

EDITORIAL

Responsible by Design: From Socially Responsible Science to Practical, Accountable Implications

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Abstract

This editorial argues that management research should be responsible by design rather than merely responsible in retrospect. Bringing together the critique of socially irresponsible research systems and the warning that practical implications can themselves be harmful when overstated or poorly framed, it develops a publishing stance for *Management Research Quarterly* (MRQ) centered on three connected expectations: socially meaningful problem selection, methodological credibility, and careful, conditional practical implications. The editorial also suggests that journals should treat editorial infrastructures, review criteria, and communication practices as part of responsible research. In doing so, it positions MRQ as an open-access venue where transparency, relevance, and ethical interpretation can be jointly institutionalized across the full research pipeline.

KEYWORDS

Responsible research; practical implications; management research; open science; editorial policy; MRQ.

Management research is an applied social science in the strongest sense: our concepts travel into organizations, our findings inform managerial discourse, and our methods shape what counts as credible knowledge. That is why two converging conversations now feel impossible to keep separate. One conversation, captured in de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021)'s synthesis of self-criticisms in management research, calls for a socially responsible science that takes relevance, integrity, and incentive systems seriously. The other, articulated forcefully by Hideg et al. (2020) in their *Academy of Management Journal* editorial, warns that "practical implications" can themselves be irresponsible, especially for sensitive topics, when they are shallow, overconfident, or communicated without attention to misuse and unintended consequences. Together, these arguments imply a single agenda for journals like *Management Research Quarterly* (MRQ): relevance is not achieved by adding an "implications" paragraph at the end, and responsibility is not achieved by good intentions alone. Both must be built into research choices from the beginning (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021).

de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021) show that the critique of our field is not one critique but a clustered set of problems: a persistent gap between research and practice; methodological fragilities that undermine trust; and evaluation systems that can incentivize novelty over truth, publication over dissemination, and symbolic rewards over societal value. Their review connects these issues to the organizational conditions of knowledge production: publish-or-perish dynamics, journal templates, and training practices can collectively normalize weak transparency, limited replication, and selective reporting, producing a discipline that appears productive but becomes vulnerable to credibility and relevance deficits (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). Importantly, they connect this to a values argument: management research has social implications because organizations are among the most powerful actors shaping contemporary society, and therefore our research should not focus only on performance questions detached from issues such as inequality, corruption, sustainability, and well-being (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021).

Hideg et al. (2020) sharpen the "last mile" of this critique: even when research is publishable, the way it is framed and translated into practice can create harm. Their point is not to avoid uncomfortable findings but to treat the social consequences of framing as part of scholarly responsibility. They caution that counterintuitive claims and effect "flipping"

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can be especially vulnerable to false positives and weak evidence if not accompanied by robust designs and careful reporting (Hideg et al. 2020). They also stress interpretive discipline: causal language should match design, robustness should be proportionate to the sensitivity of the topic, and practical implications should be written with care for who bears burdens and how findings may be used (Hideg et al. 2020). This stance aligns with longer-standing editorial guidance in *AMJ* that “implications” are not an ornamental add-on but a scholarly obligation, and that discussion sections should explicitly articulate relevance without overstating evidence (Geletkanycz and Tepper 2012). It also resonates with the broader argument that management scholarship can contribute to societal grand challenges, provided our standards of evidence and communication match the stakes (George et al. 2016).

MRQ sits at an intersection where these conversations should not merely be cited but operationalized. As an open-access journal, MRQ benefits from broader reach; it also inherits a stronger duty of care because open work is easier to circulate, excerpt, and deploy outside academic contexts. This is why “responsible by design” is not a slogan but a publishing stance: authors should treat responsibility as a property of the entire research pipeline, from topic choice and theory framing to measurement, inference, and communication (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021, Hideg et al. 2020). A practical implication follows directly: the way we construct contributions—how we problematize, build intertextual coherence, and establish why a study matters—shapes what readers take away and how they can responsibly use the knowledge (Locke and Golden-Biddle 1997).

First, MRQ encourages problem selection that is simultaneously scholarly and socially legible; de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021) note that scholars often search for theoretical gaps rather than socially important puzzles, and they call for a more pragmatic orientation that aligns epistemic and social values. MRQ has already signaled this direction by publishing work that engages practice-relevant problems in technology, sustainability, and governance while maintaining analytic clarity (e.g., Chapuis and Guégan 2024, Monod 2025). As a journal, we can strengthen this further by expecting submissions to articulate not only a contribution to literature but also the affected stakeholders, plausible decision contexts, and the likely pathways by which the research could be used (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021).

Second, MRQ treats methodological credibility as inseparable from responsibility. Hideg et al. (2020) explicitly link practical responsibility to rigorous methods, warning that findings with potentially high social consequences demand especially careful designs and restrained interpretation. Similarly, de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021) emphasize transparency, falsifiability, and replicability as central concerns in the discipline’s self-critique. These arguments align with the open science movement’s call to build an open research culture and credible infrastructures for reporting and verification (Nosek et al. 2015). They also invite sobriety about magnitude and meaning: even small effects can matter in the aggregate, while large effects can mislead when they arise from biased designs or fragile measurement—an issue long recognized in methodological debates (Cortina and Landis 2009). For MRQ, “responsible by design”

therefore means aligning claims with evidence, encouraging auditability (data, code, protocols when feasible), and valuing careful estimation and boundary conditions over theatrical novelty (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021, Hideg et al. 2020).

