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METHODOLOGY IN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH: BETWEEN EMPIRICISM, LITERATURE REVIEW AND SCIENTIFIC ORIGINALITY

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Purpose: The paper aims to develop an integrated methodological framework for management research by synthesising deductive, inductive and empirical perspectives, critically evaluating literature-based inquiry, and conceptualising originality as a structured methodological construct.
Design/methodology/approach: This is a conceptual study based on a narrative literature review, epistemological analysis, problematisation and integrative conceptual synthesis. It systematises methodological debates across empirical, deductive and idiographic traditions, critically evaluates literature review practices and synthesises existing frameworks of originality and theory development in management research.
Findings: The study demonstrates that methodological rigour in management research cannot be ensured through any single paradigm or technique. Instead, rigour emerges from the alignment of empirical inquiry, transparent and systematic literature-based reasoning, and deliberate construction of originality through problematisation. The paper identifies recurring methodological errors, clarifies the appropriate use of systematic reviews and bibliometrics, and integrates existing views on originality into a coherent framework.
Research limitations/implications: As a conceptual paper, the study does not empirically validate the proposed methodological framework. It is influenced primarily by European and Polish traditions of methodological thought. Future research should empirically assess hybrid methodological designs, the practical use of systematic reviews, and institutional mechanisms shaping originality evaluation in management research.
Practical implications: Although conceptual, the paper offers actionable methodological guidance for researchers, doctoral students and reviewers. It provides criteria for selecting methodological approaches, designing rigorous literature reviews and developing research programmes oriented towards originality, which can enhance transparency and coherence in management research.
Social implications: Strengthening methodological foundations may indirectly improve the societal relevance of management research by supporting more reliable and theoretically grounded evidence for organisational practice and public policy.

Originality/value: The paper offers a novel triadic conceptualisation of methodology in management science, explicitly integrating empiricism, literature review and originality. It synthesises dispersed methodological discussions into an integrated framework and clarifies the epistemological foundations of originality and problematisation. It is addressed to management researchers, doctoral students and journal editors concerned with methodological quality.
Keywords: research methodology; conceptual research; literature review; originality; triangulation.
Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

The development of scientific knowledge has long been interpreted through two competing lenses: cumulativism, which assumes the gradual enrichment and refinement of existing knowledge, and eliminativism, which stresses the systematic rejection of obsolete theories. Yet, as Amsterdamski (1987) observes, the social sciences resist straightforward categorisation into either model due to their inherent interpretative complexity. Progress in these fields tends to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, characterised by incremental adjustments and the gradual institutionalisation of new insights (Niemczyk, 2011).

Debates on the epistemological foundations of scientific inquiry—particularly between deductive and empirical reasoning—have profoundly shaped methodological choices in management research. Kant's understanding of cognition as an interpretative process (Hempoliński, 1987) and Popper's (1959, 1999) deductive hypothesism emphasise the centrality of theoretical reasoning and falsification, whereas empiricism positions observation and inductive generalisation as the core mechanisms of scientific discovery (Niemczyk, 2011). This longstanding tension reflects the methodological pluralism of management science, where both nomothetic generalisation (Thomae, 1999) and idiographic case-based inquiry (Chełpa, 2002) coexist without forming a unified methodological canon.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognised that traditional methodological dichotomies are insufficient for capturing the multidimensionality, fragmentation, and interdisciplinarity of contemporary management research. Dźwigoł (2018) and Krzyżanowski (1999) argue that management science draws on heterogeneous epistemic traditions and therefore requires highly reflexive methodological choices. This is particularly evident in emerging research domains such as artificial intelligence, energy security, and digital transformation, where methodological integration rather than strict adherence to a single paradigm becomes essential. For instance, recent studies employ hybrid methodological frameworks combining empirical modelling, expert-based approaches, and conceptual reasoning (Kharazishvili, Kwilinski, 2022; Kharazishvili et al., 2021a, 2021b). Similar methodological hybridity is visible in research on cognitive technologies (Kwiliński et al.,

2021) and in investigations into the nonlinear environmental effects of digitalisation (Kwilinski, 2024a).

Concerns about methodological rigour also extend to literature-based inquiry. Czakon (2011, 2015) identifies recurring deficiencies in traditional reviews—fragmentation, incompleteness, and unclear inclusion criteria—that undermine the credibility of research foundations. Bibliometric studies similarly reveal conceptual dispersion and inconsistent methodological integration across management research streams (Oliver, Ebers, 1998; Jourdan et al., 2008).

Recent developments demonstrate a growing reliance on bibliometric and scientometric techniques to strengthen methodological rigour and overcome the limitations of narrative reviews. Kwilinski (2023) shows that bibliometric analysis has become an essential tool for mapping the intersections between sustainable development and digital transformation, providing a structured approach for detecting research gaps and emerging clusters. Extending this methodology, Kwilinski (2024b) offers a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of global research on green energy and green investment, illustrating how large-scale data analytics can improve transparency, reproducibility and methodological clarity in interdisciplinary research domains.

