EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Articulating scholarship in human resource management: Guidance for researchers

Abstract

HRMJ is a business and management journal: we seek to publish excellent work that deals not simply with people and organisations, but with the management of people and the issues and tensions around the latter. As such, the journal is broadly multidisciplinary, the key focus being on advancing theory through empirical evidence, through consolidations and extensions of conceptual knowledge, through revisiting and extending existing theory, literature reviews, as well as the development of salient research methods. This extended editorial brings together a range of perspectives from and beyond the editorial team to advance understanding around developing work for publication. As such, it is intended not only to guide authors interested in publishing in HRMJ, but all with an interest in advancing their scholarly work.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Pawan Budhwar[1], Geoffrey Wood[2,3,4,5], Soumyadeb Chowdhury[6]

During regular 'meet the editors' sessions at major conferences, a number of points recur regarding submissions and publications in respective HR related journals. The data highlights some clear trends. Inter alia, these include: the number of submissions are consistently increasing; they are increasingly authored by emerging markets based researchers; they are covering less-researched contexts, yet often say little about the same; the majority of research findings from empirical studies are based on established research constructs and variables, and, hence, make only incremental contributions; that the expectations regarding what a contribution to theory entails have increased; and the number of desk rejections is also rapidly increasing. Editors share a variety of observations regarding the possible reasons for the latter. These vary from a poor quality empirical base; poor level of writing, not presenting a pressing and clear research problem, an unconvincing rationale for research and a lack of coherence in the presented arguments; lack of novelty, originality and significance of the proposed research; inadequate theorisation (in case of a theory driven outlet) and less convincing presentation of clear gaps in the literature which deserved the conduct of a given research; serious methodological issues linked to chosen research design, sampling, data collection, use of chosen variables/constructs; ethical issues; adoption of relevant and robust data analysis tools and techniques; opacity in methods and poor presentation of the results; lack of engaging

discussion and convincing rationale for key findings; thin contributions (can be a combination of conceptual and theoretical); and, surprisingly commonly, a lack of fit with the journal. For example, in HRMJ, we will not entertain an organisational psychology based manuscript that says nothing about management nor HRM; more broadly-speaking, a paper that has clearly been crafted for—and rejected by—another journal has few chances unless substantial revisions are undertaken. Apart from these, other reasons for a desk rejection can include: not adhering to submission guidelines; not passing the 'plagiarism checker test' (e.g., via CrossCheck/Turnitin). Here it is worth noting that thank to the over-enthusiastic and uncritical usage of AI, we are coming across an increasing number of submissions where even if the similarity to a single paper is slight, much of the paper is a pastiche of snippets from others that are not properly acknowledged. Of course, we cannot entertain such work.

There is also the risk of falling into the 'aspiration versus the reality trap' (i.e., we all aspire or should aspire to publish in leading journals, but many a times the quality of our research or the scope or parameters of the study are insufficient). It is always wise here to benchmark off recent papers in the target journal, given that standards are always rising. Methodology papers in HRMJ can provide guidance on recent methodological advances. Again, whilst there is always some variation in the structure of article submissions, pointers regarding structure can, once more, be found be reviewing recent published articles in the target journal. By addressing the above highlighted issues, one can develop a quality submission and hopefully avoid a desk rejection or negative reviewer perceptions.

Along with offering constructive feedback via rejection letters and developmental workshops, amongst others, we the editors feel more can be done to help researchers improve the writing of manuscripts and subsequent submissions. Accordingly, the aim of this perspective editorial is to offer guidance on how to craft high quality submissions. We do so by providing clear guidelines regarding what to write, and also what not to include in specific sections of a manuscript. To do this, we invited editors to contribute to specific sections. Next we brief regarding the kind of submissions we look for in HRMJ in particular.

1.1 | Kind of articles we accept in HRMJ

In HRMJ we are open to submissions covering any aspect of employment studies, so far, they focus on issues related to specific aspects of management of human resources at work. We do not have a methodological preference and accept manuscripts based on qualitative, quantitative or mixed studies, but not purely replication studies. The submissions to HRMJ must include implications for practice as well as theory. Broadly speaking, our submissions are divided into four types—regular empirical submissions, provocations and other conceptual papers, theoretical papers, reviews and registered reports. For details on what, why and how of registered reports, see Timming et al. (2021).

1.2 | What we do not accept in HRMJ

- Research which is not focused on specific aspect(s) of human resource management (HRM).
- Manuscripts solely focusing on Organisational Psychology with little or no mention of HRM.
- A paper that does not engage with theory.
- Only student sample-based studies.
- Small scale studies.
- Studies written by AI.

The following sections are devoted to offering guidance to researchers regarding how to write a specific section of their manuscript.

2 | HOW TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION AND ABSTRACT

Shad Morris[13]

First impressions are crucial in academic papers, as readers may only glance at the abstract and introduction. Crafting these sections effectively can entice them to read the full paper. Knowing your audience—scholars in your field—and your purpose—to present new insights—is key. Engage your audience as you would in a conversation by first showing awareness of existing discussions, then introducing novel ideas.

Picture yourself at a party. You don't know anyone but see a group of three people talking about music. You happen to love music and want to join the conversation. You walk over to them trying to look cool and casual. Rather than interrupting, you listen and learn. Then, after you're confident you know what they're talking about you chime in with your knowledge, possibly introducing an unfamiliar band. Their interest is now piqued. What follows must convince them of the band's worth, differentiating it from the bands they've been discussing. Your approach should be tactful and thoughtful, ensuring the conversation welcomes and values their insights.

2.1 | Writing the introduction

Like a party conversation, to effectively write the introduction for an academic audience, it is essential to first demonstrate engagement with current scholarly discourse (Huff, 1999). Next, introduce your novel idea and clarify its importance, making sure it resonates with your audience and adds value to the conversation.

As per Barney (2018), your initial paragraph is where you affirm your engagement with the ongoing scholarly discourse. For example, if your research uncovers that information overload can cause even star employees to underperform, start by discussing relevant literature that closely aligns with your findings. Addressing the work of two or three key scholars who have explored the exceptional performance of star employees due to their expansive information networks not only demonstrates you know the audience but also proves you are attuned to their conversation.

In the second paragraph, begin with a 'However...' to pivot towards how your perspective diverges from those scholars. If star employees' broad networks sometimes result in performance decline due to overload, highlight this nuanced view without alienating others in the academic community. Construct an argument showing why your new findings are significant for both scholars and practitioners. The 'so what' factor comes into play here: it's not enough for a topic to be unexplored—it must also be compelling and valuable.

The third paragraph should state the paper's objective, plainly and directly. You could say, 'The purpose of this paper is to investigate the potential for information overload to cause burnout and underperformance among star employees.' Follow this declaration with a concise overview of your paper's direction and its potential implications for individuals and organisations. Be brief; the aim is to offer a glimpse, not a complete summary, of the paper's theoretical framework.

For empirical studies, the fourth paragraph should succinctly present the study's context and findings, ensuring readers grasp the essence of your research, its practical applications, and how it might affect people and organisations. In conceptual papers, this is the juncture to elucidate the paper's contributions. Note that some editors, including Barney (2018), believe that well-executed introductory paragraphs should inherently convey your paper's contributions. Whether to elaborate further is at your discretion.

Thatcher and Fisher (2022) suggest an exercise for crafting your introduction. Try to complete the following sentence stems to sharpen your introduction's clarity and focus on your contributions:

1. Paragraph 1: 'The conversation I want to join is...'
   a. 'The 2–3 scholars I want to converse with are...'
   b. 'I have been listening to the conversation and these are its main elements...'

2. Paragraph 2: 'However, an unresolved issue in the conversation is…'
   a. 'The reasons for writing this paper include…'
   b. 'This is interesting to managers and scholars because…'
3. Paragraph 3: 'The purpose of this paper is…'
   a. 'The paper will pursue this purpose as follows…'
   b. 'The implications of these findings are…'
4. Paragraph 4: 'To test these ideas we…'
   a. 'The context of our study is…'
   b. 'Our clear and concise findings are…'

Completing this exercise is likely to help you improve the clarification of your introduction and the contribution you are trying to make to the conversation.

2.2 | Writing the abstract

Contrary to treating it as a mere summary, write the abstract as a teaser for your paper. It should be written last to ensure it captures the essence of your research effectively. Thatcher and Fisher (2022) recommend a five-sentence structure:

1. Establish common ground or what we know from prior research.
2. Establish a complication or gap in the research.
3. Establish why we need to understand this gap better.
4. Establish your findings and how that helps resolve this gap.
5. Establish why this is important for managers and scholars.

Remember, clarity about your findings and their significance will entice readers to explore the full paper.

3 | HOW TO WRITE THE THEORY SECTION

Roy Suddaby[17,18,19,20]

Failing to provide a convincing contribution to theory is the most common reason for rejecting a manuscript. Because of this, writing the theory section of your manuscript is perhaps the biggest challenge you face when shaping your paper for publication. The challenge is particularly difficult because of the inability of most editors or reviewers to articulate exactly what a contribution to theory is. While editors can easily articulate why a particular paper fails to contribute to theory, they often struggle to explain precisely how to fix it. This arises, in part, because of the absence of a universal definition of what a contribution to theory actually is. This is perhaps why Sutton and Staw's (1995) famous paper on theory construction is titled 'what theory is not' rather than 'what theory is'. Like US Supreme Court Judge Stewart Potter's famous quip about pornography, editors may not be able to define theory, but they know it when they see it.

What, then, constitutes a contribution to theory for HRMJ? The answer is that no single attribute defines a well-crafted theory paper. Rather, it is the coherent accumulation of several factors, most of which have already been discussed by the other contributors to this article, that constructs a theoretical contribution. For clarity, I will review the three core most critical components of a good theory paper. Effective theorists reinforce and elevate each of these components in the theory or discussion section of a paper. They are; a compelling motivation, a

creative re-interpretation of prior literature, and an elaboration of your core constructs. I briefly elaborate what each of these components below and describe how to weave these attributes into your discussion section in a way that makes a clear contribution to theory.

3.1 | Motivation

Typically, the motivation for your paper appears in the opening paragraphs of a paper. However, it helps to revisit the motivation after you have presented your core arguments and findings. Rather than simply restating your motivation, the theory or discussion section of your paper provides an ideal opportunity to explain to the reader how your findings (or, in the case of a pure theory paper, your theoretical argument) contributes to knowledge.

