

Methodological Preferences in Cross-Cultural Management Research – Exploratory Approach

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Abstract: Research in cross-cultural management increasingly recognizes the existence of important cultural differences that influence methodological design choices and researchers' preference for specific methods, as well as the framing of research questions. Theoretical frameworks often lack empirical testing, especially regarding the way in which the cultural context influences the effectiveness and appropriateness of specific methods. The literature advocates for methodological pluralism and adaptation, yet serious gaps exist in integrating all cultural layers and testing theoretical frameworks empirically, at the same time with a lack of explicit argumentation for the choice of research methods. Within these contextual premises, the present study aims to synthesize, through a systematic literature review, empirical and theoretical contributions to map how methodological choices in cross-cultural management research are shaped. The research is rather exploratory and descriptive, meant to scrutinize the situation in the field and extract directions for future research. The results could contribute to a better understanding of the field, especially concerning contradictory findings and replication failures, which could be better understood through the lens of the initial background and methodological preferences of investigators.

Keywords: Cross-cultural management research, methodological design, method choice

JEL Classification: M16, M14, C18

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INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND AIMS

Research in cross-cultural management increasingly recognizes the existence of important cultural differences that explain methodological choices and preferences, the influences being produced at various cultural layers – national (country level), regional (West-East), organizational (corporate culture), professional (field/domain). Extant literature, both theoretical and empirical, shows that these layers of culture not only affect the design and execution of research, but also significantly shape the way results are interpreted and, later, applied into practice (Iddik, 2024; Choudhary et al., 2025; Urgan et al., 2025). The selection of certain methodological designs or the preference for certain research methods and instruments are often explained in relation to the dominant cultural values and practices in the studied context, and researchers are more and more attentive to their positionality in research, to how their own cultural backgrounds and institutional settings affect methodological preferences (Contreras et al., 2025; Bartosik-Purgat et al., 2026). Furthermore, methodological pluralism is advocated to account for cultural complexity and diversity within the field of management research in general, and in cross-cultural management research, in particular. (Kittur & Agarwal, 2024). Empirical studies highlight that researchers' national backgrounds often influence their methodological choices and the framing of research questions (Choudhary et al., 2025; Contreras et al., 2025; Rocha, 2025). Cross-cultural validity is an important challenge to ensure methodological rigor across diverse contexts (Costa et al, 2025). The professional field or domain also shapes methodological norms, the domination of certain methods, pluralism in cross-cultural management research or the acceptance of mixed methods (Kittur & Agarwal, 2024; Urgan et al, 2025; Ashfan et al, 2025). Organizational culture, especially through values related to hierarchy or openness to innovation significantly affects the way research is conducted and preferred methods, mainly the most innovative and collaborative ones, like participatory research designs (Iddik, 2024; Tran, 2025; Twaissi et al, 2025; Walentynowicz, 2025). Although interdisciplinary approaches would be often needed, researchers are still less confident in their skills as far as interdisciplinary methods are concerned (Zait et al, 2024); however, there are studies using chaos theory or motivational models to explain adaptability and innovation in research designs, linking cultural dimensions to methodological preference (Mandiello et al, 2025; Tudoran & Tudoran, 2024). Mixed-methods and comparative research demonstrate the interaction between

national, organizational and domain cultures in shaping choice of research methods (Sampat et al, 2022; Hallak & Feghali, 2025; Jimenez-Villamizar et al, 2025; Zhu & Winterstein, 2026). Many theoretical frameworks lack empirical testing, especially regarding the way in which the cultural context influences the effectiveness and appropriateness of specific methods (Dulebohn et al, 2025). The literature advocates for methodological pluralism and adaptation, yet serious gaps exist in integrating all cultural layers and testing theoretical frameworks empirically, at the same time with a lack of explicit argumentation for the choice of research methods. Researcher voices ask for decolonizing methodologies in general (Smith, 2021) and management theories, in particular (Banerjee, 2022), yet there are no integrative studies of research methods used in cross-cultural management research.

Within these contextual premises, the present study aims to synthesize, through a systematic literature review, empirical and theoretical contributions to map how methodological choices in cross-cultural management research are shaped. The research is rather exploratory, meant to scrutinize the state of the field and extract directions for future research. The results could contribute to a better understanding of the field, especially concerning contradictory findings and replication failures, which could be better understood through the lens of the initial methodological preferences of investigators.