Combs (2010) further warns that prioritising large samples and statistical power at the expense of conceptual relevance weakens the theoretical contribution and practical significance of research findings. Scandura and Williams (2000) highlight that methodological inconsistency remains a systemic challenge in management research, while Dźwigoł and Dźwigoł-Barosz (2018) underscore the growing need for methodological transparency and reflexivity.

A parallel challenge concerns the construction of scientific originality. While originality is widely regarded as a central evaluative criterion, its methodological foundations remain under-theorised. Scholars emphasise that originality derives not from novelty per se, but from theoretical recombination, methodological robustness, and the ability to problematise taken-for-granted assumptions (Weick, 1989, 2005; Dubin, 1987; Strużyna, 2015). Alvesson and Sandberg's (2011) problematisation framework further positions originality as a deliberate methodological practice rather than a by-product of research design. However, Boxenbaum and Rouleau (2011) note that theoretical advances often emerge through bricolage—creative reconfiguration of existing concepts—suggesting that originality is inherently linked to methodological pluralism.

Recent methodological literature also emphasises the growing demand for structured methodological thinking in management research. This need is increasingly evidenced by meta-analytical studies showing that methodological fragmentation, weak conceptual precision and inconsistent operationalisation hinder the cumulative development of knowledge in strategic and organisational studies. For example, the meta-analysis conducted by Kwilinski et al. (2025) demonstrates that research on crisis management and strategic thinking remains marked by

heterogeneous methodological standards, uneven evidence quality and the absence of unified coding frameworks. These findings underscore the necessity of clearer methodological protocols, more explicit inclusion criteria and greater transparency in analytical procedures—requirements that extend across the broader field of management science.

In this context, Jonker and Pennink (2007) argue that methodology should not be reduced to a set of technical procedures, but understood as a form of rigorous academic reasoning that shapes how researchers conceptualise problems, design studies and implement scientific inquiry. Such an approach reinforces the importance of methodological reflexivity, epistemological coherence and awareness of the theoretical assumptions underpinning research choices.

Together, the reviewed literature reveals several persistent gaps in management research methodology:

1. Limited integration between empirical, deductive, idiographic, and hybrid methodological approaches.
2. Insufficient rigour and transparency in literature review practices.
3. Underdeveloped frameworks for building scientific originality and generating theoretically meaningful research questions.
4. A lack of methodological reflexivity in emerging interdisciplinary research areas such as AI, digital transformation, and energy security.

In response, this paper develops a comprehensive conceptual perspective on methodological choices in management research. It examines the epistemological foundations of deductive, inductive, and empirical approaches; analyses the methodological challenges inherent in literature-based inquiry; and proposes a structured understanding of originality as a methodological construct. By synthesising insights from classical and contemporary methodological theorists, this study seeks to enhance methodological reflexivity and contribute to more rigorous, transparent, and impactful management research.

2. Methods

This study adopts a conceptual methodological design aimed at synthesising and critically evaluating the epistemological foundations of management research. As the objective of the paper is not to test hypotheses empirically but to develop an integrated understanding of methodological approaches, the research follows the logic of conceptual inquiry grounded in analytical reasoning and literature-based analysis.

The methodological procedure consists of four complementary components. First, a narrative literature review was conducted to trace the evolution of methodological debates in management science, including deductive, inductive, empirical, nomothetic and

idiographic traditions. Narrative review was selected over systematic procedures due to the conceptual and theoretical nature of the research question, the heterogeneity of epistemological sources and the need for interpretive synthesis (Czakon, 2011, 2015). This approach allowed for the incorporation of classical methodological contributions (e.g., Kant, Popper, Dubin, Weick) as well as contemporary insights from interdisciplinarity, digitalisation and bibliometrics (e.g., Kwilinski, 2023, 2024b; Kharazishvili, Kwilinski, 2022).

Second, the study applies epistemological analysis, examining the assumptions underlying major methodological paradigms in management research. This included a comparative assessment of deductive and empirical traditions, nomothetic and idiographic logics, and traditional versus modern approaches to literature review. Epistemological analysis was necessary to uncover underlying tensions, blind spots and implicit assumptions that influence methodological choices in the field.

Third, the study employs problematisation, following the approach proposed by Alvesson and Sandberg (2011). Rather than accepting established methodological categories at face value, the analysis seeks to challenge and reconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions regarding scientific rigour, originality, literature review practices and theory development. This strategy allows for the identification of methodological gaps and the emergence of alternative conceptual framings.

Fourth, the paper utilises integrative conceptual synthesis, aimed at combining insights from diverse strands of methodological literature into a coherent analytical framework. This synthesis draws on classical philosophical accounts of scientific knowledge, mid-20th-century methodological debates and contemporary methodological innovations such as bibliometrics, triangulation (Dzwigol, 2020) and scientometric mapping. The integration of these perspectives enables a multidimensional assessment of methodological rigour and originality in management studies.