For academics, a compelling motivation for an academic typically rests on the ability of the study to resolve a theoretical question. Thomas Kuhn reminds us of that science progresses through paradigms, groups of scholars working on an existing puzzle. In the introduction of your paper, your motivation typically identifies the central theoretical puzzle that you are working on and mobilises prior literature to identify a gap, problem or question the paradigm—that is, the existing body of knowledge or within a specific field of study. In the theory development section you have the opportunity to go beyond merely identifying the gap and intended contribution and demonstrating precisely how your study addresses the central puzzle. Ideally, you can place this precise contribution in the context of a larger discussion that explains how your findings might reframe the core question, amend the methods that might answer the question and identify future empirical sights for research that may advance the work of others in the paradigm. Ultimately, the standard here is to offer a description of how your study elevates, not simply our knowledge of the specific research question you ask, but rather how your study advances the research paradigm.

Increasingly, editors and reviewers are also looking for a motivation that speaks to management policy makers and practitioners. This requires an elaboration of a contribution to theory that goes beyond mere gap spotting. Embedding your claimed contribution to theory in a phenomenon that defies existing theory or moves the conversation beyond what we already know is also an important way of elevating your study to the level of a theoretical contribution. Leaning on a phenomenon adds both contextual specificity and gravitas to your research. It helps articulate why your findings contribute to solving practical problems or inform policy and practice. Effective motivations often engage with current debates, controversies, or emerging trends, demonstrating the significance and potential impact of the research. Additionally, highlighting the potential benefits or implications of addressing the identified gap can further enhance the appeal and relevance of the research to both academic and broader audiences.

3.2 | Literature

When discussing the literature in the discussion or theory section of an academic paper, authors typically follow a structured approach that integrates prior research into their own work. Typically, authors summarise how their findings embellish existing research. They will identify how their findings fill gaps or resolve contradictions in prior literature and show how the study contributes to existing conceptual frameworks or theories. Often authors will offer their own insights or interpretations of the findings based on the literature review and propose extensions to existing theories.

While these are useful and necessary steps to articulating a theoretical contribution for your research, they do not, by themselves constitute a theoretical contribution. References to prior literature are not theory, particularly when those references are honorific signals designed simply to signal an author's affiliation with a specific topic

area or research group. Yes, you need to demonstrate a command of the literature, but this appears in the early stages of the paper—that is, the literature review. The discussion section is not a space to continue the literature review. Nor is it a space where you should simply embellish existing theory by reviewing it through the lens of your results. Rather, it is a space where an author can use their findings to *re-interpret the causal logic of prior research and theory in a way that makes the reader understand the prior literature in a new way*. Though admittedly a high standard, this is the approach authors should take when trying to connect your study to prior literature. The goal is not to review or recount the prior literature. Rather, the goal is to reinterpret prior literature, through the lens of the empirical evidence from your study or, in the case of a theoretical article, through the logic of your conceptual argument.

3.3 | Constructs

The capacity of the editor, reviewer or other reader to discern a contribution to theory ultimately rests on the degree of skill the author brings to the constructs in use in the manuscript. Constructs are the main 'actors' in any theoretical argument (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017). Constructs play a pivotal role in advancing theory by providing the fundamental building blocks for conceptualising and operationalizing phenomena under investigation (Suddaby, 2010). These abstract ideas or concepts serve as the foundation upon which theories are built, allowing researchers to systematically organise and analyse empirical data.

The clarity and precision with which constructs are defined and measured contribute to the coherence and validity of theoretical frameworks. Moreover, constructs enable researchers to develop hypotheses, test relationships, and generate predictions, fostering the accumulation of knowledge within a particular field. In essence, constructs serve as the scaffolding that supports the edifice of theory, shaping our understanding of complex phenomena and driving scientific progress.

Constructs appear in the early stages of the paper, most typically in conjunction with, or just after, the literature review. Similar to the literature review, however, the constructs by themselves do not articulate a contribution to theory. Rather, the narrative around the constructs connects the constructs in a causal relationship is what ultimately provides a theoretical contribution. This narrative occurs in the theory section. This section provides a space where you can construct a story that grants the constructs a degree of agency. An effective storyteller understands that the constructs are the focal actors through which the author can integrate data and theory and, in the process, elevate the theoretical gravitas of the argument by connecting the core constructs to secondary constructs (Van Maanan, 1979).

3.4 | Summary

No single component of a manuscript creates a theoretical contribution. Rather, it is the cumulative summation and coherent integration of the core elements of a research paper—the motivation, the literature, the core constructs—that determines whether a paper meets the bar of a contribution to theory. Theory, at its core, is a narrative that ties all of these component parts together in a causal relationship that elevates our understanding of both phenomenon and theory. This narrative is told in the discussion or theory section and requires considerable nuance and skill. A good theoretical narrative is interesting—it creates tension and offers an answer that surprises because it denies 'certain assumptions of its audience' (Davis, 1971, p. 309). Most critically, it should elevate the reader, not through an emotional catharsis, but through an awareness that the literature, assumptions and theory that she thought she knew can be understood in a different way.

4 | WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW SECTION

Dermot Breslin[8]

When writing the literature review section for an empirical paper, authors need to focus on the review's purpose, scope, positioning and contribution, which will change depending on literature review method and whether the paper is quantitative or qualitative in nature.

4.1 | Purpose

The literature review section needs to set up the study at hand, by presenting the theoretical background, identifying gaps in the literature and motivating the need for the study (Pratt, 2009). Well-written review sections define the key concepts and relationships used in the arguments of the paper and show how these concepts are linked to the theory being developed or tested. Unlike a literature review paper which seeks to complete an exhaustive review of a body of literature or present the state of the art, the literature review section is a theoretically driven narrative targeted towards the specific empirical study at hand (Sparrowe & Mayer, 2011).

4.2 | Scope

As a result, the review may be narrower in scope than a full literature review paper and focuses on the relevant literature which informs the paper's hypotheses, research question or research gap. Given word limits of journal articles, it is important that the review is limited to that literature, which is important to the arguments being made, focusing more on depth of coverage than a wider superficial overview. It should therefore include those theories and concepts that directly relate to the research question and hypotheses, providing the theoretical foundation needed to support the contribution.

4.3 | Positioning

Given this focus, the review section needs to clearly position the research within the literature (Sparrowe & Mayer, 2011). It should provide the context, background, and justification for the research being conducted, and position the study within the broader scholarly conversation, highlighting what is already known and what gaps exist in the literature. In addition to anchoring the research within the literature, the review should make a unique contribution by presenting new insights and interpretations of that literature, and there are many approaches one can take to make a theoretical contribution (Breslin & Gatrell, 2023).

4.4 | Contribution

In addition to spotting gaps, the review might problematize the literature challenging taken-for-granted assumptions or generating new ways of understanding the literature. The review could be positioned across two literature, perhaps pitting theories against each other through competing hypotheses (Sparrowe & Mayer, 2011). The review might build bridges between these literature by transferring theories between domains, applying a theory from one to the other, or using a metaphor to view the literature through a new lens or perspective (Breslin & Gatrell, 2023).

It might go even further and blend literature to produce new theoretical insights in both. However, as authors prospect further into such theory development approaches, they face increasing risks from potentially opposing views of peer reviewers (Breslin & Gatrell, 2023).

For example, in Vardi & Collings' (2023) review of talent management published in HRMJ, the authors analyse three streams of the talent literature (talent management, human capital and organisational psychology) through the lens of paradox theory. They develop a framework of five tensions of talent: inclusive and exclusive, innate and acquired, transferable and context-dependent, a focus on subject and object, and input and outcomes (Vardi & Collings, 2023), which the authors argue has important implications for the underlying assumptions behind how talent is understood and managed.

4.5 | Review method

The purpose, scope, positioning and contribution of the review section will change depending on the literature review method. A systematic review approach is well suited to reviews in which the aim and scope can be set out in advance, and when the authors seek to provide an exhaustive review of research within a specific area (Tranfield et al., 2003). When research questions are less well-defined or when the review seeks to develop theory through a more explorative process, then a narrative approach may be more suitable (Fan et al., 2022). Narrative reviews rarely consider all aspects of the literature, and instead examine it through a particular lens defined by the article's objectives, as the authors tell a story (Torraco, 2005). The integrative review on the other hand is wider in scope than narrative reviews, integrating different paradigms, conceptual language, and research traditions (Cronin & George, 2023). Through this inclusion of different theoretical perspectives, the integrative literature review can help to connect and bridge across different disciplinary groups.

4.6 | Quantitative versus quantitative papers

The purpose, scope, positioning and contribution of the review section will also vary for quantitative and qualitative papers. Quantitative papers using a deductive approach set out to explore, clarify or supplement theory, by examining effects, exploring new moderators/mediators, examining new relationships/processes or introducing a new construct (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). To achieve these goals, the literature review sets the background for the development of hypotheses (Bansal & Corley, 2012). As a result, the scope of the literature is targeted towards this goal, by selectively summarising and marshalling theory to support these hypotheses. In quantitative papers, review sections might contribute to the literature by spotting gaps, identifying patterns, trends, and in-consistencies across studies, or assessing the strength of evidence supporting theoretical hypotheses.

On the other hand, qualitative papers using an inductive approach do not have apriori hypotheses (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007), but instead use the review to expose a gap in a current theoretical conversation (Pratt, 2009). The scope of the review should not reveal too much as to undermine the need for the study, but instead situate research questions in that conversation (Bansal & Corley, 2012). In this process, authors develop theory by problematizing the literature, bridging across theories or using metaphors to develop new theoretical insights or puzzles.

In some papers, an abductive approach may be more appropriate where authors iterate back and forth be-tween empirical data and literature, to generate relationships between the data, across the data and literature, or across literature (Locke et al., 2022). The review section first positions the paper within the literature. The contribution to theory then unfolds through iterations between data and literature in the findings and discussion sections.

4.7 | Reasons for desk rejecting reviews

Reviews are more likely to be desk rejected when the purpose, scope, positioning and contribution are underdeveloped. As noted above, authors should clearly position the paper within the literature, and review methods employed should be both rigorous and of sufficient scope to support the paper's contribution. Importantly reviews need to be generative in nature and make a clear and novel contribution to theory, changing how scholars conceptualise research in their respective fields.

