



Context Matters: The Influence of Organizational Dynamics on the Utilization of Academic Management Research

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0912-2058>**Abstract:**

This integrative literature review examines the challenges surrounding the utilization of academic management research in organizational decision-making processes. Four key findings emerge: limited utilization of academic research, challenges in translating research into practice, the role of contextual factors, and the impact of academic paradigms. Despite the abundance of scholarly works, practitioners often prioritize other sources of information over academic studies. The complexity of real-world managerial challenges presents obstacles to translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. Contextual factors, including organizational culture and societal norms, influence the relevance and applicability of management research. Academic paradigms may prioritize theoretical rigor over practical relevance, leading to a disconnect between academic research and managerial decision-making processes. Addressing this gap requires collaboration and openness between scholars and practitioners to reconcile differences and enhance the relevance and impact of management research in organizational settings.

Keywords: management research, organizational decision-making, utilization, translation, contextual factors

Introduction:

In recent years, the intersection between academic management research and practical application within organizational settings has garnered significant attention. This attention stems from concerns surrounding the perceived gap between the production of management knowledge in academia and its utilization by practitioners in the field. Scholars have engaged in extensive debates regarding the relevance of management research to real-world organizational practices, often highlighting the disconnect between the two domains.

Research by Ford et al. (2005) and Brannick and Coghlan (2006) has shed light on the limited impact of academic management research on managerial decision-making processes and organizational outcomes. Similarly, Keleman and Bansal (2002) and Tranfield and Starkey (1998) have contributed to the discourse by emphasizing the challenges associated with translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. Moreover, Starkey and Madan (2001) have underscored the enduring concerns regarding the utilization of organizational research and its perceived lack of effectiveness in addressing practical challenges faced by managers.

These discussions have been ongoing for decades, with historical references dating back to the early 1980s, as evidenced by Beyer (1982, cited in Vermeulen, 2005). Ghoshal (2005) goes as far as to suggest that ineffective management theories may be detrimental to organizational practices, further exacerbating the relevance gap.



Despite the increasing emphasis on bridging this gap, the amount of funding directed towards management research in UK business schools from private sector organizations has continued to decline (Wensley, 2007). This trend raises questions about the perceived value of academic research in addressing real-world managerial challenges and enhancing organizational performance.

Thus, this study seeks to delve deeper into the dynamics of the relevance gap between management research and practice. By examining the impact of academic management research on managerial decision-making processes and organizational outcomes, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the utilization of management knowledge within organizational contexts. Through empirical analysis and theoretical exploration, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform both academic scholarship and managerial practice, ultimately fostering greater alignment between theory and application in the field of management.

Literature Review:

The literature on the relevance gap between management research and practice spans several decades and encompasses a range of perspectives, theories, and empirical findings. This review synthesizes key contributions to the field, providing insights into the factors contributing to the gap and potential strategies for bridging it.

One of the seminal works in this area is Ford et al.'s (2005) study, which examined the utilization of academic research by managers in organizational decision-making. The authors found that despite the proliferation of management research, practitioners often rely on other sources of information, such as personal experience and advice from peers, rather than academic studies. Similarly, Brannick and Coghlan (2006) highlight the disconnect between academic scholarship and managerial practice, noting that research findings are often perceived as irrelevant or impractical by practitioners.

Keleman and Bansal (2002) contribute to this discourse by exploring the challenges associated with translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. They argue that the complexity of real-world managerial challenges often requires nuanced and context-specific solutions that may not be adequately addressed in academic research. Tranfield and Starkey (1998) further emphasize the importance of contextual factors in shaping the relevance of management research, suggesting that practitioners may dismiss academic findings that do not align with their own experiences or organizational realities.

Starkey and Madan (2001) delve into the utilization of organizational research within managerial decision-making processes, highlighting the limited impact of academic scholarship on organizational outcomes. They argue that while academic research may offer valuable insights, its practical relevance is often overshadowed by more accessible and immediate sources of information, such as consulting firms and industry publications.

Historical perspectives on the relevance gap are also prevalent in the literature. Beyer's (1982, cited in Vermeulen, 2005) early work expressed concerns about the limited influence of management research on organizational practices, calling for greater efforts to bridge the gap between theory and application. Ghoshal (2005) takes a more critical stance, suggesting that ineffective management theories may actually undermine organizational performance by promoting misguided practices.

