

**Benefits realisation management: a structured quantitative literature review**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Evidence-Based Management).

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between benefits realisation management (BRM) and project success has been widely established in literature. BRM ensures that project value is created, serving as the critical link between project execution and strategic implementation. Research on BRM has been steadily growing over the years. Various themes, theories, contexts, and methodologies have been explored in the literature. This study builds on previous reviews in the field by providing a comprehensive review of the academic literature on BRM. I adopt a structured quantitative literature review approach to identify the prevailing context in which BRM has been studied, the dominant methodological approaches, themes, and theories applied over the past decade. My analysis found that BRM research has gradually expanded and become more diverse in terms of study contexts, research methodologies, thematic scope, and the application of theories. However, despite this progress, BRM research remains unevenly distributed. Most studies in the field still focus on the meso-level of the IT/IS sector in developed economies. Methodologically, the literature remains dominated by qualitative research. The application and development of independent theories in BRM research also remain sparse and fragmented. Future research should thus focus on expanding the contextual and methodological diversity. There is also a need for more theory development and integration in BRM research.

**Keywords:** Benefits Realisation Management, Project Value Creation, Project Management, Project Success, Structured Quantitative Literature Review

## **Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Evidence Based Management at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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# 1 Introduction

Projects are undertaken as a means of effecting change and creating value for stakeholders. Project management literature has, however, historically defined project success only in terms of the “iron triangle,” which describes successful projects as those that deliver the intended output quality on time and within the allocated budget (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016). However, as early as the 1980s, it became clear that this project management success did not always translate into attaining the intended project benefits. Consequently, there was a move to broaden the definition of project success to focus on the value created (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016; Pereira et al., 2021). As a result, benefits realisation management (BRM) emerged in the early 1990s within the field of project management as a means of ensuring that the anticipated benefits from executing a project are realised (Breese, 2012; Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022).

Benefits Realisation Management (BRM) is defined as “the process of organizing and managing, such that potential benefits, arising from investment in change, are actually achieved” (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016, p. 738). The benefits created for stakeholders through the attainment of project outcomes may be financial, such as increased revenue, or non-financial, such as improved organizational learning within the project owner organisation (Zwikael, 2024). The beneficiaries of the benefits created by projects may also be stakeholders other than the project owner organization, such as in the case of public health improvements arising from government projects (Zwikael, 2024). The relationship between BRM and strategic value creation has also been well established in the literature (Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Chapman, 2024; Hamidi, 2017; Marnewick, 2016, 2017; Scheepers et al., 2022; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Williams et al., 2020; Young & Grant, 2015; Zhang & Shukla, 2023). BRM thus serves as the critical link between project execution and strategic implementation (Serra & Kunc, 2015).

Since its inception in the early 1990s, our scholarly understanding of BRM has undergone significant evolution. Ward et al. (1996) were the first to propose a process model for managing benefits in IT/IS projects. Since then, other scholars have expanded on their research by exploring the link between BRM and strategy; foregrounding the role of projects as value-creating systems; exploring the capabilities, competencies, and practices relevant to BRM; proposing models for measurement of benefits; and developing models for target benefit formulation (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016; Pereira et al., 2021). Over the years, various theoretical lenses and frameworks have been used to study BRM. These include Principal-agent theory,

Resource-based view, Contingency theory, Transaction cost, Microeconomics, Porter's value chain, and organisational integration (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016; Olsson et al., 2024; Pereira et al., 2021). BRM has thus evolved into a multidisciplinary approach that aligns project management efforts with business strategy by expanding the focus from solely project completion to a more holistic view incorporating value creation (Serra & Kunc, 2015).

Despite the significant developments in BRM literature over the years, there remain significant shortcomings in our scholarly understanding of the construct. Firstly, despite the abundance of high-quality empirical studies on BRM, there is a notable shortage of review papers in the field. Review papers serve the function of summarizing and synthesizing what is known and not known about a concept, identifying research gaps to provide direction for future research, and supporting the development and refinement of theories. The only review articles on the topic date back over 5 years (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016; Pereira et al., 2021). These reviews, in themselves, identified a field that was growing but lacked consistency in terminology and had significant gaps in population and theoretical coverage. There is thus currently a need for studies that map our current understanding of BRM, identify trends in the research, and provide guidance on how future research can address any gaps identified.

BRM has also garnered increased interest amongst practitioners. Despite the increasing adoption of BRM practices in the industry, many projects still fail to capture their envisaged benefits (Svejvig & Schlichter, 2020). Project failures result in wasted resources and financial and non-financial losses for project owner organizations, investors, customers, and the public (S. K. Gupta et al., 2019). In South Africa, industry reports indicate that only 30 to 40 percent of IT projects deliver the benefits they were intended to achieve (Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022). High project failures in the developing world represent a significant waste of opportunities to uplift millions of impoverished populations. Therefore, project management practitioners need more effective BRM.

To promote more effective BRM practices amongst practitioners, organisations such as the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the United Kingdom's Office of Government Commerce (OGC) have increasingly incorporated BRM processes as best practices in their guidelines and standards (Mathur et al., 2021). PMI's 2023 "Pulse of the Profession" report identified BRM maturity as the most significant driver of organizational project success (Project Management Institute, 2023). To be effective, these guidelines need to be based on sound theories supported by credible empirical evidence. An improved scholarly understanding of BRM is thus also imperative for effective practice.

Structured literature reviews are considered a cornerstone of evidence-based management. They are widely considered to be the most effective method of collating the body of knowledge on a given topic in a comprehensive and replicable way. This Structured Quantitative Literature Review (SQLR) aims to contribute to BRM scholarship and practice by offering new insights into the scholarly practices around BRM over the past decade and providing guidance for future research avenues. My overall objective is to expand our theoretical understanding of BRM in project management.

