



Exploring the gap between research and practice in human resource management (HRM): a scoping review and agenda for future research

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Abstract

The call for evidence-based decisions in HR has become a heated debate in recent years. An alleged research-practice gap has been identified by a number of HRM scholars, leading to recommendations for practice. To what extent the assumption of this gap is justified, theoretically or empirically, remains vague, however. Thus, building on a systematic literature search and the formulation of eligibility criteria for articles, we conducted a scoping review of the current research landscape. Our aim was to explore the constituent components, causes and consequences of the gap. Overall, it was found that research activity has so far been heterogeneous, a significant number of articles were conceptually driven, and a large proportion related to knowledge deficits of HR practitioners. A subset of consistent survey-based studies indicated little awareness of empirically supported practices in personnel selection. The qualitative, mixed-method, and content-analysis studies revealed other influences, such as research with limited practical relevance or divergent interests between scholars and practitioners (e.g., employee motivation). Based on the conceptual contributions, three thematic clusters were identified as causes for the gap: (1) communication barriers (e.g., insufficient interfaces), (2) methodological issues (e.g., rigor-relevance tensions), (3) accessibility, visibility, and dissemination of HR research (e.g., oversimplification of practical implications). There was a strong emphasis on presumed causes and their resolution, with less consideration given to the expected consequences of the gap (e.g., poorer organizational outcomes). Despite preliminary empirical indications for the existence of a research-practice gap in particular areas of HRM, many articles tend to focus on overarching recommendations for practice. We conclude that the HRM research-practice gap in itself has not yet been sufficiently empirically investigated. In view of this, we discuss implications and develop an agenda for future research.

Keywords HRM · Research-practice gap · Knowing-doing · Rigor-relevance · Scholar-practice divide

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1 Introduction

Over the last two decades, the increasing popularity of evidence-based decision-making has affected the field of HRM (e.g., Morell 2008; Rousseau and Barends 2011). The expectations of what HR departments should achieve are constantly growing (Roberts and Hirsch 2005; Schultz 2019). HR executives face expanding areas of responsibility (e.g., Claus 2019). For example, there is a trend emerging to incorporate anything around leadership to HR, which includes not only development and training, but also the construction of innovative management concepts for organizations (e.g., Davenport 2015; Maheshwari and Yadav 2019; Ulrich and Dulebohn 2015). As a result of an increased awareness of mental health issues (e.g., Rosado-Solomon et al. 2023), HR managers have also become concerned with implementing workplace-related interventions to improve employee well-being and to reduce absenteeism (e.g., Qamar et al. 2023; Ipsen et al. 2020).

HR departments are expected to promote employees' identification with company values to enhance emotional engagement, motivation, and creativity in the workplace (e.g., Young et al. 2018). Through the incorporation of marketing principles into HR departments, employer branding has become a vital tool in building sustainable HR policies (e.g., App et al. 2012). Overall, the future of HRM will increasingly be driven by sustainability issues. Beyond environmental and performance sustainability, companies will need to embrace the sustainable use of human resources as a key success factor (e.g., Aust et al. 2020; Ybema et al. 2020).

In recent years, workplaces have become more competitive, with companies fiercely battling for talent. Therefore, HR professionals have embraced the challenge of using data to clarify the relationship between personality traits, individual needs, behaviors, and organizational productivity. An overarching goal is to enhance decision-making procedures regarding team productivity, employee retention, or motivation (e.g., Marler and Boudreau 2017; Kryscynski et al. 2018). Given the cost and time required to effectively develop employees and leaders, the use of proven selection strategies has become essential. Poor hiring decisions or a mismanaged workforce can lead to both direct (e.g., salary) and indirect costs (e.g., reduced productivity) for an organization (e.g., Hoffman et al. 2018).

The central role of human resources in corporate success and innovation today coincides with a pronounced shortage of skilled workers in many sectors (e.g., Brunello and Wruuck 2021; Horbach and Rammer 2022). The pressure on companies to improve the effectiveness of their recruitment and retention practices is evident. It is therefore crucial to improve the interaction between the needs of the HR sector, the study of the effectiveness of HR measures in research, and the dissemination of the results in practice. There are signs, however, that HR practitioners are not always comfortable with the use of empirical research in decision-making processes (e.g., Beechler and Woodward 2009). The reasons for this are rarely understood, but the consequences are potentially far-reaching in an ever-tightening candidate pool (e.g., Muehleemann and Strupler Leiser 2018).

In view of the challenging demands on a ‘modern’ HRM, the call for empirically proven effective measures has increased. However, there were first indications that HR practitioners may regard aspects other than those suggested by empirical studies as important for their working environment (e.g., Rynes et al. 2002). This has opened a debate on whether there is a pervasive gap between research and practice in HRM. Until now, it is still not always clear on what basis an overarching gap is assumed and what it might consist of. But this clarity is necessary in order to close a potential gap in the future. Therefore, this article aims to provide an overview of the current research landscape on the research-practice gap in HRM. In the following sections, we offer a more detailed introduction to evidence-based decision-making in HRM and outline the resulting questions of the review. We then explain the procedures used for article inclusion and mapping of the findings. Finally, we present and discuss the results, place them in a broader context, and suggest avenues for future research.

2 A brief history of the evidence-based approach in HRM

The evidence-based approach has its origins in medicine and is now the essential paradigm for decision-making in medical care (e.g., Claridge and Fabian 2005). It is based on the principle that medical decisions should be made using the best available evidence on efficacy, side effects, and cost-effectiveness (Guyatt et al. 1992). As early advocates, Sackett and Rosenberg (1995) pointed out that physicians’ individual habits, experiences, and intuitions tend to be biased. Conversely, an empirically-based approach to decision-making more objectively incorporates the current evidence on the effectiveness of certain interventions.

A few authors have compared the situation for doctors before the evolution of evidence-based practice to the actions of (HR-) managers today (e.g., Rousseau and McCarthy 2007). It has been supposed that HR managers rely on heuristics, expert opinions, and personal experiences to draw widespread conclusions (e.g., Highhouse 2008). Indeed, empirical studies suggest that HR practitioners consider the subjective judgment of experts to be more effective in predicting job performance than standardized tests (e.g., Lievens et al. 2005).

As companies’ HR departments have grown during the past decades, so has the scientific investigation of certain HR practices. Thus, the empirical evidence on the efficacy of HR practices has increasingly matured. Meaningful and robust study results can now be found for almost all HR-relevant topics, such as personnel selection (e.g., Sackett et al. 2022), leadership development (e.g., Reyes et al. 2019), or the effective composition of teams (e.g., Bell et al. 2011), often even accumulated in meta-analyses.

More than 20 years ago, however, academics and practitioners raised doubts about whether some of these evidence-based practices would be adopted by organizations (e.g., Pfeffer and Sutton 1999). Meanwhile, there are indications that unstructured interviews continue to be widely used in employee selection (e.g., Dana et al. 2013; Kausel et al. 2016), although evidence emphasizes the benefits of structured and behavior-oriented interviews (e.g. Alonso et al. 2017). Almost the same can be found for emotional intelligence and general cognitive performance.

While the predictive validity of emotional intelligence for professional performance is low (e.g., O'Connor and Little 2003), the predictive power of general cognitive performance has proven to be good in many studies (e.g., Kotsou et al. 2019; Morris et al. 2015; Salgado et al. 2003). Nonetheless, HR managers' interest in the construct of emotional intelligence remains high (e.g., Devonish 2016). In contrast, various authors have pointed to the low prevalence and use of psychometric tests on general cognitive performance in the personnel sector (e.g., Neumann et al. 2021).

Hamlin (2002) was among the first to define evidence-based HR as follows: "Evidence-based HRD is the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the development of individuals, groups, and organizations integrating individual HRD practitioner expertise with the best available external evidence derived from systematic research" (p. 97). Even if Hamlin (2002) used the term HRD in his definition, there are almost identical definitions for HRM (e.g., Briner 2000).

Early studies found that companies with greater consideration of scientific knowledge were associated with greater economic success (Terpstra and Rozell 1997; Terpstra and Limpaphayom 2012). There are indications to suggest that HR departments are increasingly expected to provide evidence relating to the efficacy of a planned measure before receiving financial support from senior management (e.g., Bélanger et al. 2018). However, although the long-term benefits and cost effectiveness of several HR interventions has been proven (Huselid 1995; Ock and Oswald 2018; Renaud et al. 2014; Wright et al. 2003), this knowledge is rarely translated into practical action (e.g., Short 2006; Latham 2007). Consequently, a gap has been identified between HRM research and practice, indicating that these two worlds coexist without any meaningful connections.

From an epistemological perspective, there is a growing concern about the extent to which the restriction to certain methods in management and organizational research affects the transferability of results (e.g., Gilad 2019; Frederiksen and Kringelum 2021). This also applies to studying decision-making processes in organizations, which is a key indicator of the HRM research-practice gap. While positivist research traditions tend to investigate whether associations between certain variables exist, more qualitative approaches often aim to explore why these associations have occurred (e.g., Brannan et al. 2017). Therefore, we believe that a research synthesis on the gap should incorporate a range of methodological approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

3 Scope and objectives

While the existence of a research-practice gap in HRM is intensively discussed, it is not always clear whether this gap results from opinions and theoretical considerations, or whether it is grounded in empirical data. Therefore, it is necessary to establish more clarity regarding the nature of the gap and identify potential changes required at the HRM research-practice interface. We are unaware of any systematic attempt to collate conceptual and empirical contributions to evaluate them more holistically in terms of a research synthesis. Two previous reviews have either focused on a broader

context of research-practice gaps (Tkachenko et al. 2017), or on more theoretical aspects of the topic in HRM (Gill 2018). Furthermore, some empirical studies on the subject have only been published recently (e.g., Kirk et al. 2023; Risavy et al. 2021).