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW FOR UTILIZED METHODS

We chose a systematic literature approach, utilizing the PRISMA methodology (Page et al., 2021) to attain our aim. The literature selection was done using the Web of Science platform administered by Clarivate; the initial search was performed in November 2025 (1287 articles found at that time), then enriched through a new search, in May 2026 (1365 articles). The search took place in two rounds, with two sets of key words. We started from general – the methodology level, broader, strategic and philosophical, outlining the whole research design and the choices between quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods paradigms – toward particular – the methods utilized, specific tools, techniques and procedures showing the practical, operational side of performed research. Thus, in the first round, the search used the syntagm “research methodology in cross cultural management”, through which a list of 1287 articles was obtained in November 2025, and 1365 articles in May 2026. The period in which

articles were published was 2000-2026. Inside this list, a new search was done, using the syntagm “research methods”, thus obtaining a list of 192 articles in 2025, and 207 articles in 2026. We could see that the number of articles with an explicit focus on research methods in the larger context of the methodological design is a lot smaller.

In the second stage of the PRISMA analysis we performed a manual analysis of the articles, scanning both abstracts and content (where full articles were available), retaining for analysis only those articles explicitly dealing with the methodological choice discussion (they were not simply presenting a research methodology applied for solving a specific research question, but debated upon the choice of methods and specific epistemological and contextual arguments for doing so). In this second stage we obtained 27 articles in 2025, and 30 articles in 2026. The reason for this double search was meant to explore the pace of evolution in the field of methodological based publications in cross-cultural management – and the results showed that the increase is quite small.

The 30 articles were analyzed to find out the distribution on type of design (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) and on type of method inside each design, after a manual analysis with two rounds of reading and categorizing (results in Table 1) and on country of origin of authors, and field or disciplinary domain, using Claude Sonnet 4.6 (results in Table 2). For the analysis in Table 1, two articles were slightly borderline between qualitative and mixed methods or quantitative and mixed methods but eventually classified to qualitative (one) or quantitative (the other one).

The analysis for the country of origin of authors (starting with the corresponding author) was performed in Claude Sonnet 4.6, uploading the list of 30 articles retained from WOS after the PRISMA selection, with articles in the order they were retrieved in WOS (order based on the relevance of the articles according to the key words search). Results are in Table 2.

An interesting detail of the analysis on authors’ origin performed by Claude is that two articles were swapped: while the human authors considered the Horak (2018) article under the Reviews section and the Xu and Zhang (2012) article under qualitative, the AI suggested the contrary. Both articles have a part of review, but the authors’ analysis of the whole texts allowed a clearer classification, the one from Table 1, as far as the methodological design is concerned.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of our systematic literature review show a dominance of qualitative research methods’ choice (14 articles), followed by quantitative approaches (7 articles), with conceptual, literature review-based studies in the middle (8 articles). Only 1 article used a mixed methods type methodology, with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is, however, difficult to classify the articles in mutually exclusive categories, because very few are methodologically purists, belonging to just one research design. In terms of utilized methods, surveys are dominant for the quantitative methodology, while action research, interviews and narrative analysis are slightly dominant for the qualitative methodology – although here the heterogeneity is larger, with a much larger array of methods.

An interesting finding comes from the analysis of authors’ country of origin, performed with AI help from Claude Sonnet 4.6. In studies with multiple authors from different countries, with different norms in terms of authors’ order in the article, it would be interesting to analyze influences coming from the corresponding author, which sometimes is not the first author in the list.

In terms of present countries, Western ones are dominant, with US holding the not surprising first place, but Asian countries are approaching quickly. The qualitative classified articles come from UK, China, Canada, France, USA, Netherlands, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and Ireland. The quantitative ones, from USA, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Ghana. The literature review-based ones come from India, Malta/USA, USA, China, Germany, Italy, Finland, Sweden, and UK. USA and Germany appear across all types of methods, suggesting a broad scholarly output in this field. Qualitative articles come predominantly from the UK, Australia, Canada, and non-Western contexts (Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, Cuba), generally places where culture is treated as deeply contextual and not easily quantifiable. Quantitative articles cluster around Western measurement-oriented traditions (USA, Germany, Spain) plus Ghana (scale development). The single mixed methods article comes from a US-France collaboration, working with a massive 18-year narrative corpus - a rather rare and methodologically ambitious design. Conceptual literature review-based articles span the widest geographic range, suggesting that methodological reflection is a global scholarly activity, as we would have expected.

As far as field of studies are concerned, the ones present in the analysis are: organizational research, cross cultural management and communication,

international business, management, marketing or logistics, international human resources management, health and nursing research, indigenous research, developmental studies and psychometrics – but the sample of articles is too small for more in-depth analysis on each field.

