

# Crafting Constructive Critique in Management Research: A Structured Approach

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*The peer-review process is a cornerstone of academic scholarship, ensuring the integrity, rigor, and relevance of published research. However, the efficacy of this process is contingent upon the reviewers' ability to provide constructive and insightful critiques. This paper proposes a holistic framework aimed at equipping reviewers of management journals with a structured approach to evaluating empirical and conceptual research papers. Drawing from established methodologies in academic writing and critical analysis, the framework outlines key dimensions for assessment, including methodological rigor, theoretical contributions, empirical robustness, and conceptual coherence. It underscores the importance of fostering a developmental review process that enhances research quality and advances knowledge in the field of management and organization studies.*

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## Introduction

The critique of research papers by reviewers serves as the basis for advancing knowledge (Smith, 2018). The practice of peer review in academic publishing can be traced to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with the establishment of the first scholarly journal, which sought to enhance editorial decision-making and ensure the integrity of published research (Brewis, 2018). As these journals emerged as a medium for scholarly discourse, mechanisms for authentication became necessary, prompting learned societies and academies to implement peer review as a means of maintaining public confidence in academic knowledge (Day, 2011). Traditionally, critiques of research papers have followed a somewhat ad-hoc approach, guided by the individual preferences, expertise, and biases of reviewers (Thompson, 2017). While this subjective evaluation can offer valuable insights, it also introduces inconsistencies and potential blind spots, hindering the overall advancement of knowledge (Adams, 2021).

Furthermore, the focus of critique has often been skewed toward identifying flaws or limitations rather than nurturing constructive dialogue (Brown & Lee, 2018). Therefore, despite its fundamental importance, the process of critique in a peer review process often lacks a standardized framework, leading to variations in the depth, breadth, and quality of feedback provided (Johnson et al., 2020).

**Intervention by reviewers and editors often results in the publication of papers that make only incremental contributions to knowledge.**

The absence of a holistic framework for evaluating a manuscript sometimes gives rise to unjustified and persistent demands from the reviewers and editors, creating several doubts in the minds of authors. Researchers, especially the early career ones, often clamour that after multiple rounds of revision and preventable alterations, the originality of their manuscripts gets diminished and, at the same time, such a process introduces conceptual ambiguity (Brewis, 2018). A survey was conducted with informants who published their work in the Academy of Management Review (AMR) and the Academy of Management Journal (AMJ) (Bedeian, 2003). Nearly 25% of respondents felt compelled to implement revisions they fundamentally disagreed with. It has been noted that such excessive intervention by reviewers and editors often results in the publication of papers that make only incremental contributions to knowledge, likening them to

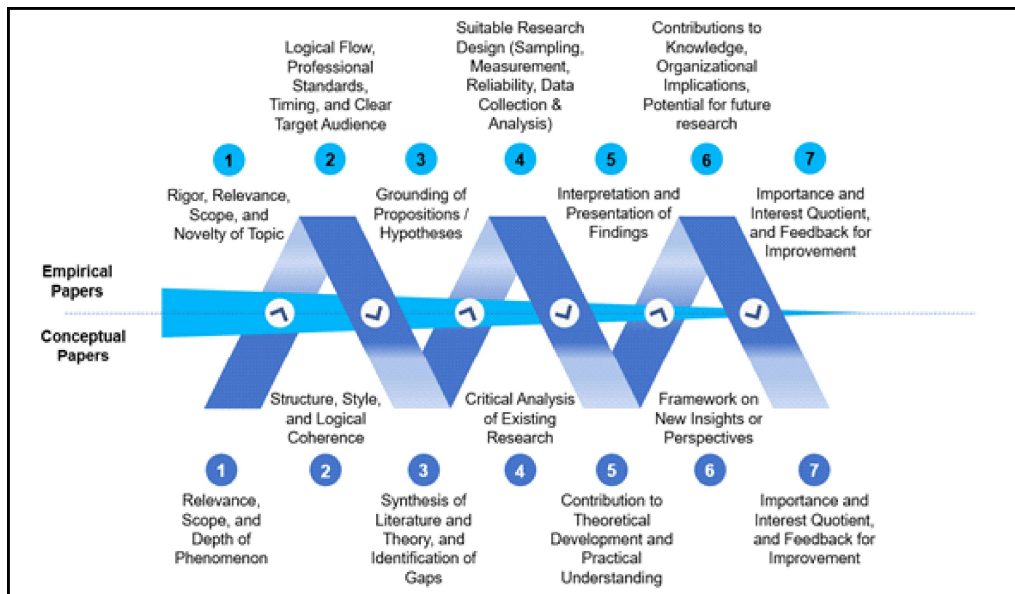
“vanilla pudding”—bland, familiar, and lacking substantive intellectual nourishment. Inconsistency in the review mechanism tends to dismiss certain substantial research labelling them as “messy, provocative, and envelope-pushing”, thereby reinforcing conservative tendencies in scholarly discourse (Nakata, 2003). However, it has become a compliance for authors to incorporate the views of the reviewers to safeguard their career success in terms of securing academic appointments, tenure, salary advancements, and promotions.

