

Application of the Grounded Theory Methodology in HRM Research Within Private and Public Sector – An Attempt at a Meta-Analysis of Articles Published on the ISI Master Journal List Between 2010 and 2014

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The aim of the study is to assess the cognitive value of research results presented in the articles concerning HRM in which the grounded theory methodology was used. The article puts forward the meta-analysis as a tool for comparing the results of previous empirical research published during the period of the last five years (2010–2014) on the ISI Master Journal List. I hope that my research will add to debates on issues of HRM within the private and public sector.

Keywords: methodology, grounded theory, meta-analysis, ISI Master Journal List, HRM.

Wykorzystanie metodologii teorii ugruntowanej w badaniach z zakresu ZZL w sektorze prywatnym i publicznym – próba metaanalizy artykułów opublikowanych w latach 2010–2014 na tzw. liście filadelfijskiej

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Celem opracowania jest określenie wartości poznawczej wyników badań prezentowanych w artykułach poświęconych zagadnieniom ZZL, w których posłużono się metodologią teorii ugruntowanej. Dzięki wykorzystaniu metaanalizy możliwe będzie porównanie wyników badań empirycznych, publikowanych na przestrzeni ostatnich pięciu lat (2010–2014) w periodykach z tzw. listy filadelfijskiej, poświęconych zagadnieniom zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi w organizacjach działających zarówno w sektorze prywatnym, jak i publicznym.

Słowa kluczowe: metodologia, teoria ugruntowana, metaanaliza, lista filadelfijska, ZZL.

JEL: J53, M12, M54, O15, B50

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1. Introduction

Following Aristotle's (2013, p. 258) belief that the purpose of science is to discover the truth and this truth manifests itself in cognition, it can be assumed that a properly chosen research methodology should enable cognition (and understanding) of certain phenomena. This is because each empirical study should be underpinned by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Thus, methodology allows for the development of science as such (cf. Kuhn, 1985, 2009). This is also the case for the management science methodology, which is to serve to develop systematic and efficient procedures for studying and improving organisations and management (Sułkowski, 2006, p. 56). As management science evolves, it is observed to progressively draw on other sciences, as evidenced by the enrichment of the management methodology with further research methods of different cognitive and pragmatic efficiency. One such method is the so-called grounded theory methodology¹ (GTM, GT). It has been borrowed from sociology and is a set of methods within the interpretive paradigm (Clarke, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Konecki, 2000). As shown by studies, this is the methodology that is increasingly, although still on a small scale, employed in management research (Loonam, 2013). Researchers following the recommendations by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the authors of this method, are not always aware of its multiple modifications and related benefits (cf. Charmaz, 2009), which may translate into research results and their subsequent interpretation. In order to diagnose the degree to which this methodology is grounded (an apt term) in management science, more precisely in human resource management, a meta-analysis should be performed. The main aim hereof will, therefore, be to assess the cognitive value of research findings outlined in the articles on HRM in which the grounded theory methodology is applied. The meta-analysis will make it possible to compare the outcomes of empirical studies that were published over the last five years (2010–2014) in the journals included in the so-called Philadelphia list (Thomson Reuters ISI Master Journal List) and that address human resource management in organisations operating both in the private and public sector.

2. Characteristics of the Grounded Theory Methodology

Sociology, in particular research methodologies used in that field, had a definite influence on management science (Zieleniewski, 1976, p. 66). The fundamental task of sociology as a science is to study and explain society: mechanisms and regularities governing people's social life. To this end, a variety of both research and statistical methods, techniques and tools are used that are willingly "borrowed" by other sciences. In examining organisations along the lines of sociology, namely describing and explaining

society, management practitioners willingly resort to sociological methods that may analogically contribute not only to describing and explaining an organisation in question but also to understanding the mechanisms, processes and regularities within it. One such method is the grounded theory methodology, which derives from symbolic interactionism² and is now well established in management science: it is more and more often employed – also in Polish research – to portray the organisational and management reality (Konecki, 1998; Masaru, 2006; Reis, Schwedler & Oates, 2012). In the context of the issues addressed herein, it appears reasonable to provide a brief picture of the assumptions of this approach.

