

# *Management and Organization Review*

## **Preregistration and Preapproval**

MOR encourages authors to submit proposals for preregistered and preapproved studies. After peer review, such proposals can receive a conditional acceptance in MOR – all before data are collected and results are realized. The editors of MOR believe that this innovative initiative is probably the most effective strategy for developing papers that are ultimately accepted for publication in *Management and Organization Review*.

The Editors of MOR would like to engage with authors at the earliest stage of developing their research study. This will allow the Editors to nurture the study of research questions that highlight important questions or phenomena, open new directions, offer alternative or competing explanations for existing findings, or otherwise question extant management research when situated in transforming economies or anchored in indigenous history, culture, values, and national aspirations.

The MOR preapproval and preregistration process offers an important benefit for the authors and the scientific community: it determines the merit of a proposal – and the likelihood of its publication – before the findings are known. The underlying theory and research questions are peer reviewed and deemed important and interesting; hypotheses and data collection procedures are established before data collection and hypothesis testing commence. By doing this, we combat the temptation to HARK, the all-too-common practice of squeezing empirical findings into a theory that may not fit well. Rather, we want to understand reality as it is, whether ‘as predicted’ or not.

The Editors of MOR are committed to assisting authors with preapproval and preregistration to enhance the importance of the research, satisfy falsifiability requirements, and enhance data transparency, rigor, and replicability (Lewin et al., 2016). This is an ambitious goal that differentiates MOR articles, by alleviating the publication bias inherent in research toward ‘counterintuitive’ findings and supported hypotheses (Starbuck, 2016). A recent study estimates that 24%–40% of results in strategic management research cannot be replicated (Goldfarb & King, 2016). Another suggests that the real number may be even higher (Bergh, Sharp, Aguinis, & Li, 2017), even if this journal is comparatively more reliable (Li, Sharp, & Bergh, 2017).

Preapproval and preregistration can help authors clarify their goals and plans before embarking on the time-consuming (and sometimes irreversible) effort of data collection. In preregistration, authors register the proposal in a public, open-access repository (but they may keep the registration non-public during the review process). Then, authors submit for peer review a proposal, akin in content to a dissertation or grant proposal. The proposal should describe the research questions that the study proposes to address and the key hypotheses and data collection and analysis plan. Essentially, authors submit what typically constitutes half a ready manuscript, up to and including the data and description of the empirical approach. However, the proposal should not include data analyses, results, or conclusions. Instead, authors should provide an estimate of the time needed to complete the study.

The MOR preapproval process applies to quantitative and qualitative work as well as inductive and deductive work. The Editors of MOR recognize that inductive qualitative research is indeed a discovery process, and authors should carefully think through and discuss which discoveries the study aims to make and why such discoveries are important. To gain preapproval, authors should articulate which theoretical debates the research will address and how the

outcome of the research will advance theory or society, regardless of whether the hypotheses are confirmed. Theoretical significance, knowledge impact, and thoroughness and rigor of the research plan are the major criteria for preapproval. Preapproval proposals are evaluated by MOR's most senior editors: the Editor-in-Chief or one of the Deputy Editors. If the proposal is deemed of interest to the journal, it is assigned to a Senior Editor who will guide the developmental peer-review process. After peer review, the Senior Editor, in consultation with the Editor-in-Chief or the Deputy Editor, may reject the proposal, request revisions, or approve it. If it is approved, the authors commit to collecting data and completing the study as proposed, and the journal grants conditional acceptance—regardless of the findings. In other words, because of the importance of the subject matter, MOR will publish the final manuscript regardless of whether the results are as hypothesized, whether positive or null. After this conditional acceptance, authors embark on data collection, analysis, and writing to turn the proposal into a manuscript. However, preapproval and preregistration should not restrict flexibility in the knowledge generation process. Adjustment to the proposal may be granted under exceptional circumstances, such as unavailability of data. Following preapproval, authors should update the editor on progress and seek advice, as needed.

The manuscript will be published in MOR in two parts: The first part will report the results of the study according to the preapproved and preregistered plan. The second will present and discuss exploratory (post hoc) analyses, which may emerge in the course of analyzing and reporting the originally approved study. Both parts will feature a preapproval and preregistration badge.

The Editors of MOR accept that preapproval and preregistration entail more effort on our part and a stronger commitment to knowledge co-creation. We understand that it requires us to shepherd the knowledge co-creation process, rather than act as gatekeepers. The Editors of MOR are confident that the preapproval process will result in higher-quality accepted manuscripts. It can also combat the crisis of confidence in the social sciences, revitalizing the research and publication culture in management and organization science.

## REFERENCES

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