Consistent with the above perspective, scholars acknowledge that there exists a pressing need for a comprehensive framework that systematically guides the critique of conceptual and empirical research papers, especially in the field of management and organization studies because of inherent subjectivity (Davis & Smith, 2019). Such a framework would not only streamline the evaluation process but also promote consistency, rigor, and fairness in manuscript feedback provision (Wilson, 2020). This paper addresses this need by proposing a holistic framework for critiquing conceptual and empirical research papers in the management and organization studies domain. The proposed framework outlines essential dimensions of critique that aspire to improve the peer-review process, making it more constructive, equitable, and impactful. Fig. 1 illustrates the proposed framework that can be used to constructively critique a journal submission. For an empirical study, authors focus more on data and analysis, and hence, reviewers should critically assess

the sampling method, variables, operationalization, and generalizability or application of the results. For a conceptual article, synthesis of the literature, logical coherence, theoretical grounding, etc., become important. A comprehensive framework that can evaluate a paper

constructively shall help authors to get a realistic assessment of their work instead of biased and idiosyncratic feedback from reviewers. Also, such a framework can become handy for doctoral students and early-career researchers who wish to learn the art of reviewing.

**Fig. 1 Framework for Constructive Critique of Research Papers**



**Rigor, Relevance, Scope & Novelty of Topic**

The choice of the research topic is important in a way that it should have the potential to advance the field of study (Colquitt & George, 2011). The reviewers generally ask a set of questions to assess whether the topic of a submitted manuscript can foster readers’ curiosity such as: how novel is the topic? Is it interesting? Does it contribute adequately to the relevant domain? In other words, reviewers ensure that the selection of a research topic is a foundational determi-

nant of a study’s scholarly contribution and impact. An ill-conceived research topic can render even the most rigorous study inconsequential.

A rigorous research topic is not merely an interesting one but intellectually challenging and theoretically consequential. Reviewers should assess whether the research topic clearly articulates a research gap, emerges from a well-developed theoretical foundation, and demonstrates a logical extension or refinement of existing theories (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). While rigor

ensures the intellectual robustness of a research topic, relevance determines its practical significance. A highly relevant research topic addresses pressing issues in business and society while offering insights that are valuable to academics, practitioners, and policymakers. A purely theoretical research topic, without implications for practice, may struggle to justify its impact. Conversely, a topic that is overly practitioner-oriented without theoretical grounding risks being dismissed as lacking academic depth. Reviewers should ensure that the research topic strikes a balance between scholarly advancement and practical utility.