In 1967, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (a student of Herbert Blumer³), in their book *Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*, stressed that the investigated reality is best understood by the actors involved in it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Social reality (never finished or complete) is processual and the researcher is part of it; therefore, a theory whose assessment criteria have practical value should be developed in precisely this way. As Krzysztof Konecki, a Polish pioneer of this method, says: “If the researcher is able to understand or explain the field that he/she is exploring by means of categories and hypotheses that he/she has generated, the theory is reliable. If we can change this reality by means of theory, this means that the theory works (cf. Glaser & Holton, 2010, p. 93). And the same applies to methodology. (...) we do not disregard the existing knowledge but we add new knowledge to it, modifying the existing categories and hypotheses” (Kołtun, 2011, pp. 162–163)⁴. Moreover, the grounded theory methodology serves to put forward such hypotheses that will form the basis of a theoretical model for the phenomenon studied. It is thus a micro-theory or even a middle-range theory as it concerns the community in question, with its concepts applying to one research area only. What distinguishes the hypotheses in grounded theory from those within other qualitative research is no requirement for their verification because, as Glaser (1978, p. 62) says, this is not about measuring the strength of association between variables but rather indicating some relationships between them. The method of analysis is a systematic comparison of collected data in order to generate theories relating to the examined phenomenon abductively. The assessment of a theory derived from the field investigated can be tested for reliability from three points of view: a) researcher, b) researcher’s interaction with the reader, c) according to subjectively established scientific criteria (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; as cited in: Kołtun, 2011, p. 162). This means that each assessor, having taken account of ontological and epistemological assumptions, can assess a theory grounded in the field since it is not static but alive in the assessments made by the researcher and his/her readers (e.g. Åge, 2011, p. 1601; Charmaz, 2009). Knowledge so obtained is pragmatic and can serve to solve specific problems through a better understanding of the phenomena being explored.

The application of this methodology in social studies seems very simple initially: it is sufficient to “go out into the field”, collect data, perform analyses, draw conclusions. The difficulty that appears in the application of the grounded theory methodology is the lack of more specific assumptions before commencing research. Unlike traditional research methods that involve testing hypotheses derived from related literature, grounded theory – as originally assumed by its authors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) – is supposed to examine social reality without prior suppositions: the researcher has to enter the field without prior insight, namely with pure mind (*tabula rasa*). This aspect of grounded theory may effectively deter its potential users. The inductive approach to research (generation of codes, concepts and categories from data reflected in interview transcripts, hence no need for testing hypotheses, which all was to ensure that the researcher did not miss major issues and phenomena) was a reason for sharp criticism of the authors of grounded theory. Criticism of the scientific community (partially legitimate and to some extent resulting from a misunderstanding of the basic assumptions of this methodology) could significantly contribute to its authors going different ways. Glaser stuck to the original assumptions of the theory, while Strauss verified his views on research presuppositions and the role played by the researcher in the research and analysis process (Susabowska, 2011, p. 312). Therefore, at least two interpretations of this methodology may be identified.

The concept of grounded theory as modified by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and later by Charmaz (2009) is defended by Konecki: “It is not that I limit preconceptualisation, have pure mind, do not know anything. On the contrary, I need to know a lot, have a developed theoretical imagination to see indicators for certain phenomena in the empirical material, and then give these phenomena names using categories. (...) Philosophical and anthropological knowledge is necessary” (Kołtun, 2011, p. 165). A similar reflection can be found in Suddaby (2006), who not only refutes the allegation of lack of presuppositions but also points to those elements of the grounded theory methodology that are either misconstrued by some researchers or have been mythologised (Suddaby, 2006; Urquhart & Fernández, 2013, p. 224). This type of research “is not an impressionistic, free creation of a researcher with a literary gift but a laborious, systematic, controlled and objective (not less than quantitative procedures) research methodology” (Konecki, 2000, p. 32). Collecting and coding data that serve to develop hypotheses *in vivo* can cause difficulties as data amounts are often huge. It is worth noting that such research, regardless of the orientation adopted, is not only laborious but also time-consuming and frequently expensive. Gathering and coding empirical material sometimes takes years (Reis et al., 2012). Selected assumptions of grounded theory are presented in Table 1.

<i>Key assumptions</i>	Grounded theory
<i>Purpose and logic of action (assumptions and methodological procedures)</i>	Building a theory derived from the research field
<i>Nature of knowledge developed/acquired</i>	Pragmatic nature (solutions to specific problems). Knowledge refers solely to the explored research field
<i>Indicators of increase in knowledge/progress</i>	Definitions (as an expression of the understanding of the phenomenon) building theories
<i>Characteristic research method</i>	Unprejudiced exploration (comparative method concerning many cases)
<i>Types of organising</i>	Organisations oriented towards problem solving
Examples of organisations	Universities, enterprises, etc. (all those organisations where human relations involve exchange and interpretation of meanings and symbols)

Tab. 1. Key assumptions of the grounded theory methodology. Source: Elaborated by the author.

