

# **Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Health Sciences in Research Psychology at the North-West University

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## SUMMARY

Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review

*Keywords:* guidelines, literature review, psychology, rapid review, research.

Rapid reviews are exponentially growing to inform policymakers, healthcare systems, and healthcare workers, as this review type informs all stakeholders within short time frames. In addition, it is noted that rapid reviews fast-track the traditional systematic review methodology. Various guidelines to conduct rapid reviews are prevalent. However, there is disagreement on the methodological practices employed within rapid reviews. Furthermore, no clear guidelines to conduct rapid reviews within psychology research are prevalent. This literature review study aimed to propose guidelines regarding rapid reviews that can be utilised for psychology research.

This research study utilised literature review steps to propose guidelines for conducting a rapid review within psychology research. The literature review steps as suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) included: *Step 1) selecting the topic and exploring beliefs, Step 2) searching for literature and focusing the search, Step 3) selecting and deselecting relevant literature, Step 4) expanding the literature search to include additional sources, Step 5) summarising, storing literature and additional sources, Step 6) analysing and synthesising the literature and additional sources, and finally Step 7) presenting the literature review findings.*

The research study included scientific literature that focused on rapid review methodology within the sphere of psychology research. Thematic analysis was used to synthesise all relevant literature. The findings are presented in research article format in alignment with the North-West University Academic guidelines (Manual for Master's and Doctoral Studies). Furthermore, the article is intended for possible publishing in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*. From the data analysis, the following eight themes emerged

that provided the guidelines to conduct a rapid review in psychology research; *Theme 1) stating the aim of the review and formulating the research question; Theme 2) setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria; Theme 3) formulating the search strategy; Theme 4) screening and selection of literature; Theme 5) extraction of data from included literature; Theme 6) quality and risk of bias assessment of included literature; Theme 7) synthesis and analysis of the included literature; Theme 8) stating the limitations of the review.*

The findings can be utilised in future as guidelines when conducting rapid reviews within the field of psychology research. Furthermore, the guidelines could enhance the integrity, rigour, and methodological soundness when rapid synthesis of literature is conducted.

## PREFACE

- All guidelines as stipulated in the A-rules, as well as the Manual for Higher Degree Studies of the North-West University, are adhered to in this mini-dissertation.
- This article (see Section 2) will be submitted for possible publication in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*.
- The mini-dissertation is written and formatted per the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 7th edition.
- The article (see Section 2) is also written and formatted per the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 7th edition. In addition, the article also complies with the additional guidelines for authors as prescribed by the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*.
- Chronological page numbering is placed in the centre and bottom of each page, the chronological page numbers start at STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH MINI-DISSERTATION and end with APPENDIX B.
- Ethical approval was obtained for this literature review study (see Appendix A).
- This mini-dissertation was submitted for language editing by a qualified and registered language practitioner (see Appendix B).
- The submission of this mini-dissertation (in partial fulfilment for the degree Master of Health Sciences in Research Psychology at the North-West University) for examination was approved by the research supervisor, Prof Werner de Klerk.
- This mini-dissertation was submitted to Turn-it-in for similarity testing.

## **PERMISSION LETTER FROM SUPERVISOR**

I, Prof Werner de Klerk, herewith grant permission for Mr Ryan Evan du Toit to submit this mini-dissertation for degree purposes.

Prof Werner  
de Klerk

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Prof Werner de Klerk  
Date: 2021.11.11  
13:56:46 +02'00'

Prof Werner de Klerk

## DECLARATION



NWU Higher Degrees Administration

### SOLEMN DECLARATION AND PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

#### 1. Solemn declaration by student

I, **Ryan Evan du Toit**

declare herewith that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation/article entitled (exactly as registered/approved title),

Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review

which I herewith submit to the North-West University is in compliance/partial compliance with the requirements set for the degree:

Master of Health Sciences in Research Psychology

is my own work, has been text-edited in accordance with the requirements and has not already been submitted to any other university.

**LATE SUBMISSION:** If a thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation/article of a student is submitted after the deadline for submission, the period available for examination is limited. No guarantee can therefore be given that (should the examiner reports be positive) the degree will be conferred at the next applicable graduation ceremony. It may also imply that the student would have to re-register for the following academic year.

Ethics number:

NWU-00232-21-A1

ORCID:

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Signature of Student

**Ryan Evan  
du Toit**

Digitally signed by  
Ryan Evan du Toit  
Date: 2021.11.09  
15:21:07 +02'00'

University Number

2 4 2 5 1 1 3 5

Signed on this

9th

day of

November

of 2021

#### 2. Permission to submit and solemn declaration by supervisor/promoter

The undersigned declares that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation/article:

- ☒ complies with the A-rules and the technical requirements provided for in the Manual for Master's and Doctoral studies and in faculty rules;
- ☒ has been checked by me for plagiarism (by making use of Turnitin software for example) and a satisfactory report has been obtained;
- ☒ and that the work was language edited before submission for examination.

**Faculty specific requirements as per A-rules: 1.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.2.4, 4.10.4, 5.3.2**

- ☒ complies with regards to faculty rules on submission or acceptance by an accredited scientific journal;
- ☒ complies with regards to faculty rules on peer reviewed conference proceedings;
- ☒ the student is hereby granted permission to submit his/her article/mini-dissertation/ dissertation/thesis for examination.

Signatures of supervisor(s) and Promoter(s): (only compulsory in cases where there are co- or assistant- supervisor(s/promoters))

**Prof Werner  
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## **STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH MINI-DISSERTATION**

This mini-dissertation consists of three separate sections that provide the reader with in-depth detail of the entire research process. Section 1 provides the reader with a literature overview of the research topic, a description of the methodological steps, and a description of ethical and scientific rigour considerations (pp. 1-26). Section 2 provides the reader with the review article. The article presents a literature overview, the methodological steps utilised, review findings and discussion, recommendations, limitations of the review study, and a conclusion. (pp. 27-56). Section 3 provides the reader with a critical reflection of the experiences and thought processes of the researcher, as well as methodological rationale that guided the research study (pp. 57-68).

## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Within Section 1 of this mini-dissertation, the researcher provides a full literature overview regarding the research topic and the components of the research topic: psychology and research, review studies, rapid reviews, and review studies in psychology. In addition, the researcher provides the reader with the problem statement and densely describes the method of investigation employed within this mini-dissertation. A full description of the ethical considerations and rigour methods employed are also provided to give forth assurance that this mini-dissertation upholds sound methodological standards. Lastly, a conclusion is provided.

### **Psychology and Research**

Psychology is broadly defined as the study of the mind and behaviour (Muthukrishna et al., 2021; Zagaria et al., 2020). In addition, Zagaria et al. (2020) added that the study of the mind and behaviour is regarded as the pillars of psychology and psychology research, but added that a far greater subset of elements is embedded within these two pillars. Such elements include, but is not limited to: consciousness, cognition, covert actions, emotions, intelligence, memory, motivation, overt actions, perception, reasoning, and thinking (Zagaria et al., 2020).

Valsiner (2017) stated that psychology research aims to study a specific phenomenon within a particular context. However, the elements of psychology that contours a phenomenon are not as easily specifiable, and are regarded as abstractions or theories that attempt to explain the broader concepts of human psychology (Giorgi, 1992; Miller, 1992; Valsiner, 2017; Zagaria, et al., 2020). Valsiner (2017) further described research and research in psychology as the creation of knowledge that is accessible to the world, moreover, the addition of knowledge is created with methodological approaches that attempt to theorise the

complex elements within the field of psychology. Thus, methodology is used as a tool to explore, describe, and interpret the complexity of phenomena that contributes to knowledge of the future (Valsiner, 2017; Wagner, 2012).

Wagner (2012) and Grix (2002) illustrated various methodological approaches that can be used in the attempt to answer research phenomena and add knowledge to the broader field of social research; such approaches include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches. In addition, Scholtz et al. (2020) highlighted the use of five methodological approaches utilised within psychology research, the authors noted two additional methodological approaches in addition to the findings of Wagner (2012) and Grix (2002): multi-method approaches and review studies.

## **Review Studies**

Review studies play an increasingly vital part in research and the contribution of knowledge (Cooper, 1988; Moher et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019). Review studies are described as the summary of existing knowledge regarding a particular domain or research field (Grant & Booth, 2009; Sutton et al., 2019). The American Psychological Association (2020) also described review studies as the summary and evaluation of research from literature databases. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (2020) noted that review studies attempt to apprehend trends within a specific research domain or research field. Thus, researchers can consolidate literature to inform future research concerning pre-existing knowledge, the accompanying problems, gaps, inconsistencies, and recommendations (American Psychological Association, 2020; Grant & Booth, 2009; Sutton et al., 2019). Finally, Cooper and Koenka (2012) crafted a brief definition that explained that reviews after synthesis become the primary unit of evidence.

### ***The Call for Review Studies and Review Studies in Psychology***

Cooper and Koenka (2012) and Moher et al. (2015) revealed that reviews within social sciences emerged during the 1970s, and gained popularity during the 1990s as a need for a scientific method emerged to contest the once traditional narrative review. Cooper (1988) earlier highlighted the lack of taxonomy within traditional review studies and stressed the importance of this emerging research method. The sudden overload of access to information within all disciplines made way for an era of literature reviews that created a coherent space for researchers to remain informed on assimilating scientific information (Cooper, 1988). Cooper and Koenka (2012) and Epstein et al. (2018) further emphasised the notion that review studies can be utilised to guide researchers through the complexity and high volumes of existing knowledge, and assist researchers to make informed decisions on the summarised knowledge about a specific research context.

As noted, Cooper (1988) highlighted the need for review studies especially within the field of psychology, as this was primarily driven by the sudden growth in personnel and sudden expansion and access to the information within the field of psychology. Cooper (1988) found that less than one-fifth of review studies within that era had the goal of synthesising literature. Thus, Cooper (1998) put forth that the focus and goal of psychology reviews should aim to synthesise, resolve contradictions, and identify gaps within existing research outcomes, methods, theories, and applications.