5 | CONTEXTUALISING RESEARCH IN A QUALITY HRM-RELATED MANUSCRIPT

Fang Lee Cooke[9] and Michael J Morley[12]

5.1 | The importance of context in HRM research and practice

Scholarly discourse on the role of context in HRM is on the rise (Parry et al., 2021). The conversation is typically situated within the long-standing debates on 'context-free' versus 'context-specific' informed research as contrasting approaches towards building scientific knowledge (Blair & Hunt, 1986), and around the empirical evidence regarding growing convergence versus enduring divergence characterising developments in the field (Mayrhofer et al., 2011). The drive for a deeper contextualisation has been fuelled by what many see as the inherent limitations attaching to the universalistic paradigm when it comes to accounting for the impact of situational contingencies on HRM recipes and preferred approaches. The debate on context has also been driven by the increasing desire to move beyond mere acknowledgement of its existence toward a fuller explication of it and its consequences in order 'to enhance theory building' and 'deepen our appreciation of embedded management practices' (Morley & Heraty, 2019, p. 341). As Bamberger (2008, p. 839) succinctly puts it 'context counts and, where possible, should be given theoretical consideration.' In seeking to further the conversation on context in HRM research here, we address three questions as follows: What is context? Why is it important? And how could we 'do' context?

5.2 | What is context?

Johns (2006, p. 386) characterises context as 'situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organisational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables', while Cappelli and Sherer (1991, p. 56) simply refer to it as 'the surroundings associated with phenomena which help to illuminate' those particular phenomena. That context should be an integral part of HRM research is increasingly rehearsed in the literature (Cooke, 2018; Farndale et al., 2023; Mayrhofer et al., 2024), but this has not yet reversed the persistent trend of de-contextualisation in much HRM scholarship, or indeed management scholarship more generally, which, as Tsui (2007) observed, has become increasingly homogenised. The result is that context has often been underplayed or relegated in the pursuit of the universal utility of research findings and theorisation. As a development, this is very much at odds with the fact that HRM systems are heavily influenced by different national business systems, institutional arrangements, and specific institutional features even within the broadly same type of economy (e.g., Brewster et al., 2024).

5.3 | Why is it important?

While the adoption of a contextual approach in HRM research brings with it conceptual and methodological challenges, it is important for a range of reasons, not least because organisations 'do not operate in a vacuum' (Farndale & Paauwe, 2018, p. 203). Instead, they are embedded within the locale in which they operate and need to take into account the institutional and cultural environment in which they manage their operations. For multinational enterprises this is all the more complex whereby the home country, along with host country influences, need to be considered (Mayrhofer et al., 2024; Morley et al., 2021). As McNulty (1975, p. 579) illustrates, the 'concept of authority involves the power of decision makers to implement their decisions through subordinates. Acceptance of these directives by subordinates involves a perception of the superior's "right" to give orders, that is, managerial legitimacy'. What constitutes 'legitimacy' needs to be understood within specific societal contexts, including their cultural traditions, value systems, and political beliefs.

Over 90% of the submissions are rejected in top HRM journals. While there are many reasons leading to this decision, one of them often relates to a failure to contextualise the study. For example, a study of leadership and employee voice behaviour in the Chinese or Indian setting will be uninformative if it does not at least engage in some discussion about the role of culture in these paternalistic societies where authoritarian leadership style is common (e.g., Farh & Cheng, 2000).

A contextual lens helps researchers develop a deeper understanding of what happens in the workplace, why employees behave in the way they do, how organisational policies are implemented, how they are perceived and accepted or challenged by the workforce, why organisations succeed and fail, what lessons may be learnt, and how we can conceptualise the research phenomenon and advance theories. Adopting such a lens assists in deepening knowledge on the nature and import of contextually relevant constructs, especially as highlighted by Horak and Paik (2023), informal, though nonetheless influential ones governing key aspects of HRM policies and practices, the appreciation of which are essential both for the conducting of relevant empirical work, and for rigorous theory building. Importantly, explicating context also puts the spotlight on boundary conditions, situational as well as temporal ones (Bamberger, 2008), which may impact the generalisability of any research findings (Teagarden et al., 2018). More broadly, adopting a contextualisation approach raises the spectre of likely contestations and limitations that can and do arise when trying to transport 'social science models from one society to another' (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 1).

5.4 | How could we 'do' context?

Context may be framed in many different ways, contingent upon the researcher's disciplinary background, academic training, and epistemological stance, the core phenomenon of interest, the level of access to the research site, the data collection techniques employed, and so on. For example, context can be presented as a set of selected relatively objective factors that may influence organisational strategies and practices from a strategic management perspective. A common approach thus involves considering political, economic, social, legal, and ecological factors external to the organisation, as well as internal factors, such as the demographic profile of the workforce, the nature of work design, along with the structural features of the organisation and the prevailing workplace culture. Reflecting the fact that organisations are multi-level, embedded systems (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), context may be examined at various levels (e.g., macro, meso, and micro) and cross-levels (Cooke, 2018), or as the chosen phenomenon (e.g., the employment of older workers), a category of employees (e.g., motherhood), an industry (e.g., auto manufacturing), a sector (e.g., public healthcare), a locale (e.g., Asian countries), or an economic cluster (e.g., emerging markets) for investigation. Certain HRM topics are more prone to the influence of local context than others, for instance, training practices may be more universally applicable than employee reward practices

(Mayrhofer et al., 2024). Similarly, some topics could be easier to engage with in conducting cross-country comparative studies than others. For example, a comparative study of talent management in China and India will be comparatively easier to manage than a comparative study of diversity management in China and India (Cooke et al., 2014). This is because both countries have been encountering similar economic growths and experiencing workforce skill shortages in key talent areas, whereas the political and socio-cultural backgrounds of the two countries differ significantly for diversity management, something which renders comparative studies in this domain area immensely challenging to conduct (Cooke & Saini, 2012).

Despite calls for interdisciplinary research, the way contextual elements are selected for examination and discussed by scholars is very much informed by their disciplinary orientation. For example, employee voice, an important and popular topic, has been studied from employment relations, HRM, and organisational behaviour perspectives; each has its priority, level of focus, preferred methodology, and orientation of stakeholders, mechanisms, processes, and outcomes. These variations are underpinned by different ideologies, assumptions, and theoretical lenses, which will, in turn, lead to different conceptualisations and management implications (Morrison, 2023; Wilkinson et al., 2020). Novice researchers of employee voice may not have a nuanced understanding of these disciplinary traditions and specifics and tend to review the literature in an ad hoc, pick-and-mix manner by drawing on studies across these disciplines randomly.

Arising from what they view as a lack of sufficient focus on the competencies and characteristics of those who conduct research, Gümüsay and Amis (2021) highlight the importance of acquiring and deploying 'contextual expertise' as a key component of the scholarly toolkit necessary for developing contextual understanding across diverse research settings. They construe such contextual expertise as the ability of the researcher 'to be able to generate a depth and breadth of understanding of the empirical context across the entire research process (competence), while also maintaining the critical and respectful distance required to grasp the relationship between concepts' (Gümüsay & Amis, 2021, p. 12). Such expertise concerns the ability to sufficiently '(1) choose to engage; (2) capture; (3) comprehend; (4) convey; and (5) confirm' the specificities of the research setting, and must therefore, be practiced across the entire research journey.

Beyond contextual expertise, the building of collaborative networks comprising scholars who possess particular or local knowledge of the prevailing contextual circumstances, and who cooperate in the conducting of HRM research (especially large-scale comparative work), has also been advocated for the 'doing' of context. Adopting such an approach can, in particular, help to overcome the problem highlighted by Easterby-Smith and Malina (1999, p. 84) whereby researchers from one context (especially cultural context) seeking to research in another, might be less well equipped 'to make sense of events in the same way that insiders would'. In addition, apart from their practical utility as an approach to building contextual knowledge, Morley and Heraty (2019) suggest that there are at least two other reasons for the growth of such networks, one philosophical and one historical. Philosophically, scholarly networks serve to enhance theory building and deepen our understanding of practices in a range of different locations. From a historical perspective, it is suggested that collaborative networks may be read as a form of redress in the face of an increasing realisation that many contextual, in particular indigenous features of management practice (Salmon et al., 2023), have not been fully landscaped, and numerous territories remain significantly under-represented in scholarship. The correction of this deficit, Morley and Heraty (2019, p. 342) argue, 'requires comparative enquiry focused on under-researched regions in order to augment and rebalance the body of knowledge, plug research gaps, and unearth and give expression to indigenous features of management'. The pursuit of what Tsui (2007, p. 1358) characterises as 'context-sensitive indigenous theorising' of this nature would then serve to deepen our understanding of 'the influence of multiple and qualitatively different contexts embedded in each other within a nation.' It would also aid in the bringing in and landscaping of under research territories, many of which may require what Shapiro et al. (2007, p. 130) refer to as research approaches that are 'polycontextually' sensitive and capable of capturing a range of 'different contexts that are inherently present in any setting.'

5.5 | Recommendations

A study can engage with context in a range of different ways and different places within a manuscript. For example, for a submission dealing with labour conflicts and HRM interventions, authors may flag up the rising level of labour discontent and the specific nature of them in different countries and sectors in the 'Introduction', backed by statistics. In the 'Literature Review' section, they may again engage with country or industry-specific statistics and empirical examples to situate their work. In the 'Discussion and Conclusions' section, authors might usefully discuss how the findings may be specific to particular contexts and how these context-specific findings inform the development of new theories or extend existing ones as theoretical contributions. Contextualised findings will also be highly valuable in generating practical implications from the study. When contextualising the study, authors may consider the following:

1. How is the HRM phenomenon under investigation influenced by contextual factors at different levels?
2. In what way and to what extent might these contextual factors stem from societal, industrial and organizational features/differences?
3. How can the context be framed to serve the epistemological stances and theoretical lenses for the study?
4. Will the methods used for the study help uncover the contextual factors?
5. How can the findings be used to improve HRM practices with contextual relevance?

Overall, it will be apparent that the building of contextual insights is complex social science work. The result is that while there has been an increasing desire to give expression to context in our research approaches and models, 'researchers have continued to question the extent to which context plays a prominent role in management theory and research' (Stahl et al., 2023, p. 1). We suggest that it is critical for HRM in order to unearth embedded practices and enhance theorisation. It requires researchers to embrace an open-minded, inductive, and inclusive approach to detect and capture context, not just a variable for HRM studies but a theory in its own right, to aid interpretation and to conceptualise findings. Allen et al.'s (2022, p. 2133) argument for the greater use of theoretically informed explanatory typologies in international business research and how to do it is highly relevant here, because this approach 'can underpin rigorous analyses, and enhance the relevance of research findings on causally complex contemporary phenomena at different analytical levels'. The way context is operationalised and conceptualised also reflects the knowledge paradigms and disciplinary discourses through which studies have been conducted, and cross-fertilisation could enrich our understanding of the research phenomenon. The acquiring of contextual expertise on the part of the scholar, along with engaging in collaboration via scholarly research networks involving participants with local contextual knowledge, may further assist in opening up new lines of inquiry, deepening contextual insights, and renewing theoretical progress in the field of HRM.