The overall methodological approach therefore reflects the pluralistic character of management research itself. It blends narrative review with epistemological reasoning, conceptual integration and problematisation, enabling the development of a comprehensive perspective on methodological choices and challenges without relying on empirical data collection. Such a design is consistent with established practices in conceptual and theory-building research, where analytical integration, reflexivity and methodological transparency are prioritised over empirical measurement.

3. Results

3.1. Empirical Studies

Empirical inquiry remains one of the central methodological foundations of management research, yet its role is far from unambiguous due to the epistemological complexity of the field. In the social sciences, empirical analysis is not limited to observation alone but concerns the scope and validity of the logical propositions that support or falsify a given hypothesis. As Niemczyk (2011) observes, three principal empirical strategies have evolved:

- Total enumerative induction, which seeks to verify hypotheses based on all possible cases (for instance, analysing every energy-sector firm in Poland to determine success strategies during economic crisis).
- Incomplete enumerative induction, where only selected cases are examined, enabling the derivation of general laws and regularities (e.g., identifying the typical strategies used by successful firms in turbulent environments).
- Single-case temporal–spatial analysis, which focuses on explaining one unique phenomenon in its specific context (e.g., why a particular enterprise achieved exceptional outcomes).

A defining characteristic of empirical work in the social sciences is that it constitutes "research conducted by people on people". As Nowak (2007) argues, researchers not only rely on sensory observation but also on introspective awareness of their own and others' mental states. This makes empirical research inherently vulnerable to deliberate or unconscious distortion by participants—particularly visible in survey research and face-to-face interviews.

Empirical analysis, however, cannot be understood in isolation from deduction. By identifying key propositions and demonstrating that other statements follow logically from them, even empirical theories may assume a deductive structure (Wójcicki, 1987). For this reason, the longstanding dispute between empiricism and deduction—as to which should have primacy in scientific discovery—remains unresolved. Niemczyk (2011) highlights that one of the most common methodological errors in management research is privileging one approach while neglecting the other. This leads to pseudo-arguments: pure deductionism detached from empirical verification is impossible at the contemporary stage of scientific development, just as pure sensory empiricism cannot serve as the sole source of verification for complex organisational phenomena (Dźwigoł, 2018).

3.1.1. Nomothetic and Idiographic Orientations

Within the broader empirical tradition, management research draws on two distinct methodological orientations: the nomothetic and the idiographic.

The nomothetic approach seeks general, recurrent patterns and laws comparable to those found in the natural sciences. Its procedures include experimentation, verification and correlation, and its tools range from questionnaires, structured interviews and observations to controlled experiments and diagnostic tests.

By contrast, the idiographic approach aims to explain unique, context-dependent organisational phenomena by identifying the specific external forces that shape them. It relies heavily on case studies, documentary analysis, interviews, observations and projective methods (Chełpa, 2002). As Windelband and Rickert argued, the idiographic turn reflects the need to identify distinguishing features of complex social phenomena rather than impose universalising laws (Thomae, 1999).

While quantitative methods are often perceived as more rigorous, qualitative inquiry is indispensable when the nature of the research problem demands depth, contextual sensitivity or interpretative insight (Thomae, 1999). Quantitative research includes methods such as surveys, where hypotheses are tested through the statistical distribution of responses, whereas qualitative research encompasses fieldwork, anthropological interviews, participatory observation, focus groups, expert elicitation, panel studies and textual or discourse analysis (Thomae, 1999).

Importantly, quantitative and qualitative laws are not equivalent to quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative laws are expressed via mathematical relationships and require clearly defined antecedent conditions, whereas qualitative laws articulate properties of classes of objects in natural language and often lack such precision (Such, 1987).

3.1.2. Empirical Design as a Challenge in Management Science

Management science is inherently interdisciplinary and lacks an autonomous methodological apparatus, drawing instead on economics, sociology, psychology, systems theory and other fields (Krzyżanowski, 1999). Consequently, researchers must independently construct the methodological architecture of their studies – articulating the research programme, defining the research problem and selecting appropriate methodological tools (Niemczyk, 2011). This requires substantial analytical competence and epistemological awareness.

Triangulation – combining multiple methods to increase the credibility of findings— is increasingly common, particularly in contemporary complex research domains. However, Niemczyk (2011) warns that triangulation carries methodological risks when researchers employ methods they do not fully understand. In such cases, triangulation may reduce rather than enhance the quality of research, contradicting its intended purpose. Dźwigoł (2018) therefore emphasises that rigorous scientific work requires deep understanding of methodological differences, scientific procedures and epistemological assumptions.

