

SPECIAL ISSUE CALL FOR PAPERS: NULL EFFECTS IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Special Issue Editors:

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Background

Resistance to learning from failure is an organizational phenomenon studied and addressed by knowledge management. Organizations like The Institute of Brilliant Failures (see <https://www.brilliantfailures.com/>), advocate for a changed attitude to failure by collecting and awarding mistakes that afforded organizational learning. However, the aversion to failure extends beyond organizational practice; it is perhaps nowhere as acutely felt than in the realm of academic research. Therefore, in the spirit of practicing what we preach as Knowledge Management scholars, this second Special Issue (SI) of the Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management (OJAKM) will focus on research that could NOT reject the null hypothesis, but nevertheless produced important (not boring) results and/or insights.

We hope that this SI of null effects in the Knowledge Management (KM) research will respond to the need for more published null findings that are conspicuously absent from methodologically rigorous published studies (e.g., Button et al., 2016) mostly due to publication bias (e.g., Cook & Therrien, 2017). Publication bias is the major driver focusing published research on positive support of the hypothesis (type 1P & 2P; see Table 1) while rejecting the null hypothesis. Research that can find no statistical significance, and findings with negative significance, (as type 1N & 2N, see Table 1) tend to be seen as boring or ‘no big deal’ and suffer from less publication opportunities (see Piper, 2019, introducing the SURE journal, see <https://blogs.canterbury.ac.nz/surejournal/>). Cook and Therrien (2017) suggested four reasons for publishing null studies (that are by implication not boring): “identifying ineffective ... practices, refining or delimiting positive effects, informing, and spurring new theory and research, and increasing efficiency in research and practice” (p. 150). Obviously, this outcome of research (null as significant and important-type 0 below) as juxtaposed with null and boring (type ‘who cares’ below), is not always obvious. So, the question for the editors of this SI is: what should be the criteria for acceptance of papers for this special issue? Granted, all (or at least the vast majority) of the research hypotheses studied should not be accepted, as such the authors are left with accepting the null hypothesis. Unquestionably, the method of a study has to be held to the highest standard (to avoid the elephant

in the room issue of null resulting from poor research design, etc.; see Landis et al., 2014; Morkunas et al., 2020), and we will use our standard double-blind review process, and consistent with the recommendations for authors by Landis et al., (2014) and the detailed list of potential factors causing research bias (Morkunas et al., 2020) which will be shared with the submitting authors during the review process. The review process will also be consistent with the 2019 American Statistical Association recommendation regarding the Null Hypothesis Significant Testing (Wasserstein et al., 2019, p. 1), and explicitly ask the authors to detail not only the precision aspect, but also elaborate on the confidence aspect (for example confidence interval, see Cready et al., 2019) in their statistical analysis (Trafimow et al., 2021, p. 40; see example in Tenenbaum et al., 2019). Still, the question remains: what is important and not boring? At this call for papers, we will leave this criterion open, publishing the paper if (following the recommendations of Landis et al., 2014) most of the editors agree that the results and the implications are relevant and interesting to our readers. For example (as for criteria to be used), relevance of the null findings to policy making might be one criterion (Frankel & Kasy, 2018). Other criteria might be the need to change an assumption or theory used in the paper significantly, or an opportunity to improve a new computing resource or tool (Maheshwari et al., 2017). Another category might be the research projects that failed to reject the null hypothesis because of external reasons (‘black swans’), such as lack of respondents, having to stop the project before results could be obtained, natural disasters, change in research environment, etc.

Obviously, we could use the four rationales presented by Cook and Therrien (2017) as listed above as guidelines. However, we should leave for a later day the need to crystalize what we found as ‘not boring’, hoping that additional drivers and benefits will bubble up. In this SI call for papers, we ask the authors explicitly to identify their reasoning for why they consider their null findings important and/or ‘not boring.’ In the research taxonomy provided in Table 1, we refer to those papers as Type 0; the boring papers we defined as ‘who cares.’ Here we should be careful too quickly qualify a failure as ‘who cares’ (Iske, 2019), because maybe someone does care! We also encourage them to be judicious while interpreting their null results, due to a high rate of misinterpretations, which apparently seems to be a common appearance (Cready et al., 2019; Edelsbrunner & Thurn, 2020).

Table 1. Research Taxonomy

Null hypothesis not rejected		No	No	YES
Statistical significance for RH		Yes	NO	
		Positive (Supporting) Hypothesis		
		YES		NO
Study tells us something of importance	Yes	Type 1 _p Publishable	Type 1 _N Not-Publishable	Type 0
	No (‘boring’)	Type 2 _p Publishable	Type 2 _N Non-Publishable	‘who cares?’