A well-defined research topic must have a clear and appropriate scope—neither too narrow to limit generalizability nor too broad to lack focus. The scope of a research topic defines the contextual and conceptual boundaries within which its contributions apply (Chandy et al., 2021). A well-scoped research topic provides clarity on its intended contribution while maintaining depth in analysis. Finally, a compelling research topic should introduce fresh perspectives, challenge existing assumptions, or explore emerging phenomena that have not been adequately studied. The institutionalization of impact factors in the 1960s shifted reviewers' priorities toward a paper's "citability" rather than its originality (Ortinou, 2011). There is also a trend to reinforce the dominance of established scholars within a particular field. We argue that genuinely novel topics are those that fill meaningful gaps in the literature rather than merely presenting unexplored but trivial questions (Colquitt & Zapata-

Phelan, 2007). Reviewers should ensure that submitted papers articulate what makes their research topic distinctive and valuable to the field.

### **Logical Flow, Professional Standards, Timing, and Clear Target Audience**

A high-quality manuscript in management research is not only defined by its research question or topic but also by how effectively it communicates its insights. Reviewers play a crucial role in ensuring that submissions adhere to essential scholarly standards, including logical flow, professional presentation, timely development of arguments, and clarity regarding the intended audience (Corley & Gioia, 2011). These elements collectively enhance the accessibility, impact, and scholarly value of a paper. Without them, even a theoretically sound, interesting, and novel study may struggle to gain traction in academic discourse.

**A manuscript lacking logical flow often presents fragmented arguments, forcing readers to reconstruct the author's intent rather than engaging with the content meaningfully.**

Logical flow refers to the seamless development of ideas throughout a manuscript, ensuring that arguments are coherent, internally consistent, and build progressively toward a meaningful conclusion (Grant & Pollock, 2011). A well-structured paper enables readers to follow the author's reasoning effortlessly,

making the research more compelling and impactful. A manuscript lacking logical flow often presents fragmented arguments, forcing readers to reconstruct the author's intent rather than engaging with the content meaningfully. Reviewers should provide feedback on structural weaknesses and suggest ways to enhance clarity and cohesion. Similarly, professional standards encompass multiple aspects of academic writing, including clarity, grammar, formatting, and citation accuracy. Poor writing and presentation can obscure valuable insights and reduce the paper's credibility. Manuscripts that fail to meet professional standards often require extensive revisions, delaying publication timelines.

Timing in academic writing refers to how contemporary is the research. A timely submission includes sufficient background of the research problem along with the rationale for taking the field forward. Reviewers should also consider a manuscript's intended audience as it dictates its framing, theoretical positioning, and practical implications. Authors must specify whether their research is aimed at academics, practitioners, policymakers, or a combination of these groups. Misalignment between content and audience expectations can diminish the paper's relevance and impact. An effective reviewer can accurately assess a manuscript's contribution and evaluate its alignment with the standards and aims of the target journal. Aligning the expectations of a journal with the submitting authors' vision can significantly reduce the variability of comments across reviewers.

### **Grounding of Propositions / Hypotheses**

An empirical paper should engage prior research (and not arbitrary literature) to construct its argument to avoid fragmented theorizing, frame hypotheses that are logically deduced from preceding paragraphs, and ensure the overall coherence of the hypotheses so that they do not surprise the reader (Sparrowe & Mayer, 2011). Propositions (or hypotheses) serve as the bridge between theoretical constructs and empirical validation, making their formulation a critical component of scholarly inquiry (Whetten, 1989). When well-grounded, they provide a logical, testable, and meaningful extension of existing knowledge. However, when poorly developed, they weaken a study's contribution, leading to theoretical ambiguity, empirical misalignment, and interpretational inconsistencies (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007).

Reviewers play a crucial role in ensuring that the propositions (or hypotheses) in a manuscript are theoretically sound, logically developed, and empirically justifiable. Without a strong theoretical foundation, hypotheses become speculative, reducing the study's credibility and contribution. A common weakness in manuscripts is the assertion of hypotheses without substantive theoretical backing. A well-crafted hypothesis should also be precise and unequivocal. The variables and the relationships should be unambiguously written (Van de Ven, 2007). Reviewers should ask :(a) does the hypothesis clearly articulate the expected direction and nature of relation-

ships between variables? and (b) does the hypothesis propose a genuine causal or relational mechanism, rather than being tautological? When hypotheses are vaguely stated, they leave room for multiple interpretations. Reviewers should flag unclear hypotheses and suggest ways to improve precision.