The purpose of this review is to explore the current research landscape on the HRM research-practice gap. It expands upon previous research in three ways. First, we narrow the analytical focus of the review to the specific characteristics of HRM. Despite similarities to other management disciplines, we believe that there are unique challenges in HRM (e.g., position in companies) that warrant specific attention. Second, we strive for a methodological breadth of approaches to the gap. In this way, we hope to uncover as many facets of the gap as possible. It will further be feasible to identify findings that may be dependent on the chosen method. Third, we develop an agenda for future research. This is crucial as there is discussion about changes in research or practice to close the gap, while little attention is paid to studying the gap itself. With this in mind, we aim to address the following questions:

- (1) On what theoretical (e.g., concepts and definitions) or empirical basis (e.g., methodological approaches) is the HRM research-practice gap currently investigated?
- (2) What causes and consequences of the gap can be identified in light of the current state of research?
- (3) Are there consistent study designs with similar findings regarding certain characteristics of the HRM research-practice gap?
- (4) Do studies with different methodological approaches reveal different facets of the HRM research-practice gap?
- (5) Which research gaps might emerge from the research landscape to date?

4 Methods

According to the questions set out above, we conducted a scoping review of the literature on the HRM research-practice gap. The objective of this type of review is to categorize and map articles on a circumscribed topic, which has so far been investigated to a limited extent (e.g., Arksey and O'Melley 2005). To facilitate the configuration of a body of evidence, scoping reviews enable the integration of more heterogeneous research approaches (e.g., Pham et al. 2014; Tricco et al. 2016). This includes an examination of the extent, range, and nature of research activity, a clarification of key concepts and definitions, a summary of current research findings, and the identification of research gaps (Arksey and O'Melley 2005; Munn et al. 2018). The approach is characterized by an iterative process of literature search and article inclusion (Sucharew and Macaluso 2019; Westphaln et al. 2021). Meanwhile, scoping reviews have been increasingly used for a variety of HRM-related issues, such as performance management (Brown et al. 2019), HR analytics (Tursunbayeva et al. 2018), or growth mindset in HRD (Han and Stieha 2020). We followed the PRISMA guidelines for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al. 2018), while also incorporating elements of more narrative reviews (e.g., Fisch and Block 2018).

4.1 Criteria of eligibility

To be included, articles needed to fulfil the following criteria: (1) The paper should address research-practice gaps in the context of HRM. Therefore, the articles should provide a detailed description of how the phenomenon was defined. (2) The article should fall into one of three methodological categories: (a) *Conceptual articles* were defined as contributions related to theoretical frameworks for the HRM research-practice divide. This included narrative reviews in which certain questions were discussed with reference to the empirical work of others. (b) *Empirical studies with a survey-based quantitative focus* were defined as investigations in which the relationship of research and practice in HRM was examined by using standardized measurement methods and survey instruments. (c) *Empirical studies with a qualitative or mixed-method focus* were defined as those studies in which a more in-depth investigation was conducted either using established qualitative research methods (e.g., in-depth interviews with HR experts) or a combination of quantitative and qualitative data-analysis. A targeted population of HR respondents (e.g., HR executives) was not specified for inclusion of empirical studies. (3) Both empirical (e.g., Bartunek and Rynes 2010) and non-empirical articles (e.g., Anderson et al. 2001; Kieser and Leiner 2009) were excluded if no specific focus on HRM was detected. (4) The articles had to be available in English.

4.2 Information sources and search strategies

The literature search was conducted by creating a list of terms in an iterative process. A preliminary list of search terms was created based on the first articles identified. As the search progressed, new terms that might be indicative of the underlying topic were supplemented. If the addition of further search terms resulted in no hits, neither in the title nor in the abstract, no further new search terms were added. The preliminary list of search terms was presented to a professional librarian for review. Using the complete set of search terms,¹ five literature databases (Business Source Elite/EBSCO Host; PsycInfo; ScienceDirect; Scopus; web of science) were comprehensively explored.

Figure 1 illustrates the process of article inclusion. The databases were searched between the first available entry and August 2023. Titles and abstracts of the articles were screened for eligibility. If an article appeared to be eligible, it was evaluated at the full-text level. An initial decision was made by the first author of this article (PN). However, in cases of ambiguity, the second author (AH) or even another research assistant was asked to evaluate the article for eligibility. To uncover unpublished studies (e.g., unpublished dissertations), a literature search in open databases (google scholar; dissertation abstracts; open grey) was added. The final database search was conducted on August 31st, 2023.

¹ Upon request the complete list of search terms is available from the corresponding author.

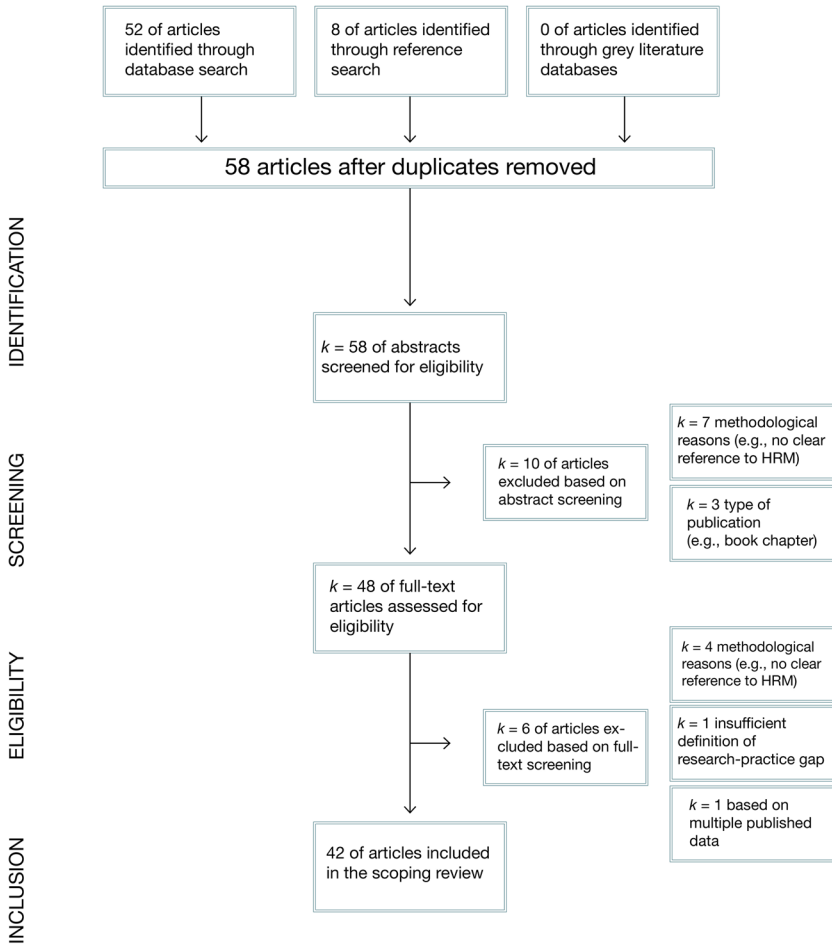


Fig. 1 Flow chart of the article selection and inclusion process

4.3 Data extraction, coding, and synthesis

To extract relevant information from eligible articles, a charting form was developed. After articles were classified as eligible, the following characteristics were extracted: (a) authors, year of publication, country; (b) type of article (conceptual, empirical); (c) research design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods); (d) type of data collection and evaluation (e.g., survey, in-depth interview, content analysis); (e) sample (e.g., HR practitioners, HR scholars, published journal articles); and (f) main results of the article. The coding was done by the first author (PN), with a random sample of one-third of the eligible articles being coded independently by another research fellow. A complete match of over 92% was achieved during the first coding pass. In the event of a discrepancy, the respective article was further discussed to reach a consensual decision.

Table 1 Descriptive features of the included articles

Article feature	Number of articles (<i>k</i>)
<i>Type of research</i>	
Quantitative/survey-based	<i>k</i> = 12
Qualitative/mixed method	<i>k</i> = 7
Content analysis	<i>k</i> = 5
Conceptual	<i>k</i> = 18
<i>Publication period (year)</i>	
1998–2003	<i>k</i> = 2
2004–2009	<i>k</i> = 11
2010–2015	<i>k</i> = 9
2016–2021	<i>k</i> = 12
2022–2023	<i>k</i> = 8
<i>Focus of perspective on</i>	
Practitioners	<i>k</i> = 22
Scholars	<i>k</i> = 2
Both	<i>k</i> = 18
<i>Region (empirical studies)</i>	
Europe	<i>k</i> = 8
US, Canada	<i>k</i> = 10
Australia	<i>k</i> = 2
Cross-cultural/multiple countries	<i>k</i> = 4

The empirical articles were grouped by their methodology and main findings. A slightly different approach was taken for the conceptual articles. The pool of these articles was analyzed for common themes, especially along the question of causes and consequences of the research-practice gap in HRM. This resulted in a thematic structure of common and overlapping themes.

5 Results

5.1 Bibliographic analysis and descriptive features of the included articles

A summary of the main article characteristics is given in Table 1. The articles were published between 1998 and 2023, entirely in peer-reviewed journals. Conceptual papers were published more frequently between 2006 and 2009, while in the last 10 years an increase in method-diverse studies emerged (e.g., qualitative, mixed-method). An overview of the journals in which the articles were published is depicted in Fig. 2.