Within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reviews are still one of the most highly regarded research methods and continue to gain popularity as different review types arise to meet the requirements of various domains within research (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019). Within the current decade, the need for review studies in the field of health care is still prevalent, as outcomes in health settings can be synthesised, discrepancies can be resolved and future research gaps can be identified (Cooper & Koenka, 2012; Tricco

et al., 2018). Cooper and Koenka (2012) uncovered that various review types can be especially useful in the field of psychology as interventions in health and clinical contexts can also be synthesised, compared and evaluated.

Scholtz et al. (2020) conducted a systematised review that focused on the use of research methods in psychological research and conducted the systematised review on a list of five top miscellaneous psychology domain journals. The systematised review presented that the review studies exceeded the number of published multi-method and mixed-method research in psychology (Scholtz et al., 2020). This coincides with the statements made by Grant and Booth (2009), Moher et al. (2015) and Sutton et al. (2019) that reviews are continuously gaining popularity.

### ***Different Review Study Types***

Grant and Booth (2009) also identified fourteen types of reviews: critical review, literature review, mapping review, meta-analysis, mixed studies review, overview, qualitative systematic review, rapid review, scoping review, state-of-the-art review, systematic review, systematic search and review, systematised review, and finally, an umbrella review. In more recent years Sutton et al. (2019) uncovered forty-eight distinctive types of reviews within the broader framework of knowledge synthesis.

Essentially, similarities are shared within these various review types. However, the review types all have individual characteristics (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019). Tricco et al. (2018) also highlighted that methodological differences exist within the broader framework of knowledge synthesis methods.

In addition, it can also be difficult to determine the most appropriate synthesis method to answer the research question under review (Tricco et al., 2018). The difficulty to appropriately apply the synthesis process to the research setting and phenomena under investigation is highlighted by the unique characteristics of the different review types (Sutton

et al., 2015; Tricco et al., 2018). Thus, selecting the correct review type for a specific context remains a challenge and researchers should extensively aim to correctly match their research question with the review type. For example, Tricco et al. (2018) depicted that pharmacological interventions typically require meta-analysis and traditional systematic reviews, and in contrast scoping reviews and rapid reviews are typically employed to synthesise non-pharmacological interventions. Moreover, Garritty et al. (2017) maintained that rapid reviews can also be considered applicable to utilise when rapid evidence for intervention within a specific context is required.

### ***Rapid Reviews and Rapid Reviews in Psychology***

Focusing on rapid reviews, this review type in general is regarded as a review that speeds up the traditional systematic review process (Hamel et al., 2021). Hamel et al. (2020) argued that the fast-tracking element within rapid reviews cannot be the only defining characteristic to distinguish it from a systematic review. It was also argued that the key differences between rapid reviews and systematic reviews are not just embedded within the time constraint; two other key distinguishing characteristics also include search methods and quality assessment (Grant & Booth, 2009; Haby et al., 2016; Hamel et al., 2021).

Disagreement in the use of methodological guidelines emerged from the various distinguishing characteristics (Epstein et al., 2018; Featherstone et al., 2015; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012). Furthermore, Garritty et al. (2017) earlier noted that the World Health Organisation issued proposed rapid review guidelines in 2007. However, on closer inspection, the guidelines did not propose unique methods to conduct rapid reviews, but rather that the guidelines were standard methods with the effort of producing rapid evidence.

The body of literature underlying the guidance of rapid reviews is equally beneficial to both rapid and systematic reviews (Garritty et al., 2021; Plüddemann et al., 2018; Reynen et al., 2012). However, studies conducted by Plüddemann et al. (2018) and Reynen et al.

(2012) revealed minor inconsistencies in conclusions when same topic systematic reviews and rapid reviews were compared.

Watt et al. (2008) and Khangura et al. (2012) have also noticed that the use of rapid reviews within research is increasing and is primarily driven by the need to engage with policymakers, healthcare professionals and stakeholders to promptly provide evidence-based recommendations on healthcare activities and decisions. Abrami et al. (2010) also added these information seekers do not operate in a no-evidence vacuum, and is constantly seeking for quicker, influential, and reliable evidence to shape decisions within their context.

Langlois et al. (2017) provided examples that relate to psychology research, from these examples the importance of how and why rapid reviews can be employed are highlighted. Such measures included the prevention, integration, and management of mental health interventions for the general population to enhance the implementation of such measures (Langlois et al., 2017). Thus, rapid reviews promptly inform stakeholders on pressing health-related issues and how these issues can be addressed (Langlois et al., 2017; Watt et al., 2008). Plüddemann et al. (2018) uncovered that in recent years rapid reviews had been used within various research domains. Such domains related to psychology include dementia, substance abuse, and later-life development.

Rapid reviews as a review method have unique characteristics, but do come with perceived strengths and weaknesses (Grant & Booth, 2009). Amongst the strengths, rapid reviews attempt to be quick while following a systematic process, limit the depth and width of the research, clearly focus the research question, limit certain stages within the research process, and report on these limited methods and the implications thereof (Grant & Booth, 2009; Martin et al., 2020; Plüddemann et al., 2018).

Rapid reviews do however run the risk of bias due to the short time frame in which they are conducted. Additionally, appraisal and quality assessment can impact the research

outcomes, and the short time frame might create an area where researchers can overlook inconsistencies and contradictions when analysing the data (Grant & Booth, 2009; Martin et al., 2020; Plüddemann et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement**

Rapid reviews are hard to define, and up to date no clear consensus regarding a definition can be reached (Garritty et al., 2021; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012; Tricco et al., 2015). However, Hamel et al. (2021) proposed that "a rapid review is a form of knowledge synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting various methods to produce evidence in a resource-efficient manner" (p. 80). Confusion between rapid reviews and systematic reviews, as well as disagreements and unclear guidelines for methodological steps within rapid reviews, are prevalent (Garritty et al., 2017; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012). Garritty et al. (2021) elaborated that researchers need fast-tracking decision-making processes within any global crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which traditional systematic reviews cannot meet. This leads to the increased usage of rapid reviews that are now regarded as part of the literature synthesising body.

Consequently, a problem emerges when utilising rapid reviews for rapid decision-making (Grant & Booth, 2009; Hamel et al., 2021). This problem was explained by Featherstone et al. (2015), who noted that the rigour and soundness of the methodological guidelines to conduct rapid reviews decline as the timeline for evidence synthesis is shortened. Additionally, Featherstone et al. (2015) and Hamel et al. (2021) also stated that there is heterogeneity in rapid review methods, which increases confusion and disagreements on the use of rapid reviews. Thus, a need arises for a distinguishable rapid review approach to produce sound evidence-based research while maintaining methodological soundness.



Furthermore, no clear guidelines to produce rapid synthesis within psychology research is prevalent (based on the in-depth search for rapid review methodologies in psychology research – see Method of Investigation of Section 1).

### **Aim of this Literature Review Study**

Shortcomings and disagreements within rapid review standardised guidelines are prevalent throughout the literature (Featherstone et al., 2015; Garritty et al., 2017; Garritty et al., 2021; Grant & Booth, 2009; Hamel et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2015). Thus, the literature review study aimed to present standardised guidelines regarding rapid reviews that can be utilised within psychology research (see Section 2 of mini-dissertation). A literature review was used as it enables the researcher to conduct a comprehensive search, summarise the literature (focusing on the rapid review methods employed), identify gaps in the literature, and make research findings based on a thematic analysis (Grant & Booth, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012).

### **Research Question**

What are the guidelines utilised within rapid reviews to conduct psychology research?

### **Contribution of the Literature Review Study**

Through the review study, standardised guidelines to conduct rapid reviews within psychology research was identified. This could potentially enhance the use of rapid reviews within the field of psychology while still maintaining research integrity, rigour, and a sound methodological approach.

### **Method of Investigation**

For this research study, a literature review was utilised. A literature review's strengths can assist in research as it uses current and previous literature to synthesise literature and identify gaps in literature (American Psychological Association, 2020; Grant & Booth, 2009).

Thus, to build on literature that serves as a tool to create new evidence and make recommendations for solving the research problem.

The seven steps of conducting a literature review proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) were followed, and include: 1) selecting the topic and exploring beliefs, 2) searching for literature and focusing the search, 3) selecting and deselecting relevant literature, 4) expanding the literature search to include additional sources, 5) summarising, storing literature and additional sources, 6) analysing and synthesising the literature and additional sources, and finally, 7) presenting the literature review findings.

In addition, Grant and Booth (2009) suggested that a literature review's methodological process must be structured within a broader SALSA (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis) framework. Grant and Booth (2009) noted that researchers can use the SALSA framework to identify strengths and insufficiencies within the processes of a review study. This framework is also embedded within evidence-based practices. Structuring the seven steps to conduct a literature review as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) within the broader SALSA framework, provided additional guidance to the researcher in order to ensure methodological soundness.

## **Search**

### ***Step 1: Selecting the Topic and Exploring Beliefs***

A literature review was utilised to synthesise current and previous literature on the methodological steps followed when conducting rapid reviews within psychology.

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) warned that researchers should be cognisant of research pitfalls. These pitfalls primarily refer to the researcher's worldview, research philosophy, and general beliefs about the topic.

Within this research study, the primary researcher was continuously guided through these potential pitfalls by documenting worldviews, research philosophies, and beliefs related

to the research question. These documented findings, as described by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012), were constantly assessed after each step of the literature review to enhance and ensure research neutrality. It also served as a foundation for Section 3 (Critical Reflection) of this mini-dissertation.

### ***Step 2: Searching for Literature and Focusing the Search***

This step involved the process of searching for relevant literature (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012). The researcher used databases to search for evidence-based literature (peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed articles, peer-reviewed articles in books, and theses and dissertation studies) regarding rapid review steps within the field of psychology research.