For empirical studies, hypotheses should be structured in a way that allows for systematic testing. If a hypothesis is too abstract, lacks measurable variables, or is overly complex, it may not be empirically verifiable (Shadish et al., 2002). The most important element should be falsifiability i.e., the hypothesis should be structured in a way that allows it to be potentially refuted (Popper, 1959). Reviewers should push authors to clarify the unique contribution of their hypotheses. In essence, the grounding of hypotheses is fundamental to the credibility and impact of a research study. By prioritizing the above-mentioned criteria, reviewers can contribute to the advancement of rigorous, insightful, and impactful management research.

### **Research Design (Sampling, Measurement, Reliability, Data Collection & Analysis)**

A good research design ensures alignment between the chosen method for the study and the research question, samples, variable operationalization, and model specification (Bono & McNamara, 2011). The research design of a study serves as the blueprint that ensures its rigor, validity, and contribution to management scholarship. Without a well-

structured design, even theoretically compelling studies and grounded hypotheses risk yielding unreliable or misleading findings (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Reviewers play a critical role in assessing whether the research design aligns with the study's objectives, is methodologically sound, and follows best practices in sampling, measurement, reliability, data collection, and analysis.

First, sampling is fundamental to the validity of any empirical study, as it determines the extent to which findings can be generalized to broader populations (McShane & Böckenholt, 2017). Poor sampling strategies can introduce biases, reducing the reliability and applicability of the research. Therefore, reviewers should assess whether the paper clearly articulates its sampling method (e.g., random, stratified, purposive) and whether it is appropriate for the research question. Sample size also needs to be justified. A well-justified sampling strategy enhances the study's external validity. Second, measurement quality determines the credibility of empirical results. Constructs must be defined clearly, and measurement instruments must be reliable and valid to ensure that the study captures the intended phenomena. Reviewers should push authors to justify their method of operationalization of variables and measurement choices.

Third, reliability assesses whether the study's measures produce consistent results across time, samples, and contexts. If reliability is low, findings may not be replicable. For quantitative papers, reviewers typically look for internal con-

sistency reported through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and other measures, whereas for qualitative papers, inter-rater reliability is checked through Cohen's kappa or Krippendorff's alpha. If reliability measures are weak or absent, reviewers should request additional robustness checks or alternative approaches to establish measurement consistency.

Fourth, the credibility of research findings depends on the transparency and rigor of data collection processes. Poor data collection practices can introduce biases that compromise validity and replicability. Reviewers should evaluate - Are the data sources, collection methods, and timeframe documented? Has the author taken measures to minimize biases such as self-reporting errors? Has the study obtained necessary approvals (e.g., Institutional Review Board), and are ethical issues such as confidentiality and informed consent addressed? Transparency in data collection enhances confidence in the study's findings. Reviewers should demand detailed reporting on how data was gathered.

Finally, data analysis determines whether the study's hypotheses are meaningfully tested. Weak or inappropriate analyses can lead to incorrect conclusions, even if the research question and data collection are sound (Shadish et al., 2002). Reviewers should assess model robustness, handling of missing data, controls and endogeneity, among others. Instead of asking for additional studies to unnecessarily substantiate authors' arguments, reviewers can highlight

methodological weaknesses and suggest improvements wherever necessary. During the revision process, reviewers must remember that it becomes unreasonable to ask for further data/studies beyond what was originally requested. A "moving of goalpost" during revisions not only frustrates the contributors but also introduces unnecessary delays and uncertainty in the publication process.

### Interpretation & Presentation

Authors should report their results with clarity and comprehension. Even when a study is theoretically sound and methodologically rigorous, poor interpretation and reporting of results can lead to misrepresentations, overstatements, or weak conclusions that undermine its contribution (Aguinis et al., 2023). First of all, findings must be interpreted within the constraints of the study's design and data. Overstating the implications of results or making causal claims without appropriate evidence can mislead readers and distort theoretical and practical contributions. Reviewers should evaluate whether there is consistency between results and discussion, avoidance of causal overreach, and recognition of alternative explanations (if required). Reviewers should challenge manuscripts that draw unjustified conclusions or fail to acknowledge the limitations of their findings, in-

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stead of asking authors to forcefully conform to editorial expectations at the cost of authorial autonomy.