The findings could support the possibility that national and disciplinary context shape method choice, although establishing direct influence is out of scope for our exploratory, descriptive review. We obtained an interesting snapshot, puzzle type of preferences toward methodological designs and chosen methods for cross-cultural management research but limited in terms of covering the huge diversity of this strongly interdisciplinary subject.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our study has several limitations, pertaining to the authors' positionality, on one hand, and the search algorithms of the WOS database, on the other hand. The authors' scientific background, country of origin and international experiences (affiliations) for studies and working produce tacit influences on the investigating behavior – key words for searching, inclusion and exclusion of articles from the analysis – implicit biases are present. The WOS database search algorithms didn't show to light methodological papers useful for our subject, but classified into narrower categories, due to their focus. From this perspective, for example, important methodological articles were not present in the analysis, when entering into details such as the emic-etic dilemma in cross-cultural research (Berry, 1989; Harzing et al, 2005), the measurement equivalence and invariance (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000; Fischer & Poortinga, 2018) or the multi-paradigm tensions in the choice of research designs (Romani et al, 2018; Grosskopf, Barmeyer & Bonache, 2025; Primecz, Sackman & Romani, 2025). The selection of key words and JEL codes by researchers themselves also produces biases.

Future research should include distinct streams of systematic literature reviews, on narrower key words and all cultural layers of potential influence, according to the specificities of research in the field of cross-cultural management research. Another direction would be the investigation of specific norms adopted by scholarly journals, on specialized streams (methodological and/or field related), because these norms have also a very high potential to influence researchers' behavior in terms of publishing, and thus their methodological choices, on top of everything else.

Disclosure: We used Claude Sonnet 4.6 for formatting references in APA style, for Table 2, and for language proofreading.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.

Analysis – based on methodological design and type of research methods - of the 30 articles retrieved and retained through the PRISMA approach

Design and number of articles	Authors	Research methods
Quantitative (7 articles)	Palocsay & White, 2004	Neural network modelling and Multiple regression
	Grienitz & Schmidt, 2010	Social network analysis with Scenario technique
	Okazaki et al, 2011	Multicountry survey with fictitious ad stimuli and equivalence testing
	Tang, 2017	Behavioural laboratory experiment
	Doc & Pupilampu, 2019	Cross sectional survey and exploratory factor analysis for scale development
	Krautz & Hoffmann, 2019	Large scale survey and OLS regression
	Felix et al, 2025	Psychometric validation with reliability and validity checks
Qualitative (14 articles)	Soin & Scheytt, 2006	Narrative methodology, story-driven inquiry
	Wozniak, 2006	Narrative approach
	Greenhill & Dix, 2008	Participatory action research, community-based ethnography
	Xiao & Boyd, 2010	Participatory action research, experiential research
	Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012	Interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observation, case studies
	Xu & Zhang, 2012	Qualitative analysis of literature review
	Berry, 2015	Cross-cultural psychology framework
	Hofstede, 2015	Social simulation and gaming (proposed)
	Clark et al., 2017	Cross-cultural ethnography and transcription/translation protocol
	Abalkhail, 2018	In-depth interviews, translation analysis
	Ashta et al., 2018	Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, lived-experience analysis
	Fitzpatrick, 2019	Longitudinal participant observation
	Krishnan et al, 2022	Auto-ethnography
Correia et al., 2025	Co-design, Indigenous methodologies, with decolonizing frame	
Mixed methods (1 article)	Winskell et al, 2018	In-depth narrative analysis, thematic qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis
Reviews (8 articles)	Schaffer & Riordan, 2003	Systematic literature review
	Cascio, 2012	Conceptual/analytical review
	Buttigieg et al., 2015	Scholarly commentary and synthesis
	Horak, 2018	Review and conceptual proposal
	Goede & Holtbrügge, 2021	Systematic literature review
	Russo et al., 2024	Methodological commentary/overview
	Choudhary et al., 2025	Systematic literature review
	Miller & Lengler, 2025	Best-practices conceptual review

Table 2.
Country of Origin & Research Method Analysis - 30 Articles

Grouped by method type · Sorted by article number within each group · Country reflects institutional affiliation at time of publication (obtained using Claude Sonnet 4.6)

