



Review Article / Derleme Makalesi

Synthesizing the Meta-Synthesis Research in Management and Organization Studies: Where Are We? Where Should We Go?

Yönetim ve Organizasyon Çalışmalarında Meta-Sentez Araştırmalarının Sentezlenmesi: Neredeyiz? Nereye Gitmeliyiz?

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ABSTRACT

Qualitative meta-synthesis methodology has received considerable attention from scholars in a variety of disciplines by answering a widening range of questions for which traditional methods have proven inadequate. However, turning to management and organization research, the meta-synthesis of qualitative research is nascent in the literature. In this context, the present study investigated the conceptual and methodological framework of meta-synthesis of qualitative research in the management and organization literature in terms of review subject, methods for searching, number of reviewed papers, appraisal methods of papers, and methods of synthesis. By investigating 9 meta-synthesis studies, it was found that a variety of contexts and subjects, mainly nurses' working lives, were addressed in meta-synthesis research in the management and organization field. A wide range of databases and journal-based searches were performed. Also, the keywords were used as composed of variations of different keywords to cover the concept. In terms of inclusion criteria, the studies mainly used criteria as using qualitative research method, the research questions addressed the concept, written in English or a specific language, and peer-reviewed articles. In terms of methods, reviewed studies used different approaches in addition to the qualitative meta-synthesis approach.

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ÖZ

Nitel meta-sentez metodolojisi, geleneksel yöntemlerin yetersiz kaldığı çeşitli sorulara yanıtlar sunarak farklı disiplinlerdeki akademisyenlerden büyük ilgi görmüştür. Bununla birlikte, yönetim ve organizasyon literatüründe ise, nitel meta-sentez araştırmaları henüz gelişim aşamasındadır. Bu bağlamda, mevcut çalışma, yönetim ve organizasyon literatüründeki nitel meta-sentez araştırmalarının kavramsal ve metodolojik çerçevesini derleme konusu, tarama yöntemleri, incelenen makale sayısı, makalelerin değerlendirme yöntemleri ve sentez yöntemleri

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açısından araştırmıştır. 9 meta-sentez çalışması ışığında, yönetim ve organizasyon alanındaki meta-sentez araştırmalarında başta hemşirelerin çalışma yaşamları olmak üzere çeşitli bağlam ve konuların ele alındığı tespit edilmiştir. Çok çeşitli veri tabanları ve dergi temelli aramalar yapıldığı belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca anahtar kelimelerin kavramı kapsayacak şekilde farklı anahtar kelimelerin varyasyonlarından oluşacak şekilde belirlendiği gözlemlenmiştir. Dâhil edilme kriterleri açısından çalışmalarda ağırlıklı olarak nitel araştırma yönteminin kullanılması, araştırma sorularının araştırmaya konu olan kavramı ele alması, İngilizce veya belirli bir dilde yazılmış olması ve hakemli makaleler olması kriterleri kullanılmıştır. Yöntem açısından ise, incelenen çalışmalar nitel meta-sentez yaklaşımına ek olarak farklı yaklaşımlar kullanmıştır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, given that research in different disciplines with pioneering and important contributions, the richness of current methodological approaches is also noteworthy in addition to the strong theoretical contributions in this research. These methodological approaches bring a deep understanding and insight to research in the presence of complex situations, processes, or experiences.

As one of these approaches, the meta-synthesis approach is focused on synthesizing findings from single and different qualitative studies to develop a more robust, comprehensive, and holistic meaning and framework of a phenomenon (Chrastina, 2018). Qualitative meta-synthesis has also attracted great attention of scholars thanks to expanding the power of research by answering a widening range of questions for which the traditional methods had proven to be inadequate (Thorne, 2022). In this vein, qualitative meta-synthesis is one of the most significant methodological advancements of the last decades (Thorne, 2022).

Given the important contribution of the meta-synthesis approach in providing a holistic view, the large volume of research has dealt with meta-synthesis of qualitative research mainly in the field of health (Hannes & Macaitis, 2012), sociology (Jovanovski & Cook, 2019), psychology (Achterbergh et al., 2020), and education (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Surprisingly, though, there has been very little examination of the processes, methods, challenges, and outcomes of the meta-synthesis of qualitative research (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007). Besides, methodological challenges and difficulties in developing standards of practice warrant the need for undertaking further research (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007).