6 | METHODS SECTION OF A QUALITY HRM RELATED MANUSCRIPT

Mark NK Saunders[15,16] and Fariba Darabi[10]

6.1 | The issue

Journals' guidance for authors on writing the methods section is, for the vast majority of HRM journals, minimal. Examination of 14 HRM and Employment Studies' journals listed as world leading or world class by the Chartered Association of Business Schools' 2021 *Academic Journal Guide* reveals limited guidance. Consideration of a further

38 journals in associated fields comprising Management Development and Education, Organisation Studies, and Organisational Psychology shows a similar position.

Information comprises brief general indications of the range of methodologies embraced (one or more of 'quantitative', 'qualitative' and 'mixed methods'); and statements that research should be high quality, adopt best practice, being rigorous or undertaken robustly. Inductive, deductive and abductive forms of theorising, use of primary and secondary data, and reporting of methods for other research forms such as literature reviews are considered rarely. Rather, journals require the methods section to be accurate, of sufficient detail, provide a rationale, and discuss limitations. In rare occasions where further insights are offered these are list like: naming a few data collection and analysis strategies and, if deemed illuminating, summarising the approaches to inquiry including the paradigmatic stance. Guidance rarely references editorials about methods, checklists, or specific Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS). In aggregate, these consider a breadth of methods, being prescriptive and dominated by a focus on quantitative research; considerations of qualitative and mixed methods predominantly reflecting neo-positivistic publication conventions and norms.

The issue facing authors writing their methods section is an implicit assumption that, despite the paucity of advice, they will be able to show the quality of their methods thereby ensuring trust and confidence in the application and findings. This, within the form of theorising adopted, needs to demonstrate their research's methodological rigour and robustness.

6.2 | Concerns

Our concerns relate to demonstrating methodological rigour and robustness. Despite journals' expectations that the methods section will be sufficiently detailed to instal confidence in the research findings, elaboration is limited. In particular, there is negligeable recognition that qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research designs utilise differing criteria for rigour and have discrete approaches to demonstrating robustness. Where check-lists or JARS are specified, unconditional adherence can result in methodological and contextual nuances important to the research being omitted. Check-lists and JARS signal implicitly those aspects of design and method that are privileged and, in so doing, may stifle methodological innovation.

Rigour in qualitative design comprises credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of findings in relation to methods adopted to address research questions. To demonstrate this, the methods section needs to outline what has been done and why, clarifying any limitations, and the researcher's role within the approach to inquiry adopted. Researcher's reflexivity, in particular insights into their biases and rationale for the choices made, is therefore crucial. Robustness is demonstrated through methodological coherence within the paradigmatic lens adopted; a systematic, consistent logic ('fit') being clear across research elements. Despite the pluralistic nature of qualitative research, an archetypical design uses exploratory methods inductively to understand phenomena and suggest insights where theory is nascent (Edmundson & McManus, 2007). Alongside clear arguments, specific steps in the method need to be consistent with the paradigmatic lens and theorising style adopted (Plakoyiannaki & Budhwar, 2021). Writing a qualitative methods section requires more than, for example, just reporting the application of a methodological template (Harley & Cornelissen, 2022). Similarly, given its pluralistic nature, using JARS or check-lists to determine what to include without paradigmatic awareness, may result in methodological inconsistencies or constrain of reporting.

For quantitative designs, rigour concerns the validity and reliability of methods adopted in relation to the findings and research questions. The methods section requires sufficient detail and openness to allow assessment of appropriateness, rationale, and internal consistency of tools and techniques used to collect and analyse data statistically. Where such transparency is low, this is likely to preclude inferential reproducibility (Aguinis et al., 2018) increasing rigour concerns. In an archetypical quantitative design, use of explanatory methods fits with testing mature well specified theory deductively (Edmundson & McManus, 2007) within a positivist paradigm. Here,

WILEY | **843**

robustness is demonstrated by findings holding across a broad range of data, limitations being stated. The more unitarist nature of quantitative research means adopting check-lists or JARS may be considered less problematic for different forms of such designs. These can support systematic reporting of methods (and reasoning) allowing the research to be understood, assessed, evaluated and replicated with reasonable accuracy (Applebaum et al., 2018).

Where mixed methods (hybrid) designs are used, alongside addressing the rigour and robustness concerns of both components, a clear rationale for combining methods is important. This needs to show the added value to, for example, advancing theory or enabling more nuanced understandings (Wellman et al., 2023), usually from within a pragmatist or critical realist paradigm. In an archetypical mixed methods design both qualitative and quantitative data are used abductively. Data use needs to fit with exploring and testing proposed relationships, incorporating existing theory where appropriate (Edmundson & McManus, 2007). Mixed methods designs may require justifying combinations of methods that vary in their scientific reasoning (Wellman et al., 2023).

Given such concerns it is unsurprising that methods sections can be of poor quality, providing insufficient detail to understand how the research was undertaken, no justification for the method (including citing literature) and, where appropriate, omitting the role of the researcher. Poor quality methods sections often lack coherence in research design, tools and techniques used to collect and analyse data not fitting the paradigm or enabling the research question to be answered fully. Where rigour and robustness are considered, inappropriate criteria may be used. In particular qualitative rigour may be assessed inappropriately using validity and reliability of findings; rather than their credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

6.3 | Remedies

In outlining our concerns, we highlighted implicitly the pluralistic nature of HRM research methods, revealing how quality requirements differ between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods empirical designs. Although the choice of method and its reporting are influenced by researchers' paradigmatic homes, it is editors and reviewers who act as methodological gatekeepers for their journals, being responsible for the norms reflected in their journals' articles. Remedies for authors to address concerns comprise, firstly, input on how to demonstrate transparency, rigour, robustness and methodological fit and, secondly, signposting where additional insights into norms may be uncovered.

Authors need to write a transparent methods section which is accurate, contains sufficient detail to allow other researchers to apply the research design, and is justified with clear supporting arguments. Demonstration of rigour should be appropriate to the research design, for qualitative designs considering the findings' credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, and for quantitative designs their validity and reliability. Demonstrating robustness also needs to be appropriate, for qualitative designs focusing on methodological coherence and, for quantitative designs, by the findings holding across a broad range of data. With mixed methods designs, the added value of combining qualitative and quantitative components also needs to be outlined. For all research designs authors need to show in their writing how elements of research design are methodologically coherent (fit), and consistent with the paradigmatic lens and theorising style adopted. Limitations, and where appropriate researcher's reflexivity, also need to be outlined.

Associated advice in check-lists and JARS can support systematic communication, particularly for quantitative designs. However, for some designs, advice offered may be inappropriate, particularly when offered from within a different paradigm to that within which the research is undertaken. Such advice, along with that in editorials, needs to be considered critically, rather than adopted without deliberation. Alongside, insights into reporting norms might be gleaned from careful browsing of methods sections of similar published studies.

In highlighting the issue, voicing concerns and offering remedies we have tried to offer insights rather than prescribe how to write a transparent, justified methods section that is methodologically consistent. It is through this writing that the rigour and robustness of the research will, invariably, be revealed.

7 | USING Mturk AND PROLIFIC IN HRM RESEARCH: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT AND BEST-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Herman Aguinis[7] and Ursula M. Martin[7]

We critically evaluate two popular online platforms to conduct HRM research: Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and Prolific. We describe the benefits of using them, but also challenges and, importantly, ways to address each by implementing best-practice recommendations. A unique aspect of our assessment and recommendations is that we rely on the HRM literature, psychology, and the health sciences, thereby expanding the toolkit of HRM researchers based on knowledge produced in other fields.

7.1 | MTurk and prolific: General considerations and their benefits

Amazon MTurk and Prolific have emerged as pioneering tools. Both platforms have significantly advanced how data are collected and have been used to develop and test theories across many HRM domains, including changes in the nature of work, diversity and inclusion, leadership, and personality as a predictor of job performance, among many others. One key benefit is allowing access to wide and varied participant pools beyond traditional recruitment methods (e.g., university participant pools or access to a single organisation). MTurk, as a marketplace for crowdsourcing, leverages 'human intelligence' tasks encompassing a broad spectrum of activities including data validation, experimental research, and surveys (Aguinis et al., 2021). With around 7300 MTurkers available at any given time, researchers can efficiently recruit diverse participants and collect data swiftly, often within a 12-h timeframe or less, offering unparalleled efficiency and speed (Aguinis et al., 2021). Prolific also accelerates data collection and has been used extensively outside of HRM in substance use and mental health (Stanton et al., 2022). It is distinguished by its built-in screening filters, which streamline the recruitment of participants, enhancing the efficiency and precision of data collection tailored to specific research questions. A particular strength is its high retention rates in longitudinal studies, which is invaluable for investigating processes that unfold over time (Stanton et al., 2022).

7.2 | Challenges and best-practice recommendations

Despite their benefits, both platforms present challenges that might threaten the validity of a study's conclusions. We highlight five critical challenges that HRM researchers planning on using MTurk and Prolific should address: (a) participant identities, (b) participant motivation, (c) response biases, (d) ethics and fairness, and (e) technical issues. There are additional ones (Aguinis, 2025), but addressing these is particularly critical because they are applicable across types of research design and research domains (see Table 1).

7.2.1 | Participant identities

Challenges: The presence of impostors is of particular concern, as individuals may provide incorrect information regarding their demographics and qualifications or completely misrepresent themselves to gain access to studies and their associated compensation (Bernerth et al., 2021; Fowler et al., 2023). This problem is compounded by the use of automated programs, or 'bots,' which seriously threaten the authenticity and validity of the collected data (Aguinis et al., 2021).

TABLE 1 Using online platforms in HRM research: main challenges and best-practice recommendations.