3.1.3. Skills Required for Empirical Inquiry

Mayer (1996) notes that researchers in economics and management frequently rely excessively on tools borrowed from the natural sciences, apply overly complex theories to simplistic problems or isolate their disciplines from broader social science debates. He argues that robust empirical research requires the integration of three intellectual qualities:

- skills, referring to methodological and analytical competence,
- imagination, enabling the formulation of meaningful and insightful research questions,
- insight, allowing the researcher to interpret complex organisational realities.

Ultimately, as Mayer (1996) stresses, the essence of empirical research lies not in the tools themselves, but in the search for an appropriate and credible solution to the problem under examination.

3.2. Literature Research

A fundamental principle of scientific inquiry is the continuity of knowledge development. As Czakon (2015) argues, any research endeavour must begin with an examination of the existing body of scholarship in order to identify established findings, inconsistencies and cognitive gaps. Literature research thus constitutes a prerequisite for developing scientifically grounded originality, as new insights can only be generated through a clear recognition of what is already known and where knowledge remains inconclusive (Czakon, 2015).

Nevertheless, the term literature research can be misleading, as its colloquial interpretation reduces the researcher to a passive reader engaged with books, monographs or encyclopaedic sources. In methodological terms, literature research refers not to passive reading but to a structured cognitive process whose aim is to reconstruct the state of knowledge, identify gaps and formulate research questions (Czakon, 2015). Every scientific article, research project or funding proposal is therefore expected to demonstrate awareness of the scholarly landscape, primarily through the analysis of peer-reviewed articles that collectively reflect the evolution of a research field (Czakon, 2011).

3.2.1. Traditional Literature Review and Its Pitfalls

Traditional literature review techniques draw on two pillars: bibliographic analysis and interpretative analysis conducted within the researcher's disciplinary community. Bibliographic analysis includes critical evaluation of scientific articles and monographs, which historically function as milestones in the academic life cycle—doctoral dissertations, habilitation monographs and professorial books. However, traditional literature reviews frequently exhibit methodological flaws, including:

- a tendency to discuss prior findings before articulating the research question, resulting in essayistic rather than rigorous argumentation,
- failure to identify all relevant literature, leading to fragmentation and incompleteness,

- vague criteria for inclusion or exclusion of publications, creating interpretative ambiguity,
- uncritical citation of studies without assessing their methodological quality, increasing the risk of selective or arbitrary interpretation (Czakon, 2015).

These shortcomings are compounded by inherent characteristics of scientific development:

- accrual (knowledge evolves unevenly, influenced by fashions and dominant paradigms),
- branching (the same phenomenon is studied from diverse perspectives),
- fragmentation (multiple small subfields with limited integration),
- methodicalness (the need to follow reproducible procedural steps) (Czakon, 2011, 2015; Combs, 2010).

To ensure methodological rigour in literature research, it is essential to recognise these characteristics and adopt procedures that reduce bias. Niemczyk (2009) emphasises that in management science, reliability is a function of rigour, defined through accuracy, clarity and transparency in methodological decisions.

3.2.2. Systematic Literature Review (SLR): A Response to Fragmentation

Growing concerns about methodological reliability have led to the increasing adoption of systematic literature review (SLR) methodologies. SLR follows a transparent, replicable and verifiable protocol comprising four phases and seven stages (Czakon, 2015):

- Phase I: defining the purpose of the review.
- Phase II:
  1. identifying primary literature,
  2. selecting relevant publications,
  3. building the database.
- Phase III:
  1. bibliometric analysis,
  2. content analysis.
- Phase IV: preparing the research report.

Digitisation and open access to electronic databases—EBSCO, ProQuest, Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar—have greatly expanded access to literature and enabled large-scale, data-driven evaluation. Yet, the abundance of digital sources also increases the difficulty of selection, making transparent inclusion criteria essential (Czakon, 2015).

A systematic review relies on descriptive bibliometric techniques (e.g., publication dynamics, citation analysis) and qualitative content analysis. The former allow researchers to assess the developmental stage of a research area—emergence, growth, maturity or decline—based on publication trends (Czakon, 2015). Citation analysis highlights seminal contributions and reveals how disciplinary communities construct knowledge around shared references (Jourdan et al., 2008).

Content analysis, in turn, must do more than identify thematic patterns. It requires assessing the methodological quality of publications based on criteria such as clarity of purpose, contextual relevance, sampling, robustness of data and generalisability. Only then can researchers identify cognitive gaps and determine the direction of future research (Czakon, 2015; Oliver, Ebers, 1998).

3.2.3. Bibliometrics and Scientometrics in Contemporary Management Research

Recent advances demonstrate a shift towards bibliometric and scientometric methods as tools for enhancing methodological rigour and overcoming the limitations of traditional narrative reviews. Bibliometric approaches enable transparent, replicable and quantitatively grounded mapping of research fields.