Secondly, the interpretation should explain how the findings contribute to both theory and practice. Weak discussions often restate results without integrating them into broader scholarly conversations (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Finally, poorly organized discussion sections make it difficult for readers to grasp the study's contributions (Suddaby, 2010). Apart from the conciseness and precision of the findings, it is important to use visual aids in the form of tables, figures, and graphs to effectively summarize key findings. Reviewers should not hesitate to request revisions if the interpretation and discussion are unclear or disorganized. Studies that fail to discuss limitations or alternative explanations run the risk of being perceived as biased or incomplete (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

### **Contributions to Knowledge, Organizational Implications, Potential for Future Research**

Manuscripts should discuss the practical implications to highlight critical learning and must avoid common pitfalls like rehashing results, meandering, and overreaching (Geletkanycz & Tepper, 2012). A fundamental criterion for evaluating any research paper is its contribution to the advancement of knowledge, its practical implications for organizations, and its potential to inspire future research. The most impactful studies do not merely confirm existing theories but challenge

assumptions, introduce new perspectives, or integrate insights across disciplines (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Given their familiarity with the existing literature, reviewers must ensure that the work genuinely advances the field and does not overlook or intentionally omit relevant prior research. Data from publishing houses suggests that approximately 20% of authors strategically exclude pertinent citations to enhance the perceived novelty of their findings (Gewin, 2011).

Academic research must move beyond incremental findings to offer substantive contributions that refine, extend, or challenge existing theories (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). High-quality research should also offer insights that are not only theoretically sound but also practically relevant to organizations, managers, and policymakers (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014). Studies that lack managerial relevance are perceived as disconnected from real-world challenges (Aguinis et al., 2023). Additionally, strong research not only answers key questions but also raises new ones, inspiring further investigation (Rindova, 2008). A well-crafted discussion should identify gaps, unresolved tensions, interdisciplinary potential, and emerging trends that future research can address. Reviewers should encourage authors to offer thought-provoking research directions that stimulate further theoretical and empirical development.

### **Importance, Interest Quotient & Feedback for Improvement**

Davis (1971), in his seminal work, argued that scholarly work gains popu-

larity and acceptability among researchers not because of its rigor and eminence but because it appears “interesting” to the audience. He extended the thought by saying theories that are rigorous but trivial are forgotten over a period whereas interesting theories are repeatedly borrowed by scholars even from a distant domain. In sum, studies that challenge conventional wisdom, offer surprising insights, or present findings in a thought-provoking manner tend to attract greater readership and influence (Davis, 1971). On the contrary, Tihanyi (2020) argued that in addition to writing interesting propositions and giving catchy titles, it is important that papers make significant theoretical contributions to resolve equivocal understanding. Moreover, the societal impact of an article should be ensured instead of only looking at the surprising or counter-intuitive elements in it.

Furthermore, a key function of peer review is to offer constructive feedback that enhances the quality of the research, rather than merely identifying flaws (Aguinis et al., 2023). The purpose of this article is to emphasize “constructive” critique in a peer review process that enhances the quality of a submission and does not undermine the authors’ autonomy. Under no circumstances, the peer review process should become a form of negotiation, wherein authors must deliberate with editors and reviewers over which revision requests to accommodate and how best to implement them. Therefore, the peer-review process should be developmental rather than solely evaluative. Thoughtful feedback

can help authors refine their arguments, strengthen their contributions, and enhance the clarity of their work (Aguinis et al., 2023). The whole and sole purpose of this paper is to educate reviewers to play their role as mentors rather than gatekeepers, helping authors refine their work rather than imposing unnecessary modifications. Reviewers should also be mindful of potential biases, avoid overly harsh criticisms, and ensure that their feedback contributes to the author’s intellectual growth.

