

QQM Checklist Enhances Research Quality Appraisal Across Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods

Researchers develop the QQM Checklist, a new tool addressing gaps in existing appraisal methods to evaluate quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies

SHANGHAI, CHINA, June 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Research quality appraisal is essential in meta-analyses and systematic reviews to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of evidence. However, many appraisal tools are restricted to single methods or to narrow fields. The study found that most mainstream tools are meant for single-method study, and 67% are limited to medical research fields. Tools suitable for social science research are especially scarce, particularly those that balance rigor, easy usage, and reliable judgments. These limitations risk producing biased syntheses and misleading conclusions for the scientific community.

In a study published online on September 1, 2025, in [ECNU Review of Education](#), a team of researchers led by Professor Xin Tang from Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Professor Jennifer Symonds from University College London developed the Quality Appraisal Checklist for Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods Studies (QQM Checklist) using a utility-usability framework. The checklist comprises eight universal indicators applicable to all studies, along with four to six method-specific indicators for quantitative and qualitative approaches. The tool employs a three-tiered scoring system with suggested cut-off points to categorize studies as poor, moderate, or high quality.

"The QQM Checklist offers a standardized solution for research quality appraisal transcending disciplinary and methodological boundaries," explains Prof. Tang.



Evaluating research quality is central to building scientific knowledge, yet social sciences often face challenges due to methodological limits and disciplinary biases in existing tools.

The checklist has been validated through the Delphi method and applied in international research. Detailed explanations are provided for each indicator, supplemented with illustrative examples to demonstrate how a full scoring process can be carried out. By increasing transparency and comparability in quality appraisal, the QQM Checklist offers researchers, editors, and funders a common standard that could strengthen evidence-based decision-making. The QQM Checklist and the published paper are open-access to the public.

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Abstract

Purpose

Existing research quality appraisal tools in the social sciences face significant disciplinary incompatibility and methodological limitations. This study aims to address these gaps by evaluating current tools and developing a versatile new checklist to standardize quality assessment across quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies.

Design/Approach/Method

A systematic literature analysis of 24 mainstream appraisal tools assessed their disciplinary compatibility, methodological scope, and criteria design. A new checklist (i.e., Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed-Methods Studies [QQM] checklist) was developed using a utility-usability framework, integrating common indicators to ensure methodological inclusiveness for studies.

Findings

Analysis revealed majority of tools are restricted to single methods, 67% focus on medical fields, and only two are discipline-specific for social sciences. Issues include ambiguous criteria, rigid binary scoring, and outdated frameworks. The QQM checklist addresses these gaps with eight universal indicators and method-specific criteria (4–6 for quantitative, 6 for qualitative), using a three-tiered scoring system (0–2 points).

Originality/Value

The QQM checklist offers a standardized solution for quality appraisal in social sciences, transcending disciplinary and methodological boundaries. Its design enables AI integration, advancing standardization for consistent, rigorous evaluations—critical for funding, publication, and policy decisions. This work contributes to improving research quality and transparency in the social sciences.

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A new study addressed these gaps by systematically reviewing current approaches and developing the Quality Appraisal Checklist for Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed-Methods Studies (QQM Checklist). This concise, versatile tool enhances rigor in assessi

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