Third, MRQ expects practical implications that are specific, conditional, and socially mindful. Hideg et al. (2020) observe that authors often treat implications as an afterthought, despite editorial guidance urging researchers to translate contributions responsibly and to anticipate how claims may be amplified or misused (Geletkanycz and Tepper 2012, Hideg et al. 2020). MRQ’s contribution is to make this expectation explicit across diverse article types. For empirical papers, implications should be anchored in mechanisms, not slogans, and should specify scope conditions and potential adverse use. For conceptual and computational papers, practical implications can be framed as design requirements, governance safeguards, or operational constraints rather than simplistic prescriptions. MRQ’s own portfolio offers concrete examples of how responsibility can be integrated into emerging-technology debates: Chapuis and Guégan (2024) explicitly frame responsibility as something enacted across the design, implementation, and use of AI-based systems, while Monod (2025) treats AI supervision as an organizational and ethical challenge rather than a narrow efficiency problem.

Fourth, MRQ can treat editorial infrastructure as part of responsible research. This is demonstrated by de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021), who highlight how evaluation systems and journal standards shape research behavior and can distort scientific priorities. This invites journals to reflect on their own “choice architecture”: how review criteria, reporting expectations, and even category taxonomies signal what is valued and what is marginalized. MRQ has begun to cultivate a reflective conversation about knowledge pipelines and epistemic hierarchies. Dosquet (2025) argues for interdisciplinarity with accountability, while Charman and Bahadori (2025) examine epistemological hierarchies in Southern scholarly publishing—both aligning with the socially responsible science agenda by making visible how systems of publishing and evaluation structure dictate what becomes sayable and valuable (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). Complementing this, Bahadori and Ramjawan (2025) offer a power-aware toolkit for operationalizing Bourdieu in management research, providing conceptual resources for studying how categories, classifications, and evaluative regimes stabilize or contest domination. Taken together, these MRQ contributions suggest that responsible publishing is not only about “better papers”; it is about better infrastructures for knowledge production, circulation, and use (Bahadori and Ramjawan 2025, Charman and Bahadori 2025, Dosquet 2025).

Finally, MRQ’s stance is strengthened by a broader recognition that ethics in AI and datafied management is not only a compliance issue but a political and epistemic one. Work problematizing AI ethics shows that the governance of technological systems often involves contested values and pluralist tensions, which makes careful framing and accountability especially important when research informs design and policy (Sahut et al. 2023). This echoes Hideg et al. (2020)’s warning that practical implications can harm when they erase structural constraints or

invite simplistic prescriptions. It also reinforces the broader point: publishing is a communicative act with consequences. As MRQ expands its portfolio in AI, sustainability, and global management, "responsible by design" should be treated as a journal identity: not by narrowing scope, but by raising expectations for trustworthy evidence, meaningful relevance, and ethically careful interpretation (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021, Hideg et al. 2020).

For MRQ, the editorial stance is therefore simple. We want submissions that are credible enough to trust, relevant enough to use, and careful enough to avoid avoidable harm. "Responsible by design" is not a constraint on ambition; it is a commitment to making ambition publishable, usable, and socially defensible. This approach represents MRQ's contribution to promoting and embedding responsible research in the knowledge production and publication process. As an open-access journal with broad outreach, MRQ has an opportunity to take a lead in demonstrating how the components of problem selection, methodological credibility and practical implications of research can work together. Priorities such as promoting the testing of well-established concepts in newer emerging environments can become more commonplace than the more traditional publish-or-perish parameters of a new contribution, refocusing what constitutes a new contribution itself. Open access journals represent a good platform for such empirical work, and MRQ has consistently promoted this approach to questioning and promoting a responsible research culture, based on transparency, openness, and reproducibility (Nosek et al. 2015), the responsibilities of management science to management practice (Hideg et al. 2020), and echoing the call for responsible research in management (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). This also supports the wider literature on responsible research, focusing on both the responsibilities for research design and for useful and practical applications of research in a variety of cultural settings (Field et al. 2024, Tsui 2022). With recent works in MRQ, including responsibilities in design and ethical use of AI (Sahut et al. 2023, Chapuis and Guégan 2024), the operationalizing Bourdieu principles in management research (Bahadori and Ramjawan 2025), the involvement in management research of the people affected by it (Dosquet 2025), and the potential role of Southern journal publishing in promoting a diverse, responsible, relevant and impactful agenda (Charman and Bahadori 2025). Not only is MRQ maintaining its standards in responsible research, but is contributing to the debate on what responsible research is, and building the platform of priorities for responsible management research by design in the future.

The present issue gives concrete expression to this agenda through four contributions situated at the intersection of management, technology, and governance. Zhang and Duan (2025) show how image similarity, behavior similarity, perceived information quality, and social presence jointly shape purchase intention in virtual human livestream e-commerce, offering a more fine-grained account of consumer response to human-like digital agents. In the banking sector, Boateng and Sapati (2026) examine the effects of top management team social capital on bank performance in Ghana and clarify the intervening roles of liquidity and management commitment in a context of institutional turbulence.

Turning to publishing infrastructure itself, Drdla (2025) propose a mixed qual-computational method for deriving cross-cutting article categories from a journal's own corpus and embedding them into editorial meta-data systems, thereby extending the discussion of responsible research to the architecture of scholarly communication. Finally, Jiang and Gao (2025) review the emergence of cognitive computational advertising and show how generative AI, semantic reasoning, and knowledge collaboration are reshaping the theory-practice interface in intelligent communication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interests.

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emphasis on innovation, responsible research, and the societal consequences of knowledge production. His work contributes to discussions on how management scholarship can remain rigorous, relevant, and socially accountable.

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