This study builds on the previous work by Laursen & Svejvig (2016) and Pereira et al. (2021). I expand on the work previously done by these authors by exploring the themes, theories, contexts, and research methods employed in BRM scholarship over the past decade. These reviews, in addition to now being outdated, also had various data source quality and methodological shortcomings. My study thus distinguishes itself from these previous studies by, firstly, limiting the source of the studies included to only quality peer-reviewed publications, and secondly, by improving the methodological rigour of the review, particularly through the collation and use of the different terms used to describe BRM as search keywords.

In total, 53 publications sourced from the premier project management journal, the International Journal of Project Management (IJPM), as well as the Scopus and Web of Science databases were selected and analysed as part of this study. I employ quantitative content analyses to identify the practices, trends, and gaps in the research. I synthesized my findings to answer the following research questions: **RQ1: How has BRM been studied in academic literature over the past decade? RQ2: What are the dominant theories and themes in BRM research? RQ3: What are the gaps in our understanding of BRM, and how can future research address this?**

My findings suggest that BRM research has gradually expanded over the past decade. Our scholarly understanding of BRM has recently undergone a notable improvement in terms of the contexts in which it has been studied, the research methods employed, the themes explored, and the theories applied. However, despite these developments, the field is still characterised by notable population, methodological, and theoretical gaps. These gaps, however, also represent opportunities for further research in the field.

There is a need to expand the contexts of BRM research beyond the organisational level in IT/IS industries in developed nations. There is also a need for more quantitative and mixed-methods research. Several themes in BRM research remain underexplored, including BRM roles, the measurement and evaluation of benefits, and the enablers and barriers to BRM.

Lastly, there is a need for more theory-building papers that consolidate the most recent findings and provide unifying theories for BRM.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The following section, **Methodology**, describes the steps I undertook in collecting, selecting, and analysing the articles included in this study. Thereafter, the results of my analyses are presented in the section **Findings from the literature** review. In the **Discussion** section, I present the results of the analysis, which describe the evolution of BRM research over the past decade. I also identify gaps in the study, avenues for further academic enquiry, as well as the benefits and limitations of this study. I provide concluding remarks and recommendations for future research in the section titled **Conclusion and avenues for future research** .

## 2 Methodology

This section presents the methodology I employed to source and analyse the articles included in the study. The section begins with a description of the methodological approach I adopted in conducting the review. I then provide details on the search and selection process I carried out to identify and acquire relevant articles. The criteria I employed to determine which articles were applicable, along with the process I followed to assess their quality, are outlined below. Lastly, I provide details of the framework I employed to structure my analyses and justify its utility in answering my research questions.

### 2.1 Methodological approach

My study aims to identify the practices, trends, and gaps in BRM research over the past decade and provide guidance on how future research can address any identified gaps. In line with this aim, the study seeks to address the following research question: **RQ1: How has BRM been studied in the academic literature over the past decade? RQ2: What are the dominant theories and themes in BRM research? RQ3: What are the gaps in our understanding of BRM, and how can future research address this?**

To answer these research questions, I adopted the Structured Quantitative Literature Review (SQLR) methodology proposed by Pickering et al. (2015). This approach is particularly useful for identifying trends within a field of study (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). The method is also suited for application in emerging areas of academic inquiry where methodological approaches vary significantly, thus precluding meta-analysis (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). My literature search revealed a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methodology empirical studies. Based on this observation, I therefore deemed the SQLR methodology to be an appropriate approach for this study.

Moreover, the SQLR methodology is considered the most efficient approach for conducting a literature review when resources are limited and time is a constraint. Paul et al. (2021) observe that the SQLR methodology is preferred over other types of literature reviews, which generally require extensive domain and methodological knowledge to be carried out effectively. This is because methodological or subject matter inadequacies by the reviewers can result in misinterpretation of research results, negatively affecting future research into a field (Paul et al., 2021). The SQLR method is relatively easy and straightforward to apply, thereby overcoming this challenge (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). This methodology, therefore, represents the most appropriate way of generating insights from the literature within my human resource and time limitations.

Rigour, transparency, and reproducibility are the core principles of conducting systematic literature reviews (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). To ensure adherence to these principles, I adopted two of the most widely used standardized systematic review approaches for my study. Firstly, I adopted the recommendations outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA 2020). The PRISMA 2020 framework was developed for general systematic reviews and has been widely used in social science research (Paul et al., 2021). I have therefore chosen to employ this framework to ensure methodological alignment with other SLRs in the field.

The second framework to which I aligned my study is the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) protocol (Paul et al., 2021). This framework was developed specifically for systematic literature reviews and builds upon the PRISMA guidelines by providing a framework for reviewers to report on the rationale behind the various decisions made during their review process (Paul et al., 2021). I, therefore, decided to utilize it to further enhance transparency in my study.

## **2.2 Search process**

I used Scopus and Web of Science (WOS) as my primary search databases. These two databases are widely regarded as the most authoritative sources of peer-reviewed academic publications (Zhu & Liu, 2020), ensuring that my results are from credible and authoritative sources across various disciplines.

My initial review of the BRM literature revealed inconsistencies in the terminology used in the literature relating to BRM. Previous systematic literature reviews had a similar finding with terms such as “benefits management,” “benefits realisation,” “benefits capture,” “benefits elicitation,” “project value creation,” “project value management” and “project success management” being used interchangeably to describe the same construct (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016; Pereira et al., 2021; Svejvig & Schlichter, 2020). I decided to employ all these keywords in my search term to ensure that I did not exclude any relevant articles. This aspect of my search methodology differs slightly from the one adopted by Pereira et al. (2021) in their SLR, who only used keywords that included the word “benefit.” Their approach will likely have resulted in relevant articles on BRM being omitted from their study due to the lack of consistency in terminology. My methodology addressed this shortcoming.

