on enhancing reproducibility. The second set applies to qualitative research and is new, created in response to the increasing application of these methodologies. These standards aim to enhance the assessment of methodological integrity. Both are available via open access.

"The growth of qualitative methods in psychology is impressive, and important," according to Anne E. Kazak, PhD, editor of APA flagship journal, *American Psychologist*, which published the standards in its January issue. She cited a dramatic increase in the number of articles with the word "qualitative" in the title or as a keyword in APA's PsycNET database, which includes PsycINFO.

"Although research questions, scientific environments and methodologies necessarily evolve over time, the importance of writing clearly and reporting [science](#) in a way that can be readily comprehended is unchanging," she wrote in an accompanying editorial. "The growth in psychological research and its proliferation in publication and other distribution outlets makes our ability to evaluate and communicate science and assure commitment to rigor critical imperatives for our field."

The standards are specific to psychological research and offer guidelines on the information needed in a research article to ensure that the elements included are comprehensible and that the study could be replicated. They were developed by two working groups appointed by APA's Publications and Communications Board. The quantitative group was led by Mark Appelbaum, PhD, of the University of California, San Diego, and the qualitative group was led by Heidi Levitt, PhD, of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The new JARS:

- Recommend the division of hypotheses, analyses and conclusions into primary, secondary and exploratory groupings to allow for a full understanding of quantitative analyses presented in a manuscript and enhance reproducibility;
- Offer modules for authors reporting on N-of-1 design, replication, clinical trials, longitudinal studies and observational studies, as well as the analytic methods structural equation modeling and Bayesian analysis;
- Address the plurality of inquiry traditions, methods and goals, providing guidance on material to include across diverse qualitative research methods;
- Provide standards for reporting research using mixed-method designs, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative standards.

Brian Nosek, PhD, co-founder and director of the Center for Open Science, welcomed the new standards. "Achieving the ideals of transparency in science requires knowing what one needs to be transparent about," he said. "These updated standards will improve readers' understanding of what happened in the research. This will improve both the accuracy of interpretation of the existing evidence, and the ability to replicate and extend the findings to improve understanding."

APA has partnered with the Center for Open Science to advance [open science](#) practices in [psychological research](#) through open science badges on articles, a data repository for APA published articles and designating the COS' PsyArXiv as the preferred preprint server for APA titles.

In addition to making the APA Style JARS reports available through *American Psychologist*, APA will release a new website later this year that includes tools to help researchers and authors follow the guidelines.

"Through these standards, we hope to improve the quality of the

research published in psychology journals and offer a place for reviewers and editors to point, thus reducing the redundancy of feedback provided to authors," said Rose Sokol-Chang, PhD, publisher of APA's journals. "Our aim is to provide a framework for authors to contextualize their research in a way that is understandable to reviewers, even if they are not expert in the analysis used in a manuscript."

More information: "Journal Article Reporting Standards for Quantitative Research in Psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board Task Force Report," by Mark Appelbaum, PhD, University of California, San Diego; Harris Cooper, PhD, Duke University; Rex B. Kline, PhD, Concordia University; Evan Mayo-Wilson, DPhil, Johns Hopkins University; Arthur M. Nezu, PhD, Drexel University; and Stephen M. Rao PhD, Cleveland Clinic et al., *American Psychologist*, Jan. 18, 2018.

"Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Primary and Meta-Analytic Research and for Mixed Methods Research in Psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board Task Force Report," by Heidi M. Levitt, PhD, University of Massachusetts Boston,; Michael Bamberg, PhD, Clark University; John W. Creswell, PhD, University of Michigan Medical School; David M. Frost, PhD, University College London; Ruthellen Josselson, PhD, Fielding Graduate University; and Carola Suárez-Orozco, PhD, University of California, Los Angeles, *American Psychologist*, Jan. 18, 2018.

"Editorial: Journal Article Reporting Standards," by Anne E. Kazak, PhD, *American Psychologist*, Jan. 18, 2018.

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