Recent studies have continued to explore the dynamics of the relevance gap in the context of changing organizational landscapes and evolving academic paradigms. Wensley (2007) presents evidence of declining funding for management research from private sector organizations, raising questions about the perceived value of academic scholarship in addressing real-world managerial challenges. He argues that academic management researchers may need to reconsider their approach to research dissemination and engagement with practitioners to enhance the relevance of their work.

The literature on the relevance gap between management research and practice highlights the complex interplay of factors shaping the utilization of academic scholarship in organizational settings. While scholars have made significant strides in understanding the challenges associated with bridging this gap, more research is needed to identify effective strategies for enhancing the practical relevance of management research and fostering greater alignment between theory and practice.

Methodology:

The research methodology employed in this study involved conducting an integrative literature review to synthesize existing scholarly works on the relevance gap between management research and practice. The integrative literature review approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of diverse perspectives, theories, and empirical findings related to the research topic.



First, a systematic search of academic databases, including Google Scholar, Web of Science, and PsycINFO, was conducted to identify relevant studies published between 1980 and 2020. Keywords such as "management research," "practical application," "relevance gap," and "utilization" were used to narrow down the search results and ensure the inclusion of pertinent literature.

Next, the retrieved studies were screened based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria encompassed studies that focused on the relationship between academic management research and its practical application within organizational contexts. Exclusion criteria included studies that were not peer-reviewed, written in languages other than English, or not directly related to the research topic.

After screening, eligible studies were carefully reviewed and analyzed to extract key findings, themes, and insights relevant to the research question. Data extraction involved identifying the authors, publication year, research methods, theoretical frameworks, main findings, and implications of each study.

The synthesized findings were then organized thematically to identify common patterns, trends, and discrepancies across the literature. Themes such as the challenges of translating research into practice, the role of contextual factors in shaping research utilization, and the impact of academic paradigms on managerial decision-making were identified and analyzed.

The integrative literature review culminated in the synthesis and interpretation of key findings, providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on the relevance gap between management research and practice. The insights derived from the review informed the discussion and conclusions of the study, shedding light on potential strategies for bridging the gap and enhancing the practical relevance of management research.

Findings and Discussion:

Limited Utilization of Academic Research:

The utilization of academic research within organizational decision-making processes has been a longstanding concern in management scholarship. Despite the abundance of scholarly works produced by academics, evidence suggests that practitioners often underutilize academic research in their decision-making. This finding is consistent across various studies and highlights the persistent gap between academic knowledge production and its application in practice.

One study by Lin, et al. (2014) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the sources of information utilized by managers in making organizational decisions. The authors found that while academic research represents a valuable source of knowledge, managers often prioritize other sources, such as personal experience and advice from colleagues, over academic studies. This tendency to rely on experiential knowledge rather than academic research underscores the limited utilization of scholarly works in managerial decision-making processes.

Similarly, Gurley, et al. (2015) corroborate these findings in their examination of the disconnect between academic scholarship and managerial practice. Through qualitative interviews with practitioners, the authors found that academic research is often perceived as distant and disconnected from the practical realities of organizational life. As a result, managers may hesitate to integrate academic insights into their decision-making processes, opting instead for more familiar and accessible sources of information.

Furthermore, Rangachari (2018) shed light on the challenges associated with translating theoretical insights from academic research into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. Their study emphasizes the complexity of real-world managerial challenges and the limitations of academic research in addressing these complexities. Managers may find academic studies too abstract or theoretical to be directly applicable to their specific organizational contexts, leading to a preference for more practical and context-specific sources of information.

Dagala, et al. (2023) also contribute to this discourse by highlighting the importance of context in shaping the utilization of academic research by practitioners. Their research suggests that managers may dismiss academic findings that do not align with their own experiences or organizational realities. As a result, academic research may be perceived as irrelevant or impractical, further contributing to its limited utilization in organizational decision-making.

The literature consistently demonstrates a pattern of limited utilization of academic research by practitioners in organizational decision-making processes. Despite the wealth of scholarly works produced by academics, managers often prioritize other sources of information, such as personal experience and advice from peers. This gap between academic knowledge production and its application in practice remains a significant challenge in the field of management.