### **Evaluating Conceptual Research Papers**

#### **Scope, and Depth of Phenomenon**

Evaluating conceptual papers is more difficult than judging an empirical piece, sheerly because the structure of such papers does not follow any organized format or flow or syntax. Typically, conceptual (or theoretical) papers serve as the foundation for advancing knowledge by synthesizing existing research, introducing new frameworks, and challenging prevailing assumptions (Suddaby, 2010). Unlike empirical studies that rely on data to substantiate claims, conceptual papers derive their contributions from the relevance, scope, and depth of the phenomenon they explore (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Therefore, reviewers play an even more crucial role in ensuring that

**Conceptual papers derive their contributions from the relevance, scope, and depth of the phenomenon they explore.**

the chosen phenomenon is thoroughly examined in a way that advances theory development.

Relevance is the cornerstone of a strong conceptual paper. A theoretical contribution is only valuable if it addresses a phenomenon that holds significance for scholars (Rindova, 2008). Reviewers must assess whether the paper focuses on an issue that is pressing, impactful, and aligned with ongoing debates in the field. A few critical questions can be - Does the paper engage with a major gap, paradox, or underexplored dimension in existing theory? Does the paper address a phenomenon that is important for organizations, industries, or society at large? Is the phenomenon timely, emerging, or part of a broader discussion in the field? Does the paper create pathways for new empirical investigations or theoretical extensions? It is to be remembered that a conceptual paper usually resonates more with academics rather than with practitioners and policymakers.

A well-crafted conceptual paper must balance breadth and depth in its theoretical exploration. The scope of a paper refers to the boundaries of the phenomenon being studied and how expansively or narrowly the paper defines its contribution (Corley & Gioia, 2011). The breadth or cross-disciplinary insights i.e., whether the paper incorporates perspectives from adjacent fields can enhance its theoretical richness. The depth of a paper refers to the rigor and sophistication with which a conceptual paper develops its theoretical arguments. Strong

conceptual papers go beyond surface-level descriptions to unpack mechanisms, relationships, and theoretical intricacies (Suddaby, 2010).

### **Structure, Style & Logical Coherence**

The impact of a conceptual research article is significantly influenced by its structure, style, and logical coherence—all of which determine how effectively its ideas are communicated and developed. Even the most innovative theoretical contribution can lose its influence if it is poorly structured, lacks clarity, or presents arguments in a disjointed manner (Suddaby, 2010). First of all, a well-structured conceptual paper provides a logical roadmap that guides the reader through its argument, making complex theoretical ideas easier to follow (Whetten, 1989). Structure determines how effectively a paper presents its research question, develops theoretical insights, and synthesizes prior work into a cohesive contribution. Conceptual papers in the organization studies domain that are published in FT-50 journals typically contain clear introduction and positioning (Grant & Pollock, 2011).

Secondly, the style of academic writing plays a significant role in the clarity, persuasiveness, and credibility of a conceptual paper. While complex ideas are inherent in theoretical work, they should be communicated in a way that is precise, engaging, and accessible (Suddaby, 2010). Reviewers should ensure that conceptual papers are rigorously written yet accessible so that their theoretical insights

can be understood and appreciated by a broad scholarly audience. Finally, conceptual papers are fundamentally argument-driven, meaning their impact relies on how logically and persuasively they build their theoretical claims.

### **Synthesis of Literature and Theory & Identification of Gaps**

A fundamental requirement for a high-quality conceptual paper is the effective synthesis of literature and theory, ensuring that it provides a coherent, well-organized, and critical review of prior research rather than a mere compilation of studies (Webster & Watson, 2002). Additionally, the identification of theoretical and empirical gaps is critical, as it sets the foundation for novel contributions (Whetten, 1989). A well-conceived conceptual paper does not merely summarize prior studies but synthesizes them into an integrated framework that highlights patterns, inconsistencies, and emerging trends (Webster & Watson, 2002). This requires authors to engage with relevant theories and empirical findings critically, connecting disparate streams of research to build a coherent theoretical foundation (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Reviewers should ask whether the paper reveals theoretical tensions, paradoxes, or inconsistencies in the literature that warrant further exploration (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Reviewers must also ensure that the manuscript draws from relevant and foundational theories in the field, rather than using tangential or loosely connected frameworks (Grant & Pollock, 2011).