My search term also excluded the keywords “product” and “patient to ensure that the numerous papers on product management and patient benefits management in healthcare were filtered out of our search results. The final search term used for the study was thus the following:

"Benefit management" OR "Benefits management" OR "Benefit realisation" OR "Benefits realisation" OR "Benefit realization" OR "Benefits realization" OR "Benefit capture" OR "Benefits capture" OR "Benefit elicitation" OR "Benefits elicitation" OR "Project value creation" OR "Project benefit" OR "project value management" OR "project success management" AND NOT "product" AND NOT "patient"

Further considering the lack of standard terminology regarding BRM, I decided to conduct a focused search for BRM-related articles in the International Journal of Project Management (IJPM). This is the premier journal within the project management field. It is also the only project management journal ranked in category A or above on the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List (ABDC JQL). I thus considered this to be the most relevant source of high-quality journal articles on BRM and hence required a specific focus.

My focused search in the IJPM consisted of a three-step selection process that entailed, firstly, scanning the tables of contents of the journals for possible relevant articles, followed by a review of the abstract and introduction, and finally, a complete reading of the articles. This approach ensured that I collected as many relevant high-quality articles as possible, including those that used keywords that do not directly match the most used ones.

### **2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

My study focuses on benefits realisation management within the project context. I excluded closely related topics, such as operational and product benefits management. These topics do not specifically focus on creating value through projects and, therefore, are deemed to fall outside the scope of this study. Value management, which examines the optimization of the relationship between project costs and benefits, is closely related to project benefit management (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016). However, as observed by several scholars, most of the literature on this topic focuses primarily on reducing costs rather than enhancing the realisation of benefits (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016). For this reason, articles on value management that focus on cost reduction rather than benefit realisation were considered irrelevant for my study.

Similarly, project success management is another closely related concept that was excluded from this study. The literature on project success management primarily focuses on the successful execution and completion of projects within the three dimensions of budget, time, and quality, often referred to as the "iron triangle" (Varajão et al., 2022). Even where the definition of project success has been expanded, this construct has primarily focused on the successful execution of projects, often termed project management success, output success, or efficiency success, rather than the realisation of planned and unplanned project benefits, also referred to as tactical success or project impact. It is for this reason that I decided to

exclude articles that focused solely on project success management within the iron triangle from my study.

A key aim of my study was to map the current state of the literature on BRM, based on high-quality academic sources. To achieve this, I limited my data set to articles from peer-reviewed journals only. This was to ensure the scholarly credibility of my research. My study also excluded the voluminous body of grey publications, such as industry reports and conference papers. Although it can be argued that these publications offer a snapshot of the most current BRM practices in industry, they are often not peer-reviewed and therefore may not always be grounded in a sound theoretical foundation.

Only English-language publications were included in this study. While I acknowledge that this could potentially result in some relevant non-English papers being omitted from my analysis, research has shown that a large majority (70%) of academic papers in the social sciences are published in English (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). I therefore contend that it is safe to assume that the documents included, though they may not represent the entirety of the body of knowledge, can be considered a representative sample.

The selected search period for my study was the past decade, spanning from 2015 until the present date. I considered ten years to be a sufficiently long period over which to evaluate the evolution of a research field. Fortunately, this period also coincided with the time since the last comprehensive literature review was conducted by Laursen and Svejvig (2016). I was thus able to compare and relate the developments in the field over the past decade to the prior years included in Laursen & Svejvig's (2016) review.

#### **2.4 Quality appraisal of included papers**

A quality appraisal of the articles included in my review was a necessary step to ensure that the results of my study are based on credible research. Journal rankings are a commonly used indicator of journal quality. It is, however, recommended that, in addition to relying on journal rankings, reviewers should also conduct further quality and relevance checks based on their specific review questions (Rojon et al., 2021). I thus adopted a two-step quality appraisal process based on this approach.