On the other hand, only a few recent studies have examined current approaches in qualitative research methods in management literature. Existence studies investigated nurses' psychological experiences after inpatient suicide (Shao et al., 2021), formal management control system design (Janka, 2021), factors affecting nurses' decisions to work in rural and remote settings (MacKay et al., 2021), the processes associated with job crafting (Lazazzara et

al., 2020), nurses' experiences of caring for patients who request assisted death (Elmore et al., 2018), the role of nursing home staff in decisions to transfer residents to hospital (Laging et al., 2015), factors that constitute the notion of nursing professional dignity (Sabatino et al., 2014), investigating opportunities and obstacles of employees with common mental disorders experience concerning return to work (Andersen et al., 2012), and experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace (Gewurtz & Kirsh, 2009). From this point of view, it is seen that qualitative meta-synthesis research mainly concentrated on nursing and research on the other employee groups and the different sectors were neglected in the field of management and organization literature.

Therefore, the originality and significance of the present study lies in highlighting the methodological approaches and dynamics of current qualitative research methods that are widely used in a variety of disciplines. Consequently, research in the management and organization literature is expected to make significant contributions through methodological diversity as well as theoretical contributions.

In this context, to contribute to a more comprehensive, rich, and detailed understanding of current trends in qualitative research methods, this study focuses on meta-synthesis as one of the contemporary qualitative research methods. Additionally, the objective of this study is to reflect on the meta-synthesis approach to management and organization literature. Therefore, this study investigated (i) the conceptual framework of meta-synthesis of qualitative research, (ii) the methodological framework based on processes and methods of meta-synthesis of qualitative research, (iii) meta-synthesis of qualitative research in the management and organization literature in terms of review subject, methods for searching, number of reviewed papers, appraisal methods of papers, and methods of synthesis.

2. META-SYNTHESIS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Meta-synthesis of qualitative research is defined as “the study of the underlying assumptions of various qualitative

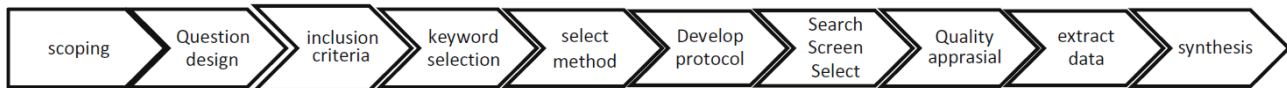


Figure 1. Processes of a Qualitative Meta-synthesis.

Source: Dawson (2019, p. 794)

findings in the included studies, comparing different types of data according to their quality and utility and synthesizing and interpreting the findings of research studies that relate to the same phenomenon (Dawson, 2019, p. 786). This approach involves comprehensive view based on *“the bringing together and breaking down of findings, examining them, discovering the essential features, and, in some way, combining phenomena into a transformed whole”* (Schreiber et al. 1997).

The aim of conducting a meta-synthesis of qualitative research is to create an integrative and holistic perspective by interpreting the whole study findings that are greater than individual studies (Finfgeld, 2003). Therefore, qualitative synthesis involves examining the research findings, discovering essential patterns, and creating an in-depth and integrative view of the whole (Flemming, 2007). In doing this, the synthesis of qualitative research develops new cumulative knowledge based on the primary data.

Synthesis of qualitative research has a variety of contributions to a rich fabric of research. For instance, meta-synthesis of qualitative research allows (i) the development of theory by creating a comprehensive conceptual and theoretical framework, (ii) enhancing the use of primary data focusing on the sensitive, specific, or rare concept, (iii) enhancing the generalizability of single qualitative studies, (iv) providing cumulative knowledge, a broader context and meaning to evidence of effectiveness, and (v) identification of future research topics (Flemming, 2007). Besides, the meta-synthesis of qualitative research provides a broader and richer understanding of important conditions and mechanisms for individual and group beliefs, experiences, and behaviors (Flemming et al., 2019).

Given these contributions of the synthesis of qualitative research, a range of synthesis methods were developed for gaining new cumulative knowledge. As one of these methods, thematic synthesis refers to *“the method that is often used to analyse data in primary qualitative research in systematic reviews to bring together and integrate the findings of multiple qualitative studies”* (Thomas & Harden, 2008, p. 1). Thematic synthesis consists of three stages: (i) the coding of text line-by-line; (ii) the development of descriptive themes; and (iii) the generation of analytical themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Framework-based synthesis concentrates on specific questions, a limited time frame and issues for interpreting and integrating the concept related to the framework (Dixon-Woods, 2011).