3. Application of the Grounded Theory Methodology in HRM Research – Research Methodology

The grounded theory methodology can probably be applied to study all existing types of organisations. Research carried out in accordance with the applicative procedure of this methodology results in understanding the research situation and key problems that affect the subject of research. These issues may in fact revolve around all HRM aspects, from employment planning through recruitment and selection of employees, evaluating and rewarding their work to motivating and career planning. By means of interviews or systematic observations⁵, the researcher is able to obtain data that, in the course of research (through a comparative analysis), will highlight issues characteristic of the area being explored. As in management science the grounded theory methodology influences the organisation of qualitative research enormously (Koltun, 2011, p. 159) and its procedure can be applied to explore actually most research areas, this article aims to verify whether the use of this methodology is appropriate also in the area of human resource management.

3.1. The Research Problem, Questions and Hypotheses

The issue emerging from the above considerations is the application of the grounded theory methodology to study the human resource management area. The research problem is to assess the cognitive value of research results obtained by applying grounded theory to investigate HRM

in commercial and non-commercial organisations. The problem so outlined determines the following research questions:

- *Regarding the application of grounded theory:*
 - a) Which of the approaches to the grounded theory methodology (the original one proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) or that modified by Corbin and Strauss (Charmaz, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 1990) was used in the research? Is the choice of approach made by the author(s) justified?
 - b) Was the research conducted in compliance with all procedural steps (relevant to the selected approach)⁶? Does the article contain the required indicators that, according to Paweł Kleka (2011, p. 103), should be included therein as a result of the application of an interpretive research methodology?
- *Regarding the research areas where the grounded theory methodology was used:*
 - c) In which organisations (commercial, non-commercial) was the research carried out?
 - d) Which HRM areas were studied?
 - e) Does the type of organisation determine the choice of approach to the grounded theory methodology?

These research questions are exploratory; therefore, the author refrains from attempting to answer them in the form of research hypotheses. Arguably, however, research results (obtained by applying the grounded theory methodology) will have a high cognitive value, yet cannot be used to develop a middle-range theory as understood by Merton (cf. Susabowska, 2011, p. 306); they would rather form the basis for conclusions relevant only to the explored research area (the organisation investigated) and the introduction of potential changes in this area.

3.2. Characteristics of the Research Method (Meta-Analysis) and Tool Design

In order to answer the research questions, it was decided to perform a meta-analysis of publications on the issues of human resource management in commercial and non-commercial organisations, which issues had been examined by means of the grounded theory methodology.

A meta-analysis is a quantitative review of literature that consists in compiling a set of results of a number of independent studies carried out by different authors and addressing the same research subject in order to integrate them. This concept was introduced by Glass (1976) to define the steps in the application of statistical methods that allow for extending the conclusions of individual studies to a wider population and for improving reliability of results obtained. In management science, meta-analysis is not commonly used by researchers in Poland yet, although – as shown by Anna Gondek and Karolina Mazur (2013, p. 68) – further examples of performed meta-analyses are gradually appearing.

The meta-analysis process consists of several stages. Paweł Kleka (2011, pp. 99–100), citing Sauerbrei and Blettner (2003), mentions as many as ten stages, while Gondek and Mazur (2013, pp. 70–73) indicate only four main ones: 1) conceptualisation and operationalisation of the research problem based on a preliminary analysis of available research results; 2) data collection using inclusion criteria; 3) selection and compilation of results; 4) statistical analysis and drawing conclusions (Gondek & Mazur, 2013, p. 71).

Since the grounded theory methodology fits in the interpretive strand of social research, the criteria included in the above stages are extremely difficult or even impossible to satisfy. This is because these criteria concern quantitative rather than “qualitative” research. Moreover, even the popular guide to meta-analysis (Kulinskaya, Morgenthaler & Staudte, 2008) contains no mention of a meta-analysis relying on qualitative data. Paweł Kleka (2011, p. 103) notes, however, that a meta-analysis based on such data should include the following: frequency distribution, standard error, confidence interval, odds ratio, risk ratio or risk difference (OR, RR, RD). Thus, by expanding the criteria to include the elements relating to the grounded theory application, an attempt will be made to design a tool for meta-analysis of empirical articles where the GT methodology was employed. This tool, according to requirements (cf. Charmaz, 2009; Gibbs, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Konecki, 2000; Silverman, 2009), will encompass elements regarding: A) grounded theory; B) the type of the organisation examined; C) HRM area; D) statistical measures presented in the article. These areas, along with ancillary questions, are outlined in Table 2.