Reference	Author(s)	Country of Origin	Field Specialization /	Method Type	Method Detail
Soin & Scheytt (2006)	Kim Soin; Tobias Scheytt	UK / Germany	Organizational Research Methods / Cross-cultural Management	Qualitative	<i>Narrative methodology; story-driven inquiry; interpretive qualitative analysis</i>
Xiao & Boyd (2010)	Hong Xiao; David Boyd	UK / China	Project Management / Construction / Cross-cultural Management	Qualitative	<i>Participatory action research; experiential research; personal construct theory; cross-cultural dialogue & reflection</i>
Correia et al. (2025)	Margarida Correia; Sherri Alexis; Aleksandra Dulic	Canada	Indigenous Research Methods / Environmental Studies	Qualitative	<i>Co-design; Indigenous methodologies; decolonising frame; design justice; reflexivity; immersive media exhibition</i>
Wozniak / Sadler-Smith et al. (2006)	Agnieszka Woźniak; Eugene Sadler-Smith; Carol Evans	UK / Poland	Cross-cultural Management / Managerial Cognition	Qualitative	<i>Conceptual literature review; epistemological critique of intuition measurement; narrative methodology proposed</i>
Ashta et al. (2018)	Arvind Ashta; Philip Stokes; Paul Hughes	France / UK	Cross-cultural Management / Organizational Change	Qualitative	<i>Participant observation; semi-structured interviews; lived-experience methodology; reflexive critical incident review; inductive narrative analysis</i>
Clark et al. (2017)	Lorraine Clark; Angela S. Birkhead; Carmen Fernandez; Marlene J. Egger	USA	Qualitative Health Research / Cross-cultural Methodology	Qualitative	<i>Cross-cultural ethnographic research; transcription & translation protocol; vendor management; quality rubrics; anonymization</i>
Horak (2018)	Sven Horak	USA (German origin)	Cross-cultural Management / Indigenous	Qualitative	<i>Conceptual review & categorisation of CCEE studies; call for experimental methods</i>

Reference	Author(s)	Country of Origin	Field Specialization /	Method Type	Method Detail
			Management Research		<i>in indigenous management research</i>
Hofstede G.J. (2015)	Gert Jan Hofstede	Netherlands	Cross-cultural Research / Cultural Dimensions / Management	Qualitative	<i>Conceptual paper; sociological status-power theory; simulation gaming & computational social simulation proposed</i>
Greenhill & Dix (2008)	Jenny Greenhill; Kathleen Dix	Australia	Indigenous Research / Cross-cultural Research Ethics / Health Sciences	Qualitative	<i>Participatory action research; community-based ethnography; reflexive qualitative approach; relationship-building & trust</i>
Abalkhail (2018)	Jouharah M. Abalkhail	Saudi Arabia	Management & Gender Studies / Qualitative Research Methods	Qualitative	<i>Insider qualitative research; in-depth interviews with female managers; Arabic–English translation analysis; back-translation</i>
Fitzpatrick (2019)	Fiona Fitzpatrick	Ireland	International Business / Cross-cultural Adjustment / Expatriate Studies	Qualitative	<i>Longitudinal qualitative study (3 years); full participant observation; researcher immersion in Cuba</i>
Berry (2015)	John W. Berry	Canada	Cross-cultural Psychology / Global Management	Qualitative	<i>Conceptual/theoretical paper; critique of Western-dominated psychology (WASP); global psychology framework proposed</i>
Krishnan et al. (2022)	Santhosh Krishnan; Robert Soden; B. Aguihon; R. Liu; P. Khatiwada	USA / Nepal / Philippines	Disaster Management / Participatory Research / Development Studies	Qualitative	<i>Auto-ethnography; poly-vocal cross-national working group; weekly digital meetings (4 months); unstructured reflection</i>
Chikweche & Fletcher (2012)	Tendai Chikweche; Richard Fletcher	Australia / Zimbabwe	International Marketing / Qualitative Research / Development Studies	Qualitative	<i>Empirical qualitative mixed methods: in-depth consumer interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observation, case studies (Zimbabwe/BOP)</i>

Reference	Author(s)	Country of Origin	Field Specialization /	Method Type	Method Detail
Palocsay & White (2004)	Susan W. Palocsay; Marilyn M. White	USA	Organizational Research Methods / Quantitative Methods	Quantitative	<i>Neural network modelling vs. multiple regression; cultural dimensions & justice perceptions; higher predictive accuracy demonstrated</i>
Felix et al. (2025)	M.M.S. Felix; T.S.A. Tibola; M.B.G. Raponi; A.C.R. da Silva; I.B. Calegari; M.F. de Faria; P.S. Pires; M.H. Barbosa	Brazil	Nursing / Health Sciences / Cross-cultural Psychometrics	Quantitative	<i>Forward-backward translation; expert review; pretest (n=30); psychometric validation (n=360); Cronbach's alpha; Kappa; ICC</i>
Krautz & Hoffmann (2019)	Christian Krautz; Stefan Hoffmann	Germany	International Marketing / Cross-cultural Research Methodology	Quantitative	<i>Large-scale cross-cultural survey (n=236,089; 30 countries); OLS regression; multilevel analysis; acquiescence response style (pARS) validation</i>
Tang (2017)	Roger W. Tang	USA	Cross-cultural Management / Experimental Methods	Quantitative	<i>Behavioural laboratory experiment (ultimatum game); complementary background survey; tests limitations of survey-based culture measurement</i>
Okazaki et al. (2011)	Shintaro Okazaki; Barbara Mueller; Sandra Diehl	Spain / USA / Germany	International Marketing / Advertising Research / Cross-cultural Consumer Behavior	Quantitative	<i>Multicountry survey (6 countries); <i>fictitious</i> ad stimuli; cross-national equivalence testing; formative construct validation</i>
Doe & Pupilampu (2019)	Frederick Doe; Bill Buenar Pupilampu	Ghana	Organizational Behavior / Management / Scale Development	Quantitative	<i>Cross-sectional survey (n=371); 20-item scale; latent variable approach; exploratory factor analysis; Cronbach's alpha</i>