Meta-ethnography is an interpretative synthesis approach focusing on creating new understandings or

grounded theories for the phenomenon based on the included studies (Flemming et al., 2019). Meta-ethnography includes three different methods of synthesis such as reciprocal Translational analysis (adapting concepts from studies into one another for developing overarching concepts or metaphors), Refutational synthesis (exploring and synthesizing studies having contradictory findings), and Lines-of-argument synthesis (developing a holistic view of the whole culture or organization regarding included studies) (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

2.1. Processes of a Qualitative Meta-synthesis

Undertaking qualitative meta-synthesis includes many iterative but not discrete steps as follows: “defining the scope of the study, question design, developing an inclusion criterion and forming keywords, selecting a method or approach to the synthesis of qualitative data, developing a protocol, searching and selecting/sampling studies, appraising qualitative studies in the review, extraction and synthesis processes” (Dawson, 2019) (see Figure 1).

2.1.1. Defining the Scope of the Study

Scope refers to *“the kind of boundaries that will exist around the review, framing the topic of interest and mapping the existing information available”* (Flemming & Noyes, 2021, p. 2). Scoping of a meta-synthesis contains the activities for identifying the concept that concentrated on the research. This stage involves the preliminary search of literature review to determine the studies forming the basis for the meta-synthesis research (Dawson, 2019). Defining the context of the study and problem framing provides direction for the review (Flemming et al., 2019).

2.1.2. Question Design

Qualitative meta-synthesis aims to identify given information about the concept from different perspectives. In this regard, the review question is broadly formulated for framing what is known already (Flemming & Noyes, 2021). Clear and detailed review questions allow us to determine the required type of data and a specific approach for collecting and analyzing those data (Booth et al., 2018).

In this regard, three main question types are used for question design (i) prediction questions; (ii) intervention questions; and (iii) exploration questions (Booth, 2006). Prediction questions are used for determining outcomes under specific conditions and circumstances. Intervention questions aim to address questions for comparing two or more activities in terms of their success in achieving goals and outcomes. Finally, exploration questions seek to find

PICO	SPIDER	Justification
P – Population/problem	S – Sample	Smaller groups of participants tend to be used in qualitative research than quantitative research, so this term was deemed more appropriate.
I – Intervention/exposure	PI – Phenomenon of Interest	Qualitative research aims to understand the how and why of certain behaviours, decisions, and individual experiences. Therefore, an intervention/exposure per se is not always evident in qualitative research questions.
C – Comparison	D – Design	The theoretical framework used in qualitative research will determine the research method that is used. As inferential statistics are not used in qualitative research, details of the study design will help to make decisions about the robustness of the study and analysis. In addition, this might increase the detection of qualitative studies in the databases in which titles and abstracts are unstructured.
O – Outcomes	E – Evaluation	Qualitative research has the same end result as quantitative research methods: outcome measures. These differ depending on the research question and might contain more unobservable and subjective constructs when compared to quantitative research (e.g., attitudes and views and so forth), so evaluation was deemed more suitable.
	R – Research type	Three research types could be searched for: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Figure 2. Construction of the SPIDER search tool from the PICO Model.

Source: (Cooke et al., 2012, p. 1438)

the underlying reasons beyond human attitudes, feelings, and behaviors (Booth, 2006).

On the other hand, different approaches are used for the question design. One of these approaches is the PICO (Population, Intervention/phenomena of interest, Control, Outcome, and Study design) model (Hannes & Pearson, 2011). For instance, in terms of the implementation of evidence-based healthcare practice, the PICO model involves the population is healthcare practitioners, phenomena of interest are obstacles towards the implementation of evidence-based practice, context is the Belgian healthcare system, and outcome is experiences and perceptions (Hannes & Pearson, 2011).

Besides, the SPIDER tool is developed to overcome the limitations and difficulties encountered in the PICO model (Cooke et al. 2012) (see Figure 2). SPIDER tool includes ingredients as the sample, the phenomenon of interest, design, evaluation, and research type (Cooke et al. 2012). SPIDER tool has been seen as easier for generating search terms thanks to involving more suited terminology for the qualitative research questions and easier for managing the databases thanks to producing a smaller number of research results in the search phase (Cooke et al., 2012).