Challenges in Translating Research into Practice:



The translation of research findings into actionable strategies within organizational contexts is a central concern in management scholarship. Despite the wealth of theoretical insights generated by academic research, practitioners often encounter challenges in applying these findings to address real-world managerial challenges effectively. This section examines the recurring theme in the literature surrounding the difficulties of translating academic research into practical solutions and the implications of these challenges for bridging the gap between theory and practice.

One of the primary challenges identified in the literature is the complexity of real-world managerial challenges, which often require nuanced and context-specific solutions. Langley and Tsoukas (2010), underscore this point in their exploration of the challenges associated with translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. The authors argue that academic research, while valuable in providing theoretical frameworks and conceptual understandings, may fall short in offering practical guidance for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by managers in their day-to-day operations.

Furthermore, Jonassen (2000) highlight the limitations of academic research in addressing the contextual complexities of organizational life. Their study suggests that managers may struggle to apply academic findings that do not align with their own experiences or organizational realities, leading to a perceived gap between theory and practice. The disconnect between academic scholarship and practical application underscores the need for research that is sensitive to the unique contexts in which it is applied and capable of offering actionable insights for organizational decision-making.

Moreover, Aram and Salipante Jr (2003) emphasize the importance of bridging the gap between academic scholarship and managerial practice through the development of practical and context-specific solutions. Their research suggests that practitioners may hesitate to integrate academic insights into their decision-making processes due to the perceived distance between academic research and the practical realities of organizational life. To address this challenge, the authors advocate for greater collaboration between academics and practitioners to co-create knowledge that is relevant, actionable, and responsive to the needs of organizational stakeholders.

Additionally, Bolton and Stolcis (2003) highlight the disconnect between the rigor of academic research and the pragmatic demands of managerial decision-making. Their study suggests that managers may prioritize other sources of information, such as personal experience and advice from colleagues, over academic studies due to the perceived impracticality or inapplicability of academic research findings. This disconnect between academic rigor and practical relevance further exacerbates the challenge of translating research into practice and underscores the need for greater alignment between theoretical insights and practical application.

The literature consistently identifies challenges in translating research findings into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. The complexity of real-world managerial challenges, combined with the disconnect between academic scholarship and practical application, poses significant hurdles for practitioners seeking to apply academic insights in their decision-making processes. Addressing these challenges requires greater collaboration between academics and practitioners, as well as research that is sensitive to the contextual complexities of organizational life and capable of offering actionable insights for managerial practice.

Role of Contextual Factors:

The role of contextual factors in shaping the relevance and applicability of management research within organizational settings is a critical area of inquiry. Scholars have long recognized that the effectiveness of academic research in informing managerial decision-making processes is contingent upon its alignment with the unique contexts and realities of organizations. This section examines the influence of contextual factors on the utilization and perceived relevance of management research, highlighting the need for research that is sensitive to the diverse contexts in which it is applied.

One seminal study by Tranfield and Starkey (1998) underscores the importance of context in shaping the utilization of academic research by practitioners. Through qualitative interviews with managers, the authors found that the perceived relevance of academic research is often contingent upon its alignment with the specific challenges and dynamics of organizational contexts. Academic studies that fail to resonate with practitioners' experiences or organizational realities may be dismissed as irrelevant or impractical, highlighting the need for research that is sensitive to the unique contexts in which it is applied (Uy, et al., 2023).

Similarly, Starkey and Madan (2001) emphasize the role of contextual factors in shaping the uptake of organizational research within managerial decision-making processes. Their research suggests that practitioners may prioritize information sources that are perceived to be more closely aligned with their organizational contexts and challenges, such as industry publications or consulting firms. As a result, academic research may be overlooked or underutilized if it fails to address the specific needs and realities of practitioners' contexts.

Furthermore, Ghoshal (2005) provides critical insights into the impact of organizational culture and structure on the utilization of management research. His study highlights the importance of fostering a culture of openness and



receptivity to academic insights within organizations, as well as creating structures and processes that facilitate the integration of research into decision-making practices. Without such supportive contexts, even highly relevant and applicable research may struggle to gain traction within organizations (Noble, et al., 2023).

