

Evidence for Whom? Transparency, Sampling Bias, and Generalizability in Meta-Analyses of Psychological Interventions

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BACKGROUND

- **Meta-analyses** of psychological interventions shape **clinical guidelines** and **policy**.
- Prior research suggests interventions may be **less effective** for **marginalized** groups.
- Psychological + clinical science rely on **WEIRD** (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) populations, limiting diverse representation.
- How do **meta-analysts report** participant **representation** and **frame generalizability**?

METHODS

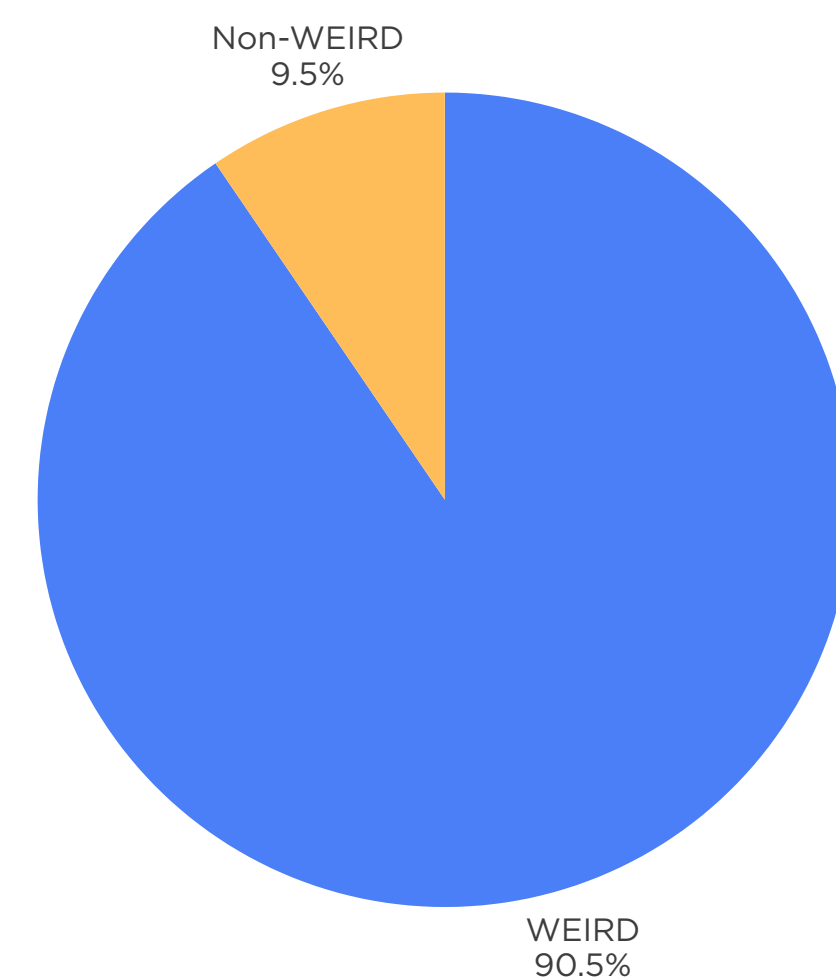
Sample: 25 peer-reviewed psychological intervention meta-analyses (2020-2025).

Mixed-methods: Combined descriptive coding and qualitative template analysis.

Descriptive coding: Reporting of sample characteristics and eligibility criteria.

Qualitative Template Analysis: Discussions of representativeness, equity, and generalizability.

MAIN FINDINGS



OVER 90% OF META-ANALYSES HAD A SIGNIFICANT DOMINANCE OF WEIRD SAMPLES

Global Framing Without Global Representation

Authors often framed disorders as “global” or “worldwide” Issues despite relying on non-globally representative evidence.

Overstated Conclusions Relative to Evidence

Authors often generalized findings broadly despite high levels of heterogeneity, risk of bias, small effect sizes, or narrow samples.

Limited Inclusion of Social and Cultural Variables

Culture, socioeconomic status, and related social factors were rarely reported or used in analyses.

DATA ANALYSIS

- **NVivo** was used to identify recurring **patterns** in the text and develop broader qualitative **themes**.
- **Excel** was used to calculate descriptive **frequencies** and **counts** of key **reporting characteristics**.
- Qualitative and quantitative findings were **integrated** to examine how reporting patterns aligned with narrative framing.

DISCUSSION

- **Broad** conclusions drawn from **narrow** evidence bases may shape guidelines that **do not fully serve diverse populations**.
- **Limited representation raises equity concerns** for underrepresented marginalized groups in treatment research.
- **Greater transparency** is crucial to support **equitable** treatment and **responsible** science **communication**.

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