Challenge area	Recommendations for addressing challenges
Participant identities	1. *Implement methods for verifying participant identities.* Conduct an IP (Internet protocol) address analysis, perform validity checks, and employ data cleaning procedures to remove suspicious data. 2. *Calculate IP threat scores and gather information on the participants' Internet Service Provider (ISP)* Calculate IP threat scores to evaluate the possibility that an IP address may be concealed or linked to nefarious online activities.
Participant motivation	3 *Foster a positive environment for participant engagement.* Boost participants' intrinsic motivation to partake in research by respecting their time, opinions, and willingness to participate and improve their engagement levels and the quality of the data collected. 4 *Implement a tiered compensation system.* Adapt compensation strategies by offering tiered payment systems in which participants are granted increased compensation for demonstrating higher levels of engagement and accuracy in their responses.
Response biases	5 *Implement data quality filters.* Screen out low-quality responses and examine factors influencing platform and panel choices for insights on data integrity. 6 *Balance quality and participant naïveté.* Implement multiple methods for assessing data integrity, including attention checks, dishonesty indicators, and standardised reporting checklists.
Ethics and fairness	7 *Ensure respect for participant rights and transparent communication.* Fully respect participants' rights while ensuring transparent communication from the start. Implement a clear and accessible informed consent process and inform participants of their right to withdraw at any time without adverse effects, providing easy steps to withdraw from the study confidentially. 8 *Address perceived researcher unfairness through open dialogues.* Proactively address perceptions of unfairness by initiating open dialogues, closely monitoring participant responses, and being responsive to feedback.
Technical issues	9 *Enhance user interface and instructions.* Create a participant-friendly interface with clear instructions and guidance, ensuring options are visible and accessible (e.g., ensure the response options are visible and use the white space to separate text to make the experience more manageable), and clarify task expectations and time commitments. 10 *Create a communication channel for participants to contact researchers.* Researchers should be readily available and responsive to participant enquiries, ensuring timely resolutions to issues and fostering a culture of open communication.

Recommendations: Addressing these challenges requires researchers to implement methods for verifying participant identities, such as conducting a thorough analysis of IP (Internet protocol) addresses, performing validity checks, and employing data cleaning procedures to remove suspicious data (Bernerth et al., 2021). For example, implementing an IP address analysis can help researchers identify false identities by providing valuable information about the participant's behaviour (Bernerth et al., 2021). The approach consists of calculating IP threat scores and gathering information on the participants' Internet Service Providers, which will differentiate genuine and potentially deceptive participants (Bernerth et al., 2021). IP threat scores indicate the likelihood of IP addresses being masked or associated with malicious or nefarious web activity.

7.2.2 | Participant motivation

Challenges: Researchers using online platforms encounter significant obstacles related to participant motivation. One of these challenges is the widespread problem of inattentiveness and careless reactions (Douglas et al., 2023). This obstacle arises when participants, driven by the desire to complete tasks swiftly in exchange for compensation, fail to engage deeply with the study, resulting in responses that lack thoughtfulness and accuracy. Likewise, there is the obstacle of differential engagement across platforms because participants on MTurk may display lower levels of attentiveness than those on Prolific, potentially due to varying incentive structures (Albert & Smilek, 2023).

Recommendations: It is important to enhance participants' intrinsic motivation to engage in the research because this enhances their level of engagement and improves data quality (Fowler et al., 2023). Because of this, researchers should foster a positive environment by respecting participants' time, opinions, and willingness to participate (Fowler et al., 2023). In addition, researchers should also consider adjusting compensation strategies to better align with participant motivation (Albert & Smilek, 2023). For example, implementing tiered payment systems where participants receive higher compensation for demonstrating higher levels of engagement and accuracy in their responses can encourage participants to invest more effort into the task at hand. By financially rewarding quality participation, researchers can mitigate the issues of inattentiveness and enhance the overall quality of the data.

7.2.3 | Response biases

Challenges: Another challenge is the potential distortion of research outcomes and conclusions due to systematic errors caused by participants' tendencies to respond in a way that can be influenced by cognitive and other biases (Peer et al., 2021). This can lead to inaccurate or misleading results that affect the validity and reliability of the research findings. Another challenge with response biases is the trade-off between data quality and naïveté (Peer et al., 2021). For example, participants more experienced with online platforms may exhibit various levels of familiarity or expertise in the study context compared to naïve participants. These differences in comprehension and behaviour can lead to altered responses and interactions with the study, impacting data quality (Peer et al., 2021).

Recommendations: Researchers can implement data quality filters to screen out low-quality responses (Peer et al., 2021). When evaluating the balance between data quality and participant naïveté, exploring diverse methods for assessing data integrity, including attention checks and dishonesty indicators, is essential to understand the compromises involved (Peer et al., 2021). Lastly, standardised reporting checklists can enhance response validity (Peer et al., 2021).

7.2.4 | Ethics and fairness

Challenges: When conducting research using online platforms, researchers may encounter unique ethical and fairness issues that differ from traditional data collection methods. When participants feel they have not been treated fairly or ethically, they are more likely to engage in 'vindictive' behaviours—including providing useless data (Aguinis et al., 2021; Moss et al., 2023). Additionally, if participants in online studies feel mistreated or exploited, it could undermine their trust in the research process and skew the results (Aguinis, 2025). Participants may also perceive researchers to be unfair due to the absence of mechanisms for communication, the lack of accessibility features for individuals with disabilities, and the misrepresentation of time commitments (Aguinis, 2025). Such perceptions can lead to punitive actions by the participant, such as boycotting any subsequent studies by that researcher (Aguinis, 2025).

Recommendations: To uphold the ethical integrity and fairness of online research, it is imperative that researchers fully respect participants' rights and ensure transparent communication (Aguinis, 2025). This includes implementing a clear and accessible informed consent process that outlines the study's goals, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, along with guarantees regarding the confidentiality of data (Aguinis, 2025). Also, participants must be informed of their right to withdraw at any point without any adverse effects and with straightforward steps in place to withdraw confidentially (Aguinis, 2025). Furthermore, the challenge of perceived researcher unfairness can be effectively managed by proactively launching the study, closely monitoring participant responses, and being responsive to participant concerns (Aguinis, 2025). Such measures adhere to ethical standards and enhance the validity and reliability of research findings by fostering genuine and engaged participation (Aguinis, 2025).

7.2.5 | Technical issues

Challenges: The frustrations of technical challenges participants face can lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and poor-quality data (Fowler et al., 2023). For example, participants have expressed frustration with survey design issues, including compatibility with different devices and browsers, unclear task expectations, and inadequate communication regarding timing for task completion, particularly on MTurk (Fowler et al., 2023). Also, studies that feature many scale items in a grid or matrix format necessitate responses by selecting a radio button, which has been called 'bubble hell' (Fowler et al., 2023) because such formats are burdensome for smartphone participants. Additionally, difficulty communicating with researchers, such as lack of accessibility and unresponsiveness to participant enquiries, also result in participant frustration (Fowler et al., 2023).

Recommendations: Researchers should consider creating user-friendly environments for participants by providing clear instructions and directions. While bubble questions are hard to avoid, it is essential to ensure the response options are visible and to use the white space to separate text to make the experience more manageable (Fowler et al., 2023). Researchers should also clarify task expectations and time commitments (Fowler et al., 2023). Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to be actively responsive and accessible to participants, promptly addressing their concerns and maintaining open communication channels (Fowler et al., 2023).

7.3 | Conclusions

MTurk and Prolific are used pervasively in HRM, and many other social and behavioural science fields, and the upward trend is likely to continue, given benefits such as speed and cost. Thus, authors, journal reviewers, and editors must know their challenges and solutions for addressing them. Although we focused on just five critical challenges, there are others (Aguinis, 2025). However, these five challenges are particularly pervasive, pernicious if not addressed, and relevant to different types of studies in terms of research design and HRM domain.

8 | GUIDANCE FOR WRITING AND REPORTING RESULTS

Shuang Ren[14]

Common issues in the Results section that hold submissions back from proceeding in the review process are often due to a lack of sufficient information that enable readers *understand* the results/findings, *evaluate* methodological rigour vis-à-vis conceptual development, and potentially *replicate* studies. Hence ensuring accuracy, clarity and transparency while maintaining the necessary thoroughness is important when crafting the Results part of the

paper. This section is intended to offer a structured reporting guideline for mainstream and emerging research designs used in HRM research.

8.1 | Reporting guideline for quantitative research

Figure 1 illustrates the steps and items needed in the Results section[1] of a quantitative paper while also acknowledging the unique characteristics and requirements of experimental studies, multi-level studies and data analysed by structural equation modelling (SEM).

Generally speaking, this section comprises of 2–3 main components, namely reporting the procedures and results of the preparatory stage (e.g. any transformation performed during data screening) if applicable, results of descriptive statistics and of inferential statistics. First, if a dataset is modified prior to data analysis, these modifications need to be described and justified. This applies to scenarios where researchers examine and assess the original dataset to identify potential issues, for example, in terms of missing data, outliers, or violation of assumptions of analytical strategies. While performing data diagnostics, the criteria and methods, alongside justifications, used to exclude data, impute missing data, and/or transform outliers must be clearly described prior to data analysis.

If the preparatory stage does not apply, the Result section typically starts with reporting descriptive statistics, which are typically summarised in a table. In this table, p value cutoff threshold (e.g., *$p < 0.05$.**$p < 0.01$.) and sample size need to be provided, alongside an explanation of abbreviations used or coding scheme of dummy variables. Studies using **multi-level analysis**[2] need to specify the levels of analysis for study variables.

The next main component reports inferential test results. There exist diverse practices concerning the testing methods and reporting conventions within psychometrics.[3] An increasingly common approach[4] is presenting a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to evaluate the fit of the proposed measurement model in comparison to alternative models. In this context, the inclusion of a table summarising the results of various measurement

Step 1: For all quantitative studies
1. Data screening if applicable: Providing information detailing the data used in analysis, including
   - Missing data: (1) frequency or percentage of missing data (2) theoretical/empirical arguments for the causes of missing data; (3) methods used to treat missing data and why
   - Assumptions associated with a particular analytical strategy if applicable: (1) Results of the assumption check; (2) methods used to treat violations if applicable and why
2. Descriptive statistics: Provide a description of the characteristics of the dataset used for analysis, both in the main manuscript and in a table, including
   - the mean, standard deviation, correlation, Cronbach's alpha (if applicable) for all measured variables (including control variables)
   - sample size
   - levels of study variables if multilevel studies
3. Inferential statistics: Outline the results of analytical techniques used to draw conclusions or make inferences, including
   - Factor analysis, providing the description and justification of any modifications if performed
   - Hypothesis testing, reporting the minimally sufficient set of statistics, e.g., regression coefficients (specifying standardized or unstandardized), standard error (se), degree of freedom (df), the exact p values (unless it is less than 0.001) if using null hypothesis statistical testing method; effect size estimates and confidence intervals appropriate to inferential test performed; for mediation, include the a, b, and c path coefficients, indirect and total effect; for moderation, include the simple slope analysis results and a figure depicting the nature of the moderation relationship. Use relative ("higher" vs "lower") not absolute ("high" vs "low") when describing moderation on a continuous variable; for moderated mediation/mediated moderation, include the index of moderated mediation
   - If reporting unstandardized regression estimates, include intercepts/ constants.
   - Devise tables/figures to organize and communicate detailed or complex statistical results
   - Supplementary analysis if needed

Experimental study
1. Prior to hypothesis testing, results of manipulation test are reported. Include how failed manipulations are handled.
2. Provide the number of participants assigned to each group, including attrition, if this information is not yet stated in the Method section.
3. If there is attrition, provide reasons for attrition.
4. To plot the interaction, a histogram is typically used to show the statistics of each group, as composed to the graph used in other research designs.