Of the 42 articles, 18 were identified as non-empirical evidence (e.g., conceptual contributions), as the 24 others were quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method empirical studies. Most of the articles addressed the HR practitioners' side of the gap (e.g., knowledge deficits), whereas only few studies explicitly

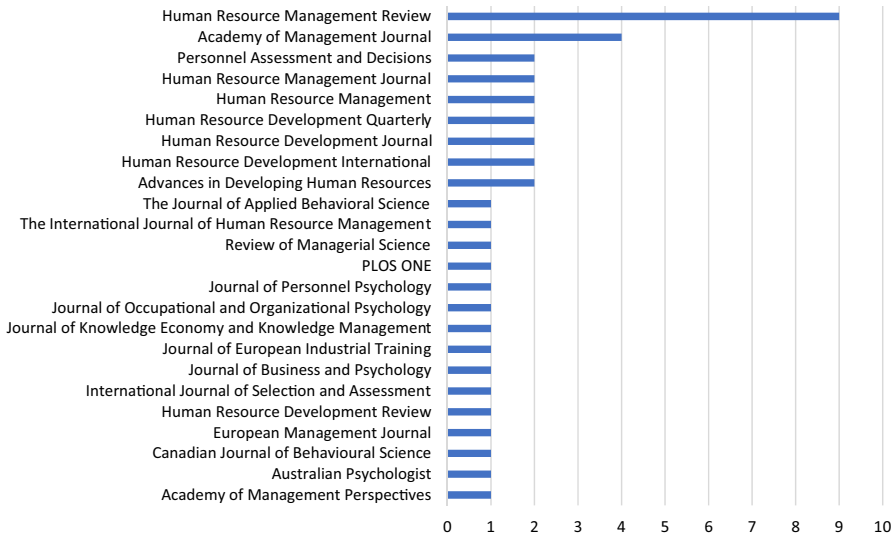


Fig. 2 Frequency of publications on the HRM research-practice gap by journal

focused on aspects rooted in scholarly practice (e.g., type of research; Kougiannou and Ridgway 2021; de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). Nineteen of the empirical studies were related to human samples (e.g., surveys among HR experts), five others were based on content analysis of journal articles (e.g., subject categorization as an indicator for areas of interest). Certain authors appeared more frequently as lead or co-authors in publications on the gap, as illustrated in Fig. 3. For instance, DC Short or BE Kaufman have made conceptual contributions repeatedly, while SL Rynes or CJ König have conducted more empirical studies.

Of the empirical studies, 16 foremostly investigated knowledge, attitudes, and decisions of HR practitioners towards evidence-based HR practices. In addition, three studies examined differences in qualification (e.g., I/O psychologists vs. other HR experts; Jackson et al. 2018), job level (Rynes et al. 2002), or HR work experience (Bezzina et al. 2017). Of the conceptual articles ($k=18$), one referred to knowing-doing gaps in the field of HRM diversity management (Kulik 2014), 14 contained debates about the reasons for an overarching HRM research-practice divide and the resulting opportunities for improvement (Beer 2022; Cohen 2007; Gray et al. 2011; Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Jewell et al. 2022; Kaufman 2022; Lawler and Benson 2022; Lawler 2007; Rousseau and Barends 2011; Short 2006; Short and Shindell 2009; Short et al. 2009; Timming and Macneil 2023; Vosburgh 2022), and three further articles summarized research related to the HRM research-practice gap (Gill 2018; Kaufman 2012; Tkachenko et al. 2017). The empirical studies were conducted in the USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe.

The sampling of the articles yielded an interesting result in that only 24 articles were empirical studies. Three distinguishable types of empirical evidence could be identified. First, one group of studies ($k=12$) used quantitative survey data to analyze HR executives' attitudes, knowledge, and preferred sources of information

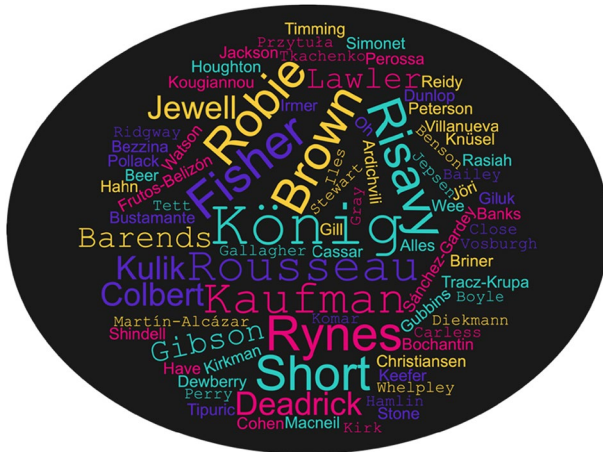


Fig. 3 The size of terms depends on the frequency of the authors' involvement in publications related to the research-practice gap in HRM

regarding evidence-based practices in larger study samples. Second, a further group of studies ($k=7$) focused on qualitative or mixed-method research to gain a deeper insight into the nature of the research-practice divide. A third group of studies ($k=5$) included content analysis methods of written material (e.g., journal articles) to uncover different preferences of HR practitioners and scholars. A systematic overview of the 24 empirical studies is given in Table 2.

5.2 Findings obtained from survey-based quantitative studies

The quantitative studies under review mostly refer to an early empirical finding. Rynes et al. (2002) examined the knowledge of 959 HR practitioners concerning empirical evidence in HR-related areas (e.g., management practice, recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits). A 35-item list of statements was developed, each of which had to be classified as true, false, or uncertain. HR practitioners were asked to indicate where they obtained information on HR practices. To sum up, substantial discrepancies between HR research-based endorsements and practitioners' knowledge were found, primarily in recruitment and selection. The predictive validity of general mental ability (GMA) on job performance has been consistently underestimated, whereas the importance of an applicant's conscientiousness or values have been overestimated.

This early study finding stimulated further investigations by others with comparable study designs. Meanwhile, the overall results were replicated several times in different regions (e.g., US, Canada: Fisher et al. 2021; Netherlands: Sanders et al. 2008; Finland, South Korea, Spain: Tenhiälä et al. 2016) and with various HR study samples (e.g., I/O psychologists vs other HR experts: Carless et al. 2009; Jackson et al. 2018). The largest discrepancy between what research

Table 2 Overview of the empirical studies included in the review

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Rynes et al. (2002)	HR practitioners (N = 959)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices	A significant difference between recommendations grounded in research and the beliefs of recruiters was evident in the use of cognitive ability and personality testing. Certain factors contributed to higher agreement with scholarly evidence (e.g., higher levels of employment in the organization)
Colbert et al. (2005)	HR managers (N = 825)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Testing an explanatory model on the factors that influence the attitudes of HR managers towards scholarly knowledge. Investigation of the channels used to acquire scientific knowledge	The extent to which HR managers agreed with common research findings was associated with their perception of the specific business strategy and regular reading of academic journals. Both relational sources (e.g., colleagues) and non-relational sources (e.g., journal articles) were used to acquire knowledge consistent with research results
Sanders et al. (2008)	HR professionals (N = 626)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices by Dutch HR practitioners compared to US HR practitioners (Rynes et al. 2002)	Deviation from evidence-based recommendations as an indicator of irregular beliefs was found to a similar extent as in the US, particularly in recruitment and selection. Certain individual factors (e.g., reading journals) and demographics were associated with greater agreement (e.g., higher education)

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Carless et al. (2009)	I/O psychologists (N = 102); HR practitioners (N = 89)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices by Australian HR practitioners. Additional analysis of the influence of professional background (I/O psychologists vs. other HR qualifications)	Similar to other countries (US, Dutch), deviations from evidence-based recommendations were found in recruitment and selection. Compared to professionals with other qualification backgrounds, I/O psychologists demonstrated a more extensive knowledge of empirically supported HR concepts
Perry et al. (2012)	HR employees (86%; N = 288)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Examination of the gap between what HR professionals believe their organizations should be implementing and what is actually being implemented in terms of evidence-based sexual harassment prevention training	HR managers with more positive attitudes toward academics were more likely to value academic advice and suggest the implementation of evidence-based training practices. However, positive attitudes were not associated with increased use of evidence-based practices. Senior management support (1) for sexual harassment training, managerial rewards (2) for attempts to reduce sexual harassment, and greater organizational resources (3) were associated with greater alignment with evidence-based training activities, but only (1) and (3) led to actual reductions in the knowing-doing gap
Diekmann et al. (2015)	HR experts (N = 109); Business management students (N = 108); Psychology students (N = 101)	Quantitative (experimental procedure)	Examination of the impact of scientific information on the acceptance or rejection of specific selection methods	The inclusion of neuroscientific information on a fictitious personality test elicited more negative reactions than its absence, especially among HR practitioners

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Tenhiälä et al. (2016)	HR managers (Finland: N = 86; South Korea: N 147; Spain: N 196)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices by HR practitioners across different cultures	Deviations from evidence-based recommendations as an indicator of irregular beliefs were found to a similar extent as in other countries (US, Dutch, Australia), particularly in recruitment and selection. Country differences (Finland, South Korea, Spain) were evident in beliefs about more interpersonal HR practices (e.g., compensation and benefits) versus more technical HR practices (e.g., staffing)
Barends et al. (2017)	Practitioners in HR associated management fields (N = 2789)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Investigation of decision-making processes of HR practitioners and the frequency of use of academic sources	Only 27% referred to scientific sources, while experience (91%), intuition (64%), knowledge from formal education (62%), or advice from colleagues and expert opinion (56–59%) were more commonly used. Fourteen percent had never read a peer-reviewed journal. Most respondents were interested in HR research, but lack of time and understanding were identified as the main barriers to implementation

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Jackson et al. (2018)	HR professionals with diverse qualifications (e.g., I/O psychologists) and non-experts (N = 476)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices based on the respective qualifications in HRM	Qualifications played a crucial role in influencing the extent to which perceptions of the validity of selection methods aligned with validity estimates from empirical research. While individuals with HR qualifications did not differ significantly from laypeople, I/O psychologists more closely adhered to current research estimates
Fisher et al. (2021)	HR practitioners from the US and Canada (N = 453)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Examination of whether selection myths in HR practices have changed over time	Comparing the findings in the US and Canada to those collected by Rynes et al. (2002) highlighted a widening gap between HR research and practice over time. There was a lower level of agreement with the correct statements on evidence-based HR measures
Kirk et al. (2023) ^a	Talent acquisition professionals (N = 68)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Deviation of common HR practices from empirically supported scientific recommendations	A few areas indicated a research-practice gap: (1) psychometric tests are rarely used (2) significant factors influencing the selection of a measure were the candidate's experience, reducing bias, and consistency in providing scores (3) the most important consideration when selecting a candidate was their fit with the organization's culture