The researcher used the following databases: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Directory of Open Access Journals, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, MEDLINE, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, and SocINDEX. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) suggested that Boolean operations be used to focus the search. Furthermore, the identification of keywords within the Boolean operations was made by reading abstracts from an initial database search. The identified keywords included: "rapid review\*" and "psychology" or "psychological" and "methodological" or "method\*" or "technique\*" or "strateg\*" or "research". The researcher consulted a subject librarian from the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus, to assist in the search process of the review study.

### ***Step 3: Selecting and Deselecting Relevant Literature***

Evidence-based literature relevant to rapid review guidelines within psychology research was the primary rationale for selecting relevant literature. In addition, Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) proposed that the selection of pertinent literature also be made in conjunction with additional identified criteria: 1) *Does literature uphold rigorous methods?* 2) *Will the literature included serve the research question?* It is critical to note that primary

preference was given to relevant literature which focused on rapid review methodologies in psychology research (thus rapid review methodology literature/articles/studies). Other psychology literature employing rapid review as a methodology took secondary preference. The researcher specifically used the keywords and Boolean operations to find literature based on the primary preference; however, the scope search did include abundant literature on psychology studies employing rapid reviews as a methodology. Therefore, as stated, those studies took secondary preference as the search yielded no relevant literature on the primary preference. This led to only including studies that employed rapid reviews as a methodology.

#### ***Step 4: Expanding the Literature Search to Include Additional Sources***

In this step additional literature was included by utilising Google Scholar as a tool to expand on the literature search in step 2. Within this step, it is critical to note that the researcher utilised the additional search strategy and database to include any other relevant evidence-based literature that met the inclusion criteria. Expanding the literature search ensured that all possible evidence-based literature that the initial search did not extract was included. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) suggested that reference lists of selected literature must also be reviewed to act as an additional search strategy for the inclusion of relevant literature.

**Time Range of Relevant Literature.** All current literature utilising rapid review methods within the field of psychology research was included and no limitations on the time range of publications were set. Garritty et al. (2021) highlighted the need for rapid reviews as it is within a time of expected growth. Garritty et al. (2021) added that a sound methodological undertaking of rapid reviews versus systematic reviews is needed. Furthermore, rapid reviews still rely on systematic review guidelines, and a significant body of literature is not evident and might be out of date (Garritty et al., 2021). Thus, all relevant literature was recommended for this research study.

**Determining Relevance.** Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) suggested that the researcher overlooks all literature that emerged from the Boolean configuration and keyword search. Furthermore, the guiding criteria were to read the title and abstract of literature found in Step 2 (Searching for Literature and Focusing the Search). The title served as a primary determiner for initial selection. In addition, the abstract served as a secondary determiner for inclusion. Thus, the researcher first determined whether the keywords appear in the title and then read the abstract of the literature where keywords appeared. Only literature relevant to conducting rapid reviews in psychology research and literature that employed rapid review methodological steps within psychology research were included.

### **Appraisal**

Two reviewers were utilised within this literature review. The primary reviewer was the research student and conducted all steps as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012). The secondary reviewer was the study leader and monitored the quality of the entire research approach.

The primary reviewer was Mr Ryan Evan du Toit (registered MHSC in Research Psychology Programme student) and has undergone strict training within psychology research on a post-graduate level. The secondary reviewer was Prof Werner de Klerk (study leader and registered Research Psychologist). Prof Werner de Klerk is based within the School of Psychosocial Health at the North-West University and has extensive years of experience conducting and monitoring reviews such as literature reviews, critical reviews, systematised reviews, and systematic reviews.

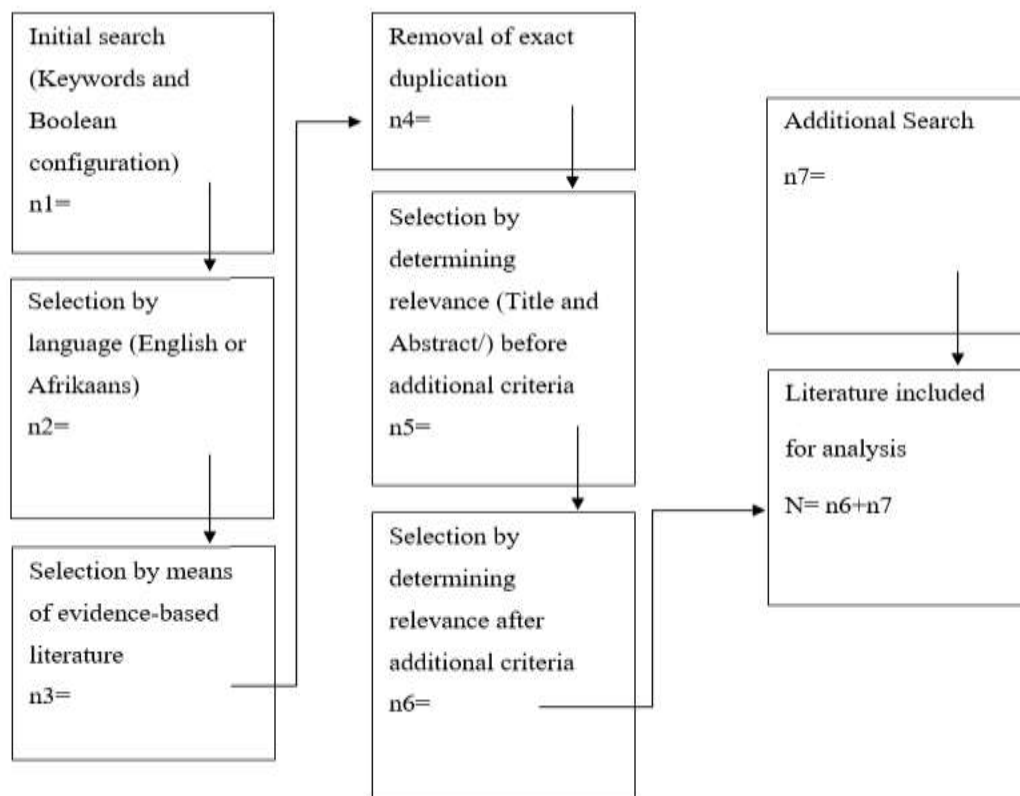
Grant and Booth (2009) noted that literature reviews could either include or exclude quality assessment. For the purpose of this research study, all initially selected literature was appraised by employing quality assessment. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) and Oxman and Guyatt (1988) suggested that the researcher develop guiding criteria for selecting and

appraising relevant literature. Within this review study, the primary researcher selected the final relevant literature by employing the following additional criteria: As per the suggestion by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) and Oxman and Guyatt (1988), the initially included literature was scrutinised for soundness of methodological designs, thus informing the first two criteria, i.e., 1) *Does literature uphold rigorous methods?* and 2) *Will the literature included serve the research question?*

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) suggested that the reviewer uses a search map of literature retrieved to clarify the rationale of the final selected relevant literature (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Search Map Utilised by the Researcher*



## **Synthesises**

It is important to note that only the methodological steps of the relevant selected literature were extracted. This provided the researcher with the data to conduct the thematic analysis to propose guidelines for rapid reviews in psychology research.

### ***Step 5: Summarising, and Storing Literature and Additional Sources***

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) suggested the following data extraction procedure: All data from the relevant literature was extracted and methodically transferred to a computer-assisted software program (Excel data sheets). The extracted data included the following: author(s), year of publication, type of research work (full-text journal study, peer-reviewed study, review study, book, PhD-Thesis, Master's dissertation), a summary of the work (only the methodological steps), and complete references as prescribed by the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 7th edition. Within the research article (see Section 2) only the author(s), year of publication, title, and summary (methodological steps) were included in the data extraction table.

## **Analysis**

### ***Step 6: Analysing and Synthesising the Literature and Additional Sources***

For the purpose of this review study, the six steps of thematic analyses as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilised to put forth themes from the relevant literature and additional sources. As per Grant and Booth (2009) and Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012), the researcher summarised all relevant literature and provided an in-depth explanation and application of the identified themes. These themes of the rapid review methods serve as the proposed guidelines for conducting rapid reviews in psychology research.

In general, thematic analysis is described as a process to identify, analyse, and report on extracted themes from selected data. Braun and Clarke (2019) added that the approach is

flexible and rich in detail. The following steps, as initially proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), were utilised.

**Step 1: Researcher Familiarising the Selected Literature and Additional Sources.**

After selecting relevant literature, the researcher familiarised himself with the content of all literature selected by repeatedly reading through the literature. This was done to comprehend the depth of knowledge situated within the literature selected. The researcher started with additional note-taking to generate ideas that were used in conjunction with the subsequent steps. Braun and Clarke (2019) also noted that thematic analysis is theoretically flexible, and the importance of deep reflection and engagement with data is important when producing new knowledge from the data.

**Step 2: Generating the Initial Codes.** In this step, initial codes were generated from the selected literature, generalising the content of the literature into coded groups. Within this step, initial codes that linked across the selected literature were connected. Thus, similar keywords and various methodological steps employed when conducting rapid reviews were connected.

**Step 3: Searching for Themes.** The initial codes were then reverted into possible themes. The themes are, in essence, the overarching umbrella under which the initial codes were categorised when similarities are prevalent. Braun and Clarke (2019) noted that themes are generated from the data and are not pre-existing waiting to be extracted. The themes were thus generated from the initial codes that underpinned the central meaning while keeping the aim of the review in mind.

**Step 4: Reviewing the Themes.** In this step, initial themes were revised to ensure that similar codes support themes and that codes under each theme were identical. Furthermore, this ensured that no diverse themes emerged from the reviewing process. In this step, the



validity of each theme was aligned with the data set and initial codes. Themes were also integrated and separated to ensure that the research aim was achieved.

**Step 5: Defining and Naming the Themes.** Each revised theme was given a thematic name that captured the essence of the similar initial codes. Thus, at the end of this step, each theme was defined.