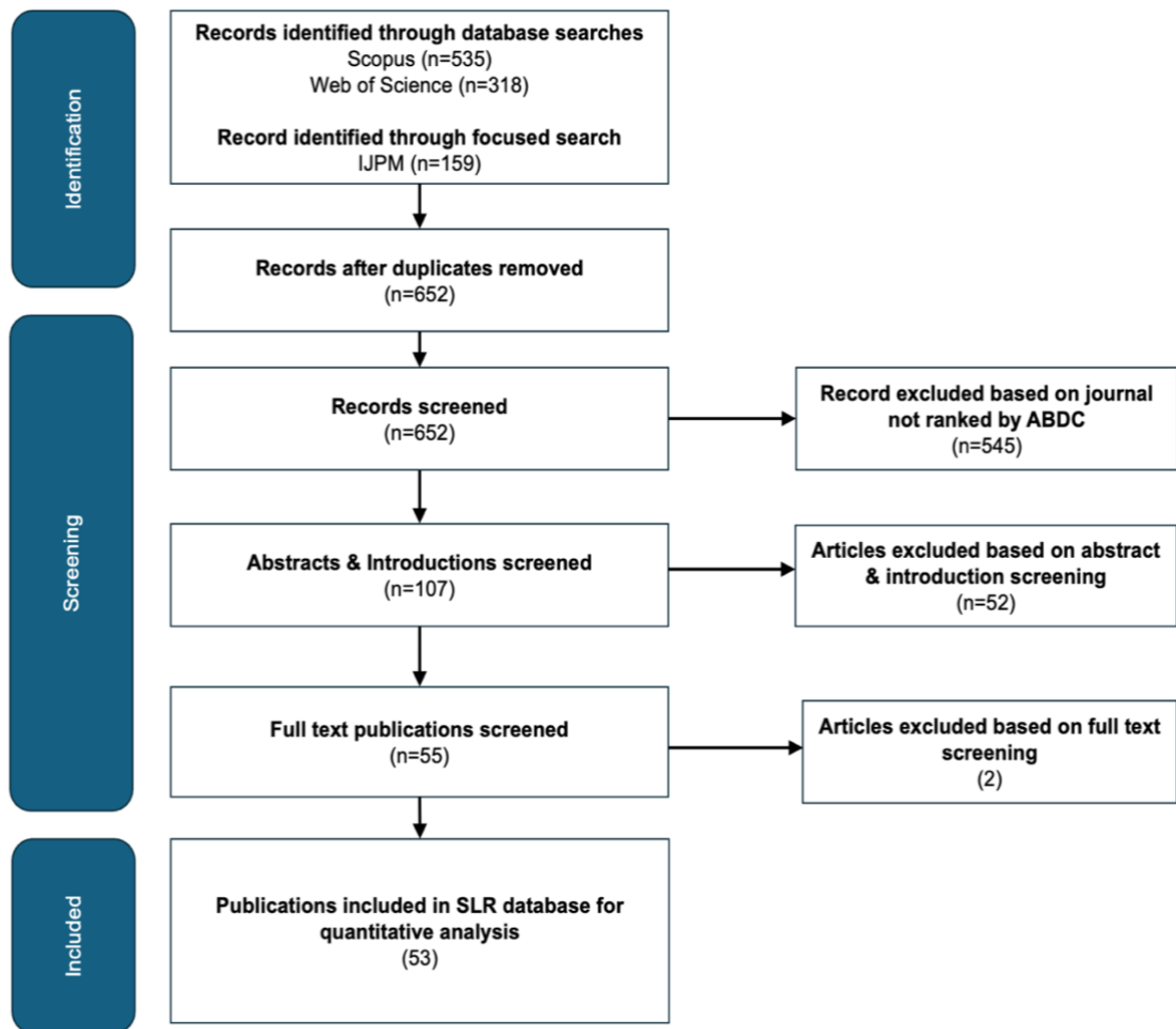
Firstly, I used the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List (ABDC JQL) as the first indicator of the article quality. Journals appearing on the ABDC JQL undergo stringent quality assurance evaluations, must adhere to accepted scholarly principles, and should not be predatory (Scott et al., 2022). Consequently, the ABDC JQL has become one of the most widely used ranking lists in the business management field, alongside the Chartered Association of Business Schools Annual Journal Guide (CABS AJG) (Paul et al., 2021). For

emerging fields, the ABDC JQL is preferred over the CABS AJG due to its larger number of listed journals. This was thus the most appropriate list for my review, considering the intermediate state of BRM research.

The second step in my quality appraisal process involved assessing each article using a quality appraisal questionnaire that I had developed. The questionnaire consists of the following five questions: **Q1: Is the purpose of the study and the intended contribution to academia and practice clearly articulated? Q2: Have the authors described their methodology in sufficient detail, and is it suitable for answering the research question? Q3: Have the authors used high-quality scholarly academic sources in their study? Q4: Have the authors presented a well-structured argument throughout the paper? And, Q5: Have the authors identified the limitations of their research, and are the recommendations for future work based on gaps identified in the study?** These questions enabled me to ascertain the level of academic rigour undertaken in the research and, consequently, the level of credibility of the research findings.

Figure 1 depicts the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for my study. The diagram outlines the steps taken in my search process and provides details on the number of records retrieved from the various databases, the records removed during the screening processes described above, and the number of documents included in my final dataset. As shown in the diagram, I identified a total of 1,012 records through my focused search in the IJPM journal, as well as my searches of the Scopus and WoS databases. The articles were reduced to 652 after I removed duplicates. I excluded an additional 545 records because their source journals were not ranked on the ABDC list. I then screened the remaining 107 articles based on my reading of their abstracts and introductions. Based on this assessment, I excluded an additional 52 articles because they did not meet the inclusion criteria described earlier. After a thorough review of the articles, I found that two additional articles did not meet the inclusion criteria. The final data set thus consisted of 53 articles that were included in my study.

## PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



**Figure 1**

*Literature search process (PRISMA 2020)*

### 2.5 Data capture process

I employed a framework-based organising code for structuring my database that aligned with the requirements of my study. Paul et al. (2021) recommend the use of frameworks in domain-based reviews, such as my own, due to the clarity and coverage attained using a clearly defined structure. My database was structured based on a modified version of the Theory, Context, Methods (TCM) framework, which I have named the Themes, Theories, Contexts, and Methods (TTCM) framework. The TCM framework has garnered popularity amongst scholars seeking to structure their review analysis in a holistic way that enables easy identification areas that require further attention (A. Gupta & Chawla, 2024; Herjanto et al., 2023; Koi-Akrofi et al., 2023; Shruthi Priya & Sathish, 2024; Thomas & Gupta, 2022; Yashika & Prakash, 2025). I thus defined variables for inclusion in my database based on the four categories in my TTCM framework.

The data was captured and stored in a personal database in the Microsoft Excel software package (Excel). Each article represented a single row. The category variables were assigned to the columns. In instances where each article could only be assigned a single value for the variable, such as the type of study (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed), the variable was assigned a single column with a drop-down list. In cases where a paper could be assigned different values for a single variable, for instance, where the data for the article was sourced from multiple countries, each possible value of the variable was assigned a column which was then filled with a 1 or 0 to indicate whether it applied to that study or not.