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Risavy et al. (2019) ^b	HR practitioners from the US and Canada (N = 453); HR experts from Germany (N = 166)	Quantitative (inventory based)	Deviation of common HR practices from empirically supported scientific recommendations	While the most used selection tools were interviews, general mental ability tests were among the least in all three countries. The usefulness of personality tests was found to depend on whether individuals were regular users. A greater openness to the use of personality tests was observed among recruiters from the US and Canada. Contrary to research findings, HR practitioners prefer to examine personality types instead of traits
Hamlin et al. (1998)	Executive unit of the Departments of the British Civil Service (Anglia)	Qualitative/mixed methods (case study)	Case description of how professional partnerships between HR departments and cooperating HR scholars facilitate evidence-based change processes	The results of an ethnographic case study on organizational culture were compared to the results of managerial effectiveness research, suggesting some consistencies (e.g., moving away from defending the status quo towards proactively empowering staff). A research based HRD seems to be necessary to encourage active interest and to engage employees successfully in strategic change processes

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
König et al. (2011)	HR practitioners (N = 40)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (repetitive grid technique)	Uncovering HR practitioners' thoughts and cognitive structures on employee selection. HR practitioners were encouraged to generate the constructs according to which they justify the use or rejection of selection procedures	Participants rarely used evidence-based practices in the previous year (e.g., mental ability tests: 47% never; personality tests: 20% never). Of the 44 bipolar constructs extracted (e.g., standardized vs. non-standardized), nine were highlighted as being important for future research (e.g., generalizability or specificity, breadth of focus, or flexibility of the selection procedures)
Banks et al. (2016)	HR practitioners (survey: N = 939; interviews: N = 22) HR academics (survey: N = 828; interviews: N = 16)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (survey + in-depth interviews + focus group)	Similarities and differences regarding perceived challenges at the interface between research and practice from the perspective of scholars and practitioners	22 challenges were identified, of which six primarily concerned practitioners (e.g., promote employee well-being), while eight were related to scholars (e.g., implementation of HRM best practices). Eight of the extracted challenges were shared by both practitioners and scholars (e.g., reduce pay inequality and discrimination)
Bezzina et al. (2017)	HR executives (survey: N = 300) (interviews: N = 20)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (survey + qualitative interviews)	Identification of irregular beliefs concerning evidence-based HR practices	Irregular beliefs about HR practices occurred often. HRM work experience was positively associated with irregular beliefs, most of which related to selection and recruitment. While academic theories and empirical evidence were appreciated, their implementation was perceived as challenging (e.g., lack of time, inaccessibility to research articles, or difficulties to evaluate empirical results appropriately)

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
de Frutos-Belizón et al. (2021)	HR academic experts (N = 15)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (in-depth interviews)	Investigation of the causes of the gap from the perspective of academic HR experts	Five influencing factors were extracted: (1) <i>publication pressure</i> , (2) <i>generation of research ideas</i> (e.g., research topics more easily publishable), (3) <i>research dissemination</i> (e.g., journal publications as the most valued output to advance academic careers), (4) <i>time issues</i> (e.g., different professional/academic time horizons), and (5) <i>differences in the use of language</i>
Risavy et al. (2021)	Tech company representatives (e.g., HR professionals, CEOs) (survey: N = 120) (interviews: N = 18)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (survey + semi-structured interviews)	Deviation from evidence-based practice in staff selection procedures	Respondents relied on individual CVs rather than structured applications forms. Highly predictive evidence-based HR practices (e.g., tests on GMA) were underutilized. The most common arguments for the use of certain selection methods were <i>fit with company's culture/values</i> and <i>efficiency</i>
Bailey (2022)	qualitative literature review; HR practitioners (N = 4)	Qualitative/ mixed methods (qualitative interviews)	Limited impact of academic research on HR professionals regarding the issue of employee engagement	Having identified a gap, five implications for bridging it are proposed: (1) ensure that research is accessible in a style that is useful to practitioners, (2) increase the dissemination of research synthesis (e.g., literature reviews), (3) increase dialogue and debate, (5) develop practice-relevant research topics

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Deadrick and Gibson (2007)	4,300 articles from four HR journals (time-period: 20 years)	Content analysis (CA of practice and research HR journals)	Gaps of interest based on published topics in the respective journals	The extent of the gaps varied by topic, with some substantial and persistent discrepancies (e.g., <i>organizational behavior issues</i> more common in HR research journals)
Deadrick and Gibson (2009)	6,000 articles from four HR journals (time-period: 30 years)	Content analysis (CA of practice and research HR journals)	Gaps of interest based on published topics in the respective journals	Equally high and enduring level of interest in <i>HRD</i> and <i>staff issues</i> , deviations identified in <i>motivation-related issues</i> (HR research journals) and <i>compensation/benefits</i> (HR practice journals)
Rynes et al. (2007)	1,449 articles from three HR journals; Editorial board members (N = 85)	Content analysis (survey of editorial board members [research HR journals] + CA of practice HR journals)	Gaps of interest assessed via deviations between editors' point of view (HR research journals) and actually published topics in HR-practice-oriented journals	Of the three outstanding content areas identified by the editors, only a marginal proportion was covered in the HR practice journals (0–1.2% mental ability; 0.4–1.2% personal-ity; 0.6% goal setting)
Ardichvili and Oh (2013)	900 articles from two HR-journals; 10 curricula of HR academic programs	Content analysis (CA of practice-oriented HR journals + content analysis [curricula] of academic HR programs)	Deviation between high-priority topics in HR practice journals and consideration of these topics in academic HR programs	A pronounced deviation was found for three content areas: (a) leadership (b) organizational culture, and (c) social learning. While these topics were given priority in HR practice journals, there was hardly any corresponding training content in the academic HR courses

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Sample	Methodological approach	Topic around the research-practice gap in HRM	Main results
Kougiannou and Ridgway (2021)	324 articles (year: 2018) from 11 HR-journals	Content analysis (CA of HR-related journals (word count of practical implications sections))	Insufficient extent of practical implications derived from research results	Of the 11 journals, seven clearly demanded a practical implication section for submitted papers. In half of the articles, only 2% of the content was used for practical implications. The journals were found to provide insufficient insight into issues of practical relevance

^aAlthough Kirk et al. (2023) used eleven qualitative interviews to subsequently construct the inventory, the focus of the study is clearly on the inventory-based data analysis. Therefore, we classified the study as quantitative survey-based

^bWhile different questions were examined, Diekmann et al. (2015), Fisher et al. (2021), Risavy et al. (2019) partly used the same datasets in their respective analyses. I/O psychologists = industrial/organizational psychologists. CA = content analysis

would recommend and the actual knowledge and application of measures in HR practice constantly emerged in recruitment and selection, even in the most recent studies (Fisher et al. 2021; Kirk et al. 2023; Risavy et al. 2019).

In the above studies, there was a strong belief among HR practitioners that it was more important to consider aspects other than GMA as an indicator for employee selection (e.g., values: Carless et al. 2009). This in fact contrasts with the cumulative evidence regarding the predictive validity of certain recruitment and selection measures (e.g., Salgado et al. 2003). However, turning to other dimensions of HR practice (e.g., management practice, general employment, training and development), most of these studies do not provide strong evidence that an overarching gap exists.

While there is broad agreement that some of the empirical results on personnel selection are not well received in HR practice (e.g., GMA, Fisher et al. 2021; Tenhiälä et al. 2016; Kirk et al. 2023), it remains unclear whether this also applies to other HR dimensions. Some studies suggested that HR practitioners underestimate the predictive validity and usefulness of psychometrically proven integrity and personality tests in recruiting (e.g., Carless et al. 2009). With regard to the sources of information, most of the respondents stated that they obtain their information about HR practices from other HR practitioners (e.g., Tenhiälä et al. 2016), or public sources, such as the internet (e.g., Rynes et al. 2002). Both consulting academics and retrieving recommendations from scholarly journals were under the least preferred sources (e.g., Sanders et al. 2008). A few studies found a correlation between HR professionals' level of qualification (e.g., psychology degree) and their knowledge of evidence-based HR practices (Carless et al. 2009; Jackson et al. 2018; Sanders et al. 2008). However, the results were not consistent across studies.

Besides the above studies, which were consistent in terms of the study design and the overall results, other investigations were identified that had slightly different focuses. A more behavioral approach has revealed that HR professionals are most likely to rely on bias-prone sources (e.g., personal experience) to inform their decisions. In contrast, scientific sources have little influence on decision-making (Barends et al. 2017). Research-oriented information (e.g., neuroscientific information on a personality test) has even been found to result in HR experts' higher rejection rates of certain selection tools rather than their approval (Diekmann et al. 2015).

It has also been shown in more specific HR fields (e.g., implementation of training courses on the prevention of sexual harassment) that a positive attitude towards research aligns with a positive reception of scholarly recommendations (Perry et al. 2012). This is consistent with the results of Colbert et al. (2005), who found that practitioners' regular reading of journal articles, higher job level, and perception of a specific HR strategy in the organization led to higher agreement with research findings. However, other factors might have a stronger impact on the actual implementation of evidence-based practices (e.g., management support, organizational resources) (Perry et al. 2012). Overall, studies have found that time constraints and a poor understanding are the main barriers to

HR professionals' practical implementation of evidence-based information (e.g., Barends et al. 2017).

5.3 Findings obtained from qualitative and mixed-method studies

The qualitative and mixed-method studies used a variety of methodological adjustments. The approaches ranged from expert interviews (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021) and case studies (Hamlin et al. 1998), to the use of the repertory grid technique to explore thoughts and cognitive structures (König et al. 2011), and included combining survey data with in-depth interviews (e.g., Bezzina et al. 2017). While most of these studies also examined the practitioners' side of the gap, some placed stronger emphasis on causes rooted in HR research (e.g., de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). Overall, the focus of this study pool is more on the justifications for the use or rejection of certain selection tools.