For instance, Kwilinski (2023) employs bibliometric analysis to reveal the intellectual structure connecting sustainable development and digital transformation, identifying emerging clusters, underexplored intersections and methodological gaps. Similarly, Kwilinski (2024b) conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global research on green energy and green investment, demonstrating how large-scale data analytics can illuminate dominant research fronts, thematic evolution and knowledge fragmentation. These examples illustrate how bibliometric techniques strengthen reliability, facilitate the detection of research gaps and support methodological clarity in interdisciplinary fields.

Moreover, the increasing importance of digital databases aligns with broader trends in management research, where methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity create both opportunities and challenges. Scientometric techniques allow researchers to systematically navigate large volumes of dispersed literature and to construct structured, evidence-based foundations for further theorising.

3.2.4. Database Development, Keyword Strategies and Analytical Procedures

Constructing the primary literature database is one of the most critical stages of SLR. It requires defining the object of study—analogous to sampling in empirical research (Czakon, 2015). The initial search is typically conducted using author-supplied keywords (AKW) and index keywords (KW). However, the iterative nature of keyword refinement means that researchers must balance breadth and precision.

Czakon (2015) identifies four groups of keyword strategies:

- auxiliary concepts, used when the topic intersects multiple categories,
- variables, given that titles increasingly specify dependent and independent variables,
- methodological descriptors, useful but restrictive,
- empirical context, essential in fields such as sustainability, energy studies and digital transformation.

The database is subsequently cleaned using exclusion criteria, duplicate removal and abstract screening. Stratification of publications into: (1) directly relevant, (2) partially relevant, and (3) marginally relevant helps narrow the dataset to items that genuinely advance the research objective.

3.2.5. From Analysis to Synthesis

Bibliometric procedures provide quantitative characterisation—publication trends, citation patterns, thematic clusters—while content analysis delivers qualitative insights necessary for constructing theoretical synthesis. As Czakon (2015) and Jourdan et al. (2008) note, neither approach is sufficient in isolation; their integration is essential for identifying dominant perspectives, research gaps and methodological inconsistencies.

Finally, the reporting stage culminates in the synthesis of findings and their integration into a coherent narrative that can guide empirical inquiry or theoretical development.

3.3. Originality in Research

Originality constitutes a critical accelerator of scientific knowledge and a defining element of a researcher's competence and academic identity. Importantly, scientific originality must not be conflated with everyday notions of "being original", as the latter typically refers to unconventional behaviour or personal distinctiveness. Scientific originality functions differently: it pertains to the intellectual contribution made by the researcher and to the methodological and conceptual means through which this contribution is achieved (Strużyna, 2015).

In the social sciences, the pursuit of originality can be understood through three primary pathways (Strużyna, 2015):

1. The traditional scheme, in which the researcher situates the problem in the present and extends what is already known.
2. Problematisation, which involves questioning prevailing assumptions, challenging existing explanations and opening new analytical spaces.
3. The search for original obviousness, which entails returning to the fundamental origins of a problem and reinterpreting its primary assumptions.

Among these, the second pathway tends to generate the most influential contributions, receiving favourable evaluation from global scientific publishers and supporting the cumulative development of management theory (Strużyna, 2015). This approach aligns closely with Dubin's (1987) view that theoretical advancement emerges from proposing new answers to the foundational questions: what?, how?, and why?—each representing a distinct dimension of conceptual enrichment.

3.3.1. Forms and Criteria of Original Contribution

Within management sciences, the "what?" question holds particular significance but is especially difficult to satisfy due to the field's interdisciplinary and rapidly evolving character. Strużyna (2015) identifies five principal forms of original contribution:

1. Introducing new elements into existing constructs, such as incorporating emerging social phenomena or technological developments. To qualify as scientific originality, such additions must:

- modify the interpretative picture of the original construct (Czakon, 2005),
- clearly justify the necessity and relevance of the supplementation (Dooley, Van de Ven, 1999),
- engage with contemporary debates on the limitations of well-established theories,
- avoid blurring the conceptual boundaries of the original model,
- contribute more than subjective impressions of theoretical insufficiency.

2. Developing new concepts. Proposals can be regarded as original only if they:
   - enable comprehension by a wider scholarly community, not solely by the author,
   - simplify existing conceptual complexities,
   - or alternatively, introduce more sophisticated complexity that advances theoretical reasoning. Importantly, not every novel insight evolves into a coherent or meaningful theoretical construct.
3. Creating synergies between management knowledge and other disciplines, which requires a deep understanding of both fields and a clear demonstration of how interdisciplinary integration advances management theory.
4. Assessing the influence of management sub-disciplines on broader management theory, with originality becoming most evident when results extend, refine or reframe existing theoretical foundations rather than remaining confined to narrow subfields.
5. Building new management theory on the foundations of other theories. This can occur through:
   - developing a wholly new framework for management (rare in practice),
   - incremental theorising supported by leading academic institutions,
   - or adapting theories from other disciplines.

Researchers must therefore distinguish between mere compilation and the scientifically valuable practices of eclecticism and bricolage (Boxenbaum, Rouleau, 2011).