The first category of information captured was the bibliographic data. The bibliographic information for the articles was exported from the Scopus and WOS databases as comma-separated text files (CSV) and imported into Excel. The imported information included the authors, article title, publication year, abstract, index keywords, author keywords, number of citations, and the Digital Object Identification (DOI). The journal ranking and research field, as per the most recent ABDC Journal list, were also added to the bibliographic information. I observed in some instances that the citation counts for the articles differed between the two databases (Scopus and Web of Science). In these cases, I used the larger figure from either of the two databases.

The next category of information I captured for each article was information on the methods used in the study. I categorized each article into a genre using the same classification system employed by Laursen and Svejvig (2016) to facilitate comparison with their paper. The genres employed were empirical research, literature review, and theory and development essays. Thereafter, based on a detailed review of the methodology and results sections of each paper, I further categorized the empirical papers into those that employed a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods analysis. Using the same method, I also recorded the data collection methods employed in each study (for example, interviews, surveys, participant observation, or document analysis) and, lastly, the analysis method (for example, structural equation modelling, longitudinal case study, or action research). All this data enabled me to answer various questions regarding how BRM has been studied in the literature.

The next category of information I captured was the context in which the study was undertaken. The first variable under this category was the country of origin of the article. I defined the country of origin as the country from which the data used in the study's analysis were sourced. In instances where the data was sourced from multiple countries, all of these countries were captured. In a few cases, the authors indicated the proportion of data that was sourced from each country. This information was also captured in the database. This was to ensure that the results accurately represented the geographic origin of the articles. I adopted the same approach for capturing the industries from which the data was sourced for each article. Lastly,

I captured the analytical level in each study. This was either at the meso level, which I defined as the organisational or individual project level, the micro level, which referred to the person or role level, and finally the macro level, which focused on the industry or country level.

The next category I captured for each article was the theories applied. I captured the theories, theoretical lens, and theoretical frameworks used in each paper as stated by the authors themselves. I also captured the core propositions of the theories as applied by the authors to their research. In some instances, the theoretical underpinning of the papers could be somewhat inferred from the reading. To address this, Laursen & Svejvig (2016) further differentiated whether the theory was used comprehensively, had a limited application, or was only mentioned. In seeking to primarily include only objectively sourced data in my study, I opted to include all theories explicitly stated by the authors.

The final category of data captured was the theme that each article focused on. The categorisation of the themes I identified builds upon the previous reviews carried out by Laursen & Svejvig (2016) and Pereira et al. (2021). I found that some of the themes identified by their studies continued to emerge throughout the literature that I reviewed. I adopted these themes where applicable, adapted them as required in some instances, and added new themes that emerged from my reading of the literature. This approach further enabled comparison with these previous studies.

The structure of my database is presented in Table 1. The table presents a breakdown of each category and its corresponding subcategories in the database, along with a description of each variable as defined by me. The last column to the right presents the insights sought through the inclusion of each category.

## **2.6 Data analysis and synthesis process**

My study employed quantitative content analysis to identify trends and gaps in the literature. I undertook the analysis and synthesis in three distinct steps, each of which aimed to answer one of my research questions.

The first step in my analysis focused on answering my first research question, **RQ1: How has BRM been studied in academic literature over the past decade?** To answer this question, I first created a bar chart that depicted the number of BRM publications each year, along with their corresponding journal field of research. I also generated a combined chart showing the number of publications and the corresponding number of citations. From these two graphs, one can visually identify trends in the number of publications, the fields of research, and the impact of these articles as represented by the number of citations.

The subsequent analysis that I carried out in this step entailed mapping the origin of each article on a global map. The mapping was performed using the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software package, QGIS. I created a bubble map that depicts the location of the studies as different-sized circles, where the diameter of each circle represents the number of studies originating from a specific area. To identify temporal patterns, I split the data into two time periods, period 1 (2015-2019) and period 2 (2020-present). From this map, one can visually determine the spatial distribution of BRM research worldwide.

Still focusing on the context, the following analysis employed bar graphs to depict the industries on which the articles focused, and the percentage breakdowns of the analytical levels used in the literature were presented in a pie chart.