SPICE comprises “setting (where), perspective (for whom), intervention or phenomenon of interest (what), comparison (compared with what), and evaluation (with what result)” (Booth, 2006) is another tool for determining the questions for the qualitative meta-synthesis. SPICE tool has two contributions to the study of meta-synthesis. The first contribution is separating the population component into setting and perspective. The second change is replacing

the outcomes component with the “evaluation” component to gain a broader framework (Booth, 2006).

2.1.3. Developing an Inclusion Criterion and Forming Keywords

Following the review question, another stage is clarifying the inclusion criteria for the literature review and forming keywords for screening the literature (Dawson, 2019).

Inclusion criteria are also defined as conducting in the specific context, explicitly describing the detail of methodologic focus, published years, published language, and published in peer-reviewed journals (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007). Besides, primary research can be subjected to the inclusion criteria as follows: study type, study participants, the topic of interest, context, and outcome of interest (Hannes & Pearson, 2011). Additionally, Chrastina (2018) stated that publication (i) using qualitative research design, (ii) peer-reviewed, (iii) related to a given phenomenon and research problem, (iv) using primary data, (v) using valid qualitative data collection procedure, (vi) written in a specific language. Contrarily, conceptual or theoretical studies, qualitative-based research, and qualitative data not transforming into themes and studies based on close-ended survey questions can be used as an exclusion criterion (Chrastina, 2018).

The keywords form is based on the designed question and the inclusion criteria. Hence, electronic databases were searched using these keywords. For instance, Dawson et al. (2015) searched electronic databases using the keywords as follows: “nurs*” OR “nurse-led” OR “midwife*” OR “midwife-led” AND “leadership” OR “workforce” OR “staffing” AND “universal health coverage” OR “equity” OR “access” in their meta-synthesis study.

2.1.4. Selecting a Method or Approach to the Synthesis of Qualitative Data

Methods or approaches to the synthesis of qualitative data are specified according to the purpose of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, nature of the current findings, and available resources. The qualitative data was extracted and synthesized in line with this framework (Dawson, 2019).

2.1.5. Developing a Protocol

A protocol is required for attaining the objective of the meta-synthesis study. This protocol is crucial because of being a reference point for the implementation of the review process (Harris et al., 2018). Also, developing a review protocol provides a control mechanism for the research team, ensures transparency, prevents the duplication of the reviewed studies, and serves as a guide for future research (Dawson, 2019). To gain these objectives, a research protocol should be developed to prove the notions of the importance of the review.

2.1.6. Searching and Selecting/Sampling Studies

Searching the studies mainly relies on the theoretical selection which aims to develop a framework based on what is previously known in the literature. This iterative process examines the key concept and identifies the different conceptualizations, inconsistent findings, and specific sample groups relevant to the concept of meta-synthesis study (Dawson, 2019). Hence, comprehensive, purposeful, theoretical, or random samples of studies are included in the synthesis (Dawson, 2019). This decision depends on the purpose, epistemology, and inclusion criteria of the meta-synthesis study. For instance, the meta-synthesis study aims to include all evidence in the literature and may use the comprehensive approach.

2.1.7. Appraising Qualitative Studies in the Review

Appraising qualitative studies in the review is mainly based on the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria in the process of review. Specifically, studies provide details about sampling, data collection, analysis processes, and coherence between data and conceptual framework (Dawson, 2019). Standard tools, frameworks, or checklists have been developed for appraising the quality of studies such as the United Kingdom's National Health Service Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative checklist and the JBI QARI Critical Appraisal Checklist, and Cochrane Intervention Reviews (Noyes et al., 2008).

However, the formal appraisal process and rigid rules for inclusion and exclusion of the study prevent benefiting from the studies which creates new insights in the literature. Studies excluded from the review may offer more depth insight and a new perspective than included studies that fall within the appraisal standards (Noyes et al., 2008).

2.1.8. Extraction and Synthesis Processes

The qualitative study mainly reports findings in the form of photos, diagrams, tables, quotations from interviews, and field notes of researchers (Dawson, 2019). Data from included studies has been systematically extracted for analysis in line with the purpose, epistemology, and paradigm of the researchers. In this vein, researchers should decide on the extracted data and section of the included research in the review.