Another critical component of a conceptual paper is its ability to identify meaningful gaps in existing literature and position itself as addressing these gaps (Whetten, 1989). Without a well-articulated research gap, a conceptual paper risks being seen as redundant or lacking contribution. The key factors to assess should include justification of the gap and whether it is genuinely underexplored. By ensuring rigor in these areas, reviewers can enhance the clarity, novelty, and theoretical depth of conceptual contributions in management research.

### **Critical Analysis of Existing Research**

A distinguishing feature of high-quality conceptual papers is their ability to go beyond what is already known by challenging assumptions, highlighting contradictions, and offering alternative interpretations that push the boundaries of management scholarship (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). The first thing reviewers should notice is whether conceptual papers critically engage with the literature by questioning assumptions, revealing inconsistencies, and identifying limitations (Suddaby, 2010). A strong critical analysis demonstrates the author's deep understanding of the field. Reviewers should ask whether the paper highlights conflicting findings, contradictory theoretical perspectives, or under explored paradoxes in the literature (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Theoretical frameworks are not infallible, and an important aspect of conceptual papers is identifying and articulating the weaknesses of existing research (Whetten, 1989).

High-impact conceptual papers often question dominant paradigms and introduce alternative ways of thinking (Weick, 1989). This requires a critical examination of taken-for-granted assumptions in management research. Problematization of dominant views, introduction of alternative perspectives, contextualization of theories, and engagement with emerging trends within a conceptual paper push the field forward by questioning and reinterpreting established knowledge. Also, the goal of critical analysis is not just to identify weaknesses but to use this critique as a foundation for new theoretical insights (Whetten, 1989). Reviewers should assess whether the paper translates its critical evaluation into meaningful contributions.

### **Contribution to Theoretical Development & Practical Understanding**

The most impactful management scholarship contributes to both the development of theory and the understanding of real-world management problems (Corley & Gioia, 2011). For reviewers, evaluating a conceptual paper's contribution requires a focus on two key aspects: (1) Theoretical Advancement—whether the paper deepens or reconfigures existing theories, and (2) Practical Understanding—whether the insights offered have implications for organizational or managerial practice.

Theoretical contributions in conceptual papers can take many forms, including refining constructs, extending theories, integrating perspectives, or propos-

ing new frameworks (Suddaby, 2010). Reviewers must ask whether : (a) the paper introduces an original perspective or extends an existing theory in a meaningful way, (b) the contribution is incremental (refining existing ideas) or disruptive (challenging fundamental assumptions), (c) the core constructs and relationships are well-defined and logically articulated, and (d) the paper synthesizes insights from multiple theoretical traditions to create a more comprehensive understanding or it bridges gaps between disconnected theoretical perspectives.

While theory-building is central to conceptual papers, high-impact scholarship also enhances practical understanding by offering insights that managers, policymakers, and organizations can use (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014). Not all conceptual papers will have immediate practical applications, but reviewers should assess whether the insights offered have the potential to inform managerial practice in meaningful ways. Many conceptual papers struggle with either being too abstract and detached from practice or too applied without making a meaningful theoretical contribution (Corley & Gioia, 2011). The best scholarship balances both dimensions.

### **Framework on New Insights or Perspectives**

Some conceptual papers introduce new insights or perspectives that reshape existing understanding of management scholarship. Theoretical advancements often stem from the development of novel frameworks that integrate, refine, or

challenge established ideas, thereby providing fresh conceptualizations of organizational phenomena (Corley & Gioia, 2011). In other words, conceptual papers should offer more than incremental extensions of existing theories; they should propose distinctive perspectives that shift scholarly discourse (Colquitt & George, 2011). Novel frameworks might emerge by integrating disparate streams of research, challenging dominant paradigms, or offering innovative conceptual models.