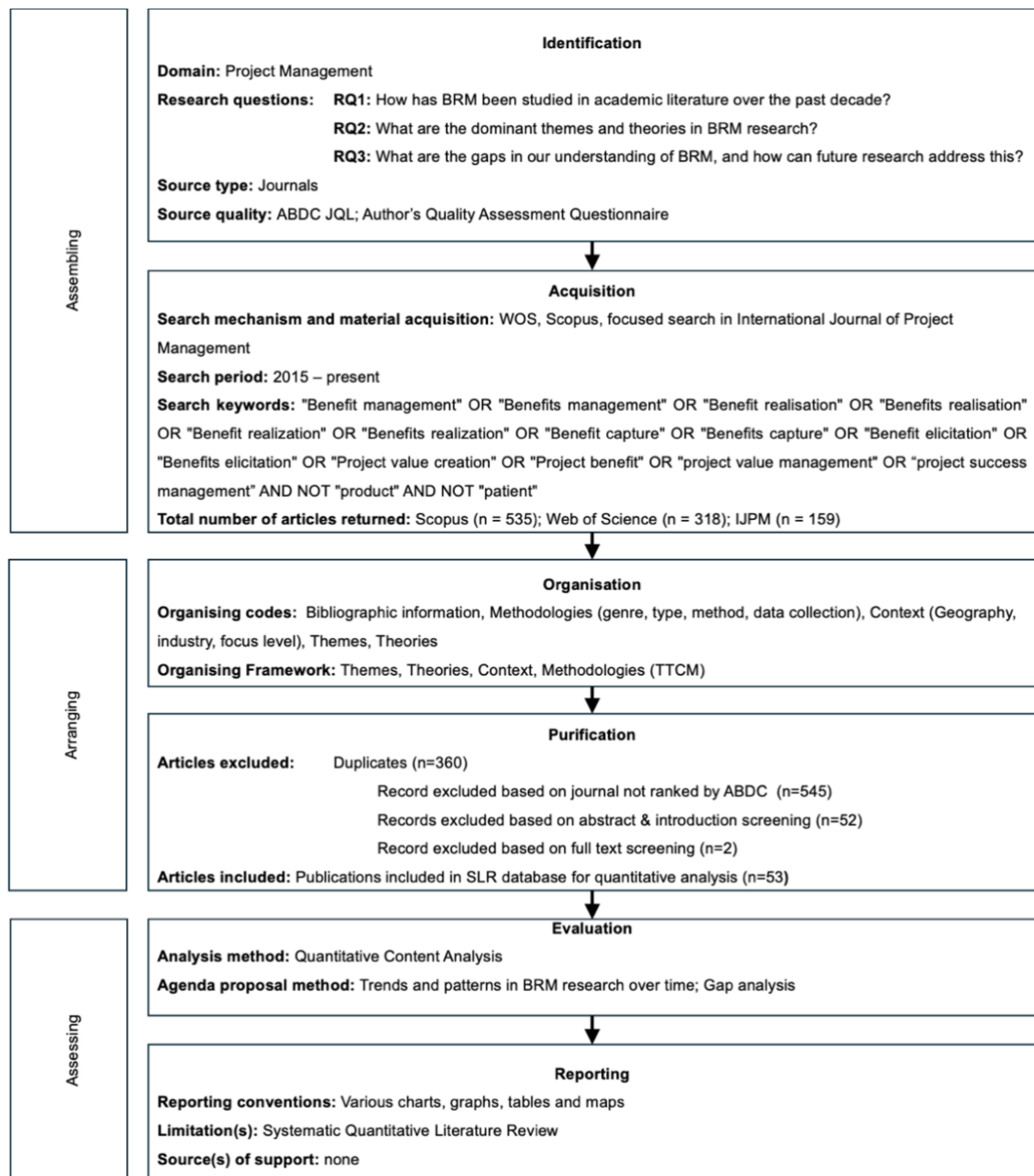
The final category analysed under this step was the methods employed in BRM research. Again, the use of bar charts enabled me to visually identify trends in the research genres and research types employed in BRM research over the past decade.

The next step in my analysis sought to answer my second research question, **RQ2: What are the dominant theories and themes in BRM research?** To analyse the themes studied in BRM research, I generated a radar chart. The radar chart depicts the number of articles focusing on each theme. Similar to spatial mapping, I divided the dataset into two time periods to determine whether there were any changes in the research focus over time. The combined data set was also represented, as it provides a picture of the overall distribution of articles across the various themes.

The final category analysed was the theories applied in BRM research. My analysis started with a review of the descriptive quantities of the theories. This included determining the number of papers that explicitly stated a theory used and those that did not, as well as the number of different theories applied and the most frequently applied theories. Thereafter, I generated a heatmap of the theories and the analytical levels at which they were applied. This graph provides a visual tool for identifying patterns in the use of theories within and across different analytical levels.

The final step aimed to address my third research question, **RQ3: What are the gaps in our understanding of BRM, and how can future research address these gaps?** To answer this research question, I had to synthesize the findings of the analyses carried out in the previous steps. Holistically integrating the findings from our last steps provided an overview of our current scholarly understanding of BRM, revealing the aspects that have received the most attention from scholars and those that require further research.

Figure 2 depicts a flow diagram of the strategy I followed in conducting the structured quantitative literature review (SQLR). The steps followed are illustrated using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol as proposed by Paul et al. (2021).



**Figure 2**  
*Systematic literature review strategy (SPAR-4-SLR)*

The findings of my literature review are presented in the following section. The section thereafter presents a detailed discussion of these findings, focusing on the implications for the current state of scholarship in the field and its future direction.

**Table 1***SLR personal database structure*

Category	Variable name	Description	Possible values	Insights sought
Basic Bibliographic Information	UniqueID	A unique identifier for each article		
	Authors	Name of authors	Name	Who are the leading voices in BRM research?
	Title	Title of the article	Title	
	Year	Publication year	Year	Is interest in the topic increasing or waning?
	Source title	The name of the publication in which the article was published	Journal name	In which journals has BRM literature been primarily published? What is the quality (journal ranking) of these journals?
	Abstract	The article's abstract	Abstract	
	Author keywords	The keywords listed by the author for the article	Keywords	What are the keywords most frequently used by authors for BRM research?
	Index keywords (Keywords plus in WoS)	The database index keywords	Keywords	What are the keywords most frequently used in the Scopus and WoS databases for indexing BRM research?
	Cited by	Number of citations	Number	Which are the most cited articles?
	DOI	The document's Digital Object Identifier	DOI	
Methods	Journal field	The journal Field of Research (FoR) as categorized in the ADBC JQL 2022	FoR	In what journal field of search have articles on BRM been published most frequently?
	Genre	The genre of the article employing the classification systems	Empirical research, Literature review, Theory development, and research essays, other	What is the genre of the publications? What does this say about the maturity of the research area?