The survey-based parts of the mixed-method studies highlight similar findings as those reported above. Both frequent irregular beliefs about effective selection tools and infrequent use of evidence-based practices were uncovered (e.g., König et al. 2011). The importance of highly predictive selection measures was underestimated. There were indications that increased experience in HR practice leads to more biased attitudes towards evidence-based personnel selection (Bezzina et al. 2017). HR practitioners justified the use of certain selection procedures based on the applicant's suitability for the organization (e.g., compatibility with an organization's culture) rather than on validity concerns (Risavy et al. 2021). However, other qualitative studies showed that HR professionals consider a variety of dimensions when deciding whether to conduct a selection procedure, but certain aspects seem to be of particular importance to them (e.g., generalizability-specificity of job characteristics, breadth of focus, fakability; König et al. 2011).

In-depth interview studies conducted with HR scholars provided further important insights into the presumed causes of the HR research-practice gap. The type of research (e.g., data on highly specific questions to be easily published in top-tier journals) and the current climate at scholarly institutions (e.g., journal publications as the most valued output) are recognized by HR academics as influencing factors contributing to the low levels of research reception in HR practice (de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). This is consistent with other studies showing that HR practitioners value empirical evidence (e.g., Bailey 2022). However, the actual implementation is perceived as challenging due to difficulties in evaluating research results properly, lack of time, and limited access to journals (e.g., Risavy et al. 2021). In this context, an early case study has shown that by encouraging close collaborations between HR departments and academic institutions, companies can effectively remove certain barriers and facilitate evidence-based change processes (Hamlin et al. 1998). The importance of such collaboration has recently been demonstrated for the HR-relevant construct of employee engagement. While practitioners often adopt broader definitions, academics specify the construct more narrowly. This results in split perspectives, less overlap, and a potential widening of the rigor-relevance gap (Bailey 2022).

Scholars and practitioners may evaluate differently whether and why the convergence of research and practice in HRM is a goal to strive for. Practitioners (e.g., promote employee well-being) and scholars (e.g., implementation of best practices) provide partly different and partly overlapping reasons (e.g., reduce discrimination and pay inequality) regarding the importance of bridging the gap (Banks et al. 2016).

5.4 Findings obtained from content analysis studies

A few previous studies ($k=5$) have yielded some important insights into the topic by applying content analysis methods to published articles in HR journals. The aim of this approach is to uncover different areas of interest that might indicate a divergence of research and practice. Following this procedure, Deadrick and Gibson (2007, 2009) examined over 6000 journal articles that were published in four HR-focused journals. A total of 14 content categories consisting of specific HR issues (e.g., motivation-related issues, staff issues, compensation/ benefits) were used for the coding scheme. Out of the four journals, two were classified as more practice and two as more scholarly oriented. In the first study, Deadrick and Gibson (2007) collected a sample of 4.300 articles published over a time-period of 20 years to investigate different areas of interest that might indicate a research-practice gap in HRM. Although the magnitude of the respective gaps varied across topics, the authors saw evidence for substantial divides between research and practice in certain fields (e.g., organizational behavior issues more common in scholarly-oriented journals). The 2009 study extended on this scope by including an examination of changes over a time-period of 30 years to identify possible trends concerning the research-practice gap in HRM (Deadrick and Gibson 2009). Of note is the fact that neither of these studies revealed a significant divide for the dimension of staff issues (e.g., recruitment and selection). For the areas of HR development and staff issues, there was an enduring and equally high level of interest in both types of journals over the examined 30 years. The authors concluded that there was a pronounced research-practice gap in the areas of motivation-related issues and compensation/benefits.

According to other content analysis studies, practice-oriented HR journals seldom discuss the topics that leading HR scholars have identified as important for future practice (Rynes et al. 2007). In turn, there is evidence to suggest that HRM research journals, and related publications, fail to provide sufficient insights on matters of practical importance. For instance, using a word count approach, Kougiannou and Ridgway (2021) found that half of the articles published in the top-tier HR-associated journals in 2018 devoted less than 2% to practical implications. This finding leads to the question of how topics perceived as important by HR practitioners can be re-transferred into academic contexts. In this regard, a further content analysis study indicate that academic HR programs often disregard topics that are given high priority in practice-oriented journals (e.g., organizational culture, ethics, social learning; Ardichvili and Oh 2013).

5.5 Mapping of the non-empirical articles

Under the 42 articles included in this review, 18 were conceptual contributions. These articles were evaluated according to the discussed (1) causes and (2) consequences of the gap. There was a noticeable focus on the causes and how to overcome them. The expected consequences of the research-practice divide received considerably less conceptual attention. With regard to the causes, the following three thematic clusters were extracted: (a) *communication barriers*, (b) *methodological issues*, and (c) *visibility, accessibility, and dissemination* of HR research. The conceptual articles were collated based on these extracted thematic clusters.

(1) Causes of the HRM research-practice gap

(a) *Communication barriers at the HRM research-practice interface*. The conceptual articles consistently pointed to the fact that HR scholars and practitioners are insufficiently connected, which has led to communication barriers. Lawler (2007) argued that much of today's HR research fails to address issues of practical relevance. Others indicated that the ever-increasing output of journal publications is accompanied by a growing complexity of the methods used to answer narrowly defined questions, often in highly specific contexts, making it difficult for non-academics to comprehend (e.g., Jewell et al. 2022; Short et al. 2009). Therefore, it can be challenging for practitioners to apply research findings to their work environments (e.g., Gray et al. 2011). There is consensus that the exchange between research and practice needs to improve (e.g., Cohen 2007; Short and Shindell 2009; Timming and MacNeil 2023; Vosburgh 2022).

The academic writing and publishing style is thought to affect communication hurdles (e.g., Beer 2022; Lawler and Benson 2022), including the use of technical language, the under-establishment of a practical orientation, and an overemphasis on numerical data (e.g., Gill 2018; Jewell et al. 2022; Timming and MacNeil 2023). Thus, HR practitioners could benefit from an expanded use of models, frameworks, and storytelling to receive research findings in a more inspiring and emotional way (Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Short et al. 2009). To improve familiarity with journal publications, it has also been suggested that HR executives could promote a culture in their departments in which research findings are discussed more regularly (e.g., Short 2006).

To enhance communication in a sustainable way, HR academics and practitioners need to collaborate more closely by establishing networks (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Kaufman 2022; Short et al. 2009; Tkachenko et al. 2017). Researchers could attend HRM practice conferences more routinely to gain a deeper understanding of the issues HR executives face in their daily work (e.g., Short and Shindell 2009; Vosburgh 2022). These dialogues should occur before commencing research projects and after obtaining results (e.g., Cohen 2007; Timming and Macneil 2023).

Kaufman (2012) underlines the need for HR research to consider external dimensions (e.g., economics or politics), as these often pose challenges for HR

practitioners (e.g., financial restrictions). However, over the past 30 years, HR research has been dominated by internal dimensions rooted in psychology and organizational behavior (e.g., staff selection). This overlooks that HR practitioners are strongly influenced by factors outside their organization. If HR research continues to neglect the needs of practice, communication barriers are likely to persist.

The role of business schools has been repeatedly discussed in the literature (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Lawler 2007; Tkachenko et al. 2017). Business schools focus on teaching theoretical management knowledge. On the other hand, training in the methods and results of the evidence-based approach is often insufficient (e.g., Short and Shindell 2009). Consequently, even MBA graduates may not be sufficiently informed about essential research findings. A project-related collaboration between universities, business schools and companies could therefore be beneficial for all sides (e.g., Cohen 2007). Although such collaborations exist to a certain extent, there is an urgent need to expand these networks (e.g., Short and Shindell 2009). Furthermore, it is deemed crucial to develop precise definitions of the knowledge required for HR practitioners in the future. These must be included in certified training programs (e.g., *HRD scholar-practitioner*, see Short and Shindell 2009; Short 2006).

Another point relates to the question of when relevant information is needed. HR studies require careful and lengthy planning (e.g., data collection, evaluation, peer-reviewed publication). However, practitioners encounter problems in day-to-day business for which they desire quick answers (e.g., Gray et al. 2011). From a practitioner's perspective, the way research is published acts as a barrier (e.g., Lawler and Benson 2022). As a result, HR practitioners may turn to more popular sources of information (e.g., internet). To enhance their reception in HR practice, Gubbins and Rousseau (2015) suggested making research findings available in two different languages. Apart from being published in journals, results could be condensed and displayed in more convenient formats.

(b) *Methodological issues at the HRM research-practice interface.* Another thematic cluster concerns the nature of research in HRM. It has been suggested that more comparative research is needed to determine which programs work better under which circumstances (e.g., Kulik 2014). To advance the field, it could be beneficial to shift the research focus from studies that concentrate on the micro-employee level (e.g., job satisfaction) to the macro-organizational level (e.g., organizational performance). This level has been studied less comprehensively so far (e.g., Kaufman 2012; Kulik 2014).

The structures of organizations are complex and dynamic. Therefore, it is debated whether the narrow research focus on individual predictors (e.g., cognitive performance) or outcomes (e.g., turnover-rates) meets the challenges of HR practice (e.g., Cohen 2007; Jewell et al. 2022). Perhaps more attention should be paid to implementation research that considers contextual factors (e.g., organizational culture; Gill 2018; Lawler and Benson 2022). However, extending HR research to the macro level requires valid and reliable measures. This is not sufficiently guaranteed in today's HR research (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Kulik 2014).