In general, the inclusion of multiple data is common in the meta-synthesis studies. For instance, meta-ethnography studies use titles, abstracts, introductions, and discussions as supporting materials (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Using multiple source types in a meta-synthesis study allows to extraction of broader meaning from a variety of resources, and therefore boosts the quality of the meta-synthesis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Besides, using multiple sources enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the meta-synthesis (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004).

Most meta-synthesis mainly rely on a reciprocal translation which refers to *"the understanding of one study's findings in terms of other studies' findings in an effort to develop syntheses that are consistent across included studies"* (Melendez-Torres et al., 2015, p. 358). With this regard, researchers may benefit from the reciprocal translation with four overlapping categories such as visual representation, key paper integration, data reduction and thematic extraction, and line-by-line coding (Melendez-Torres et al., 2015). Additionally, specific qualitative data analysis techniques (constant comparison analysis, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, theme analysis, manifest content analysis, qualitative comparative analysis, narrative analysis, and text mining) can be used for the meta-synthesis study (Melendez-Torres et al., 2015).

3. META-SYNTHESIS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES

This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review for investigating the meta-synthesis research in management and organization studies. In this regard, we searched the Web of Science database to include high-quality research. Using the keywords "Meta-synthesis of Qualitative Research" we searched for original peer-reviewed articles published in Web of Science categories related to the management and organization field. In this regard, we filtered the web of science categories (i.e., management, social science interdisciplinary, psychology multidisciplinary, psychology applied) that may include studies focusing on work life, employees and management, and organization studies. To include additional articles, we also reviewed the reference lists of the retrieved articles. As a result, 9 articles using qualitative meta-synthesis methods, in peer-reviewed journals, in the English language, were included in the study.

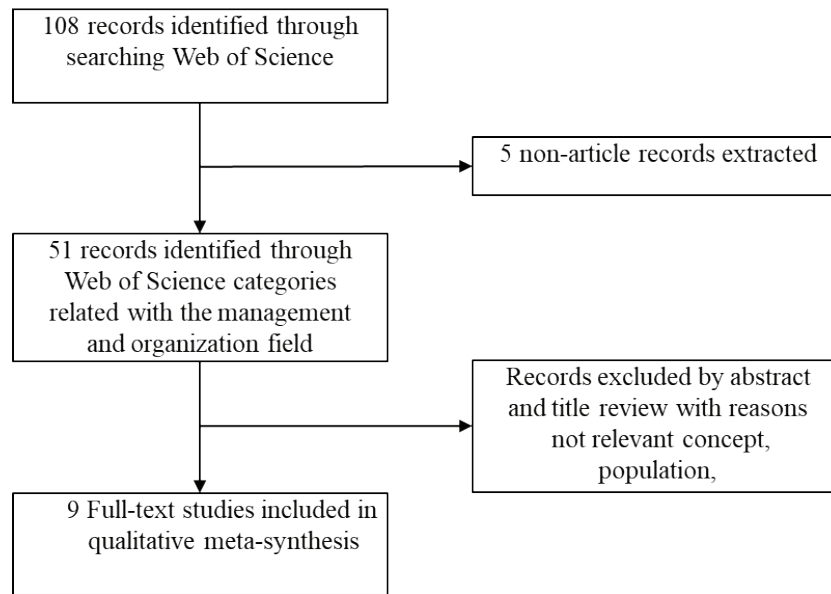


Figure 3. The Study Selection Process.