Category	Variable name	Description	Possible values	Insights sought
		previously used by Laursen & Svejvig (2016)		
	Type	The type of empirical study conducted	Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed	Have the studies been primarily quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both? What does this say about the maturity of the discipline?
	Methodology	The methods employed in the study	Action research, Case Study, Longitudinal case study, linear regression, structural equation modelling, correlation analysis	What methods have been employed to study the construct? What are the implications of the selected method on the findings? What are the gaps?
	Data Collection	The data collection methodology employed	Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, unstructured focus groups, and document analysis	How has the data been collected? What are the implications of the findings, and what are the limitations of the selected data collection method?
Contexts	Geography	Country of origin of the study: This is the country from which the study data was primarily sourced	Country	Where does the knowledge on BRM primarily emanate from? Are they developed or developing countries? In which industries has BRM primarily been studied?
	Industry	Industry of the study	Industry	
	Analytical level	The level at which the study was conducted.	Macro, Meso, Micro	At which analytical level has BRM been studied?
Themes	Themes	The main themes investigated	Themes	What are the themes of BRM research over the past 10 years?
Theories	Theories	The theories that have been applied in the study.	Theories	What are the dominant theoretical frameworks applied in BRM research?
Quality assessment	QA Score	A quality assessment score based on my five quality assessment questions.	QA Score	What is the quality of the paper? How reliable are the findings?

### 3 Findings from the literature review

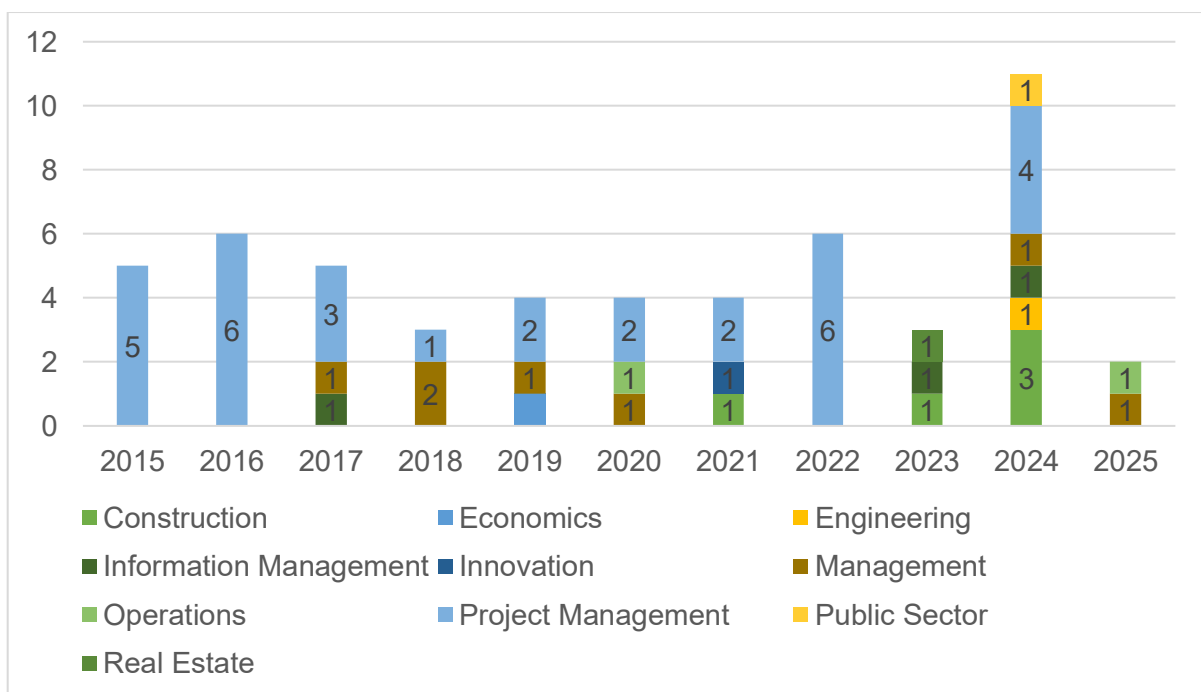
This section presents the findings of my literature review. The findings are structured according to the Themes, Theories, Context, and Methods (TTCM) framework. I, however, present the findings in the order of context, methods, themes, and theories to align with the sequence in which the analysis was conducted.

#### 3.1 How has BRM been studied in academic literature over the past decade?

##### 3.1.1 Number of publications across journal field of research

The number of publications on BRM remained relatively steady over the last decade but saw a marked increase in the past year (Figure 3). The past five years (2020-present) account for 57% (30 studies) of all publications on BRM, with 21% (11 studies) of the total number of studies having been published in 2024 alone. This signifies a consistent and increasingly growing interest in the topic.

This recent increasing interest in BRM research has expanded to increasingly diverse fields. As can further be observed from Figure 3, over the first five years of the decade, research articles on BRM were primarily published in project management-related journals, which accounted for 74%. More recently, however, there has been a noticeable increase in articles on BRM in other fields, including operations, construction, general management, and innovation. Project management journals now only account for 47% of the publications. This signifies that there is interest in this area of research across other management disciplines.