**Step 6: Producing the Report.** In the final step, the analysis was displayed visually within a data extraction table and a theme table. This was done to convince the reader clearly and concisely that the analysis method has merit and is valid. The proposed theme table visually summarises the guidelines for conducting rapid reviews in psychology research.

**Step 7: Presenting the Literature Review Findings.** In the final stage of the literature review, the findings and analysis were reported in research article format (see Section 2 of mini-dissertation) in alignment with the North-West University Academic guidelines (Manual for Higher Degrees Studies). The literature review article consists of the introduction, body, and conclusion to give forth the synthesis of rapid review guidelines within psychology research.

The article (after completion) is intended to be published in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*.

### **Ethics**

The nature of the literature review excluded any human or animal participants. Thus, existing peer-reviewed literature was the only data source to answer the research question. Ethical approval was granted by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU-00232-21-A1). It is also crucial to note that the primary reviewer (Mr Ryan Evan du Toit) has formal training in ethics (Training and Resource in Research Ethics Evaluation). The secondary reviewer (Professor Werner de Klerk) is a registered Research Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and

also completed the relevant training in ethics (Training and Resource in Research Ethics Evaluation) as required by HREC.

The following guidelines to ensure an ethical research process, as proposed by Wager and Wiffen (2011), were followed:

### **Avoiding Redundancy**

The primary reviewer avoided redundancy within the literature review article and will not submit the work for possible publication in multiple journal publications. As mentioned, the review article is only intended to be submitted for possible publication in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*.

### **Avoiding Plagiarism**

The primary reviewer interpreted and formulated all literature utilised in his own words, while still maintaining the core idea of the original author(s). The primary reviewer gave all authors credit through in-text referencing and provided a complete reference list. The referencing style is per the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 7th edition.

### **Transparency**

The reviewers have no affiliation with any research unit where compensation can benefit the reviewers directly. Thus, the reviewers were impartial and neutral, and only the two mentioned reviewers were involved in the research process. The primary researcher carried the total cost of the review study, with financial assistance from the North-West University Master's bursary and North-West University Faculty of Health Science bursary.

### **Accuracy**

To ensure accuracy, the primary reviewer systematically conducted the research process, as per the SALSA framework proposed by Grant and Booth (2009) and the seven steps to conduct a literature review as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012). The

secondary reviewer monitored the entire research process to ensure the quality and methodological accuracy of the research process.

### **Rigour**

Grant and Booth (2009) emphasised that a need for rigour has been identified within the different review types. Krefting (1991) proposed the following four criteria to ensure rigour within qualitative syntheses (as a qualitative synthesis was utilised for this literature review study):

### **Credibility**

Finding the truth within the content of the analysis. Within this criterion, the researcher's findings must be relatable to other researchers. The researcher submerged himself in the selected relevant literature to ensure familiarity with all literature and comprehend the content of selected literature. This was done to ensure the credibility of the search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis process of the review study. Additional strategies that the researcher followed: reflexivity – by taking notes throughout the research process (this was extensively used within Section 3: Critical Reflection of this mini-dissertation) and peer examination; the researcher (primary reviewer) engaged in in-depth discussions with the secondary researcher to discuss the research process and findings of the thematic analysis. As mentioned, the secondary reviewer is familiar with review processes and has extensive experience in conducting review studies.

### **Transferability**

The data extraction and analysis were methodically conducted and repeated, to ensure the study's transferability. Thus, the literature under review was relevant to the research question and scrutinised under strict quality assessments. The entire data search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis process was also strictly monitored by the secondary reviewer. Furthermore, the rapid review data (relevant literature) is rich in methodological processes.

This ensured that adequate steps were identified and synthesised using thematic analysis to contribute to the usage of rapid reviews within psychology research.

### **Dependability**

This criterion refers to the consistency of the data extraction, analysis, and selected literature. In essence, the value of dependability refers to the replication of findings in similar contexts. This was done by using a code-recode procedure. After initial coding and searching for themes, the data rested for a duration of two weeks, after which the primary researcher restarted the coding process. The data findings were compared for any significant differences. The researcher also ensured that the review and analysis process was densely described.

### **Confirmability**

This criterion refers to the research being free of bias. The researcher kept a scientific distance from the relevant selected literature and analysis. This was done through the following strategies: a review audit and reflection notes. This entailed that all relevant literature was selected through comprehensive research strategies and was recorded sufficiently. Thus, the entire research process is available and documented to ensure that external auditors can track the research process and the rationale for decisions made within the review study.

## **Conclusion**

Within Section 1 of this mini-dissertation, the researcher produced a comprehensive overview of the research process followed for this literature review study. The literature overview presented the reader with an introduction to key concepts such as: psychology, research in psychology, review studies and review studies in psychology, the different types of review studies, and most importantly, rapid reviews and rapid reviews in psychology.

Rapid reviews are regarded as part of the knowledge synthesis body and are highly regarded as a fast-growing research methodology approach (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher et

al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019). From the literature overview, it was uncovered that rapid reviews are continuously gaining momentum in research; however, a lack of a clear definition and sound methodological approach creates confusion amongst researchers (Epstein et al., 2018; Featherstone et al., 2015; Garritty et al., 2017; Hamel et al., 2020; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012; Tricco et al., 2018).

Rapid reviews are commonly known to fast-track knowledge syntheses in contrast to the traditional better-known systematic review (Hamel et al., 2021). However, it was found that the time range cannot be the only defining element that distinguishes rapid reviews from other review types (Haby et al., 2016; Grant & Booth, 2009; Hamel et al., 2020; Hamel et al., 2021). Other central elements also contribute to the differences within the methodological process of various review studies (Grant & Booth, 2009; Haby et al., 2016; Hamel et al., 2021). Rapid reviews are also gaining popularity in psychology research, with stakeholders requiring rapid evidence that informs their decision-making and clinical practices better (Langlois et al., 2017; Plüddemann et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2008). However, due to the lack of a sound methodological approach, several problems might arise when utilising rapid review synthesis (Featherstone et al., 2015). Thus, a need arises for guidelines when conducting rapid reviews in psychology, which can give sound and rigorous synthesis of existing literature.

This section also provided the reader with the method of investigation employed (a literature review). In addition, the ethical and rigour applications were also densely described to ensure the reader that this review study adhered to all good research practices.

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## **SECTION 2: ARTICLE**

Per the North-West University's Manual for Higher Degrees Studies, the researcher selected the option to submit the mini-dissertation in article format. The article is intended to be submitted for possible publication in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)*. The instructions for authors as per the *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, followed by the research article, are presented below.

### **Instruction for Authors**

#### **Manuscripts**

The article must be written in English and not exceed a total word count of 7000 words. The manuscript must be per the guidelines of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (7th edition) publication manual.

#### **Submission**

The article must make use of double spacing with wide margins. Before submission of the article, a recent issue of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* must be consulted for general layout and style (please take note: in this case, it will differ somewhat from the general APA 7th edition guidelines).

#### **Format**

All pages must be numbered consecutively.

#### ***Title***

A brief title that consists of important keywords (preferably less than 13 words).

#### ***Author(s) and Address(es) of Authors***

- The corresponding author must be indicated.
- Email address, telephone number, and fax number of the corresponding author must be provided.
- The respective addresses of where the research was conducted must be included.

### ***Abstract***

The abstract should not exceed 150 words and does not include references. The abstract should be structured as follows:

- Objective – the primary purpose of the research.
- Method – this includes the data sources, design, and data analysis method.
- Results – this includes the main findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusion.

### ***Text***

- Only one space will follow any punctuation.
- No spaces must be included between paragraphs.
- No colour within the text is allowed.

### ***Tables and Figures***

Tables and figures must include a full, stand-alone caption. As per the instructions the authors perused and consulted recent issues of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)* for general layout and style. Tables and figures are included within the article under relevant sections.

### **Referencing**

#### ***Reference List***

The *Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA)* follows a strict referencing style per the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.)*.

The reference list must be provided at the end of the article with the following specifications:

- Alphabetical order.
- Double line spacing.

- References should be formatted with a hanging indent (tabs and spaces are not permitted).

### ***In-Text Citations***

Citations must use et al. after the first author surname.

## Article

Running Head: RAPID REVIEWS IN PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review

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## **Abstract**

Various guidelines are available to conduct rapid reviews, however, disagreement regarding the methodological practices is prevalent. Following a literature review process, the following databases were searched for guidelines on conducting rapid reviews in psychology: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Directory of Open Access Journals, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, MEDLINE, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, and SocINDEX. Seventeen articles were included and thematically analysed which produced eight steps; (i) Stating the aim of the review and formulating the research question; ii) Setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria; (iii) Formulating the search strategy; (iv) Screening and selection of literature; (v) Extraction of data from included literature; (vi) Quality and risk of bias assessment of included literature; (vii) Synthesis and analysis of the included literature; and (viii) Stating the limitations of the review. The eight steps serve as the guideline to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research.

*Keywords:* guidelines, literature review, psychology, rapid reviews, research.

## **Introduction**

Cooper and Koenka (2012) and Epstein et al. (2018) emphasised the notion that review studies can be utilised to guide researchers through the complexity and high volumes of existing knowledge, and assist researchers to make informed decisions on the summarised knowledge about a specific research context. Within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reviews are still one of the most highly regarded research methods and continue to gain popularity as different review types arise to meet the requirements of various domains within research (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019).

Grant and Booth (2009) identified fourteen types of reviews. In more recent years Sutton et al. (2019) uncovered forty-eight distinctive types of reviews within the broader framework of knowledge synthesis. Essentially within these various review types, similarities are shared. However, the review types all have individual characteristics (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2019). Thus, selecting the correct review type for a specific context remains a challenge and researchers should extensively aim to correctly match their research question with the review type.