A compelling framework must not only be innovative but also internally coherent and well-articulated. Theoretical contributions can lose credibility if their underlying logic is flawed, ambiguous, or loosely structured (Suddaby, 2010). High-impact conceptual papers not only propose new ideas but also stimulate further theoretical and empirical work. Reviewers should evaluate whether the framework provides a strong foundation for subsequent studies.

### **Importance and Interest Quotient & Feedback for Improvement**

The strength of a conceptual paper is also determined by its importance and ability to capture scholarly interest. A well-crafted conceptual article should address a meaningful and timely research problem, spark intellectual curiosity, and

**The strength of a conceptual paper is also determined by its importance and ability to capture scholarly interest.**

inspire further inquiry (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Reviewers play a pivotal role in ensuring that authors enhance their arguments, improve clarity, and maximize their paper's impact. In other words, reviews should prioritize constructive feedback over overly critical assessments, offering substantive recommendations for improving the manuscript rather than simply deconstructing its weaknesses.

First, a conceptual paper should address a significant and impactful research question. Theoretical development in management scholarship is driven by the ability to identify and articulate pressing issues that warrant deeper exploration (George et al., 2016). Secondly, even if a paper tackles an important topic, its ability to engage readers and sustain scholarly interest is crucial. The most impactful conceptual papers stimulate debates, provoke new ways of thinking, and challenge established assumptions (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Finally, the goal of feedback should not be to reject or dismiss ideas but to strengthen theoretical contributions and help authors refine their arguments. Moreover, all the points that were mentioned for assessing empirical papers on "importance, interest, and feedback" should also apply to conceptual (or theoretical) papers.

### **Conclusion**

Ortinou (2011) characterized reviewers as the "lifeblood" of journal editors, while Davis (2014) underscored peer review as the "core technology" underpinning the scholarly publishing process. Undoubtedly, reviewers are critical in the

publication process, acting as key advisors to journal editors. Importantly, reviewers should align their feedback with editorial expectations by providing detailed, well-justified critiques in a timely manner. As digital publishing expands and the number of academic journals increases, many journals now actively monitor reviewer performance, particularly with respect to response times. From an editorial perspective, the most valuable reviews are those that provide well-substantiated critiques, supported by clear reasoning and evidence.

We recommended a comprehensive framework for evaluating both empirical and conceptual research papers, addressing a critical gap in the extant literature. While prior scholarship discusses theoretical contribution, methodological rigor, and practical implications as key dimensions of scholarly evaluation, these elements are often considered in a fragmented manner, without offering a structured, standardized approach for reviewers. Furthermore, many early career scholars receive little to no formal training in manuscript review, instead acquiring proficiency through trial and error. The proposed framework provides a ‘one-stop-shop’ for reviewers to critique papers in such a way that consistency is maintained in the review process. By employing this approach, reviewers can maintain objectivity, mitigate the risks of undue criticism or excessive deference, and make evaluations free from theoretical or methodological biases.

It is important to clarify that this framework does not prescribe the me-

chanics of drafting an evaluation report in the peer review process. Experienced reviewers understand that an effective review begins with a concise summary of the manuscript’s core findings and contributions, followed by a structured articulation of major and minor concerns. Moreover, editorial expectations are not monolithic; they vary across disciplines, journals, and editorial teams. Consequently, reviewers may need to adapt the proposed framework in accordance with the specific aims and scope of the journal to ensure alignment with editorial priorities. The flexibility of this approach allows reviewers to exercise judgment in determining the relative emphasis placed on each evaluation criterion, depending on the expectations set forth by the journal’s editorial leadership. The overarching goal of this paper is to enhance the fairness, consistency, and rigor of the peer review process, particularly within the domain of management and organization studies. Additionally, the adoption of this structured framework offers meaningful long-term professional benefits for the reviewers. By employing this evaluative approach judiciously—providing well-reasoned, constructive critiques—reviewers not only contribute to the integrity of the scholarly discourse but may also gain recognition from editors, potentially leading to opportunities such as invitations to serve on a journal’s editorial advisory board.

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