	Criterion/ variable	Indicator/value of variable/ancillary question
A	Grounded theory	Original version (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) Modified version (e.g. Charmaz, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 1990) Procedural steps ⁷ : putting forward research questions; data collection; data analysis (presuppositions, theoretical saturation, categories specified on the basis of collected data); emerging theory (identifying key categories, describing relationships between key categories, explaining new theories); theoretical implications; practical implications (e.g. for managers)
B	Type of organisation	Commercial, non-commercial, both
C	HRM area	SHRM, IHRM, HRM function, etc.
D	Statistical indicators	Frequency distribution (N); standard error; confidence intervals; odds ratio; risk ratio or risk difference

Tab. 2. The tool for meta-analysis of articles examining HRM by means of the grounded theory methodology. Source: Elaborated by the author based on: Charmaz (2009, pp. 233–235); Glaser (1978, pp. 4–5); Kleka (2011, p. 103). A: assessment criteria for the GT methodology application; B: place of research or type of organisation; C: HRM area; D: statistical indicators.

3.3. Selection of the Research Sample

The meta-analysis was conducted based on several methodological assumptions. First and foremost, as the grounded theory methodology is not as yet a very common research methodology, it was decided not to define further the HRM research issues when searching for articles for meta-analysis. This was intended to avoid a situation where the set of query results in library databases (EBSCO, ProQuest) would be empty. Moreover, this allowed for putting the (grounded theory) methodology applied to the fore, with only a secondary focus on the topics discussed by the authors.

Articles were selected from databases available at the Faculty of Management, University of Economics in Katowice, on 16 March 2015 in response to the search terms: “(grounded theory and (ISSN))”, where “ISSN” was replaced with numbers ascribed to the twenty most cited reviewed management journals classified on the so-called Philadelphia list (Thomson Reuters ISI Master Journal List)⁸ in 2010–2014. Of 94 articles selected, 63 were rejected⁹ after a preliminary analysis. The list of articles that were initially qualified for meta-analysis is shown in Table 3.

No.	Author(s), year	Article	
		theoretical	empirical
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	1. Hausman, Lee, Napier, Thompson & Zheng, 2010		√
2.	2. Lockström, Schadel, Harrison, Moser & Malhotra, 2010		√
3.	1. Berente, Hansen, Pike & Bateman, 2011		√
4.	2. Burgelman, 2011	√	
5.	3. Kaufmann & Denk, 2011	√	
6.	4. Martin, 2011		√
7.	5. Salvador, 2011	√	
8.	6. Skilton, 2011	√	
9.	7. Woolley & Fuchs, 2011	√	
10.	1. Austin, Devin & Sullivan, 2012		√
11.	2. Dougherty & Dunne, 2012		√
12.	3. Gligor & Autry, 2012		√
13.	4. Ladge, Clair & Greenberg, 2012		√
14.	5. Mantere, Schildt & A. Sillince, 2012		√
15.	6. O'Reilly, Paper & Marx, 2012	√	
16.	1. Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013	√	
17.	2. Gregory, Beck & Keil, 2013		√
18.	3. Seidel & Urquhart, 2013	√	
19.	4. Trefalt, 2013		√
20.	5. Urquhart & Fernández, 2013	√	

Tab. 3 cont.

No.	Author(s), year	Article	
		theoretical	empirical
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
21.	1. Beck & Plowman, 2014		√
22.	2. Bensaou, Galunic & Jonczyk-Sédès, 2014		√
23.	3. Hinds & Cramton, 2014		√
24.	4. Ketchen, Wowak & Craighead, 2014		√
25.	5. Mair & Hehenberger, 2014		√
26.	6. O'Brien & Linehan, 2014		√
27.	7. Powell & Baker, 2014		√
28.	8. Shepherd & Williams, 2014		√
29.	9. Thorpe, 2014	√	
30.	10. Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, Kreiner & Bishop, 2014		√
31.	11. Wadham & Warren, 2014	√	
N:		11	20

Tab. 3. List of articles selected for meta-analysis (I). Source: Elaborated by the author. N = 31.

The next step was to collect and read the articles selected from the database. When preliminary insight was gained, eleven theoretical articles were removed (Table 3, column 3). Thus, the number of articles qualifying for meta-analysis was 20. Afterwards, the research unit was defined, establishing whether the research had been done in a commercial or non-commercial organisation. The last step before the research as such was to check whether the research had been conducted in an HRM area. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 4.

Article	Organisations examined	Topic (aim, problem)	HRM
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Hausman et al., 2010	commercial	International trade management	–
Lockström et al., 2010	commercial	Antecedents to supplier integration in the automotive industry	–
Berente et al., 2011	commercial	Sensemaking of an innovative technology	–
Martin, 2011*	commercial	Influence of leadership groups on organisational efficiency	–
Austin et al., 2012	commercial	Accidental innovation	–
Dougherty & Dunne, 2012	commercial	The impact of digitisation on development of new medicines	–
Gligor & Autry, 2012	commercial	The role of personal relationships in communications within the company	–

Tab. 4 cont.

