Appendix 2. Flow diagram (Moher et al., 2009) of literature search and study selection

- Records identified through database searching ($n = 4,132$)
- Additional records identified through other sources ($n = 0$)

- Records after duplicates removed ($n = 3,641$)

- Records screened ($n = 3,641$)

- Records excluded at title and abstract level ($n = 2,911$)

- Full-text articles assessed for eligibility ($n = 385$)

- Full-text articles excluded, with reasons ($n = 217$)
  - nonempirical: 3
  - no relevant alexithymia data: 14
  - no substance use data: 7
  - no clear alexithymia groups: 7
  - no clear substance user groups: 1
  - no control group: 53
  - no relevant analysis between alexithymia and substance use: 113
  - duplicate sample: 7
  - alexithymia and substance use measured in different subjects: 1
  - prenatal substance use: 1
  - alexithymia and substance use measured in different waves: 1
  - substance use motivations or expectations: 3
  - missing data, no response: 6

- Studies included in qualitative synthesis ($n = 168$)

- Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) ($n = 168$)

- Studies included in the 5 meta-analyses:
  1. meta-analysis ($n = 86$)
  2. meta-analysis ($n = 69$)
  3. meta-analysis ($n = 27$)
  4. meta-analysis ($n = 25$)
  5. meta-analysis ($n = 10$)