Notably, prioritising originality does not necessarily imply striving for entirely new theories. In many cases, designing a precise and meaningful extension of an existing theory offers far greater scientific value and a higher probability of scholarly acceptance (Strużyna, 2015).

3.3.2. Theoretical Foundations for Evaluating Originality

The search for originality requires acknowledging that a theory represents not simply a set of abstract concepts but a structured relationship between variables (Homans, 1964). Consequently, answering the "what?" must be complemented by coherent responses to the "how?" and the "why?". This triadic logic ensures the consistency, explanatory power and theoretical robustness of new contributions.

Strużyna (2015) proposes a structured procedure for producing original theoretical work:

1. Conducting in-depth analysis of existing theories, including interdisciplinary knowledge and practical insights.
2. Identifying a substantive knowledge gap.
3. Designing a concept aimed at filling that gap.
4. Evaluating the originality and significance of the proposed contribution.
5. Generalising findings and recognising their relations with other scientific fields.
6. Institutionalising original results through dissemination and theoretical consolidation.

3.3.3. Problematisation as a Method for Constructing Originality

Problematisation represents a deliberate, methodical and rational approach to constructing research questions. It operates not by following the natural evolution of ideas but by creating contrast between existing assumptions and alternative possibilities (Strużyna, 2015).

Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) warn, however, that excessive or unreflective problematisation can become dysfunctional, generating conceptual confusion or undermining the positive function of science. They therefore advocate embedding problematisation within a broader academic process that maintains equilibrium between novelty and convention.

A rigorous problematisation programme begins with two focal questions:

1. Which assumptions materially shape existing debates?
2. How can these assumptions be revealed, articulated and challenged to produce more compelling theories?

Assumptions can be clustered into five categories (Alvesson, Sandberg, 2011):

- internal assumptions,
- source metaphors,
- paradigmatic assumptions,
- ideological assumptions,
- field assumptions.

To operationalise problematisation, Strużyna (2015) proposes the following steps:

- identifying the relevant field of literature,
- identifying implicit assumptions within that field,
- evaluating their validity,
- developing alternative assumptions,
- analysing the alternatives against the expectations of their scientific audiences,
- evaluating the viability of the new assumptions.

Strużyna (2015) additionally emphasises the "social obviousness of the need"—the idea that problematisation must correspond to real research needs arising within the scientific community.

3.3.4. The Social Dimension of Originality

Weick (1989, 2005) argues that originality in the social sciences is inherently shaped by academic power structures. The acceptance of theoretical propositions depends not only on their logical coherence or empirical grounding but also on the social rules determining which contributions are considered credible, persuasive or interesting.

Thus, the advancement of theory occurs not simply through verification of truth but through the institutionalised reinforcement of new relations and ideas that scholars come to perceive as meaningful. Weick (1989, 2005) notes that academic discourse frequently relies on evaluative terms – such as "interesting", "obvious", "absurd" or "meaningless" – that reflect a blend of cognitive judgement and social negotiation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this conceptual analysis highlight a series of structural tensions and methodological challenges that continue to shape the development of management research. The first concerns the persistent debate between empirical and deductive approaches. Although contemporary management studies routinely employ empirical procedures – from incomplete induction to case-based analyses (Niemczyk, 2011) – theoretical reasoning remains indispensable for structuring hypotheses and giving meaning to empirical observations. The integration of introspective, experiential and observational insights characteristic of social-science inquiry further complicates this relationship (Nowak, 2007). As Wójcicki (1987) notes, empirical theories inevitably acquire deductive properties once their central assumptions are logically articulated. Thus, methodological effectiveness in management research depends not on privileging either empiricism or deduction, but on recognising that both approaches mutually constrain and enable one another.

A second tension arises from the coexistence of nomothetic and idiographic perspectives. While nomothetic designs emphasise experimentation, surveys and correlation to identify general patterns, idiographic approaches – particularly case studies informed by interpretative reasoning – provide insight into unique and complex organisational phenomena (Chełpa, 2002; Thomae, 1999). In management sciences, where problems are context-dependent and shaped by heterogeneous organisational conditions, both perspectives offer important but partial contributions. As Krzyżanowski (1999) observes, the interdisciplinary nature of management science prevents the field from relying on a unified methodological toolkit. Rather, the researcher must navigate competing epistemological logics to select a method that fits the research problem. This requirement reinforces the necessity of methodological reflexivity and the importance of aligning epistemological assumptions with the intended research outcome.

The growing popularity of triangulation reflects an attempt to overcome these limitations by employing multiple methodological procedures in a single inquiry. While triangulation increases the credibility and robustness of findings, Niemczyk (2011) warns that it also exposes researchers to significant risks, especially when methods are used without adequate competence. Misapplied triangulation may lead to methodological inconsistency, poor integration of results or superficial multi-method designs. The insight aligns with Dźwigoł's (2018) argument that methodological rigour requires precise knowledge of methodological differences, rather than merely expanding the number of methods employed.