### ***The call for rapid reviews***

Rapid reviews in general are regarded as review types that speed up the traditional systematic review process (Hamel et al. 2021). Hamel et al. (2020) argued that the fast-tracking element within rapid reviews cannot be the only defining characteristic to distinguish it from a systematic review. Two other key distinguishing characteristics include search methods and quality assessment (Grant & Booth, 2009; Haby et al., 2016; Hamel et al., 2021). A lack of methodological guidelines emerged from these distinguishing characteristics (Epstein et al., 2018; Featherstone et al., 2015; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012). Furthermore, Garritty et al., (2017) earlier noted that the World Health Organisation issued proposed rapid review guidelines in 2007, however, on closer inspection, the guidelines did not propose



unique methods to conduct rapid reviews but rather that the guidelines were standard methods with the effort of producing rapid evidence. Khangura et al. (2012) and Watt et al. (2008) have noticed that the use of rapid reviews within research is increasing, driven primarily by the need to engage with policymakers, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders to promptly provide evidence-based recommendations on healthcare activities and decisions.

### ***Rapid review guidelines: The need***

Rapid reviews are hard to define, and up to date no clear consensus regarding a definition can be reached (Garritty et al., 2021; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012; Tricco et al., 2015). However, Hamel et al. (2021) proposed that "a rapid review is a form of knowledge synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting various methods to produce evidence in a resource-efficient manner" (p. 80). Confusion between rapid reviews and systematic reviews, as well as unclear guidelines for methodological steps within rapid reviews, are prevalent (Garritty et al., 2017; Hamel et al., 2021; Khangura et al., 2012).

Garrity et al. (2021) elaborated that researchers need fast-tracking decision-making processes within any global crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which traditional systematic reviews cannot meet. This leads to the increased usage of rapid reviews that are now regarded as part of the literature synthesising body. Consequently, a problem emerges when utilising rapid reviews for fast decision-making (Grant & Booth, 2009; Hamel et al., 2021). Moreover, the problem was explained by Featherstone et al. (2015), who noted that the rigour and soundness of the methodological guidelines to conduct rapid reviews decline as the timeline is shortened. Additionally, Featherstone et al. (2015) and Hamel et al. (2021) stated that heterogeneity exists in rapid review methods. A need arises for a distinguishable approach to produce sound evidence-based research.

## **Goal of the research study**

Shortcomings and disagreements within rapid review standardised guidelines are prevalent throughout the literature (Featherstone et al., 2015; Garritty et al., 2017; Garritty et al., 2021; Grant & Booth, 2009; Hamel et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2015). Thus, the literature review study aimed to present standardised guidelines regarding rapid reviews which can be utilised within psychology research. The following research question guided the literature review: What are the guidelines utilised within rapid reviews to conduct psychology research?

## **Method**

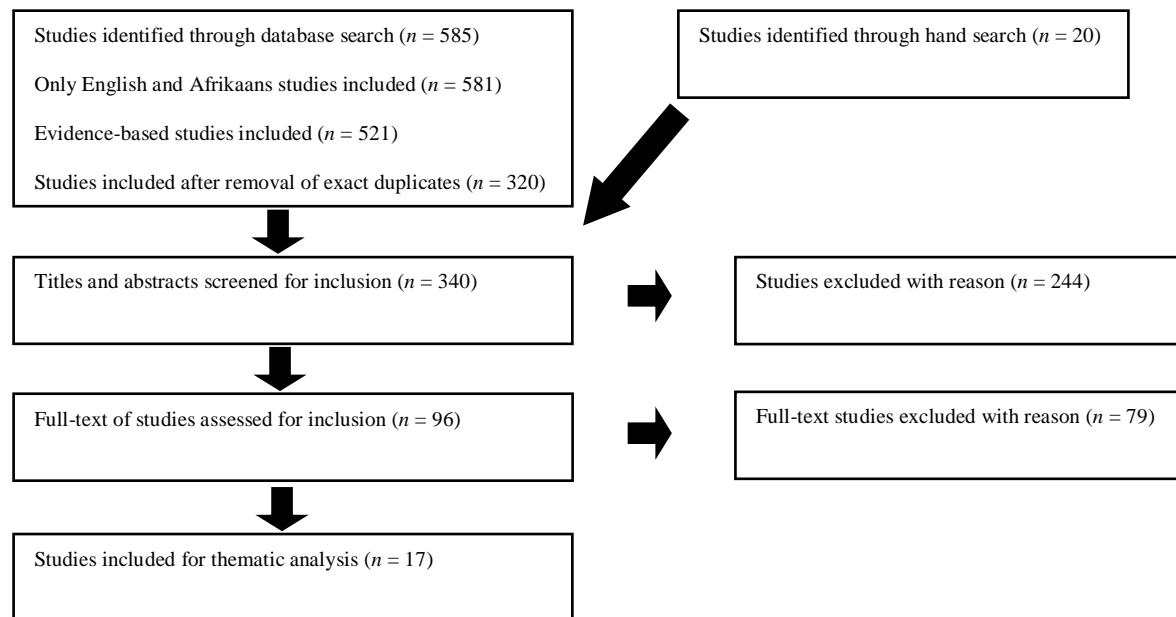
### ***Research approach***

This research study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-00232-21-A1) of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University (NWU) in South Africa. The research was conducted by the lead author and the co-author monitored the quality of the entire research process. The lead author structured the entire research process within the Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis (SALSA) framework (Grant & Booth, 2009). The seven steps to conduct a literature review (cf. Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012) were structured into the SALSA framework to guide the research process and to ensure methodological rigour. It was also important for the reviewers to follow responsible and ethical knowledge production guidelines (Khumalo & De Klerk, 2018).

### ***Search procedure***

Literature regarding rapid review methodology in psychology or studies within psychology employing rapid review as a methodology were searched for on 11 August 2021 using the following databases: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Directory of Open Access Journals, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, MEDLINE, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, and SocINDEX. The following keywords and Boolean operators were utilised to focus the search: "rapid review\*" and "psychology" or

"psychological" and "methodological" or "method\*" or "technique\*" or "strateg\*" or "research". This step was done in conjunction with a subject librarian at the North-West University. The original search yielded 585 studies and 20 studies were identified through hand searches. Studies were methodically narrowed to 17 studies which were included for analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the search and inclusion strategy:



**Figure 1.** Search and inclusion map

### ***Data extraction***

Per Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012), data pertaining to the research question was systematically extracted and summarised (see Table 1). All methodological steps utilised as headings or primary steps from the included literature were extracted by the lead author. The co-author reviewed the final data extraction to ensure accuracy.

**Table 1.** Data extraction table

<b>Authors and Title</b>	<b>Primary Methodological Steps Identified</b>
<b>Brown et al. (2020).</b> <i>The potential impact of COVID-19 on psychosis: A rapid review of contemporary epidemic and pandemic research.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Including the research questions of the review</li> <li>• Registration of the review study</li> <li>• Stating the eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Including the search strategy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing the screening process</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Stating the quality assessment procedure</li> <li>• Stating the amendments to the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Callus et al. (2020).</b> <i>Stress reduction techniques for health care providers dealing with severe Coronavirus infections (SARS, MERS, and COVID-19): A rapid review.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Including the research questions of the review</li> <li>• Including the search strategy</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria formulated</li> <li>• Describing the screening process</li> <li>• Including the quality evaluation of studies</li> <li>• Summarising the selected studies</li> <li>• Conducting the narrative review</li> <li>• Stating limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>De Kock et al. (2021).</b> <i>A rapid review of the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of healthcare workers: Implications for supporting psychological well-being.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Data sources and search strategy</li> <li>• The setting of search criteria</li> <li>• Screening and selection process</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Quality assessment and risk of bias</li> <li>• Synthesis and analysis</li> <li>• Stating the strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Embregts et al. (2020).</b> <i>Impact of infection outbreak on long-term care staff: A rapid review on psychological well-being.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating the aims of the review</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the selection process</li> <li>• Defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Methodological quality assessment</li> <li>• Data extraction and analysis of the literature</li> <li>• Including the strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Fiest et al. (2021).</b> <i>Experiences and management of physician psychological symptoms during infectious disease outbreaks: A rapid review.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining the eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy and selection criteria</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Stating the quality assessment process</li> <li>• Including strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Gronholm et al. (2021).</b> <i>Reducing stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19: Early stage pandemic rapid review and practical recommendations.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy and selection criteria</li> <li>• Registration of review protocol</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of the data</li> <li>• Including the review question</li> <li>• Methodological quality assessment</li> <li>• Including strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Lal &amp; Adair (2014).</b> <i>E-mental health: A rapid review of the literature.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying the research questions</li> <li>• Including the search strategy</li> <li>• Describing the screening process</li> <li>• Extracting and synthesising data</li> <li>• Including limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Lee &amp; Bowles (2020).</b> <i>Navigating treatment recommendations for PTSD: A rapid review.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Including the screening process</li> <li>• Synthesis of studies included</li> <li>• Including the limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Noone et al. (2020).</b> <i>Video calls for reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people: A rapid review.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating objectives of the review</li> <li>• Setting of criteria for the review</li> <li>• Search methods and screening</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Assessment of risk of bias</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Data synthesis</li> <li>• Stating the limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>O'Reilly et al. (2020).</b> <i>A rapid review investigating the potential impact of a pandemic on the mental health of young people aged 12-25 years.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the objectives of the review</li> <li>• Protocol registration of the review</li> <li>• Search and selection strategy</li> <li>• Consulting with experts</li> <li>• Data synthesis of included studies</li> <li>• Stating quality assessment procedure</li> <li>• Stating strengths and limitations of the study</li> </ul>
<b>Oakman et al. (2020).</b> <i>A rapid review of mental and physical health effects of working at home: How do we optimise health?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the inclusion and exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Screening of articles</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Quality assessment and risk of bias assessment</li> <li>• Analysis of data</li> <li>• Stating the limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<b>Phelps et al. (2017).</b> <i>What are effective psychological interventions for veterans with sleep disturbances? A rapid evidence assessment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including the aim of the review</li> <li>• Defining the research question</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the selection strategy</li> <li>• Quality assessment, evaluation and ranking of the literature</li> </ul>