In the literature, the rigor-relevance debate has been discussed as a critical factor in the research-practice gap. There is often a tension between the rigor of HR studies and their practical relevance (Tkachenko et al. 2017; Short and Shindell 2009). A trend has been observed that the rigor of studies steadily increased, whereas the relevance and transferability to HR practice has tended to decrease (e.g., Jewell et al. 2022; Lawler 2007). HR scholars and practitioners may hold fundamentally different epistemological perspectives on knowledge production and consumption. While scholars mostly strive for generalizations (e.g., GMA as predictor of job-performance), practitioners are more interested in finding specific problem solutions in their concrete work environment (e.g., Gray et al. 2011). Therefore, an expanded field of research aimed at a more holistic assessment of specific HR practices in authentic contexts might be needed (e.g., Jewell et al. 2022; Short 2006).

A broader implementation of intra-organizational research (e.g., use of metrics, internal assessments) could also contribute to a better understanding of what kind of evidence might be useful in practice. It has been pointed out consistently that more and partially different research is required to identify which HR practices work for whom (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015). The restriction of HR research to isolated phenomena, such as selection methods (e.g., intelligence tests) or other personnel measures (e.g., goal setting), is seen as a sustaining factor of the research-practice divide (e.g., Kaufman 2012). A more holistic evaluation of HR measures, including the influence of contextual factors (e.g., company size) on outcomes, could be further facilitated by conducting meta-analyses and systematic reviews more frequently (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015). Thereby, practitioners could obtain a comprehensive understanding of the accumulated evidence related to a particular HR practice, without the need to examine a confusing large number of individual studies (e.g., Gill 2018).

Under the terms mode 2 and action research, the demand has been formulated that knowledge production in HRM should be generated by a continuous and transdisciplinary exchange between research and practice (e.g., Beer 2022; Gray et al. 2011). Mode 2 research is collaborative, more contextually embedded, and practice-oriented (e.g., Tkachenko et al. 2017). It should be understood as a guiding attitude in HRM that has the potential to sustainably strengthen the relation of research and practice (e.g., Gray et al. 2011). To achieve this, it appears necessary that HR scholars increasingly focus on the concerns of HRM departments (e.g., Kaufman 2022; Short et al. 2009). Conversely, the interest of companies in participating in cooperative research projects could also increase (e.g., Short 2006).

(c) Visibility, accessibility, and dissemination of research results at the HRM research-practice interface. A central current issue appears to be the claim that research should be made more accessible to HR practitioners (e.g., Vosburgh 2022; Lawler and Benson 2022). The way results are presented is often contrary to the needs of practice (e.g., Cohen 2007; Gray et al. 2011; Short et al. 2009). Therefore, Gubbins and Rousseau (2015) suggested that core findings of rigorous HR research (e.g., controlled studies) could also be presented as case studies. By doing this, the successful implementation of certain HR strategies can be demonstrated using concrete examples (e.g., specific organization). This could enhance

practitioners' interest in and understanding of abstract research by transferring its implications to concrete working environments.

Developing strategies to make academic findings more accessible to HR practitioners also affects the area of publication practice (e.g., Gill 2018; Tkachenko et al. 2017). Influential HRM research journals could make important findings available to editors of practice-oriented journals in a condensed form (e.g., Cohen 2007). Since HRM is still an emerging profession, there are no standardized training curricula for specific areas of knowledge or professional competence yet. As a result, as Lawler (2007) argued, education and training within the organizations is notably relevant. Thus, HR executives are also responsible for disseminating evidence-based knowledge to HR employees (e.g., Rousseau and Barends 2011; Short 2006).

To improve the dissemination of scholarly knowledge, some authors have suggested to use abstracts and practical implications sections as an important channel of communication with HR practitioners (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015; Short et al. 2009; Vosburgh 2022). However, the practical implications sections of relevant HR publications are often oversimplified, so the importance of the work to practice might be overlooked (e.g., Gill 2018). To give the practical application of research greater consideration, it has been proposed to involve HR practitioners more frequently in peer-reviewing submitted articles (e.g., Cohen 2007).

The previous discussions focused on insufficient knowledge of HR practitioners as the primary cause of the gap. However, some authors have argued that issues of culture, values, and power in organizations may be more critical. As stated by Gill (2018), HR departments may not implement evidence-based practices because of their short-term and utilitarian focus. Today, companies must respond rapidly to changing requirements (e.g., government regulations). In favor of short-term benefits, companies may sacrifice the implementation of sustainable and evidence-based HR practices that often lead to success in the longer term.

The power of general management over HRM is considered a further critical factor that affects short-term focused HR strategies. According to Gill (2018), the envisioned strategic partnership between general management and HR departments often remains an unfinished endeavor. This impedes HR leaders from initiating change processes that may contradict senior management decisions. Compared to general management, HR employees' perception of control is much more limited. The low motivation of practitioners to implement evidence-based HR practices can also be seen as an indication that the status quo should be maintained (e.g., not be made redundant by research technologies) and defended against the threat of cognitive dissonance.

(2) Consequences of the HRM research-practice gap

One noteworthy aspect of the conceptual papers is that the causes of the gap, and ways to bridge it, are covered in much more detail than the expected consequences. Compared to the causes, assumptions about the consequences are discussed surprisingly broad (e.g., poorer organizational outcomes), as others

observed more than a decade ago (e.g., Kaufman 2012). Yet, a number of considerations were taken up repeatedly.

The absence of evidence-based practices in personnel selection can impede HR's ability to achieve a significant competitive advantage through human resources (e.g., Gill 2018). The opportunity is frequently missed to fully exploit the potential of the employees at the interface of job requirements, individual competencies, and organizational effectiveness. Consequently, HR departments could substantially underperform with their employees (e.g., Lawler 2007).

Due to the insufficient relatedness of research and practice in HRM, economic benefits of evidence-based HR measures might be overlooked (e.g., Lawler 2007). However, only few tangible studies on return on investment (ROI) illustrate that particular selection tools offer clear financial benefits over others. To meet the interests of HR practitioners in a more convincing manner, conducting ROI-studies is considered a crucial task of HR research (e.g., Cohen 2007).

The gap is also believed to have a negative impact on the still evolving professional identity of HR practitioners. The research-practice divide may have the consequence that the HR profession is only slowly maturing and consolidating its professional identity (e.g., Short 2006). HR practitioners could fail to acquire job-relevant competencies based on current research findings that correspond to their responsible role in the organization (e.g., Gill 2018). Therefore, a self-assured HR scholar-practitioner who is certain of his/her professional identity must still be seen as a visionary ideal (e.g., Short and Shindell 2009; Lawler and Benson 2022).

Although it may seem obvious, it is important to recognize that the disconnect between HR research and practice can lead to an ever-widening gap. Due to insufficient involvement with research questions focusing on practical needs, an increasing number of studies generate findings that are not translated to practice (e.g., Gubbins and Rousseau 2015). Consequently, HR professionals may rely less on the results of empirical studies, while scholars frequently investigate matters that are disconnected from the practical aspects (e.g., Lawler and Benson 2022).

6 Discussion

The aim of this review was to examine the current research landscape on the gap between research and practice in HRM. The results show that many of the retrieved articles consist of conceptual contributions. In these articles, the focus was on the causes of the gap and ways to bridge it, while giving comparatively less attention to the resulting consequences. The pool of empirical studies varied in methodology and results. Comparable studies were found in the area of personnel selection. Selection myths still seem to be widespread in HR practice (e.g., Fisher et al. 2021). Bias-prone instruments (e.g., unstructured interviews) were preferred over empirically supported predictive measures (e.g., mental ability tests). However, the results of the empirical studies were related to the specific definition of the gap (e.g., knowing, doing, interest) and the approach used in the research. The results of the content analysis studies revealed that HR practitioner and academic journals cover personnel selection issues to the same extent. Instead, significant differences in interests were found in other areas

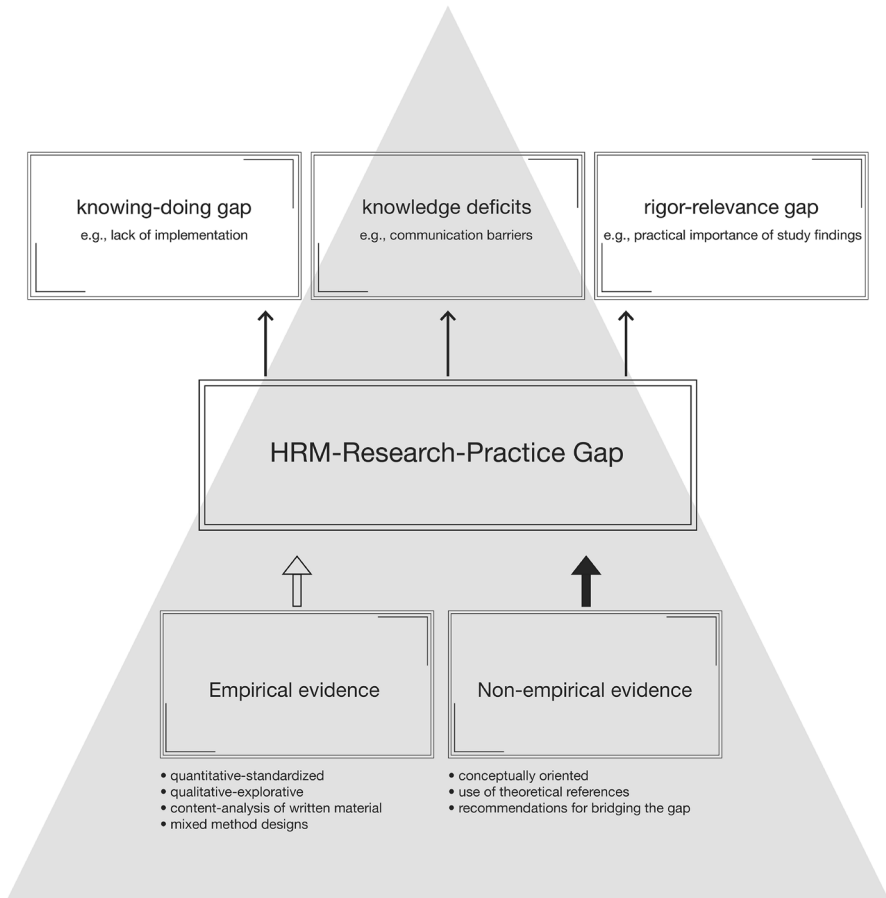


Fig. 4 Configuration of the research landscape on the HRM research-practice gap. Filled arrow symbolizes a comparatively high contribution of non-empirical evidence to the field ($k=18$), whereas sources of empirical evidence ($k=24$) were heterogeneous

(e.g., employee motivation). The complexity of the research landscape on the gap is evident in the multiple facets uncovered in this review, as illustrated in Fig. 4. In the following sections, we further discuss the results, locate them in a larger context, and develop an agenda for future research.