A further methodological challenge concerns the quality of literature-based inquiry. The analysis demonstrates that traditional literature reviews are frequently compromised by fragmentation, incomplete sampling and unclear inclusion criteria (Czakon, 2011, 2015). Such weaknesses undermine transparency, hinder theory development and impede the identification of meaningful knowledge gaps. Although systematic literature reviews—characterised by staged procedures, sampling logic and quantitative descriptive techniques—address many of these concerns (Czakon, 2015), they also require advanced methodological competences, particularly in the selection of databases, the construction of search strategies and the evaluation of publication quality. The integration of bibliometric indicators with interpretative content analysis is therefore essential for avoiding superficial, metrics-driven reviews that fail to reflect substantive theoretical developments.

The analysis also reveals a structural gap relating to the conceptualisation and institutionalisation of originality in management studies. While originality is widely valued, its methodological grounding remains under-specified. Strużyna's (2015) typology of original contributions – ranging from new conceptual elements to interdisciplinary synergies – shows that originality is neither equivalent to novelty nor reducible to invention. Rather, it derives from the researcher's ability to meaningfully reframe existing constructs, articulate alternative assumptions and identify theoretically significant gaps. This perspective is reinforced by Dubin's (1987) assertion that originality emerges from new propositions addressing the core theoretical questions: what, how and why. However, Weick's (1989, 2005) observations regarding the social construction of scholarly credibility remind us that originality is evaluated within academic power structures. Hence, problematisation (Alvesson, Sandberg, 2011) becomes not only a methodological tool but also a social process through which assumptions are questioned, alternatives constructed and theoretical relevance negotiated.

Together, these tensions point to a broader implication: methodological rigour in management research cannot be secured by any single epistemological orientation, literature review technique or originality criterion. Instead, it requires a combination of three interdependent forms of reasoning:

1. Empirical reasoning, which provides evidence grounded in observation, induction and real-world organisational behaviour.
2. Literature-based reasoning, which locates research within existing knowledge, identifies conceptual gaps and ensures methodological transparency.
3. Originality-driven reasoning, which constructs new assumptions, reconfigures existing theories and advances the field.

The integration of these reasoning modes supports a more reflexive methodological culture – one that acknowledges the complexity of management phenomena and the evolving expectations of scholarly communities. This synthesis offers the strongest foundation for theory-building, allowing researchers to navigate epistemological plurality without sacrificing transparency, precision or credibility.

Although the present study offers a comprehensive conceptual examination of methodological issues in management research, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, due to its conceptual nature, the analysis does not aim to empirically test the identified methodological tensions. Rather, it synthesises insights from existing epistemological and methodological literature (e.g., Czakon, 2011, 2015; Dźwigoł, 2018; Strużyna, 2015). This reliance on secondary sources means that some nuances present in empirical studies—particularly those illustrating the practical consequences of methodological choices—may not be fully captured. Future empirical investigations could therefore validate and refine the conceptual propositions advanced here.

Second, the review draws primarily on theoretical and methodological contributions within European and Polish traditions of management science (e.g., Niemczyk, 2011; Krzyżanowski, 1999; Nowak, 2007). While these perspectives offer significant analytical value, they may reflect specific intellectual traditions, institutional norms and disciplinary assumptions. The inclusion of broader international methodological debates—especially those prevalent in Anglo-American, Scandinavian or Asian management scholarship—could further enrich the analysis and help identify additional patterns of methodological pluralism.

Third, although systematic literature review methodology is discussed extensively, this study does not perform a full systematic review itself. Instead, it evaluates the methodological principles and risks associated with traditional and systematic approaches. As Czakon (2015) notes, the effectiveness of systematic reviews depends on carefully structured procedures, database selection and search strategies. These components were intentionally not executed here, as the aim of the paper is conceptual rather than empirical. Nevertheless, future research might apply the full systematic review procedure to test the typologies and methodological claims developed in this study.

Fourth, the analysis of originality and problematisation relies on conceptual frameworks proposed by Strużyna (2015), Dubin (1987), Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), and Weick (1989, 2005). While these frameworks are intellectually robust, their application in management science varies significantly across subdisciplines. The practical processes through which

originality is socially constructed – shaped by academic hierarchies, reviewer expectations and disciplinary paradigms – require additional empirical inquiry, particularly through interviews with researchers, editorial board members or reviewers.

Finally, triangulation is identified as a valuable yet potentially risky methodological strategy (Niemczyk, 2011). However, this study does not evaluate specific triangulation designs or analyse cases where triangulation has succeeded or failed. Future work could map the use of triangulation across management research fields and assess the competencies, epistemological alignment and integration strategies that determine its success.

Overall, these limitations do not diminish the value of the study; rather, they clarify its conceptual scope and identify pathways for future empirical and methodological development.