<p><b>Puyat et al. (2020).</b>  <i>Rapid review: Home activities or resources that promote mental wellness and resilience during times of pandemics.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating the limitations of the review</li> <li>• Registration of the protocol</li> <li>• Setting the eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the screening process</li> <li>• Stating the data collection and analysis methods</li> <li>• Assessment for risk of bias</li> <li>• Stating the limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sriharan et al. (2021).</b>  <i>Women in healthcare experiencing occupational stress and burnout during COVID-19: A rapid review.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating objectives of the review</li> <li>• Registration of review protocol</li> <li>• Stating the research questions</li> <li>• Setting of eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the screening process</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Stating the quality assessment process</li> <li>• Synthesis of data</li> <li>• Including strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strudwick et al. (2021).</b>  <i>Digital interventions to support population mental health in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic: Rapid review.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating the research question and objectives</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Stating the screening process</li> <li>• Synthesis of data</li> <li>• Quality assessment of literature</li> <li>• Stating the strengths and limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stuijzand et al. (2020).</b>  <i>Psychological impact of an epidemic/pandemic on the mental health of healthcare professionals: A rapid review.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating the goal of the review</li> <li>• Protocol registration of the rapid review</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy and selection criteria</li> <li>• Including the screening process</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Including the limitations of the review</li> </ul>
<p><b>Usher et al. (2020).</b>  <i>Pandemic-related behaviours and psychological outcomes: A rapid literature review to explain COVID-19 behaviours.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration of the review protocol</li> <li>• Including the review question</li> <li>• Stating the inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Stating the search strategy</li> <li>• Stating the quality assessment process</li> <li>• Extraction of data</li> <li>• Synthesis of the data</li> <li>• Stating the limitations of the review</li> </ul>

## ***Data analysis***

Data analysis were conducted by employing thematic analysis steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure familiarity with the data, the lead author constantly read and re-read all the included studies. The lead author also generated initial codes. From the initial codes, themes were generated and reviewed. The lead author provided each theme with a thematic name.

The co-author monitored the entire process of analysis. Finally, the report (this research article) generated the answer to the research question.

## **Findings and discussion**

Considering the lack of literature regarding rapid review methodology in psychology, the findings were solely informed by psychology studies employing rapid review methodology.

The guidelines proposed were derived from the thematic analysis (see Table 2). The principal steps stated within the included literature were often found to be ambiguous. This highlighted the importance of generating codes across the included studies. In turn, the codes informed the themes that pose as the guidelines to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research. In order to minimise unnecessary repetition, only a summative table of themes is presented, with a detailed explanation and application of the proposed guideline.

**Table 2.** Themes derived from analysis

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>
<b>Theme 1</b>	Stating the aim of the review and formulating the research question
	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Gronholm et al. (2021); Lal & Adair (2014); Lee & Bowles (2020); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Phelps et al. (2017); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Stuijtzand et al. (2020); Usher et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 2</b>	Setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria
	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Fiest et al. (2021); Gronholm et al. (2021); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Puyat et al. (2020), Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Stuijtzand et al. (2020); Usher et al. (2020)

<b>Theme 3</b>	Formulating the search strategy	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Fiest et al. (2021); Gronholm et al. (2021); Lal & Adair (2014); Lee & Bowles (2020); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Phelps et al. (2017); Puyat et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Stuijfzand et al. (2020); Usher et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 4</b>	Screening and selection of literature	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Fiest et al. (2021); Lal & Adair (2014); Lee & Bowles (2020); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Phelps et al. (2017); Puyat et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Stuijfzand et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 5</b>	Extraction of data from included literature	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Fiest et al. (2021); Lal & Adair (2014); Noone et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Stuijfzand et al. (2020); Usher et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 6</b>	Quality and risk of bias assessment of included literature	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Fiest et al. (2021); Gronholm et al. (2021); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Phelps et al. (2017); Puyat et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Usher et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 7</b>	Synthesis and analysis of the included literature	Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Embregts et al. (2020); Gronholm et al. (2021); Lal & Adair (2014); Lee & Bowles (2020); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Puyat et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Usher et al. (2020)
<b>Theme 8</b>	Stating the limitations of the review	Brown et al. (2020); Callus et al. (2020); De Kock et al. (2021); Lee & Bowles (2020); Noone et al. (2020); O'Reilly et al. (2020); Oakman et al. (2020); Phelps et al. (2017); Puyat et al. (2020); Sriharan et al. (2021); Strudwick et al. (2021); Stuijfzand et al. (2020); Usher et al. (2020)

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### ***Step 1: Stating the aim of the review and formulating the research question***

From the analysis, it became evident that the research question of the rapid review should be formulated. Furthermore, the research question will in turn inform the aim of the rapid review. It can also be noted that the aim of the review is to undertake a timely synthesis of available literature (see Embregts et al., 2020; Fiest et al., 2021; Gronholm et al., 2021; Lal & Adair, 2014; O' Reilly et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2017; Stuijtzand et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). It is important to note that the review question and aim of the rapid review can be used interchangeably to inform the subsequent steps when conducting the rapid review (see Brown et al., 2020; Callus et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2017; Sriharan et al., 2021).

### ***Step 2: Setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria***

The setting of eligibility criteria is greatly informed by the research question and aim of the rapid review. It is recommended that the eligibility criteria are defined by using PECOS components: Population, Exposure or Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Study design (see Fiest et al., 2021; Noone et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2017). This step also involves the formulation of in- and exclusion criteria that can be structured within the eligibility criteria (see Noone et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2017; Puyat et al., 2020; Sriharan et al., 2021). Setting the eligibility criteria contributes to the formulation of the search strategy and also informs the screening and selection of literature yielded from the search process.

### ***Step 3: Formulating the search strategy***

The search strategy should follow a well-developed systematic approach to retrieve all relevant literature that relates to the research question and aim of the rapid review (De Kock et al., 2021; Noone et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020). It is proposed that reviewers utilise relevant electronic databases and other relevant sources to identify records that can be included within the next step of the rapid review. Garritty et al. (2020) and Varker (2015) suggested that rapid reviews generally produce evidence within six months. Due to this

suggested time limit in which rapid reviews are conducted, it is further proposed that additional factors are included to formulate the search strategy (see Brown et al., 2020; Fiest et al., 2021; Gronholm et al., 2021; Oakman et al., 2020), i.e.: Limitation on the period in which the search is conducted; The use of search strings to search for relevant records; Limitation of publication dates, and; Determining the language of potential records.

Depending on the research question and aim of the review, researchers could search scientific and/or grey literature to identify records (see Lal & Adair et al., 2014; Strudwick et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is also proposed that the reference lists of all included studies are searched for possible additional inclusions (see Callus et al., 2020; Gronholm et al., 2021; Lee & Bowles, 2020; Stuijzand et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). It is suggested that this step is performed in conjunction with a library information specialist and that independent searches are conducted by the reviewers (Embregts, 2020; Fiest et al., 2021; Noone et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020; Puyat et al., 2020; Stuijzand et al., 2020).

#### ***Step 4: Screening and selection of literature***

The final selection of literature derives from the literature retrieved in the search process. To select relevant literature, a systematic screening process must be followed. This process allows reviewers to systematically narrow the selection of literature. The overall screening process contributes to the selection of literature that is relevant to the research question, aim, eligibility criteria, and the prevalence of keywords (see Embregts et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2017, Sriharan, et al., 2021; Strudwick et al., 2021). It is suggested that the title and abstract of the literature are first screened and that the screening of full-text is conducted on the remaining literature (see Callus et al., 2020; De Kock et al., 2021; Fiest et al., 2021; Lee & Bowles, 2020; Phelps et al., 2017; Puyat et al., 2020; Stuijzand et al., 2020). During the full-text screening, reviewers can screen all remaining literature as well as all literature excluded from the title and abstract. A tailored screening process can also be formulated, such as a

reviewer(s) screening an appropriate percentage of the literature and other reviewers screening the remaining or excluded literature from the title and abstract (see Embregts et al., 2020; Noone et al., 2020; Puyat et al., 2020). It is ideal that multiple reviewers conduct the screening process, that the process and final selection is evaluated by an independent reviewer, and that disagreements are resolved by discussion (see De Kock et al., 2021; Fiest et al., 2021; Lee & Bowles, 2020). Further suggestions include the use of online screening tools such as Covidence (see Noone et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020, Puyat et al., 2020; Strudwick et al., 2021). Finally, it is advised that the screening and selection process is visually displayed in the form of a flow diagram (such as the PRISMA-P) to convey the rationale of the final selected literature.

#### ***Step 5: Extraction of data from included literature***

From the final selected literature, it is suggested that data are systematically extracted to easily retrieve the relevant data for the subsequent steps. From the analysis, it became evident that the relevant data are tabulated to provide the reader with an accessible overview of the final selected literature. Depending on the research question and aim of the review, the following study characteristics could be tabulated: Authors, title, and date of publication; Country in which study is based; Design of the study; Participants of the study; Selection of the participants; Intervention, exposure, measurement, or psychological tool; Outcomes or findings/results of the study, and; Any other study characteristics that are deemed relevant to the review.

The data extraction can also be guided by employing a standardised form and piloting the data extraction on a sample of the included literature (see Fiest et al., 2021; Noone et al., 2020; Sriharan et al., 2021). It is suggested that the data extraction process is conducted independently by multiple reviewers and checked for accuracy either by a reviewer that did

not partake in the data extraction process or through group discussions (see De Kock et al., 2021; Gronholm et al., 2021; Puyat et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020).

***Step 6: Quality and risk of bias assessment of included literature***

Depending on the research question, aim, and type of literature included (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, and review studies), various quality assessment tools can be utilised to conduct this step. Furthermore, it is proposed that the various assessments are conducted independently by reviewers. Findings must then be verified and discrepancies resolved through discussion by fellow reviewers (see Embregts et al., 2020; Noone et al., 2020; Oakman et al., 2020; Sriharan et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2020). Careful consideration should be given to distinguish between quality assessment and risk of bias assessments.