Table 1: Characteristics of Studies in the Review

	Authors	Review concept	Searching Methods	# of reviewed studies	Appraisal Methods	Synthesis Methods
1	Shao et al. (2021)	Nurses' psychological experiences after inpatient suicide	<p><i>Database:</i> PubMed, Web of Science, CINAHL, Embase, Wanfang Data, VIP database, CBM and CNKI</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> “patient suicide” or “inpatient suicide”; “nurse” or “nursing staff”; “experience” or “reaction” or “perception”; “qualitative study” or “qualitative research.”</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> PICO-D (participant, interest in phenomena, context and design)</p>	11	Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research	Qualitative meta-synthesis
2	Janka (2021)	Integrating formal management control system (MCS) design	<p><i>Database:</i> Web of Science, Business Source Complete and Science Direct</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> Case studies published in refereed journals</p> <p><i>Exclusion criteria:</i> Book chapters, conference proceedings and non-refereed working papers, research focusing on the private sector</p>	34	NA	Meta-synthesis of qualitative case studies
3	MacKay et al. (2021)	Factors influencing nurses' decisions to work in rural and remote settings	<p><i>Database:</i> Medline, Journals@OVID Full text and APA PsycINFO</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> published in the English language, any aspect of experiences of rural or remote nursings, qualitative research.</p>	40	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist for qualitative studies PRISMA guidelines	Thematic meta-synthesis of qualitative studies

Table 1: Characteristics of Studies in the Review (continued)

Authors	Review concept	Searching Methods	# of reviewed studies	Appraisal Methods	Synthesis Methods
4 Lazazzara et al. (2020)	Understanding the processes associated with job crafting	<p><i>Database:</i> Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Google Scholar</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> “job crafting”, “qualitative study”, “interview”, “case study”, “focus group”, “ethnography”, and “process”</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> 1) a qualitative research design; (2) study related to job crafting; (3) use of primary data; (4) clearly stated research questions; (5) appropriate and justified qualitative approach; (6) clear description of context; (7) clear description of the researcher role; (8) clear description of the sampling method, data collection, and analysis; (9) consistent with research question.</p>	24	Meta-synthesis method proposed by Hoon (2013) and Walsh and Downe (2005)	Qualitative meta-synthesis
5 Elmore et al. (2018)	Nurses’ experiences of caring for patients who request assisted death	<p><i>Database:</i> 6 databases (CINAHL, Medline, EMBASE, Joanna Briggs Institute, PsycINFO, and Web of Science)</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Nursing, nurses, nurse, Stress, Occupational stress, Anxiety, emotions, stress, anxiety, distress, moral, suffer, depression</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> Written in English or French, focused on voluntary active euthanasia or assisted suicide, and reported data on nurses’ lived experiences.</p> <p><i>Exclusion criteria:</i> Primary data referred to nurse attitudes, general ethical reflections, or consideration of fictional situations, but not actual experiences</p>	14	The approach of Dixon-Woods et al. (2006) and quality criteria for qualitative research of Tracy (2010)	Qualitative meta-synthesis
6 Laging et al. (2015)	The role of nursing home staff in decisions to transfer residents to hospital	<p><i>Database:</i> 4 databases (Cinahl, Embase, Medline and PsycINFO)</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> ‘nursing home’, ‘transfer’ and ‘qualitative’</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> All interpretive studies were transferred to the hospital from the nursing setting</p>	17	Joanna Briggs Institute’s guidelines	Qualitative meta-synthesis

Table 1: Characteristics of Studies in the Review (*continued*)

	Authors	Review concept	Searching Methods	# of reviewed studies	Appraisal Methods	Synthesis Methods
7	Sabatino et al. (2014)	Factors that constitute the notion of nursing professional dignity	<p><i>Database:</i> Web of Science, CINAHL, PubMed and selected journals (i.e., Nursing Philosophy, Nursing Ethics, Bioethics)</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Dignity OR respect OR self-esteem OR self-regard OR self-concept OR identity AND nurs*</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> a) Empirical or theoretical research about nursing professional dignity and interpersonal respect (b) peer-reviewed articles.</p> <p><i>Exclusion criteria:</i> Research about dignity-related phenomena, such as bullying or general work well-being or (b) focusing on students or professionals other than nurses.</p>	15	Guidelines of Noblit and Hare (2007) for meta-ethnography	Qualitative meta-synthesis
8	Andersen et al., (2012)	Investigating opportunities and obstacles of employees with common mental disorders experience about returning to work	<p><i>Database:</i> 6 databases (Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health, EMBASE, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Sociological Abstracts, and Web of Knowledge)</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Mental health (i.e., mental health, mental disorders) AND work status (i.e., absenteeism, return to work) AND method (i.e., content analysis, meta-synthesis)</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> (i) Using qualitative research method; (ii) based on return to work (iii) participants with common mental disorders; and (iv) the study focused on return to work of the person with common mental disorders</p> <p><i>Exclusion criteria:</i> The study was based exclusively on interviews with supervisors, colleagues, or caseworkers.</p>	8	Guidelines of Noblit and Hare (2007) for meta-ethnography	Meta-ethnography
9	Gewurtz & Kirsh (2009)	Experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace	<p><i>Database:</i> 8 databases (Medline, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Scopus, ABI, Sociological Abstracts, Social Sciences Abstract, and ASSIA)</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> “disability” and “disabled persons” combined with “workplace”, “organization”, “organizational culture”, “organizational characteristics”, “organizational climate” and “work/workplace environment</p> <p><i>Inclusion criteria:</i> i) about the experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace; (ii) contained discussion of organizational culture, and; (iii) used established qualitative methods</p>	7	Guidelines of Noblit and Hare (2007) for meta-ethnography and Framework developed by the UK National Centre for Social Research	Qualitative meta-synthesis