Reference	Author(s)	Country of Origin	Field Specialization /	Method Type	Method Detail
Grienitz & Schmidt (2010)	Volker Grienitz; Anne-Maria Schmidt	Germany	Management / Systems Complexity / Organizational Theory	Quantitative	<i>Scenario technique; social network analysis (SNA); cross-linked thinking; key influence factor mapping</i>
Winskell et al. (2018)	Kate Winskell; Robert Singleton; Gaelle Sabben	USA / France	Qualitative Research Methods / Public Health / Narrative Data Analysis	Mixed Methods	<i>Longitudinal cross-national triangulating design: in-depth narrative analysis + thematic qualitative analysis + quantitative analysis; 75,000+ HIV narratives; 18 years</i>
Choudhary et al. (2025)	J. Choudhary; S. Shree; S. Rastogi; A. Chaubey; P.R. Kiran	India	Cross-cultural Management / Benchmarking / Indian Management	Conceptual / Review	<i>Systematic literature review (PRISMA); Input-Mediator-Outcome (IMO) framework; journal-based longitudinal synthesis</i>
Buttigieg et al. (2015)	Sandra C. Buttigieg; Cheryl Rathert; Thomas D'Aunno; Greg T. Savage	Malta / USA	Health Care Management / International Research Methods	Conceptual / Review	<i>Scholarly commentary & synthesis; expert panel (Academy of Management); methodological/ethical challenges reviewed; no primary data</i>
Schaffer & Riordan (2003)	Bryan S. Schaffer; Christine M. Riordan	USA	Organizational Research Methods / Cross-cultural Methodology	Conceptual / Review	<i>Systematic literature review (1995–2001); three-stage analytical framework; best-practice recommendations for self-report cross-cultural research</i>
Cascio (2012)	Wayne F. Cascio	USA	International HRM / Research Methodology	Conceptual / Review	<i>Conceptual/analytical review; five methodological issues: translation & equivalence, common method bias, reliability, sampling, non-response bias</i>
Xu & Zhang (2012)	C. Xu; Y. Zhang	China	HRM / Performance Management / Cross-cultural Adaptation	Conceptual / Review	<i>Qualitative analysis based on literature review; three inadaptability issues of Western PM in Chinese</i>

Reference	Author(s)	Country of Origin	Field Specialization /	Method Type	Method Detail
					<i>culture; cultural analysis & solutions</i>
Goede & Holtbrügge (2021)	Johanna Goede; Dirk Holtbrügge	Germany	International HRM / Expatriate Management / Research Methodology	Conceptual / Review	<i>Systematic literature review (69 articles); pre-defined inclusion criteria; IB, HRM, management, psychology disciplines; methodological gap analysis</i>
Russo et al. (2024)	Ivan Russo; Ilenia Confente; Jan Holmström; Magnus Öhman; Timofey Tokar	Italy / Finland / Sweden	Logistics / Supply Chain Management / Research Methodology	Conceptual / Review	<i>Special issue methodological commentary; surveys QCA, netnography, design science, Bayesian networks, machine learning, repertory grid</i>
Miller & Lengler (2025)	Steve Miller; Jorge Lengler	UK	International Business / Quantitative Research Methodology	Conceptual / Review	<i>Conceptual best-practice review; quantitative IB research design; transparency, triangulation, robustness testing, reporting guidelines</i>

Note: Article numbers reflect original document order. Wozniak (2006) is the third co-author of Sadler-Smith, Evans & Woźniak (2006); cited here as listed in the uploaded document. Distribution — Qualitative: 14, Quantitative: 7, Mixed Methods: 1, Conceptual/Review: 8.