Multi-level study
1. For descriptive statistics, separate study variables into their respective levels
2. For factor analysis, report the multi-level factor analysis, including associated model fit statistics (e.g., SRMRwithin, SRMR between). When describing different measurement models, specify the level where changes are made.
3. Include the justification for aggregation model and centering decisions

Structural Equation Modelling Statistical Method
- Results of whether assumptions of estimation methods (e.g. distribution) are met
- Provide details of the models estimated, measurement and structural
- Associate variance-covariance (or correlation) matrix whenever necessary
- Provide the name and version of statistical software used for analysis
- Estimation methods, estimation issues if applicable, solutions and justifications (e.g., failure to converge)
- Model specifications
- Model fit statistics
- Model performance assessment (if applicable)
- Provide a diagram for models reports

FIGURE 1 Guidelines for reporting quantitative study results.

models (with key model fit statistics[5]) is helpful to comprehensively present the evidence while saving space in the main manuscript. If parcelling is undertaken to test measurement items, methods used and justifications are needed. Testing alternative models in **multi-level CFA** via chi-squared difference testing requires unique procedures (e.g., Santora-Bentler scaled chi-squared difference test) and level-specific fit statistics (Katou et al., 2021).

Next, results in relation to hypothesised relationships are reported, one at a time. It is a good practice to briefly remind the reader of the hypothesis concerned, followed by relevant inferential test results, and conclude with the result whether the hypothesis is supported or rejected. Researchers need to provide minimally sufficient set of statistics in relation to hypothesis testing specified in Figure 1. For **SEM**, the choice of specific techniques, CB-based or PLS-based SEM, needs to be described, including the software used. Given the complexity of SEM, it requires extra reporting of model specifications, estimation methods, model fit statistics, model performance assessment, re-specification if performed.

If supplementary analysis is conducted, it is important to present the results of the specific inferential test along with a clear justification for its execution, ensuring transparency and credibility akin to the primary analysis (e.g. Katou et al., 2021; Ren, Hu, Tang, et al., 2023; Ren, Tang, & Zhang, 2023). In cases where analysis is performed on a modified dataset or a different selection of study variables (e.g., with and without control variables), it is necessary to provide results for both the supplementary analysis and the originally planned analysis. While the level of detail for the supplementary analysis may not be as extensive as the primary analysis, it should still be adequately documented. Footnotes or appendixes can be utilised to provide additional information or details in such scenarios (e.g. Ren et al., 2024).

8.2 | Reporting guideline for qualitative research

Figure 2 illustrates the guiding principles for the Findings section of a qualitative paper while also acknowledging the unique requirements of Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (Fs/QCA), an analytical strategy emerging in the HRM field (Farivar & Richardson, 2020; Signoretti et al., 2022). In qualitative papers, the convention is titling the section on study outcomes as "Findings" rather than "Results." This distinction underscores the qualitative approach's emphasis on interpretation rather than statistical inference. Unlike quantitative studies, where

Principles for all qualitative studies
1. Be explicit about the basic assumptions of the qualitative method used.
2. Adhere to the style of reporting that are appropriate for the method within the chosen tradition (reflexive first-person style, relatively neutral presentation style, narrative style of reporting)
3. In terms of the content of reporting, ensures trustworthiness
  - A clear description of how researchers' perspectives guide the research (data collection and analysis)
  - An explicit description of how analytical outcomes situate within the research process
  - A contextualized description of research findings, including
    (a) the context of the investigator
    (b) the context of data source
    (c) the context of the phenomenon.
4. Report the grounded-ness of findings in data, facilitated by quotes, excerpts, tables, figures etc.
5. Establish the utility of the Findings section achieving the research objective
(a) making explicit the link between a finding and the research question concerned;
(b) making explicit how findings are organised, e.g., by themes, categories or narratives;
(c) describing coherence among findings and when differences within a set of findings occur, explain the differences.
6. In terms of length, qualitative papers tend to require more manuscript pages for the Findings section than the Results section in quantitative papers.
7. The Findings and Discussion sections may be combined in some traditions.

Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (Fs/QCA)
1. Report the software and version used.
2. Report necessary conditions, including the threshold used and the justification, supplemented by a table showing consistency and coverage values.
3. Report sufficient conditions, including the threshold used and the justification.
4. Report how a truth table is constructed and the results of the truth table.
5. When reporting the derived configurations, a set of thresholds used need to be included, e.g., consistency, raw coverage, unique coverage, overall solution consistency, and overall solution coverage.
6. For each configuration, follow the above principles to establish the trustworthiness, grounded-ness and utility of findings.

FIGURE 2 Guidelines for reporting qualitative study findings.

reporting standards tend to be more uniform, qualitative research presents a myriad of ambiguities regarding how to organise findings, what to include and how to evaluate the Findings section. These ambiguities can be attributed to the diverse array of traditions rooted in varying ontological and epistemological assumptions, each with its own preferences for language, tone, and style. Given this intricate landscape, the guidelines outlined herein prioritise developing a set of explicit principles, rather than a one-size-fits-all check-list, acknowledging the need for diversity, flexibility and context sensitivity in qualitative studies.

Principle 1. *Qualitative studies in the HRM field have encompassed varied methods that originate from different disciplines that differ in the style and content of communicating findings. Therefore, it is meaningful to briefly acknowledge the basic assumption of the specific qualitative method, familiarising readers with the distinctive characteristics and prevalent reporting norms in the tradition.*

Principle 2. *Generally speaking, three distinct styles of reporting can be identified. The first is a reflexive first-person style in which researchers engage in reflections on how their own identity, bias and perspective influence the interpretations of the data. Research rooted in traditions such as Feminism typically adopts this style, acknowledging the researcher's subjective positioning within the research process. The second is presentation in a relatively neutral style in which researchers prioritise maintaining some level of objectivity in organising detailed descriptions and analytical outcomes, often in line with the sequence of how research questions are addressed. Studies in this category typically use objectivist rhetoric, with a less tendency to use first-person or personal narratives of the researcher. The third is a narrative style of reporting, with findings organised thematically or chronologically in line with how phenomena evolved or experienced by participants. Narrative inquiry and other qualitative methods that prioritises storytelling often take this style.*

Principle 3. *Establishing transparency requires (1) a clear description of how perspectives guide the research; (2) an explicit description of how analytical outcomes situate within the research process, especially when data collection and analysis are undertaken recursively; (3) given the rich, detailed and contextualised nature of qualitative data, report the situatedness of their research findings, including the context of the investigator, the context of data source and the context of the phenomenon.*

Principle 4. *Offering a detailed account of how findings derive from the empirical evidence collected and analysed during the research process, supported by for example, interview quotes, excerpts, observational descriptions. When utilising quotes and excerpts, researchers must ensure to provide complementary descriptions of the findings. A visual representation can be particularly useful for explaining how triangulation is achieved, involving the use of either multiple data sources or perspectives that lead to the research findings.*

Principle 5. *The Findings section needs to be organised and crafted to demonstrate its utility in addressing the desired research objective. This can be accomplished by (1) explicitly linking each finding to the corresponding research question, demonstrating how it directly addresses the objectives of the study; (2) clearly outlining how the findings are structured, for example, whether by themes, categories, or narratives, to provide transparency and coherence to the reader; (3) describing the coherence and contradictions among the findings, highlighting similarities and patterns, and providing explanations for any differences or contradictions that may arise.*

Principle 6. *Qualitative papers typically require a longer length than quantitative studies given their contextualised descriptions, illustrations of the analytic process, richness of the data, and rhetorical style. Meanwhile, appendices can serve as valuable tools to provide supplementary information, ensuring adherence to journal length guidelines while still offering comprehensive insights.*

Principle 7. *In certain studies, the Findings and Discussion sections may be combined when the interpretation of findings is closely intertwined with their presentation, making it challenging to separate a finding from its broader significance within the analysis and discussion. Such decisions should be guided by the traditions of the chosen research method.*

Fs/QCA offers a statistical approach to analyse qualitative data, thereby necessitating a distinct set of reporting standards (Figure 2). Where applicable, quotes, excerpts and other empirical evidence can be used to substantiate the description of each combination of causal sets, adhering to the aforementioned principles to establish the trustworthiness, grounded-ness, and utility of findings.

8.3 | Concluding remarks

This section has offered guidance on effectively conveying results/findings in a clear, transparent, and logically organised manner. However, it is worth noting that reporting standards are continually evolving, depending on new developments in research designs and analytical strategies. With the growing recognition of the importance of incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion into the research process, researchers should report their findings using language that is free from bias, sensitive to labels, and inclusive. Also as technical aspects of the research process continue to progress, new standards need to be developed.

In addition, while this section has endeavoured to guide reporting for most of empirical studies, it does not specifically target alternative methods and analyses (e.g., Bayesian techniques, meta-analysis, longitudinal studies), leaving room for adaptions. Thus, researchers are encouraged to remain open to new practices and to continuously refine their reporting practice to ensure the rigour, credibility and relevance of their findings.

9 | HOW TO WRITE, AND WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE DISCUSSION SECTION

David G. Collings[5]

The discussion of an article is equivalent to the closing argument in a legal case. It is an author's last opportunity to answer the 'so what' question and make the case for the contribution of the paper. While there is much guidance on writing introductions, methods and even presenting findings, the discussion is a less considered, but hugely important, element of a research paper (c.f. Geletkanycz & Tepper, 2012).

Given that the reader has reached the discussion section, it is likely that they have bought a paper's motivation and consider the research question worthwhile and novel. However, many papers run out of steam at the discussion stage, and the discussion can read like an afterthought, where authors fail to show the significance of their work and fail to convince the reader of the paper's ultimate value (Geletkanycz & Tepper, 2012). In line with the closing argument analogy, the discussion section should summarise the key findings of the paper, and link that to the precedent that you build your case for contribution upon. It should also restate why this matters, by reference to the initial framing and motivation of the paper. In a typical deductive paper, with a focus on testing theory, this generally requires a summary of the outcomes of the hypotheses testing and what this means for the theory. In an inductive or abductive paper, the focus will be on summarising the findings in the context of the theoretical constructs or relationships that emerged from the data analysis.