Article	Organisations examined	Topic (aim, problem)	HRM
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ladge et al., 2012	<i>N/A</i>	Identity transition during pregnancy: from professional to mother	
Mantere et al., 2012	commercial	Reversal of organisational strategy	
Gregory et al., 2013	commercial	Control balancing in information systems development in foreign subsidiaries	–
Trefalt, 2013	commercial	Work-life balance	–
Beck & Plowman, 2014	inter-organisational	Circumstances of temporary inter-organisational collaboration	–
Bensaou et al., 2014	commercial	Networking strategies and agency in the services sector	–
Hinds & Cramton, 2014	commercial	Mutual visits and relationships among distributed workers	–
Ketchen et al., 2014	commercial	Product recalls	–
Mair & Hehenberger, 2014	non-commercial	Overcoming conflicts as an effect of supporting different institutional models	–
O'Brien & Linehan, 2014	commercial	The influence of emotions on the understanding of the HRM role	√
Powell & Baker, 2014	commercial	Different strategic responses of companies to the same adversities	–
Shepherd & Williams, 2014	non-commercial	How local community-based projects alleviate suffering in the aftermath of natural disasters	–
Treviño et al., 2014	commercial	Professional ethics among ethics and compliance officers	–

Tab. 4. Issues addressed in the selected articles and type of organisation under examination (I). Source: Elaborated by the author. N=20.

4. Characteristics of the Resultant Database and Redefinition of the Assumptions Regarding the Sample

As shown in Table 4, the set of articles selected for meta-analysis contains only one paper directly related to human resource management (O'Brien & Linehan, 2014). Furthermore, only in two cases studies were carried out in non-commercial organisations (in one case, these were inter-organisational

studies). The database so compiled prevented a meta-analysis because it lacked at least two articles on the same HRM topic/area. However, in order to illustrate the process of meta-analysis, it was decided to introduce an additional term in the search area and to refrain from referring to 20 journals on the Philadelphia list. A new query in the EBSCO database was: “(“grounded theory”) AND (“human resource¹⁰”) AND organization”. The meta-analysis of articles so selected, where the grounded theory methodology was employed for research purposes (in 2010–2014), was intended to show inter-organisational differences in a (deliberately unspecified) HRM area. Of fifteen articles, nine were rejected after a preliminary analysis: one article because it was published in a language other than English, six on nursing, two unavailable in the EBSCO and ProQuest databases.

Article	HRM issue	Organisations examined
(1)	(2)	(3)
Harrison, 2011	The role of line management and learning culture in developing HRM practices	Commercial organisation
Huang & Hyun Jeong, 2011	Analysis of the lifelong learning programme	Commercial organisation
Lloyd, Roodt & Odendaal, 2011	Defining work-based identity	Commercial organisation
Valenta & Strabac, 2011	Welfare services and labour migration from the EU	Non-commercial organisation
Abbas, Khattak & Nocker, 2014	Gender versus commitment	Commercial organisation
Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014	Characteristics of good leadership	Commercial organisation

Tab. 5. Issues addressed in the articles and the type of organisation where research was conducted (II). Source: Elaborated by the author. N=6.

As this database (Table 5) still lacked at least two articles on a similar topic to be compared during meta-analysis, it was chosen to change the criteria for searching the EBSCO database for the last time. The search term was: “grounded theory” AND “human resource”; journals from all databases (except for Health Source Nursing) were limited to full texts that had undergone scientific peer-reviews. Of 94 results, 80 were removed: seventeen duplicates and sixty articles published in journals not included in the so-called Philadelphia list¹¹, two theoretical articles and one list of recommended books. Finally, the database comprised fourteen empirical articles (see Table 6).

Article (1)	HRM issue (2)	Organisations examined (3)
Bamberger & Phillips, 1991	Influences on human resource strategy	Commercial
Collins, 1995	Workplace democracy (motivational programme)	Commercial
Bacharach, Bamberger & McKinney, 2000	Support programme for flight attendants	Commercial
Clardy, 2000	Self-education (related to work)	Commercial and non-commercial
Voss, Cable & Voss, 2000	Relationship between external factors and sharing organisational values	Non-commercial
Bloom, Milkovich & Mitra, 2003	Managers' responses to global and local pressures (international context)	Commercial
Vashdi, Bamberger, Erez & Weiss-Meilik, 2007	Influence of military technologies on the performance of surgical teams	Non-commercial
Margolis & Molinsky, 2008	How people respond to "necessary evils" and how this affects the attainment of their goals	Commercial and non-commercial
Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010	Work-life balance among female expatriates	Commercial
Huang & Hyun Jeong, 2011	Analysis of the lifelong learning programme, HRD	Commercial
Gupta, Banerjee & Gaur, 2012	The role of the wife in expatriate (failure) life	Commercial
O'Brien & Linehan, 2014	The influence of emotions on the understanding of the HRM role	Commercial
Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014	Characteristics of good informal leadership	Commercial
Winter & Jackson, 2014	Shaping the social reality around preferred work values	Commercial and non-commercial

Tab. 6. HRM issues addressed in the selected articles (III). Source: Elaborated by the author. N=14.