Certainly not boring will be those research efforts that didn't result in rejecting the null hypothesis, but created insights that lead to the rejection of completely different null hypotheses, maybe even in another domain of research. This situation, best described as serendipity, is frequently observed and supports Einstein's remark: 'If we knew what we are doing, we wouldn't call it research'.

In this SI we will elude the discussion regarding papers that have a negative outcome (hypothesis rejected with statistical significance, BUT in the opposite direction to the one proposed by the research hypothesis), as well as those that are significant, but the outcome has minimal impact and/or the impact is of no importance (Type 2). Or as Yarkoni noted "so the results would have told us essentially nothing even if they were statistically sound" (Rohrer et al., 2021: p. 1262; see Meehl, 1967, 1990). This call for papers clearly and explicitly will filter such papers out. We also sidestep the discussion of the need for replication for Type 1 (both positive & negative) hypothesis that is taking place in the literature (e.g., Easley et al., 2013; Schmidt & Oh, 2016) and is of major importance (see for example, a rare replication-with improvements in Slater and Narver, 2000).

There are a few ethical (and others) considerations (suggested by the literature, see for example Guimarães et al., 2018; Palmer, n.d.) that we have to consider. For example, accepting null results may: a) be perceived as recognition of an inadequate study design; b) have a negative impact on future funding; c) negative impact on a researcher's reputation (for example, due to lack of knowledge, or poorly chosen assumptions); while being d) accepting responsibility for disclosing the true results regardless of implications. One way for the editors to consider those issues is to encourage senior and tenured faculty to contribute a paper. Finally, we hope that this special issue will advance our scientific knowledge in knowledge management, by accelerating the choice of subjects of future studies, minimize waste of resources (time, money, effort), and minimize distortion of knowledge and mistakes, (e.g., Guimarães et al., 2018), as well as add validity to future meta-analysis studies (e.g., Sun and Pan, 2020) conducted on specific subjects in knowledge management.

Guidelines

You will need to indicate your intention to submit your full paper by email to the Special Issue editors with the title of the paper, authors, and abstract. The full manuscript, as a PDF file, should be emailed to the Special Issue editors by the deadline stated below. For details related to the format, please refer to the webpage: <https://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/guidelines.php>.

Just in case you have a paper ready that you might consider for the Special Issue, feel free to submit it to the Knowledge Management (KM) 2022 conference (<https://iiakm.org/conference/>) by the conference deadline (or if the deadline passed, send us an email with your intention of submitting). See the call for papers at https://iiakm.org/conference/KM2022/pdfs/20211007_KM2022-CFP_Final.pdf. While submitting the paper, please identify the Special Issue as your target publication.

Important Dates

Intent to Submit: July 1, 2023

Full Version: September 30, 2023

Decision Date: October 31, 2023

Final Version: November 30, 2023

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Editors' Biographies

Professor Paul Louis Iske, Ph.D. is a professor at the School of Business and Economics, University Maastricht, Netherlands, focusing on Open Innovation and Business Venturing. Paul founder and CFO (Chief Failure Officer) of the 'Institute of Brilliant Failures' (www.brilliantfailures.com), with the mission to highlight the importance of experimentation to achieve paradigm shifts and breakthrough innovation. He is an international author, consultant and speaker on innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge management and creativity. He spent 18 years as Chief Dialogues Officer, Head of Innovation and Knowledge Management at ABN AMRO Bank.



Doctor Christiaan Maasdorp, Ph.D., Stellenbosch University (South Africa), holds a Ph.D. (Socio-Informatics) and is the study director of the postgraduate programmes in Information and Knowledge Management offered to part-time students from across Southern Africa. His current research focuses on time and organisation, specifically on the temporal focus of managers and the phenomenon of digitalisation. For the month of May 2019, he was a research fellow at the Weizenbaum Institute, where he collaborated with Research Group 7 on in-house training, related to digital transformation, offered by German and South African firms.



Professor (Emeritus) Meir Russ, Ph.D. is graduated from The Ohio State University in 1993 with a Ph.D. in Strategy, Entrepreneurship and International Business. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Electronic Engineering and an MBA from Tel Aviv University. He is a founder of a high-tech company in Israel and consulted on strategy and knowledge management domestically and internationally. While in Israel, Meir was a farmer and an HR director as a member of an Israeli Kibbutz, and spend a year participating in developing an Industrial Policy as a member of a Research Institute in Jerusalem. Following his doctoral studies at OSU, Meir joined the MBA program at Franklin University in Columbus, OH and later the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, from where he retired in December 2018.