From a data perspective it is critical that no new data are reported in the discussion section. The discussion should examine results in an aggregate fashion, with a focus on synthesising them to provide a unified, and theoretically grounded account of the study's contribution (Geletkanycz & Tepper, 2012). Additionally, the discussion of the findings must follow logically from what is presented in that section. In other words, there should be no surprises for the reader. Geletkanycz and Tepper (2012) refer to this mistake as overarching, when author's

draw conclusions that outstrip their data. It should be clear how the authors get to the conclusions they do based on the data presented in the paper.

A common mistake made by authors in terms of theory is simply stating that they contribute to a particular theory without explicating how. For example, does the contribution extend the theory, develop a new one, or elaborate some boundary conditions of a theory, and how does it do so? Equally If some of the hypotheses are not supported, or of the findings are inconsistent with previous literature, it is important to outline why this may be the case. In the context of Huff's (1999) work, one can think about this in terms of what the study adds to the theoretical conversation the authors are joining. While many authors are excited by the unique contributions of their studies, few if any papers do not build on contributions already in the literature and positioning one's contribution relative to that earlier literature is generally much more effective than arguing that a paper's contribution is so unique that it does not build on any extant literature. Geletkanycz and Tepper (2012, p. 256) argue that outlining the theoretical contribution is some-what of a paradoxical entity with 'both an ending and a new beginning, realised concurrently'. The discussion of the theoretical implications represents an ending in bringing closure to the study, identifying developments broadly and in a reflective way. New beginnings emerge in terms of the paper recasting 'contemporary theoretical understanding, bringing to light new and valuable ideas' (pp. 256). It is generally best to focus on a small number of key contributions, rather than claiming to make many incremental contributions which may be less compelling.

The discussion should also recognise the limitation of the study and propose avenues for future study. Acknowledging limitations does not necessarily imply a weakness in a study. It may reflect a design choice where some sacrifices were made in terms of one aspect of data collection to meet the priorities of another. Many authors combine limitations and future research as in recognising the limitations of the study at hand authors go some way towards identifying where future research effort in the area should be directed. Given the time an effort an author has invested in the area at hand it is likely that they will have a good sense of the answer to this question.

Finally, most journals expect papers to have some implications for HRM practice and/or policy. Many authors make the mistake of approaching this section almost as an afterthought and this is often an underdeveloped section of the paper. One recent analysis of the policy implications of HRM articles, found that only 1.5% of articles articulated any policy implications, running the risk that HRM research is societally irrelevant (Aguinis et al., 2022). While a greater percentage of HRM papers consider practical implications, one analysis found that only 2% the text in HRM papers focuses on these practical implications (Kougiannou & Ridgway, 2022). While it is reasonable to question the extent to which the findings of a single study are sufficient to make authoritative prescriptions for HRM practice, there is no doubt that it is useful to keep the potential end users of research in mind in the discussion of the implications of research (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010). Recent calls challenge authors to go beyond practical implications that do little more raise awareness, challenging practitioners to consider or reflect on the findings, and to translate the findings to accessible and applied terminology that is easily accessible to wider audiences (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010; Kougiannou & Ridgway, 2022). Authors can gain valuable insights from road testing their findings with practitioners and/or executive education audiences to tease out the implications of their studies for practice and/or policy. This can help in drawing out some useful practical implications of their research.

All in all, the discussion is a critical aspect of a paper, and it is important that the focus and clarity that authors bring to other sections of the paper continues through the discussion. It is an author's final chance to convince the reader of the value of the paper.

10 | CONTRIBUTIONS/IMPLICATIONS SECTION OF A QUALITY HRM MANUSCRIPT

Lillian T. Eby[11]

Arguably one of the most important components of an introduction is delineating the paper's contributions and potential implications. Doing so effectively helps the reader understand why your work is important and guides

them to appreciate what the study has to offer. This brief section grabs the reader's attention, convinces them that what you are doing is scientifically meaningful, and entices them to continue reading with an open and curious mind. Authors typically start by laying out the study contributions in some detail, followed by a brief discussion of potential implications. The paragraph that follow include general guidance for framing these elements as well as a discussion of different types of contributions and implications.

10.1 | Guidance for describing the contributions of your work

Contributions refer to how your scholarship builds on what we already know, breaks from existing knowledge, redirects our thinking, or introduces a new way to think about a phenomenon with broad appeal. There are different ways to position the argument that your study contributes to the literature. Hollenbeck (2008) notes two particularly effective frames. 'Consensus shifting' (p. 19) instils a sense of urgency by challenging an established assumption, providing a clearly articulated rationale as to why this assumption may be wrong or one-sided, and then turns the assumption upside down by proposing something radically different. By contrast, 'consensus creation' (p. 20) identifies an important area of knowledge that has two or more lines of discrepant thought and sets out to explain why this might be the case, often by introducing boundary conditions, contextual factors, or methodological improvements.

An important feature of contribution section involves highlighting the novelty of your research (Wood & Budhwar, 2022). Novelty includes radically changing the existing conversation on a topic, integrating insights from another discipline, elegantly combining disparate theories, or synthesising expert guidance on how to approach a phenomenon. Closely related to novelty is originality (Lubart & Mouchiroud, 2017), which involves introducing a completely new idea, theory, concept, measure, methodological approach, or statistical tool to the literature. Common pitfalls when discussing novelty and originality are arguing that 'this has never been done before' (Hollenbeck, 2008, p. 21) or noting that the study 'fills a gap' (p. 22). Such argumentation is insufficient without explaining *how, why, and in what particular ways* the identified gap has hindered or obscured our understanding. Another common mistake is stating that your study is the first one to test a more comprehensive model that includes a series of associations that are already well established in the literature (Whetten, 1989). In this case, novelty and originality are both questionable—we could easily surmise the proposed associations based on prior research. Adding one new construct to a well-established set of findings is also unlikely to meet the bar at high-quality journals, as is studying a phenomenon in a new context or with a new sample yet expecting the same effects as prior research.

10.1.1 | Different ways to make a contribution

Although theory is the 'currency of our scholarly realm' (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12), what qualifies as a theoretical contribution is multifaceted and arguably elusive. *Theoretical contributions* can advance knowledge by consolidating, synthesising or extending existing theory (Wood & Budhwar, 2022) or develop new theory by explicating associations among constructs within a system constrained by boundary conditions (Bacharach, 1989). In the context of theory development papers, this type of contribution may provide important, albeit incremental, insight that progressively adds to our understanding or suggest a radically different idea or way of thinking about a phenomenon (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Theoretical contributions can also emerge from empirical research. Qualitative research aims to understand experiences from the informant's perspective, often with an emphasis on a deep understanding of underlying processes (Pratt, 2009). Because of this, qualitative research is a cornerstone for inductive theory development. However, simply describing findings from a qualitative study is not sufficient to

make a theoretical contribution. It is necessary to carefully explain and thoughtfully interpret the findings to either build new theory or significantly elaborate on existing theory (Pratt, 2009). Quantitative research can also make a theoretical contribution by testing key aspects of existing theory. Effective approaches here include examining previously untested key mediating mechanisms and/or theoretically specified boundary conditions, as well as investigating theoretically informed temporal associations among core constructs.

Conceptual contributions offer advances with regard to constructs, which refer to abstract, hypothetical entities. Such contributions may involve refining conceptual definitions of existing constructs (e.g., differentiating from similar constructs, identifying dimensions of existing constructs) as well as integrating disparate theories to introduce new constructs and frameworks to the literature. Scientific debates can also make conceptual contributions by stimulating critical dialog that offers different perspectives and moves science in new directions through advocacy and refutation (MacInnis, 2011). Another type of conceptual contribution involves providing a normative framework related to task-related procedures. Common examples in the field of management involve research methodology, such as O'Boyle et al.'s (2023) recent paper on best practices for conducting meta-analytic research.

Another type of contribution is strictly *empirical*. Empirical contributions do not need to advance or extend theory but require strong theoretical or conceptual grounding that yokes together the specific variables of interest. This type of contribution can take several forms such as synthesising the literature (e.g., meta-analysis, topic modelling), replicating previous research, exploratory analyses of large data sets to identify meaningful patterns or associations, or an unexpected finding that challenge core theoretical tenets. Empirical contributions can also involve the application of existing theory to new settings or samples, if buttressed by compelling rationale for expecting effects that counter theoretical prediction.

Methodological contributions refer to the development of new statistical or analytic methods, major refinements or extensions of existing ones, and the application of methods from other disciplines to the study work and organisations. Strong methodological contributions have broad impact because they are often agnostic to substantive research area. Another important feature is that methodological contributions can be used to reevaluate existing knowledge and when appropriate, reconsider the conclusions reached in prior research that used more rudimentary methods (Bergh et al., 2022). In evaluating a methodological contribution, it is important to consider both the extent to which the findings make a substantive contribution and the potential scope or audience that is likely to be influenced by the findings (Bergh et al., 2022). For example, papers that provide minor changes to existing measures, (re)validate well-established existing measures, or replicate research findings that are of limited interest to scholars (e.g., not well cited) are unlikely to rise to the level of a methodological contributions.

A final type of contribution is *practical*. Practical contributions state how the research has utility or usefulness outside the academic context. This type of contribution can be discussed in terms of addressing a timely and important problem facing organisations and offering actionable solutions (e.g., equitable remote work policies) or developing a tool or technique that can be used in organisations to improve current practices (e.g., new method for combing predictors to reduce adverse impact in selection). Unfortunately, management research is often criticised as lacking relevance Eby & Facteau, 2023). By taking practical contributions seriously, our scholarship stands to have both greater and broader impact.

To summarise, there are different ways to make a contribution to the literature: theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and practical. No single paper is expected to make all types of contributions, although some journals have explicit expectations. For example, *HRM Journal* expects articles to 'make a substantive contribution to theory development'[6] and *Academy of Management Journal* notes that all research 'must makes strong empirical *and* theoretical contributions'[7] (emphasis added). By contrast, the *Journal of Applied Psychology* requires that 'the data *or* theoretical synthesis advances understanding...and (the research) has direct or indirect practical implications'[8] (emphasis added). Carefully reviewing the mission or scope statement and reading current issues of a targeted journal is important to help ensure that your study it a good fit for the journal.

10.2 | Guidance for describing the potential implications of your work

Implications extend the stated contributions by speculating on how the research could have an impact on *future* theorizing, research, and/or practice. These statements should be concise, specific, and flow directly from the stated contributions. Authors should take particular care to ensure that the stated implications do not make unfounded inferences beyond what the paper is able to deliver.