7 Reference to the overarching questions of the review

The results of the review indicate four distinct research lines on the gap (survey-based, qualitative, content analysis, conceptual), broadly categorized as empirical and non-empirical evidence. Contrary to our expectations, only 24 of the articles were based on empirical data. Thus, the proportion of conceptual contributions

to the field is relatively high. Empirical studies conceptualized the research-practice divide as a knowledge gap (e.g., Jackson et al. 2018), an implementation gap (e.g., Perry et al. 2012), or an interest gap (e.g., Rynes et al. 2007). At times, normative arguments were made for the implementation of certain HR practices. However, it was not always clear on what theoretical or empirical foundation these implications were derived. With few exceptions (e.g., Gill 2018 referring to Foucault's theory of power), most articles do not utilize established theories to explicate the research-practice gap.

The reasons discussed for the gap were organized into the following thematic clusters: (1) communication barriers (e.g., type of research to be published), (2) methodological issues (e.g., rigor-relevance tension of HR research), (3) visibility and dissemination of HR research (e.g., neglect of practical implications). The expected consequences, on the other hand, were often only briefly mentioned (e.g., poorer organizational outcomes, insufficient advancement of the HR profession) and rarely conceptualized.

A recurring finding in survey-based studies revealed that HR practitioners rely on instruments whose predictive validity is not supported by empirical studies. This finding has been replicated in various HR-associated professions and cultural work contexts over a period of more than 20 years. But this relates only to a limited area of HRM, namely the underestimation of the effectiveness of cognitive ability tests in personnel selection.

The review results suggest that a particular methodology is associated with certain aspects of the gap. While the survey-based studies aimed at knowledge deficits of practitioners, some qualitative studies pointed to implementation problems (e.g., Bezzina et al. 2017) or the role of research in HRM (e.g., de Frutos-Belizón et al. 2021). The content-analysis studies examined interest gaps and identified deviations other than those that could have been expected from the survey-based findings.

Based on the results of the review, we identified certain research gaps. First, while most articles are conceptual in nature, only a few used established theories to explain the gap. Second, the survey-based studies are overly focused on practitioners' knowledge. These studies have strongly shaped the perspective on the research-practice divide in HRM. However, contextual factors and implementation barriers are insufficiently considered there. Third, there is an imbalance in the discussion of causes and consequences, and in the roles of practitioners and scholars. Both the actual consequences and the role of HR research received less attention in the literature. Below, we discuss more general implications that extend these specific findings.

7.1 Broader implications for the research-practice interface in HRM

Despite the heterogeneity of the research landscape identified in this review, we see common implications. Research and training in organizations could improve the alignment between HRM research and practice. However, it is important to ensure a comprehensive understanding of an organizational problem before pursuing

effective solutions. This may involve conducting surveys or gathering data within the company on aspects such as organizational culture or employees' perceptions of leadership (e.g., Rousseau and Barends 2011). Once a diagnosis has been made, an appropriate solution can be pursued. But this process requires information from multiple sources (e.g., professional judgement, intra-organizational data, attitude of stakeholders; Barends and Rousseau 2018), not only knowledge of certain study results.

The implementation of an evidence-based approach to HRM clearly goes beyond the mere incorporation of specific research findings. Rather, it is about developing a mindset that systematically identifies the causes and consequences of HR problems and uses research to find solutions. This is worth mentioning because all too often the call for evidence-based decision-making follows an overly simplistic logic: There is an empirical finding from study X, but organization Y does it differently, so its policy is not evidence-based. The fact that empirical studies often leave open the question of which HR measure works for whom, under what circumstances and why is rarely part of the narrative. However, an oversimplified definition of evidence-based practice leads to a rather rudimentary conceptualization of a research-practice gap. A more comprehensive approach to evidence-based decision-making in HR, as outlined above, would instead expand the research-practice discourse in beneficial ways.

In the literature, the need for education and training of HR professionals has been discussed as an important bridge between research and practice. Higher-level HRM training programs on evidence-based decision-making could certainly enhance the identity and role of HR employees as scientific practitioners (e.g., engaged scholarship, Beaulieu et al. 2018; scholar-practitioners, Short and Shindell 2009). Boudreau and Ziskin (2011) argued that the future of HR is more likely to be defined by education than persuasion (p. 263). Therefore, acting as a scientifically informed practitioner entails approaching problems with objectivity, collecting pertinent information, diagnosing specific problems, and searching for solutions (e.g., Rousseau and Barends 2011; Short et al. 2009).

The pervasive rigor-relevance tension creates challenges for both research and practice. Our analysis of the literature indicated an increasing emphasis on contextualizing HRM research and viewing the gap from this perspective as well (e.g., Gill 2018). Even if research designs that incorporate contextual factors are challenging and difficult to implement, this is certainly a positive development. The early research landscape on the gap was strongly focused on the individual (e.g., Rynes et al. 2002). However, we believe that the overemphasis on the micro-level (e.g., knowledge) fails to capture the complexity of the phenomenon. For example, the prevailing culture at universities (e.g., preferred type of research) or business strategies focused on short-term cost-benefits represent barriers to effective communication between HR scholars and practitioners on a macro-level. It is important to note, though, that the rigor-relevance debate is not unique to HRM, as it is common to many fields of practice-based research (Short et al. 2009).

The various possible causes of so-called irrational choices have rarely been considered in the research landscape to date. Although calculation models exist for several HR practices that show favorable cost-benefit ratios (e.g., Saridakis et al. 2017;

Terpstra and Limpaphayom 2012), these practices are not widely implemented (e.g., Rynes et al. 2018; Sabramony 2006). Decisions in HRM might also be subjected to random variability. Kahneman et al. (2016) coined the term *noise* to refer to the influence of unpredictable factors on decision making (e.g., mood of the day). It is now assumed that many companies leave human capital untapped and suffer financial disadvantages due to noisy decisions (e.g., Kahneman et al. 2019). Consequently, some authors have strongly suggested the greater use of standardized procedures and algorithms in HRM (e.g., Power et al. 2019).

As Gill (2018) noted, however, issues of power distribution within organizations may have implications for the implementation of this proposal. The growing adoption of standardized HR practices can challenge conventional authority and established ways of making organizational decisions (e.g., Barends and Rousseau 2018). HR employees still have to justify their internal status as strategic partners (e.g., Kaufman 2012). One possible motive for skepticism about evidence-based practices is that HR practitioners may fear being replaced by technology. This could explain why HR executives' decisions are less economically rational, and more frequently guided by power interests that aim to preserve their own status. Consequently, decision-making resources that are more difficult to replace (e.g., expert opinion) might be preferred over standardized procedures (e.g., structured interview forms). Besides theories of power, other approaches from organizational research seem to be suitable for explaining parts of the HRM research-practice gap, such as Braverman's (1974) labor process theory or Burns' (1961) micropolitics approach. It would be desirable to expand the theoretical perspectives on the phenomenon in the future. This could diversify the design and conduct of empirical studies and provide more clarity about the constitutive elements of the gap.

From our point of view, both noisy decisions and power-driven choices could be given greater consideration as contextual variables. We agree with Lawler (2007) that conducting isolated investigations into the knowledge, use, or rejection of individual HR measures in practice only captures limited aspects of the research-practice gap. There is often even confusion between knowledge and action, as the mere understanding of evidence-based HR practices does not necessarily lead to their implementation. Studies suggest that up to 90% of workplace learning is informal (e.g., Eraut 2011; Noe et al. 2013), highlighting the importance of learning channels other than formal knowledge training. Pfeffer and Sutton (1999) noted more than 20 years ago that many organizations could benefit from focusing on deliberate actions to promote organizational learning processes rather than excessively discussing organizational problems.

The concept of rationality used in the gap literature may be too narrow. While rational decision-making serves as a guiding paradigm in science, companies are messy places where conflicts of interest and power games occur (e.g., Crozier and Friedberg 1979). The HR practitioners' deviation from empirically supported practices may be more influenced by action rationality than decision rationality (e.g., Brunsson 1982). Therefore, we doubt that educating individuals about evidence-based HR practices alone will lead to a sustainable increase in their adoption. Currently, there is also a rapid technological evolution underway that raises fundamental

questions about where HR professionals should receive more training in the future and where technology (e.g., AI) will take over certain tasks.

7.2 Bridging the gap: What role could technological progress play in the future?

Soon, advancing technologies may further automate the use of evidence-based HR practices. It will be interesting to observe to what extent concepts such as people analytics (e.g., Marler and Boudreau 2017), HR algorithms (e.g., Cheng and Hackett 2021), or artificial intelligence (AI) (e.g., Vrontis et al. 2022) will contribute to the debate on the research-practice divide in HRM.

Especially AI could play a prominent role in the future of HRM (e.g., Kaushal et al. 2023). In personnel selection, companies are already using AI technologies and machine learning algorithms to more accurately predict the future success of employees (e.g., Black and van Esch 2020; Koenig et al. 2023). Both an increased consideration of machine-based forms of interaction (e.g., chat robots) and more automated evaluations of information about applicants (e.g., video-based evaluation of interviews) are on the rise. AI has the potential to reduce unwarranted bias in human behaviors and decision-making during employee selection. To diminish disruptive influences at the candidate level (e.g., minimizing deceptive impression management; Langer et al. 2020) and at the recruiter level (e.g., reducing race or gender bias; Zhang et al. 2023), the implementation of AI technology could prove advantageous. While the evidence supporting these developments is currently limited (e.g., Drage and Mackereth 2022; Woods et al. 2019; Tippins et al. 2021), it is conceivable that the increased integration of AI-based elements in HRM could facilitate the greater incorporation of research findings into practice.