The studies included in the systematic literature review for investigating the meta-synthesis of qualitative research in management and organization studies were investigated in terms of review subject, methods for searching, number of reviewed papers, appraisal methods of papers, and methods of synthesis.

Considering the reviewed studies, we observed that a variety of contexts and subjects were addressed in the management and organization field as follows: nurses' psychological experiences after inpatient suicide (Shao et al., 2021), integrating formal management control system (MCS) design (Janka, 2021), factors influencing nurses' decisions to work in rural and remote settings (MacKay et al., 2021), the processes associated with job crafting (Lazazzara et al., 2020), nurses' experiences of caring for patients who request assisted death (Elmore et al., 2018), the role of nursing home staff in decisions to transfer residents to hospital (Laging et al., 2015), factors that constitute the notion of nursing professional dignity (Sabatino et al., 2014), investigating opportunities and obstacles of employees with common mental disorders experience concerning return to work (Andersen et al., 2012), and experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace (Gewurtz & Kirsh, 2009). The studies mainly focus on nurses' working lives.

We investigated the searching methods of qualitative meta-synthesis studies from the point of databases, keywords for search, and inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. A wide range of databases (i.e., have been consulted in these studies. In studies focusing on a specific group, such as nursing, it has been observed that field-specific databases (i.e., Embase, Medline and PsycINFO) and journal-based searches (i.e., Nursing Philosophy, Nursing Ethics, Bioethics) were performed. Additionally, the most commonly used databases were the CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) and Web of Science databases. It was observed that the keywords used were composed of variations of different keywords to holistically cover the concept. For instance, to assess the meta-synthesis research concentrating on the experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace, Gewurtz and Kirsh (2009) used keywords such as: "disability" and "disabled persons", "workplace", "organization", "organizational culture", "organizational characteristics", "organizational climate" and "work/workplace environment". In terms of inclusion criteria, the studies mainly use criteria as: (i) using qualitative research method, (ii) the research questions addressed the concept, (iii) participants-related criteria; (iv) written in English or a specific language, (v) peer-reviewed articles, and (vi) clear description of the sampling method and data collection, and analysis. On the other hand, the reviewed studies used (i) not peer-reviewed articles, and (ii) not related to the study context as exclusion criteria.

In terms of the number of reviewed papers, the meta-synthesis studies that were the subject of the current

study were performed based on between 7 and 40 studies. The average number of studies included is 19. Besides, studies generally used the guidelines of Noblit and Hare (2007) for meta-ethnography and as an appraisal method of papers. Additionally, meta-synthesis method proposed by Hoon (2013) and Walsh and Downe (2005), the approach of Dixon-Woods et al. (2006) and quality criteria for the qualitative research of Tracy (2010) were used in the reviewed research. In terms of methods of synthesis, reviewed studies used different approaches such as qualitative meta-synthesis, meta-synthesis of qualitative case studies, thematic meta-synthesis of qualitative studies, and meta-ethnography in addition to qualitative meta-synthesis approach.

4. DISCUSSION

Meta-synthesis of qualitative research has a significant contribution to a variety of disciplines. In this vein, the interest of scholars has increased in the past decade. This study has demonstrated the holistic investigation of the conceptual and methodological framework of meta-synthesis research and meta-synthesis studies in the management and organization literature.