10.2.1 | Different types of potential implications

Implications for theory describe how the research is expected to modify, challenge, or expand existing theory (Bacharach, 1989; Whetten, 1989). Introducing new theory creates new potential streams of scholarship and often offers an alternative to theoretical approaches that have not been well supported empirically or have been difficult to test empirically (e.g., overly complicated, poorly defined constructs). Implications for research go a step further by suggesting urgent questions for an area of scholarship. Next steps for research might include adding key boundary conditions, examining a broader range of predictors or outcomes, or more carefully considering temporal factors. Reviews of the literature also offer important implications for research. For example, meta-analyses can identify associations that have strong support and may not require additional inquiry, as well as pinpoint high priority areas for future research where either limited research exists of the findings are mixed. Methodological articles can create new research frontiers through careful scale development, the demonstration of analytic approaches that allow more appropriate and comprehensive tests of theory, and the development of new statistical methods.

In terms of *implications for practice*, much has been written about academics' failure to effectively translate how their research can be used to improve organisations (Eby & Facteau, 2023). Whetten (1989) challenges researchers to include a clear description of how their work could be used to change organisations in meaningful ways, arguing that even theoretical papers should have practical value. Authors should take particular care to ensure that the stated implications are not vague (e.g., make managers aware of something; Bartunek & Rynes, 2010) and are tightly coupled to the study aims. Moreover, practical implications can target employees, leaders, teams, organisations, and even society writ-large. Indeed, funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and UK Research and Innovation require a discussion of how research projects can have meaningful practical implications. NSF refers to this as broader societal impact, which might include a discussion of how the project aims to increase the participation of women and persons with disabilities in science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM), improve societal well-being, enhance national security, or develop the STEM workforce.[9] Likewise, UKRI's strategic themes include a strong focus on practical and actionable, innovative solutions for the greater good, such as creating economic and social prosperity as well as improving health, well-being and successful ageing.[10] For management such practical implications might involve a discussion of how the research contributes to goals such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, workplace safety and health, environmental sustainability, and improved quality of work life.

11 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Geoffrey Wood[2,3,4,5], **Pawan Budhwar**[1], and **Soumyadeb Chowdhury**[6]

The number of aspirant scholars and the volume of submitted work has increased exponentially in recent years. Yet very little finds its way into leading journals. This is, of course, something of a pity, in that fresh perspectives from around the world can really advance the field. A real and persistent problem is that too many aspirant scholars seek

to revisit mature debates through more of the same; providing small tweaks to what is already widely known. When there is a sufficient mass of new data, often what is really interesting about it—unique features imparted by context—is downplayed in the interests of trying to fit in with an established corpus of work. In working to identify what is interesting about a particular setting, authors are well advised to consult leading area studies journals, which may help in developing insights that may be proliferated to a business and management studies audience. Remember that there are many studies about the US and, indeed, the UK; a challenge on the author is to identify what is interesting in another setting and how this might add to what is already known.

There is little doubt that the methodological expectations of leading journals have increased over the years. This is, of course, commendable, and authors which deploy genuinely innovative and robust new methods are to be commended. At the same time, there is clearly a tension between getting the job done, and imparting unnecessary complexity, between finding something interesting, and generating a great deal of noise. Here, we would sound a note of caution against structural equation models whose causal diagrams bear a striking resemblance to a 'dysfunctional spaghetti factory'. Generating lots of results is not the same as finding anything meaningful, in the same fashion as generating multiple haystacks does not make needles any more conspicuous. Good descriptive statistics can give readers a great deal more confidence in the inferentials; it is worth noting that there is a lot more to good descriptive statistics than a few averages, and that a few good graphs or plots can go a long way. The ability to provide online appendices (e.g., via anonymised dropbox links) removes the problem of space constraints limiting data transparency.

Finally, we would caution against any absolute certainties of the absolute certainty of the superiority of one statistical tool over another, or indeed method of data gathering. Hence, it cannot be concluded that experiments are inherently superior to surveys; whilst the former may have issues with common method variance bias, the latter has limitations in terms of replicability and representivity. Whilst experiments may enable better statistics, surveys have often been quite effective in capturing the moods of a collective. This does not mean that authors should not seek to use all possible tools for alleviating or correcting any limitations that are baked into their method. It is well worth benchmarking of recent papers accepted in a target journal, and indeed making sure one's own submission is properly proofed, and there is an internal consistency in the argument through the paper. Major studies require good quality data and good analysis and this is an area where good teamwork pays off.

The usage of AI both opens opportunities and fresh challenges and risks for authors. In respect to the former, and at the simplest level, this would help level the playing field between English and non-English native speakers, and in the more efficient compilation of data. The latter can range from sentence and sentence fragments being lifted from other sources without due acknowledgement opening the author to potential charges of plagiarism; the issue of originality, especially if the efforts of data janitors are included; inaccuracies whether inherent in the way AI systems operate, or which can also be introduced through AI disrupting intellectual property protecting offencive tools such as Nightshade; and ethical issues. The latter would include tensions between the sharing of information and ideas and the harvesting of others' intellectual property, labour conditions of the data janitors, and the heavy carbon footprint associated with AI systems. At the very least, the latter would suggest that the trivial usage of AI systems is best avoided.

11.1 | Concluding remarks

There is little doubt that the academic publication game has become more challenging. The number of submissions in leading journals has increased exponentially. However, at the same time, the purpose of leading journals such as HRMJ is to publish the best scholarship in the field; we are less concerned with keeping work out, than identifying potentially good work that, through the review process and editorial feedback, may meet out standards. This perspective brings together members of the HRMJ editorial team and leading scholars with extensive editing and

publishing experience. We hope that it will help inform authors on the expectations of the journal, how the field is changing, and emerging issues and debates surrounding working to publication in business and management studies.

Here we can consider covering other broad suggestions which authors should consider.

- Ensure your research question is clearly defined and your methodology is well-justified. Ambiguity in these areas is a frequent cause for desk rejection. Moreover, clearly articulate how your work contributes to existing literature and why it is significant by demonstrating a clear gap in the literature is crucial.

- Follow the *Journal's submission guidelines* meticulously, ensuring your manuscript is well-organised. Regularly review the submission guidelines and requirements of your target journal, understand the editorial policies and preferences to tailor your manuscript accordingly. Employing professional *proof-readers or copy editors* to work on your manuscript, will help ensure it is free from grammatical errors and thus enhance readability, making it more appealing to editors, and showing that you have ben diligent in your writing.

- Where relevant, provide details on how your research adheres to *ethical guidelines*, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the ethical treatment of subjects. Authors must be transparent about how research has been executed (including data collection), and can include details as supplementary materials. Many cases of desk rejections and retractions are attributed to a lack of transparency, replicability, plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental and improper attribution to original authors/source.

- Regularly *attending workshops and seminars* (many of these are online and free to register) focused on academic writing, research methodologies and publication process can provide valuable insights into the expectations of top-tier journals. We acknowledge that there is a major variation in the quality of doctoral training globally, hence, the level of research and writing is very diverse. However, authors should be open to learning and employing the best practices and adapting to different academic cultures and expectations to grow as a researcher. Participating in *writing retreats and residencies* to focus on your manuscript without distractions can also provide opportunities for networking and feedback.

- Receiving *constructive feedback on your ideas before writing the manuscript, and again prior to submission* (e.g., via peer review, colleagues working in the area, or conference presentation) can help alleviate major issues at any stage of research. For example, early feedback can identify potential flaws or weaknesses in your approach before you invest significant time and resources. Moreover, feedback throughout the research lifecycle can help to address any weaknesses or inconsistencies in your argument, methodology, or data interpretation. This process can enhance the overall rigour and credibility of your research.

- *Where possible, collabore with scholars from different disciplines, expertise* and backgrounds to enrich your research with diverse perspectives and expertise fit to the research context. They can offer unique insights based on their own experiences and knowledge, which can provide you with approaches and nuances that you might not have considered initially, and also for shaping a clear and compelling research narrative.

- *Building professional networks through conferences, learnt academic societies, and social media* will help to stay informed about the latest trends, publications and opportunities in your field. Often, publications fail to cite the latest research in the field and neglect to reference articles from the journal to which they are submitting. This oversight can make the research appear dated, weakening the credibility of research. Referencing the journal's publications indicates that the authors are engaged with the academic community associated with the journal, fostering a sense of scholarly connection. Editors may also perceive the lack of recent citations as a sign of negligence, which can negatively impact their view of the manuscript's quality.

- Authors should *exercise caution when using AI tools* in research to ensure the integrity and originality of their work. While AI tools can be incredibly useful for tasks such as data analysis, and literature search, overreliance on these technologies can lead to several issues. Primarily, AI-generated content may lack the nuanced understanding and critical analysis that human researchers bring to their work, potentially resulting in superficial analysis or even misinterpretation of findings that are not grounded in the extant literature. Furthermore, ethical concerns arise regarding the transparency and reproducibility of AI-driven research processes. Authors must

clearly document and disclose the extent and manner in which AI tools were used to maintain transparency and credibility, and in line with the journal as well publisher guidelines. Lastly, there is a risk of plagiarism, as AI tools might inadvertently reproduce text from existing sources without proper attribution. To maintain high standards of academic rigour and ethical integrity, authors should use AI tools judiciously and verify AI responses (in any situation) rigorously with thorough human oversight and critical evaluation.

KEYWORDS

academic publishing, HRM, manuscripts, scholarly guidance, scholarship

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ENDNOTES

[1] An 'Analytics Strategy' section should be included, if not already covered in the Method section, where authors outline their planned approach before presenting the results.

[2] If not already covered in the Method section where measures are explained, researchers should provide justification for using multilevel analyses. This justification should include theoretical rationale as well as evidence of significant within- and/or between-group variance, along with significance tests of each variance component. Additionally, ICC1 and ICC2 (intraclass correlation) values should be reported. If ICC2 values fall short of recommended cutoffs, researchers should provide justification for why this is acceptable for the study.

[3] For instance, reporting average variance extracted (AVE, evidence of convergent validity), composite reliability (evidence of internal consistency reliability), the square root of the AVE value and an examination of cross loadings (evidence of discriminant validity), and VIF (evidence of collinearity).

[4] In addition, where applicable, clarity around addressing common method bias/multicollinearity issues in CFA context, instrumentation variable etc needs to be included.

[5] Key model fit statistics reported in HRM research include chi-square values (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), and the chi-square difference of alternative models with the proposed measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2$, Δdf).

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