For qualitative studies, the following quality assessment tools are suggested: Johanna Briggs appraisal tool for qualitative research (cf. The University of Adelaide, 2021) and the Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields resource (Kmet et al., 2004).

Quality assessment tools for quantitative studies include: Effective Public Health Practise Project Quality Assessment Tool (EPHPP) (Thomas et al., 2004); AGREE Reporting Checklist (Brouwers et al., 2016); various Johanna Briggs appraisal tools (cf. The University of Adelaide, 2021); Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (Wells et al., 2013); Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields resource (Kmet et al., 2004); and the AMSTAR 2 critical appraisal tool (Shea et al., 2017).

For mixed-method studies, the quality assessment tool suggested includes the Mixed method appraisal tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018).

For overall interpretation of findings/results, the following tools are proposed: GRADE approach (Langendam et al., 2013) and the GRADE Evidence to Decision (EtD) framework (Alsono-Coello et al., 2016).

Risk of bias assessments can be utilised to align with the study design (cf. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2019; Evidence Partners, 2021), alternatively utilising ROBINS-I for non-randomised studies (Sterne et al., 2016) or RoB 2.0 tool in randomised trials (Sterne et al., 2019) and the Cochrane RCT “Risk of bias” tool (Higgins et al., 2017).

### ***Step 7: Synthesis and analysis of included literature***

From the analysis it became evident that the data synthesis and analysis step must be conducted systematically to ensure accurate synthesis and analysis of the included literature. During this step, the synthesis and analysis of extracted data must ultimately attempt to reach the aim of the review and answer the research question. The synthesis and analysis procedures will greatly rely on the types of studies included (see O'Reilly et al., 2020; Sriharan et al., 2021). For qualitative synthesis, it is suggested that the following procedures are adopted: thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008) and content analysis (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To conduct a quantitative synthesis, a meta-analysis process is proposed by following the recommendations of Field and Gillet (2010) and Rosenthal (1995).

### ***Step 8: Stating the limitations of the review***

Due to the time limitations in which rapid reviews are conducted, several limitations could potentially influence the overall quality of the review (Featherstone et al., 2015). From the analysis, it is suggested that reviewers explicitly state the limitations encountered during the review process. Such limitations could include: Exclusion of relevant literature based on eligibility criteria; The search strategy and data sources utilised; Potential bias in the screening and selection of literature; Potentially including studies that do not adhere to high methodological standards; Extraction of data not checked for accuracy or limited due to available data of included literature; Small samples of included literature where the overall

aim of the review could limit the confirmability of the findings, or; Any other limitations that could affect the overall quality of the rapid review.

### **Recommendations**

Depending on the purpose of the rapid review, it can be suggested that the review protocol must be registered. This includes registration at institutes such as the Centre for Open Science (Open Science Framework), Cochrane Library, or National Institute for Health Research (PROSPERO). Abou-Setta et al. (2016) noted that rapid reviews that are prepared primarily to inform key stakeholders within organisations, are rarely registered and are not often submitted for publications. Thus, it can be concluded that the registration of protocol is highly recommended in the case of conducting rapid reviews for publication purposes.

Recommendations for future research include the evaluation of the various quality assessments and risk of bias tools that can best be utilised regarding the purpose of the rapid review. The assessment of tools could contribute to further enhancing the methodological rigour of rapid reviews. Further recommendations could be made on evaluating the number of reviewers needed to ensure methodological soundness and rigour of the rapid review.

### **Limitations of the research study**

Given the fact that literature specifically dedicated to conducting rapid reviews in psychology could not be retrieved, the use of psychology-based literature which employs rapid review methodology was analysed to generate a synthesised guideline to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research. The timeframe in which the search was conducted could potentially have excluded other relevant literature. No formal quality assessment tool was utilised to conduct the literature review. However, the authors followed predetermined criteria to assess the methodological soundness of potential studies to ensure accurate and credible findings.

## **Conclusion**

From the analysis, this literature review generated an eight-step guideline to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research. The eight steps contribute to the overall enhancement of methodological soundness and integrity of the rapid review synthesis process.

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### SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Within this section of the mini-dissertation, the researcher provides a critical reflection on the experiences, thought processes, and methodological rationale that guided the research study and research process.

#### Critical Reflection

Fook and Gardner (2007) noted important aspects regarding critical reflection. Researchers must move beyond the mere description of their experiences and thought processes, and scrutinize how their beliefs, values, and worldview guided their experiences and thought processes (Fook & Gardner, 2007). Similarly, Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) noted that researchers must explore their general beliefs, their worldview, and research philosophy. As noted in Section 1 (Introduction) of this mini-dissertation, the researcher (Mr Ryan Evan du Toit) used the guidelines as suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) as a foundation to guide through potential research pitfalls during the literature review study.

A literature review serves as a tool to create new evidence while simultaneously allowing the researcher to make recommendations on current and previous literature (American Psychological Association, 2020; Grant & Booth, 2009). Thus, a literature review was conducted to synthesise, identify, and make research findings on the guidelines utilised when conducting rapid reviews in psychology research (Grant & Booth, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012).

To present a transparent, sound and honest methodological research process, the seven steps to conduct a literature review were utilised as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012): *Step 1) selecting the topic and exploring beliefs, Step 2) searching for literature and focusing the search, Step 3) selecting and deselecting relevant literature, Step 4) expanding the literature search to include additional sources, Step 5) summarising, storing literature and additional sources, Step 6) analysing and synthesising the literature and*

*additional sources*, and finally, *Step 7) presenting the literature review findings*. Through employing these seven steps, guidelines for conducting rapid reviews in psychology research were identified, which could enhance the use of rapid reviews in psychology research that contributes and upholds the methodological integrity of rapid reviews as a research method.

All ethical considerations as proposed by Wager and Wiffen (2011) were strictly adhered to. Ethical considerations include that I will not submit the literature review article for possible publication (see Section 2) to more than one journal publication. I gave credit to all authors through the use of in-text referencing as well as including complete reference lists as per the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 7th edition. Both the primary reviewer (Mr Ryan Evan du Toit) and the secondary reviewer (Prof Werner de Klerk) declared that they have no affiliation with any research unit and that no compensation will or has been received for this literature review study. Finally, I conducted the review as the primary reviewer (registered Master's student in Research Psychology and student Psychologist at the Health Profession Council of South Africa) and writer of this literature review study in a systematic manner to ensure accuracy of the research finding. To further ensure sound ethical standards, I also completed the Training and Resource in Research Ethics Evaluation (TRREE) course in 2019 as required by the North-West University. The secondary reviewer (registered Research Psychologist at the Health Professions Council of South Africa) also monitored the entire literature review process to ensure the quality and accuracy of the research findings. Furthermore, this literature review did not make use of any animal or human participants, and I utilised only previous and current peer-reviewed literature as the source of data.

I ensured the rigour of this literature review study by employing the guidelines as proposed by Krefting (1991). Firstly, credibility was ensured through the use of extensive note-taking throughout the entire literature review study as well as constant in-depth

engagement with the secondary reviewer regarding all aspects of the process. Secondly, transferability was ensured by meticulously adhering to the inclusion criteria for the selection of all relevant literature. Thirdly, dependability was ensured by densely describing the review and analysis process as well as utilising a code-recode procedure. Finally, I ensured confirmability by maintaining scientific distance from the relevant literature and data analysis, and a comprehensive audit trail is available to rationalise the key decisions made during data selection and analysis processes.

### **Selection of Research Topic and Exploring Beliefs**

The selection of the research topic was not a topic I was familiar with. This initially provided me with a positive start as I held no former beliefs regarding the use of rapid reviews which could significantly influence the research process. I can only note that I selected the topic due to my interest in research methodology. The exploration of my worldview and research philosophy as mentioned was not just utilised in the first step of the method of investigation but was continuously explored during all steps of this literature review.

During this step, I also explored the relevant literature to identify the research problem and aim of this literature review. I uncovered that rapid reviews are still relatively new to the literature synthesis body, that no clear consensus on the methodological steps is prevalent, rapid reviews tend to follow the same methods as the traditional systematic review, and that the most noticeable difference is only within the time-frame the rapid review is conducted (cf. Hamel et al., 2021). However, a need arose to identify sound methodological guidelines to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research. As per my knowledge and the knowledge of Prof Werner de Klerk, no guidelines to conduct rapid reviews in psychology research is currently available. However, psychology researchers often employ various rapid review guidelines that are not specifically tailored to fit the needs of psychology research.

## **Search and Focusing the Search**

An initial database search was conducted to identify the research problem and aim, this database search and literature also informed the main literature search procedure and initial keywords for the Boolean operators. In addition, a subject librarian (Mr Nestus Venter) from the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus, was consulted to assist in the main literature search procedure. Through this consultation, the Boolean operators and keywords were refined in conjunction with Mr Venter to ensure the credibility of the search procedure. The following Boolean operators and keywords were utilised: "rapid review\*" and "psychology" or "psychological" and "methodological" or "method\*" or "technique\*" or "strateg\*" or "research".

The focused search yielded a total of 585 hits. This search was first limited by only including Afrikaans or English sources which brought the total hit count to 581. Secondly, the search was limited by only including evidence-based studies. This resulted in a total hit count of 521. After the removal of exact duplications, 320 potential studies were left for screening for possible inclusion. The discrepancy between the research proposal search (310 hits after removal of exact duplications) and the final search after ethical approval was due to the six-month time-lapse and the publication of new studies in this time-lapse. The newest search was conducted to ensure that all available literature could be considered for inclusion.

I meticulously took notes of all the steps while conducting the search process. This was done to ensure credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the process.

## **Selection and Deselection of Relevant Literature**

Due to the relatively large result of the focused search, this step of the entire literature review process was particularly difficult for me. Firstly, I had to ensure that I properly screened the title and abstract of all the search results. The initial inclusion criteria were to identify literature that is relevant to rapid review methods for psychology research or

psychology literature that employed rapid review methods. After the screening of titles and abstracts, 65 studies were identified for further screening and selection.