5. Research Findings

Since the database lacked two articles on the same subject, it was impossible to make comparative analyses, which are the purpose of a meta-analysis. As a broad search criterion was used, it may be assumed that a different choice of terms in the search engine would also have been unsuccessful and would have not brought expected results, namely at least two articles addressing the same area. Therefore, it was decided to make the next step, i.e. to analyse the approaches to grounded theory adopted by the authors of the articles. The results of this procedure are reported in Table 7.

No.	Article	GT: Glaser, Strauss, 1967	GT: Corbin, Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2009
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Bamberger & Phillips, 1991	√	
2.	Collins, 1995	*	*
3.	Bacharach et al., 2000	√	
4.	Clardy, 2000	√	
5.	Voss et al., 2000	*	*
6.	Bloom et al., 2003	*	*
7.	Vashdi et al., 2007	√	
8.	Margolis & Molinsky, 2008	√	
9.	Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010		√
10.	Huang & Hyun Jeong, 2011		√
11.	Gupta et al., 2012		√
12.	O'Brien & Linehan, 2014		√
13.	Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014		√
14.	Winter & Jackson, 2014		√
	N	5	6

Tab. 7. Approaches to the grounded theory methodology adopted by researchers. Source: Elaborated by the author. N = 14. * – the grounded theory methodology not used in the research.

As can be seen from the above table, five articles employed the grounded theory methodology as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), while six articles used its modified version, with a direct impact on the methodological aspects of the approach adopted. An interesting correlation can be noticed: the articles published before 2010 used the approach by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and the authors of subsequent articles applied modified procedures of this methodology.

Variable	Bamberger	Bacharach	Clardy	Vashdi	Margolis	Fischlmayr
Approach to the theory	G&S	G&S	G&S	G&S	G&S	Mod.
Theoretical sampling	√	√	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D
Data analysis:						
– no presuppositions, preconceptions, hypotheses	√	√	√	no	no	N/A; √
– definition of the coding applied (e.g. open, descriptive, axial)	√	√	no	√	√	√
– theoretical saturation	no	√	no	√	no	√
– categories developed on the basis of the data collected	√	√	√	√	√	√
Emerging theory:						
– core categories	N/A; no	N/A; no	N/A; √	N/A; no	N/A; no	no
– description of links between categories and core categories (and/or a model)	no	√	√	√	√	N/D
– explanation of new theories and/or hypotheses	√	√	√	√	√	√
Implications for theory	√	√	√	√	√	√
Implications for practice (e.g. managers)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Indicators pointed out by P. Kleka (2011)	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Huang	Gupta	Stincelli	Winter	O'Brien	
Approach to the theory	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	

Theoretical sampling	√	√	N/D	N/D	N/D	
Data analysis:						
– no presuppositions	N/A	N/A; √	N/A	N/A	N/A	
– definition of the coding applied (e.g. open, descriptive, axial)	√	√	N/D	√	√	
– theoretical saturation	√	√	no	no	no	
– categories developed on the basis of the data collected	√	√	√	√	√	
Emerging theory:						
– core categories	√	√	no	√	√	
– description of links between categories and core categories (and/or a model)	√	√	√	√	√	
– explanation of new theories and/or hypotheses	√	N/D	√	√	√	
Implications for theory	√	√	√	√	√	
Implications for practice (e.g. managers)	√	√	√	√	√	
Indicators pointed out by P. Kleka (2011)	–	–	–	–	–	

Tab. 8. Application of the grounded methodology in selected articles. Source: Elaborated by the author. G&S: (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); Mod. – modified approach; N/A – not applicable; N/D – no data; unacceptable deficiencies or errors are marked in bold.

Table 8 shows the variables characteristic of the approach to the grounded methodology applied in the research. In four of the eleven analysed articles, information was provided on theoretical sampling. Where the original concept by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used, preconceptionalisation or research hypotheses should have been avoided. The coding method used in the research should have been indicated. A characteristic feature of grounded theory is the so-called theoretical saturation, namely the moment when theoretical sampling should cease. Regardless of the approach chosen, it is necessary to indicate this moment (the table shows that as many as six articles lacked this indication). All authors developed some conceptual categories based on the collected data, but not all of them identified core categories that are indispensable where a modified procedure (e.g. that proposed by Corbin and Strauss) is adopted. Interestingly, all articles contain characteristic categories (not necessarily core ones) that became the basis for indicating relationships between them or were presented as a model. Relationships between categories or models gave rise to hypotheses or theories grounded in the field (only one article did not meet this requirement). However, all articles provide implications for theory and guidelines for practitioners, while no article contains statistical indicators identified by P. Kleka (2011, p. 103), possibly due to the specificity of research using the grounded theory methodology.