Despite the potential attributed to AI in overcoming the research-practice gap in HRM, recent studies have slowed the euphoria a bit. The trust in an appropriate selection process and the willingness to disclose important information is being questioned by qualified applicants when AI-based tools are used (e.g., Schick and Fischer 2021). It is also evident that HR recruiters are often critical of the use of machine-based AI technologies (e.g., Ore and Sposato 2022). Both touch on the issue of acceptance of these technologies, which is certainly a prerequisite for their meaningful use. There are also several ethical concerns regarding compliance with legal standards, the dignity of decoding applicants' emotions, and issues concerning privacy, safety, and transparency (for an overview see Varma et al. 2023).

While it is unlikely that human decisions will be completely replaced, the integration of computer-based algorithms and human expertise through hybrid models may be a shared approach for HR scholars and practitioners. However, we expect technological advances and AI to have only a modest impact on most of the reasons for the gap identified in this review. Beyond the influence of technological progress, there is also the question of the extent to which HRM is specifically associated with research-practice barriers, or whether the phenomenon has a broader scope in the management field.

7.3 Comparing the HRM gap to other management fields

The research-practice gap is not unique to HRM. A similar tendency has been observed in other areas of management, such as marketing (e.g., Desai et al. 2012; Kriz et al. 2021), accounting (e.g., Tucker and Schaltegger 2016), healthcare (e.g., Robinson et al. 2020), or general management (e.g., Hodgkinson and Rousseau 2009; Kieser and Leiner 2009; Rousseau 2006).

Compared to HRM and other management fields, there might be a more nuanced awareness and understanding of this phenomenon in healthcare management. For example, the reasons for adherence or non-adherence to certain evidence-based practices have been studied more comprehensively there (e.g., Banks et al. 2021; Ehrenbrusthoff et al. 2022). This is perhaps related to the fact that the approach of evidence-based decision-making originated in the health sciences. However, early explanations for the gap appear to be similar to those in HRM, including rigor-relevance tensions, implementation barriers, and communication and knowledge deficits (e.g., Dowie 1996).

In most other areas of management, the scholar-practitioner divide has been even less systematically defined and studied. Historically, one particular feature may have contributed to the more extensive discourse within HRM. Although early cumulative data on the predictive validity of selection procedures were available (e.g., Schmidt and Hunter 1998), this knowledge has not been utilized in practice. This specific aspect of the gap has narrowed its scope and encouraged further investigation in HRM. As a result, broader discussions and more targeted empirical studies evolved. Therefore, the literature on the research-practice gap in HRM is more developed than in other management fields, with the exception of health care management. But this review also identified a number of limitations in the literature on the HRM gap that need to be addressed in the future.

7.4 Agenda for future research

Five points appear to be essential for future research on the scholar-practice divide in HRM, which are explained in more detail below: (1) balance of description and prescription, (2) investigation of the actual consequences of not implementing empirically supported HR measures, (3) stronger inclusion of the perspective of HR practitioners, (4) moving from the micro-level of the HR employee to the contextual embeddedness of HRM, (5) use of diversified research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the gap.

Overall, one of the biggest challenges for future research on the HRM scholar-practice divide is the relationship between descriptive (e.g., observations based on empirical findings) and prescriptive approaches (e.g., recommendations). As demonstrated in this review, almost half of the identified articles were conceptual contributions, most of which centered on strategies to bridge the gap. However, it is important to thoroughly investigate the suspected phenomenon before drawing broader prescriptive conclusions. Therefore, we agree with Hambrick's (2007) observation that the field may be suffering from presenting ideas for a

phenomenon and its solutions before sufficient empirical investigation is done. There may be too much focus on the hypothetical rather than accurately defining the current situation. It would be desirable in the future to build on more recent and specific theoretical assumptions (e.g., distribution of power in organizations) before examining further elements of the gap empirically. A stronger integration of theory and empiricism could contribute to a deeper explanation of the phenomenon. Based on the results of this review, this should precede the derivation of prescriptive recommendations for HR practice.

Despite some compelling evidence, especially in personnel selection, future research should further examine the negative consequences of not implementing certain evidence-based practices in HRM. ROI- studies of circumscribed HR measures are the preferred approach here, even if they are complex to conduct. The field would thus become more descriptive in terms of the actual adverse consequences of the gap for organizations (e.g., financial disadvantages, insufficient development of employees). On the other hand, this could also increase the interest of HR practitioners in the phenomenon.

To overcome an oversimplified view, a more elaborated synergy of practice-oriented and scientific HR research could be very profitable in future studies on the gap. Scholars should not only talk about, but also with HR practitioners when studying a phenomenon related to practice (e.g., Kaufman 2022). Given that the focus of research to date has been on the practice-related reasons for the gap, future studies should also more critically examine the zeitgeist of science (e.g., type of research, questions, methods) as an influencing factor. Furthermore, one of the most common explanations for the gap is a lack of knowledge among practitioners. To further evaluate this, studies could be conducted on the effectiveness of educational interventions in the HR workplace (e.g., changing attitudes toward or increasing implementation of empirically supported HR practices). Such studies are absent in the current research landscape.

Given the small number of empirical studies and the heterogeneous results, we suggest that normative recommendations for practice should be made with caution. In contrast, empirical studies on the gap could be expanded in a context-specific way. Thereby, external factors may be uncovered (e.g., financial resources) that impact whether an organization adopt certain evidence-based HR practices or not. Current research on the gap overwhelmingly concentrates on HR employees at a micro-level. This mainly includes the analysis of knowledge, behavior, and decisions of individuals. However, it seems crucial to us to study the phenomenon at the meso- and macro-level of organizations as well. There are several factors that have so far been investigated only to a limited extent. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future studies to comprehensively explore economic concerns (e.g., financial issues), institutional matters (e.g., labor policies or employment systems), or organizational factors (e.g., culture and micropolitics).

Finally, the review results indicate a trend toward investigating the research-practice gap with more diverse research methods. This could be a useful advancement of the field. As demonstrated, different methodological approaches uncover distinct aspects of the gap. The integration of these findings appears to be a critical objective for future research. For example, the consistent but mostly survey-based finding that

HR professionals tend to reject cognitive performance tests in staff selection could be further explored in qualitative studies to determine the underlying motives.

7.5 Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider in this review. First, it is important to note that the literature included is based on the search strategies and inclusion criteria used. Adjusting these parameters may cause variation in the results. However, our main objective was not to conduct a systematic review based on a complete compilation of empirical studies. Rather, we aimed to provide a more holistic exploration of the research landscape on the HRM scholar-practice divide.

Second, unlike previous reviews (e.g., Tkachenko et al. 2017), we focused on articles directly related to HRM. Nevertheless, it was challenging in certain cases to determine if the study participants were primarily HR employees (e.g., Banks et al. 2016). The same holds true for some conceptual contributions (e.g., Lawler and Benson 2022), where the distinction between general management as an umbrella term and HRM proved to be complicated. While we aimed to include articles with a focus on HRM, we recognize that there are conceptual uncertainties in some cases.

Third, we extracted overlapping content and co-occurring themes from the conceptual contributions. This approach appears appropriate for the review's scope, but it also has disadvantages. The classification and mapping of topic significance depend on the evaluator's subjective judgment. Even though we discussed this evaluation carefully, other reviewers might have identified additional content or different focal points.

Fourth, it could be argued that our objectives cannot be comprehensively approached due to the limited number of articles and their methodological divergence. In fact, this reduces the potential for drawing broader, more applicable conclusions. As in almost every research field, there is a need for more extensive data. On the other hand, the limitations and heterogeneity of the existing research are a direct finding of our review and should not only be regarded as a flaw. To the best of our knowledge, there are no conclusive criteria for the number of articles that increase the explanatory power of research syntheses, particularly in the case of narrative or scoping reviews.

7.6 Conclusions

To put it pointedly, one could assume that the HRM research-practice divide itself is not yet sufficiently evidence-based. Of course, this assumption is only partially accurate. There are valuable and substantial contributions to the field at various levels of scientific support. However, if rigorous standards were set in the sense of cumulative evidence, it would hardly be possible to make uniform statements due to the diverse nature of the research activity. Some articles contained more anecdotal evidence on the phenomenon, as noted by Reay et al. (2009) for evidence-based management in general. This is interesting because an overarching criticism is that HR practitioners too often rely on this kind of knowledge in their day-to-day decisions. It is not

our intention to diminish the importance of conceptual contributions on the subject. However, we would argue that recommendations for bridging the gap should ideally be based on corresponding empirical findings. It is therefore necessary to extend the descriptive line of research. Moreover, to adhere to their own logic, we would expect more prescriptive approaches to rely on findings stemming from accumulated empirical knowledge.

A detailed knowledge of common evidence-based practices is undoubtedly useful for HR practitioners, but it is even more important to comprehend the conditions under which specific interventions are likely to be successful. As previously noted (e.g., Sackett and Lievens 2008), this review highlights the need for context-related and comparative research on specific HR measures. Such research could provide insight into why certain empirically supported HR measures (e.g., intelligence tests) are not widely used in practice. This research is expected to offer a more profound comprehension of the gap than generic suggestions for action in practice.

Based on the results of this review, we expect a broader definition of an evidence-based approach in HRM to be beneficial. A precise and context-specific analysis of organizational peculiarities must precede the search for information required to solve identified problems. Therefore, while knowledge of HR research findings is necessary, it alone does not overcome barriers between research and practice.

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Declarations

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