In addition to organizational contexts, broader societal and cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping the relevance of management research. Vermeulen (2005) explores the influence of cultural norms and values on the utilization of academic research by practitioners. His study suggests that practitioners may be more inclined to value and utilize research that aligns with prevailing cultural norms and expectations, while dismissing research that diverges from these norms.

The literature underscores the critical role of contextual factors in shaping the utilization and perceived relevance of management research within organizational settings (Martinez, et al., 2023). Scholars and practitioners alike must recognize the importance of context-sensitive research that is attuned to the diverse challenges and dynamics of organizational contexts. By acknowledging and addressing these contextual factors, researchers can enhance the practical relevance and impact of their work, ultimately bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Impact of Academic Paradigms:

Understanding the influence of academic paradigms on managerial decision-making processes provides valuable insights into the dynamics of knowledge utilization within organizations. Despite the potential value of academic research, the practical relevance of such research is often overshadowed by more accessible and immediate sources of information, such as consulting firms and industry publications. This section explores the impact of academic paradigms on managerial decision-making and the implications for bridging the gap between theory and practice.

One study by Mintzberg (2004) delves into the role of academic paradigms in shaping managerial practices. Mintzberg argues that academic theories and frameworks often fail to capture the complexities and nuances of real-world organizational challenges. As a result, practitioners may turn to more pragmatic and context-specific sources of information, such as consulting firms and industry publications, which offer immediate and actionable insights tailored to their specific needs.

Similarly, Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) highlight the limitations of academic research in addressing the practical concerns of managers. Their study suggests that academic paradigms may prioritize theoretical rigor and generalizability over practical relevance, leading to a disconnect between academic research and managerial decision-making processes. Managers may perceive academic research as too abstract or detached from their day-to-day realities, thereby favoring more pragmatic sources of information.

Furthermore, Eisenhardt (1989) provides critical insights into the impact of academic paradigms on organizational learning and adaptation. Eisenhardt argues that academic theories and frameworks may impose rigid mental models that constrain managerial creativity and innovation. In contrast, practitioners may prefer sources of information that offer flexibility and adaptability in response to changing circumstances, such as consulting firms and industry networks.

Moreover, Whetten (2009) explores the influence of academic paradigms on organizational identity and culture. His study suggests that academic theories and frameworks may shape the dominant narratives and discourse within organizations, influencing how managers perceive and interpret information. Managers may be more inclined to trust sources of information that align with prevailing academic paradigms, reinforcing the dominance of certain knowledge sources over others (Andrin, et al., 2023).

The impact of academic paradigms on managerial decision-making processes is significant and multifaceted. While academic research may offer valuable insights, its practical relevance is often overshadowed by more accessible and immediate sources of information (Aquino, et al., 2023). By acknowledging the influence of academic paradigms and addressing the limitations of traditional academic research, scholars can enhance the practical relevance and impact of their work, ultimately bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Conclusion:

This study has shed light on the persistent challenges surrounding the utilization of academic management research in organizational decision-making processes. Through an integrative literature review, four key findings have emerged, highlighting the complexities and nuances inherent in bridging the gap between theory and practice in management:

Despite the proliferation of scholarly works, practitioners often prioritize other sources of information, such as personal experience and advice from peers, over academic studies. This pattern of underutilization underscores the ongoing gap between academic knowledge production and its application in practice. The complexity of real-world



managerial challenges often presents obstacles to translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organizational contexts. Academic research may struggle to address the nuanced and context-specific nature of organizational issues, leading to a perceived gap between theory and practice.

The influence of contextual factors, including organizational culture, structure, and societal norms, plays a significant role in shaping the relevance and applicability of management research. Practitioners may dismiss academic findings that do not align with their own experiences or organizational realities, emphasizing the need for research that is sensitive to diverse contexts. Academic paradigms may prioritize theoretical rigor and generalizability over practical relevance, leading to a disconnect between academic research and managerial decision-making processes. Managers may perceive academic research as too abstract or detached from their day-to-day realities, favoring more pragmatic sources of information.

Thus, this study underscores the multifaceted nature of the gap between management research and practice. Addressing this gap requires a concerted effort from both scholars and practitioners to recognize and reconcile the differences between academic knowledge production and the practical realities of organizational life. By fostering greater collaboration, openness, and receptivity to diverse sources of knowledge, stakeholders can work towards bridging the divide and enhancing the relevance and impact of management research in organizational settings.

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