5. Summary

Management science, situated within the broader domain of economic sciences, continues to navigate a distinctive methodological tension arising from its dual utilitarian and theoretical-normative orientation. As Niemczyk (2015) notes, the discipline must simultaneously accommodate nomothetic ambitions—deriving generalisations even from individual cases—and idiographic objectives aimed at understanding singular organisational phenomena in depth. This methodological duality reflects the epistemological plurality that characterises contemporary management research.

The findings of this study indicate that traditional methodological models are increasingly insufficient for addressing the challenges posed by interdisciplinary expansion, globalisation and the growing specialisation of management sciences. As Niemczyk (2015) and Czakon (2015) observe, the demand for methodological rigour now centres on transparency, replicability and analytically defendable procedures – qualities that are not always present in conventional narrative approaches. Systematic literature review techniques, bibliometric methods and hybrid research designs therefore emerge as valuable tools for enhancing methodological robustness, provided they are applied with epistemological awareness and procedural discipline.

Across the conceptual landscape discussed in this paper, one theme recurs consistently: the centrality of originality to scientific progress. Strużyna (2015) emphasises that originality is neither a stylistic flourish nor novelty for its own sake, but a structured process grounded in thorough engagement with existing knowledge. Whether originality is pursued through incremental elaboration of established constructs, through problematisation, or through the identification of "original obviousness", the initial step invariably involves a rigorous assessment of prior research. Reliability in recognising the existing state of knowledge enables

researchers to evaluate prior assessments, refine theoretical propositions and address cognitive gaps with clarity and conceptual precision.

Furthermore, the analysis confirms that originality in management science is inseparable from methodological reflexivity. The construction of novel theoretical contributions depends on consciously articulated assumptions, critical engagement with dominant paradigms and an awareness of the social processes shaping academic legitimacy (Strużyna, 2015; Alvesson, Sandberg, 2011; Weick, 1989, 2005). In this sense, methodological choices serve not only technical functions but also constitute a central mechanism for shaping the epistemic identity of the discipline.

Taken together, the study demonstrates that methodological rigour in management research cannot be reduced to the selection of a particular method, paradigm or analytical technique. Rather, it emerges from the deliberate alignment between epistemological assumptions, research objectives and methodological choices; from the transparent articulation of research procedures; and from the thoughtful integration of empirical insight, literature-based inquiry and originality. As the management sciences continue to evolve amid increasing complexity, methodological reflexivity and rigorous problematisation will play a decisive role in ensuring that research in the field remains relevant, credible and capable of generating meaningful theoretical contributions.

The analysis presented in this study points to several avenues for future research that may significantly advance methodological development in management sciences.

First, further inquiry is required into the epistemological integration of deductive, inductive and empirical approaches. As Niemczyk (2011) and Dźwigoł (2018) highlight, methodological fragmentation persists, and researchers frequently rely on one dominant paradigm while neglecting complementary perspectives. Future studies should therefore explore hybrid methodological frameworks capable of capturing the multidimensionality of organisational phenomena without sacrificing epistemological coherence.

Second, research is needed to enhance the methodological rigour of literature reviews. Although systematic review procedures have become increasingly recognised (Czakon, 2015), empirical evidence suggests that scholars still struggle with selection bias, insufficient transparency and inadequate quality assessment. Further work could examine how digitalisation, open-access databases and emerging bibliometric tools influence review quality, replicability and methodological clarity. Bibliometric mapping approaches (e.g., Kwilinski, 2023, 2024b) may be particularly promising for strengthening evidence-based literature synthesis and identifying emerging research fronts.

Third, there is considerable scope for developing more structured models of originality in management research. While Strużyna (2015), Dubin (1987), and Weick (1989, 2005) offer important foundations, the operationalisation of originality as a research construct remains under-theorised. Future studies could investigate how originality is institutionally assessed within academic communities, how problematisation (Alvesson, Sandberg, 2011) can be

systematically embedded into research programmes, and how interdisciplinary knowledge recombination contributes to theory advancement.

Fourth, the growing complexity of management practice calls for deeper examination of idiographic methods. Despite their recognised value for understanding singular organisational contexts (Chełpa, 2002; Thomae, 1999), idiographic approaches remain underutilised. Future research may evaluate how case studies, qualitative designs and interpretive methodologies can be integrated with quantitative and nomothetic procedures in a structured and methodologically defensible manner.

Finally, further investigations should address the risks associated with methodological triangulation. While triangulation is widely recommended for its potential to enhance credibility and completeness (Nowak, 2007; Niemczyk, 2011), inappropriate or unskilled application of multiple methods may introduce incoherence rather than strengthen findings. Future studies might develop guidance for competence-based triangulation, outlining the skills, epistemic awareness and procedural safeguards required to use triangulation effectively.

Collectively, these directions underscore the need for continued methodological innovation and reflexive research practice. Advancing methodological pluralism, improving review transparency and deepening conceptualisations of originality will be essential for strengthening the scientific foundations and societal relevance of management research.

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