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Current research trends in Organisational Behaviour

The purpose of this editorial is to outline the recent trends in micro-organisational behaviour (micro-OB) in BJM for 2023-2024. As a core discipline in management studies, micro-OB focuses particularly on how individual and group behaviour in organisations evolves and adapts, while shaped by work norms and multilevel relationships and dynamics, governance and technological structures. Within this broad remit, micro-organisational behaviour draws heavily upon work and organisational psychology, although not exclusively so. With the globalisation of the economy and the aftermath of the recent pandemic, the very nature of working relationships has been transformed. The articles in this editorial provide insights in how research reflects some of these broader challenges and areas where future articles in *British Journal of Management* (BJM) could make contributions. We focus on two broad areas which reflect the majority of micro-OB studies published in BJM recently. In total we analyse ten articles clustered around two major areas : leadership and individual behaviour.

Individual behaviour

Of six articles focused on individual employee behaviour, four are focused on performance-enhancing aspects of worker employee behaviour, of which two focused on proactive behaviour, *Ren et al.* (2023) and *Ottenbring et al.* (2024). Ren et al. investigated voluntary employee green behaviour, and found that voluntary employee green behaviour was positively associated with employee affective commitment, but the association was conditional on complex mediation and moderation by perceived organisational support. Ottenbring et al. examined employee proactivity in retail services was related to enhanced consumer outcomes, extending prior work through methodological refinements. *Rangan et al.* (2023) also focused on customer service and found that enhanced employee service performance was associated with supervisor support and contact with beneficiaries.

Mehralian et al. (2024) examined how organisation-level intellectual capital enhancing human resource management practices related to organisational capacity for learning, finding that employees' innovative work behaviour was a mediator. In contrast to the previous four articles, *Agarwal et al.* (2024) examined a potentially counter-productive behaviour: knowledge hiding. Agarwal found that co-worker incivility was related to knowledge hiding through multiple mediators. Finally, and connecting with the next section *Singh et al.* (2024) examined how line managers' behaviours relate to their line reports' organisational commitment and how line reports' organisational commitment relates to their managers' ratings of line reports' performance.

Leadership

Of four articles, three emphasise the importance of the leader in shaping attitudes and behaviours of employees that are beneficial to the organisation. For *Duan et al.* (2024) and *Xu et al.* (2024), the focal point of the research is improving employees' voice. While the former demonstrates how two forms of leaders' psychological ownership (PO), i.e. promotive PO and preventive PO, show distinct pathways to endorse employees' voice, the later research show how employees constructive voice can provide leaders with information and affect resources that help enhancing LMX relationships. Both articles show the reciprocal nature of the relation between leaders and followers. Also, the article by *Usman et al.* (2024) underlines the importance of middle-managers developing learning ambidexterity strategies both explorative and exploitative to achieve higher performance levels. This article in particular highlights the role of organizational leaders, in particular with a servant leadership style, in facilitating structural empowerment, and the importance of their boundary-spanning behaviour in developing ambidexterity strategies. The article by *De Clercq et al.* (2023), , investigates the role of employee's faith/religion in buffering negative feelings of psychological contract breaches through psychological withdraw from organizational leaders

(e.g., supervisors, line-managers, etc.) to explain failures in meeting job performance requirements, such as meeting sensitive deadlines. Although there is less interactional focus between leaders and follows, this paper highlights the impact of an outside-work variable often in the private sphere such as religion/faith into a work situation. Often organizational behaviour researchers disregard important non-work aspects religion/faith in shaping work perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

Theoretical perspectives

In terms of the contributions to theory, seven articles – including all four articles on leadership - draw from resource theories either conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2002) or resource theory in combination with another conceptual approach. This is an interesting approach in attempting to understand employee behaviour and leadership relationships from a point of view of resources (rather than demands), and the underlying motivational drives within a psychological framework for understanding everyday life. Social exchange also featured as a theoretical perspective underpinning two other articles reviewed. Social exchange approaches also feature heavily in articles published in BJM relating to employment relations (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Johnstone and Wilkinson, 2018; Nayani et al., 2022), underlining the potential of social exchange approaches to connect macro- and micro- studies of organisational behaviour.

Methodologies adopted

From a methodological point of view, all nine articles propose rigorous, quantitative research designs. Time-lagged and/or multi-source data are prevalent. Time-lagged and/or multi-source data enables authors to establish a sequential series of events and avoid common method variance with dependent variables by triangulating data from different sources. Four articles also reported multiple studies, indicating the importance of replication in studies reliant on statistical inference. Ren et al. reported two studies, both with time lagged data and one

with multisource data. Three studies reported on field studies and vignette scenario experiments (Duan et al., Otterbring et al., Xu et al.). There is a wide geographical spread of samples across four continents (South America and Africa were not represented), and this reflects the spread of institutional affiliations of the authors.

Looking back and looking forwards

The geographical spread of samples and authors indicates that the title of the *British Journal of Management* reflects the journal's home and not its reach, highlighting BJM's role as a word-leading outlet for micro-OB research. However, there is always scope for enhancement. Given the volume of submissions received at BJM, the submissions that are more likely to 'stand out from the crowd' make significant conceptual contributions, take the best of what is currently published and supplement these building blocks with rigorous methodological innovations.

One major topic area missing from our review is that of workplace wellbeing, health and safety. Studies specifically on workplace safety occur in other major journal outlets, albeit infrequently. However, studies of workplace health and wellbeing form a major corpus of research in micro-OB and occur frequently in other outlets. There have been two studies published recently in BJM concerned with worker wellbeing and health (Nayani et al., 2022; Park and Koch, 2024), although both were concerned with the Covid-19 pandemic and one was focused on organisational responses.

In terms of methods, the frequent use of multi-source and/or time-lagged data reflects methodological sophistication but also the long-standing commitment of many of the leading micro-OB/work psychology outlets to methods that are capable of stronger causal inference than purely cross-sectional, single-source methods. Such methodological approaches are tractable in studies of individuals and small groups – a luxury that other areas of management studies do not often share. We should therefore expect BJM to uphold the highest standards

of methodological rigour in each of its constituent areas. However, we note that time-intensive sampling methods (e.g. experience sampling, diary studies) were not used in the studies we reviewed, yet such designs feature frequently in other leading outlets. In addition, , field studies with the strongest power for causal inference (i.e., appropriately powered randomized controlled trials {RCTs}) were also absent for our review. This most likely reflects the difficulty in conducting RCTs in organizational settings. The absence of qualitative studies in our review is also notable.

Further, none of the articles in our review has actually addressed the underlying dynamics of their phenomena over time. Employee behaviour, cognition, affect and leadership relationships are not static phenomena. Therefore, it would benefit articles and advance the research to include time related measures that elucidate trajectories of change and enhance causal inference by examining if changes in one variable are related to subsequent changes in another. Examples from other outlets are studies that have used multi-wave data to model relationships between changes in dependent, mediator and independent variables (Ogbonnaya et al., 2023), trajectories of change in variables over time (Kwok et al., 2021) and dynamic relationships between variables while accounting for stable relationships (Ford et al., 2023).

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