6. Conclusions

The attempted meta-analysis of articles addressing HRM issues in commercial and non-commercial organisations can provide answers to the research questions, thus allowing the assessment of the grounded theory methodology application from the methodological and methodical point of view.

Approach to Grounded Theory

A comparative analysis of approaches used by researchers in the framework of grounded theory has shown that the methodology proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and subsequently developed by Charmaz (2009) is becoming increasingly popular. The proportions between the original and modified approach to grounded theory were almost identical in the analysed articles. Unfortunately, the authors of the articles did not state why they had chosen a specific methodological orientation.

Compliance with the Research Procedure

Referring to the methodical aspects of the methodology discussed, the researchers mostly went through the consecutive necessary stages, adapting to the procedures ensuing from the methodology adopted. It should be, nonetheless, noted that not all of them succeeded. For example, Vashdi

et al. (2007) and Margolis and Molinsky (2008) began their research with significant research suppositions, contrary to the recommendations by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to enter the field without prior assumptions. The analysis of Table 8 shows more such instances.

Unfortunately, the examined articles did not include any statistical indicators (cf. Kleka, 2011) that could have provided a basis for meta-analysis of two articles on the same subject if such articles had existed.

Type of Organisations Examined

As shown in Table 6, most research was conducted in commercial organisations. In two cases, the research was carried out in non-profit organisations, and three researchers elected to investigate both types of organisations. A small number of articles and the uneven distribution of the “type of organization” variable prevented a further statistical analysis in this area¹².

Areas of Human Resource Management

The last research question concerned HRM areas that were studied by means of the grounded theory methodology. The analysis of the articles reveals that the grounded theory methodology is versatile – it is used in different places where the discovery of certain regularities, explanation of phenomena or description of the situation it is not possible by applying “quantitative” methods and techniques. Interestingly, the issues addressed concerned not only the processes of managing people but also depicted different levels at which the application of the methodology was appropriate (e.g. Bamberger and Phillips (1991), by analysing dozens of reports, displayed a strategic approach to HRM in their article; Vashdi et al. (2007) examined team work; Gupta et al. (2012) sought to demonstrate the role of wives in expatriate life at the individual level). In conclusion, it may be stated that the analysed examples of studies focus more on the individual functions of human resource management than on human resource management understood holistically. The examination of the entire HRM function with the use of grounded theory would have been virtually impossible because of time, effort and cost involved in the application of this method.

7. Research Limitations

The steps undertaken in this article were aimed at depicting the meta-analysis procedure illustrated by articles where the grounded theory methodology was employed to study HRM in various types of organisations. Due to an insufficient number of articles addressing the same HRM issues, a full meta-analysis was impossible. Moreover, as a result of vaguely written analytical procedures (lack of certain indicators), the research results

presented in the articles were not suitable for further statistical analyses (i.e. a meta-analysis). The reason might have been that the choice of articles in the EBSCO and ProQuest databases was confined to those available in the database. Perhaps databases currently inaccessible to the staff of the University of Economics in Katowice contain articles that meet the criteria established at the outset. Keeping these limitations in mind, future research in this area should be carried out on a larger research sample selected based on a specific HRM issue.

A further analysis of the grounded approach revealed that some researchers treat the grounded theory methodology quite freely. This is evidenced primarily by the selective treatment of different methodological procedures under various theoretical approaches, leading to a blend of procedure-specific elements that are used depending on not always methodologically justified needs. This situation may result from a misunderstanding of the fundamental differences between theoretical approaches within the adopted methodology and even the lack of relevant knowledge in this regard. As a consequence, further comparisons cannot be made by other researchers, potentially bringing about the impoverishment of science. At this point, what can only be suggested to researchers is that they should follow certain general guidelines on the presentation and evaluation of research results that are independent of the employed “version” of the grounded theory methodology and have been proposed by Charmaz (Table 9).

Credibility	Do the collected data allow drawing conclusions? Have you made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories? Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and your argument and analysis?
Originality	Are your categories fresh? Do they offer new insights?
Usefulness	Does your analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds? How does your theory contribute to knowledge?

Tab. 9. Selected recommendations on the presentation of research results obtained by means of GTM. Source: Charmaz (2009, pp. 233–235).

8. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The aim of the article was to determine the cognitive value of research results obtained by applying the grounded theory methodology to study HRM in commercial and non-commercial organisations. The performed analysis leads to the conclusion that the grounded theory methodology used in the field of human resource management allows an in-depth examination

of the mechanisms governing HRM practices and – potentially – a subsequent comparison of results with those for other organisations.

The grounded theory methodology as probably the most pragmatic direction of symbolic interactionism also satisfies the utility and originality criteria identified by Corley and Gioia (2011) to be met by a theory if it is to serve the explanation of social and organisational life. Therefore, as regards these criteria, the grounded theory methodology can be considered practically useful. This follows from the ontological and epistemological assumptions according to which it is utility that is the criterion of truth of propositions and concepts. On the other hand, given the methodological aspect, inferring concepts from the research field and deriving hypotheses grounded in the field from these concepts results in a better understanding of the issues being explored and, at the utilitarian level, allows for applying corrective actions and solving specific problems. In turn, knowledge developed through the grounded theory methodology is incremental, meaning that a theory should explain both known and new phenomena (cf., e.g., Lakatos, 1995). By constantly comparing many cases, hypotheses emerge that are modified or verified in the course of research, hence a “field-grounded” theory not only refers strictly to the phenomena under investigation but also allows for deepening knowledge about them. A theory so designed will be a micro-theory or a middle-range theory as it aims to describe and explain one selected aspect of the social world rather than extrapolate (results) globally. This implies research into the construction of the HRM function, the development of human resources in an organisation, on the one hand, and – more broadly – into development of human capital, social capital or inter-organisational networks, on the other hand.

Wind-Up

The results outlined herein show a compilation of articles addressing human resource management practices in commercial and non-commercial organisations and applying the grounded theory methodology to study these practices. In the face of an insufficient number of articles on the same subject, a full meta-analysis proved infeasible.

This limitation does not, however, prevent an assessment of the applicative procedure of the grounded theory methodology to be made or ensuing conclusions to be drawn. The analysis of the articles proves that empirical models developed on the basis on data collected in the course of research make it possible to build a new theory that provides information on behaviours of and actions taken by specific people working in HR departments or organisations where such departments exist. Knowledge so gained is pragmatic and allows for solving problems thanks to a better understanding of the phenomena being explored, described and explained.

Endnotes

- ¹ Throughout this text, “the grounded theory methodology” is used interchangeably with its shorter equivalent: “grounded theory”.
- ² In American sociology, symbolic interactionism developed under the influence of the philosophy of pragmatism (Hałas, 2006, p. 15). Symbolic interactionists emphasise people’s ability to create and use symbols (Turner, 2005, p. 419), which allows them, among others, to communicate with one another after having agreed on the meaning of words or body gestures.
- ³ Who introduced the concept of symbolic interactionism into sociology in 1937.
- ⁴ In other words, the purpose of abductive reasoning is to provide explanations of phenomena for which such explanations are necessary and required.
- ⁵ Or – if research is conducted according to the original, unmodified assumption of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) – without any previous suppositions or preconceptions (operationalised, for example, as research questions).
- ⁶ The elements of meta-analysis are presented in Table 2, section 2.2.
- ⁷ Not all are obligatory – depending on the adopted version.
- ⁸ Journals according to JCR/IF (ISI Master Journal List): 1) Academy of Management Review; 2) Academy of Management Annals; 3) Journal of Management; 4) MIS Quarterly; 5) Academy of Management Journal; 6) Personnel Psychology; 7) Journal of Operating Management; 8) Journal of Applied Psychology; 9) Organization Science; 10) Journal of Information Technology; 11) Journal of Supply Chain Management; 12) Journal of International Business Studies; 13) Organizational Research Methods; 14) Journal of Management Studies; 15) Management and Organization Review; 16) Journal of Organizational Behavior; 17) Omega; 18) Strategic Management Journal; 19) Supply Chain Management; 20) Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes.
- ⁹ Mostly editorials, calls for publications, book and article reviews, and articles that did not use this methodology despite including *grounded theory* among their keywords.
- ¹⁰ A singular form was used so as not to exclude other terms (e.g. human resource management).
- ¹¹ The current list of 173 management journals can be found on the Thomson Reuters website.
- ¹² Although the examined number of articles was small ($N = 11$) and further statistical analyses seemed unreasonable, it was after all decided to correlate the “type of organization” variable with the approach to the GT methodology preferred by the authors in order to answer the fifth research question. The correlation analysis did not reveal any statistically significant relationship (the value of chi-squared test for the variables studied was 2.549 with the asymptotic significance of 0.280; for $p < 0.05$). The relationship between variables was analysed because the 11 articles examined represented a population rather than a research sample.

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