Specifically, this study investigated meta-synthesis research as a response to Dixon-Woods et al. (2007) call to manifest comprehensively the processes, methods, challenges, and outcomes of metasynthesis research. Meta-synthesis research is of high significance in terms of synthesizing the findings of separate studies conducted on a topic and presenting a holistic perspective on the phenomena (Chrastina, 2018). With this regard, qualitative meta-synthesis research has required an iterative but not discrete process as follows: "defining the scope of the study, question design, developing an inclusion criterion and forming keywords, selecting a method or approach to the synthesis of qualitative data, developing a protocol, searching and selecting/sampling studies, appraising qualitative studies in the review, extraction and synthesis processes" (Dawson, 2019). Following a specific process in meta-synthesis research and explicitly reporting the steps of the process is important for the comprehensiveness, validity and transferability of the research (Booth et al., 2018).

This study also investigated meta-synthesis-based studies in the field of management and organization, which extended past studies. Specifically, previous meta-synthesis studies have taken place in health (Hannes & Macaitis, 2012), sociology (Jovanovski & Cook, 2019), psychology (Achterbergh et al., 2020), and education literature (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Despite the theoretical and managerial significance of the meta-synthesis research, there has been very little examination of meta-synthesis studies in the management and organization literature. Here, this study has contributed to the management and organization literature from a methodological perspective. Particularly, meta-synthesis research enables to development of new cumulative knowledge and broader meaning based on the

single studies. Additionally, meta-synthesis research allows us to make extensive inferences and frameworks for sensitive, specific, and rare concepts in organization studies. These inferences and frameworks have provided avenues for future research.

In this regard, this study investigated 9 meta-synthesis studies in the management and organization literature in light of the review subject, methods for searching, number of reviewed papers, appraisal methods, and methods of synthesis. We demonstrated that nurses' working lives were addressed in meta-synthesis research in the management and organization field concerning nurses' psychological experiences after inpatient suicide (Shao et al., 2021), nurses' experiences of caring for patients who request assisted death (Elmore et al., 2018), factors influencing nurses' decisions to work in rural and remote settings (MacKay et al., 2021), the role of nursing home staff in decisions to transfer residents to hospital (Laging et al., 2015), and factors that constitute the notion of nursing professional dignity (Sabatino et al., 2014). Additionally, integrating formal management control system design (Janka, 2021), the processes associated with job crafting (Lazazzara et al., 2020), investigating opportunities and obstacles of employees with common mental disorders experience concerning return to work (Andersen et al., 2012), and experiences of persons with disabilities in the workplace (Gewurtz & Kirsh, 2009) were among the other research subject in meta-synthesis research. We inferred that these studies mainly focus on employee experiences.

This study also revealed the searching methods of qualitative meta-synthesis studies in terms of databases, keywords for search, and inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. A wide range of databases and journal-based searches were performed for the literature review. We also revealed that the keywords were used as composed of variations of different keywords to holistically cover the concept. This is consistent with the past studies (Chrastina, 2018). In terms of inclusion criteria, the studies mainly use criteria such as: (i) using qualitative research method, (ii) the research questions addressed the concept, (iv) written in English or a specific language, (v) peer-reviewed articles, and (vi) clear description of the sampling method, participant, data collection, and analysis. In terms of the number of reviewed papers, the meta-synthesis studies that were the subject of the current study were performed based on between 7 and 40 studies.

Besides, we demonstrated that most studies benefited from the standard tools, frameworks, or checklists for appraising the quality of studies. Specifically, studies generally used the guidelines of Noblit and Hare (2007) for meta-ethnography as an appraisal method of papers. In terms of methods of synthesis, reviewed studies used different approaches (i.e., qualitative meta-synthesis, thematic meta-synthesis) in addition to the qualitative meta-synthesis approach.

Finally, the current study suggests new avenues for future research. Specifically, it would be beneficial to expand the use of the meta-synthesis method in future studies to provide a more comprehensive view and extend the findings of qualitative research in management literature. The current study revealed that the organizational meta-synthesis studies are mainly based on nursing-focused studies. Future research can conduct meta-synthesis studies focusing on employees working in the service, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. Also, the existing studies focused more on employee experiences. Future research can focus on topics such as employees' emotions, attitudes, behaviors, and well-being in management and organization research. On the other hand, for validity, reliability, and transferability of meta-synthesis research, conducting the study transparently within the framework of processes and steps defined in pioneering studies may contribute to increasing the conceptual and methodological strength of future research.

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