Secondly, I completed the screening of titles and abstracts twice to ensure that no literature was accidentally overlooked. This was done by conducting the entire screening process after two days, the articles selected were then compared. This step provided an additional seven studies that were also included for further screening and selection. It is however important to note that the original 65 selected articles were once again in the selection pool. If this was not the case, I would have needed to note that I potentially conducted the selection and deselection process incorrectly.

Thirdly, after the screening of the title and abstract, the selected relevant literature (75 studies) needed to be measured against the additional inclusion criteria. The studies were screened for sound methodological descriptions of the rapid review methods employed and whether the studies could serve the research question (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012; Oxman & Guyatt, 1988). Through this, I methodically read through the selected studies and approved the studies if they met the selection criteria. Studies were also deselected if gaps in rigour or methodology were prevalent (quality assessment). During this process, I also continually engaged in discussions with the secondary reviewer if I felt confused or uncertain. A total of 13 studies were included for the next step in the literature review.

Lastly, the entire procedure and the systematic selection and deselection of literature were recorded to ensure the overall rigour of the procedure. In addition, I was also cognisant of my research philosophy, beliefs, and worldview as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012). This could potentially influence my choice to select or deselect relevant studies not based on the set criteria, but rather whether the research topic does or does not align with these intrinsic perceptions. It was thus very important for me to ensure that I strictly adhere to

the set criteria for inclusion and methodically document the entire process to ensure that I could keep track of all decisions regarding the selection of relevant literature.

### **Expanding the Literature Search**

A similar process was conducted in this step of the literature review as mentioned above. However, Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) recommended that additional searches must be conducted to include all possible relevant literature. Firstly, I made use of Google Scholar to expand the literature search. The same Boolean operators were employed as in the search and focusing the search step. Through this procedure, 17 studies were identified. The title and abstract of the 17 studies were screened to determine relevance. After the screening of the title and abstract, only four studies were selected. The four studies were screened in totality following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and three studies were included as they met the additional inclusion criteria.

Secondly, the search was expanded by reviewing the reference list of all the selected relevant literature (16 studies). This review process yielded three additional studies. The title and abstracts of the studies were screened, only one study was selected as it met the inclusion criteria, and two studies were excluded due to a lack of methodological soundness.

During this step, I was also cognisant of the potential influence that my worldview, research philosophy, and beliefs could have on the search, screening, and selection process. I also methodically recorded the entire process to ensure the overall rigour of this step in the literature review.

### **Summarising and Storing the Relevant Literature**

During this step, I also methodically recorded the entire process of summarising and storing the relevant literature. Each relevant study was stored, and data from each study were extracted. The data from the selected relevant literature were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. This included the authors, year of publication, type of research work, a summary

of the methodological steps identified, and a complete reference. It ensured the confirmability as well as dependability of this step in the literature review process.

It can also be noted that this step could be influenced by my beliefs concerning the research topic. Thus, I ensured that I took note of my prior beliefs regarding what I will find, especially with regards to the summary of the methodological steps identified, as steps could have been overlooked due to my prior beliefs and expectations. To avoid this research pitfall, I continuously read through all the selected relevant literature and completed this step twice. It is key to note that only minor discrepancies between the initial and second extractions were noted. This step was duplicated to ensure the overall rigour of this step. During this stage, I also discussed the findings with the secondary researcher to ensure the credibility of this step in the literature review process.

### **Analysing and Synthesising All Relevant Literature**

During the thematic analysis phase, I utilised the six steps as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). *Step 1: Researcher Familiarising the Selected Literature and Additional Sources*, was read and re-read over a period of one week to ensure familiarity with all final included studies. During this step, I started to jot down a few initial ideas that were used to inform the next step of the analysis. I also revisited my initial research beliefs and views, and compared these beliefs and views with my initial ideas. The comparison yielded no caution of potential bias as my initial beliefs and views of rapid reviews were not consistent with any of my initial ideas. This indicated the neutrality of the first step, as I did not search for ideas that matched my prior beliefs and views. *Step 2: Generating the Initial Codes*, this step was repeated twice to ensure the dependability of the data analysis. The code-recode procedure yielded no significant differences that needed to be investigated further. I completed each coding step by highlighting different codes that carried the same meaning across the selected studies by hand. The codes generated were also transferred to a spreadsheet in Microsoft

Excel. Within the spreadsheet, the codes across all included studies were systematically organised. This provided me with an in-depth representation of the hand-coded data which also contributed to the overall rigour of the analysis. The codebook furthermore ensured the confirmability of the analysis. *Step 3: Searching for Themes*, from the generated codes, themes were developed by grouping the codes that carried the same underlying principles. *Step 4: Reviewing the Themes*, the themes were then revised and assisted in the process of ensuring that all initial themes are supported by the codes. It is important to note that more themes were recorded initially; however, themes were integrated since the themes carried similar meanings and the integrated themes served the research question better. For example, initially the theme “*Step 2: Setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria*” was two separate themes, but on closer analysis and with support of the initial codes it was noted that the themes could be integrated. *Step 5: Defining and Naming the Themes*, the themes were finally revised and given a thematic name that posed as steps to conduct a rapid review in psychology research. The entire process of thematic analysis was an overall iterative process. The steps were not done in isolation but utilised as interchangeable steps that informed each other. This ensured the overall quality of the final themes that were generated. Working with scientific literature, it became evident that precaution should be taken when analysing the content of the data as I do not have a first-hand account of the overall intent of the included studies. Thus, I was very conscious of the potential pitfalls, such as ensuring that I understand the overall content of each study as well as the specific components that distinguished the included studies from each other. This also forced me to truly be familiar with the selected studies to give a true account of the data, and to remain uncorrupted by my research views, beliefs, or lack of misunderstanding the intent and content of selected studies or any part thereof. Lastly, the entire process was monitored by the secondary reviewer, and the peer-examination ensured the credibility of the thematic analysis process. *Step 6:*



*Producing the Report*, the findings were then reported. Step six of the thematic analysis process and the final step in writing a literature review as proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012) connects and the critical reflection of presenting the report/findings are discussed below.

### **Presenting the Review Findings**

Within the final step of conducting the literature review, the findings from the thematic analysis needed to be presented in a clear, concise, and comprehensive manner. Moreover, I had to ensure that the essence of all included literature be captured while maintaining research integrity, providing logical flow and that the final write-up was aligned with the research question and aim of the literature review.

The final themes included: *Theme 1) Stating the aim of the review and formulating the research question; Theme 2) Setting the eligibility criteria and in- and exclusion criteria; Theme 3) Formulating the search strategy; Theme 4) Screening and selection of literature; Theme 5) Extraction of data from included literature; Theme 6) Quality and risk of bias assessment of included literature; Theme 7) Synthesis and analysis of the included literature, and; Theme 8) Stating the limitations of the review.* The themes were also supported by including a dense and concise description that was backed by the codes identified in the thematic analysis process.

Within the final article, I also declared the limitations of the study and made recommendations for future research practices. From the analysis and final write-up, I gathered that further in-depth exploration could still be done on steps within the rapid review process. This includes the exploration of the various risks of bias and quality assessment tools that are used to evaluate included literature, as well as potentially evaluating the effectiveness of the number of reviewers needed to conduct a rapid review.

Overall, I am proud of the final research findings and do believe that this literature review can contribute to enhancing the methodological soundness and integrity of rapid reviews.

### **Conclusion**

The process of conducting this literature review study was one enormous life lesson. The process highlighted the importance of determination, hard work, integrity, and has taught me that all is possible if you put your mind to it. Furthermore, uncovering how my perspectives and worldview influence my research and how to account for these aspects gave me a sense of insight that stretches far beyond my journey to becoming a good researcher, but also positively contributed to how I interact with the world around me. I am and will be ever grateful for having the opportunity to conduct this research study.

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## APPENDIX A



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**North-West University Health Research Ethics  
Committee (NWU-HREC)**

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studies)

19 August 2021

### ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) on 19/08/2021, the NWU-HREC hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-HREC grants its permission that, provided the general conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

**Study title: Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review**

**Principal Investigator/Study Supervisor/Researcher: Prof W de Klerk**

**Student: RE du Toit - 24251135**

**Ethics number:**

N	W	U	-	0	0	2	3	2	-	2	1	-	A	1
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Institution Study Number Year Status  
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation;  
A = Authorisation

**Application Type: Systematic review**

**Commencement date: 19/08/2021**

**Expiry date: 31/08/2022**

**Risk:**

**Minimal**

**Approval of the study is provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of an annual monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report is due at the end of August annually until completion of the study.**

#### **General conditions:**

*While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:*

- *The principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HREC:*
  - *Annually on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided annually, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the principal investigator/study supervisor/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for active monitoring.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-HREC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*

- *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
  - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
  - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
  - *submission of the annual monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and/or*
  - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *NWU-HREC can be contacted for further information via [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 1206*

**Special conditions of the research approval due to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

**Please note:** Due to the nature of the study i.e. (systematic review of previously published manuscripts), this study will be able to proceed during the current alert level, following receipt of the approval letter. No additional COVID-19 restrictions have been placed on the study except that the researcher must ensure that before proceeding with the study that all research team members have reviewed the North-West University COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety Standard Operating Procedure.

The NWU-HREC would like to remain at your service and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Digitally signed by  
Prof Petra Bester  
Date: 2021.08.20  
08:12:53 +02'00'

Chairperson NWU-HREC

Current details (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.4 Templates\9.1.5.4.2\_NWU-HREC\_EAL.docm  
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## APPENDIX B

This certificate declares that the mini-dissertation with the title,  
**Guidelines for conducting a rapid review in psychology research: A literature review**  
by **Ryan E. du Toit**, excluding references, was edited by:

Ann-Lize Grewar

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BA Hons in Translation Studies

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Signed on 08/11/2021

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Date of receipt: 02/11/2021

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