**Figure 3**

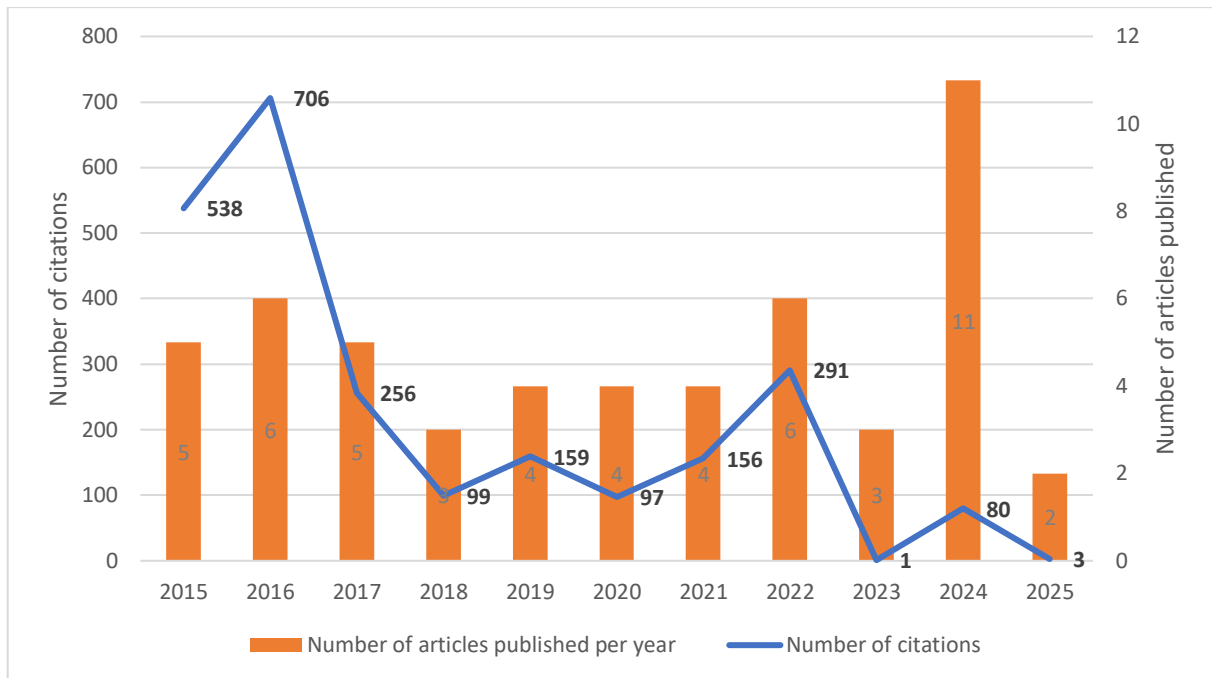
*Distribution of publications over time and across journal field of research*

### 3.1.2 Most cited articles

Based on the number of citations, it is observed that articles published at the beginning of the decade are still the most cited (Figure 4). The individually most cited articles are primarily seminal pieces that established the relationship between BRM and project success (Table 2). The most prominent of these is the article by Serra and Kunc (2015), which focuses on the impact of BRM on project success and the execution of business strategy. Similarly, Musawir et al. (2017) investigate the relationship between project governance, benefits realisation, and project success. Likewise, the third most cited article examines the impact of project management and benefits management practices on project success (Badewi, 2016). These three papers account for almost a quarter (24%) of all citations, signifying the continued interest amongst BRM researchers in the relationship between BRM and project success.

An equally large proportion (25%) of the top ten most cited articles have focused on BRM practices and processes. This includes studies on how to improve project sustainability through benefits co-creation with broader stakeholder groups (Keeys & Huemann, 2017); how to enhance value creation through the management of benefits throughout the system lifecycle (Artto et al., 2016); how project value creation can be augmented through the leveraging of inter-organisational networks (Matinheikki et al., 2016); how the process of target benefits formulation should be carried out (Chih & Zwikael, 2015), and providing a theoretical basis for BRM practices. These publications suggest that there remains significant interest among scholars in achieving a shared understanding of how to implement BRM effectively.

The last category of highly cited articles comprises literature reviews and theory development articles that have provided a theoretical foundation for subsequent studies. The systematic literature review by Laursen & Svejvig (2016) is the fourth most highly cited article, testifying to its importance in the development of the field. The article by Varajão et al. (2022) is a recent contribution to the academic discourse that aims to fill the gap in the literature between the theoretical basis of BRM and the numerous practical implementation guidelines. As is evident from my further analysis of the number of publications across different research genres (section 3.1.4.1), the interest in these publications reflects the scarcity of theory development articles in comparison to the numerous empirical research articles.



**Figure 4**

*Distribution over time of the number of citations*

**Table 2**

*Top ten most cited articles*

Authors	Title	Source title	Cited by no.	% of total citations	Theme
(Serra & Kunc, 2015)	Benefits Realisation Management and its influence on project success and the execution of business strategies	International Journal of Project Management	221	9%	BRM Impact/influence
(Musawir et al., 2017)	Project governance, benefit management, and project success: Towards a framework for supporting organizational strategy implementation	International Journal of Project Management	220	8%	BRM Impact/influence
(Badewi, 2016)	The impact of project management (PM) and benefits management (BM) practices on project success: Towards developing a project benefits governance framework	International Journal of Project Management	185	7%	BRM Impact/influence

(Laursen & Svejvig, 2016)	Taking stock of project value creation: A structured literature review with future directions for research and practice	International Journal of Project Management	177	7%	Literature Review
(Keeyes & Huemann, 2017)	Project benefits co-creation: Shaping sustainable development benefits	International Journal of Project Management	123	5%	BRM processes & practices
(Arto et al., 2016)	From the front end of projects to the back end of operations: Managing projects for value creation throughout the system lifecycle	International Journal of Project Management	122	5%	BRM processes & practices
(Matinheikki et al., 2016)	Managing inter-organizational networks for value creation in the front-end of projects	International Journal of Project Management	121	5%	BRM processes & practices
(Chih & Zwikael, 2015)	Project benefit management: A conceptual framework of target benefit formulation	International Journal of Project Management	117	5%	BRM processes & practices
(Varajão et al., 2022)	Success Management- From theory to practice	International Journal of Project Management	117	5%	BRM processes & practices
(Ika & Pinto, 2022)	The “re-meaning” of project success: Updating and recalibrating for a modern project management	International Journal of Project Management	107	4%	Benefits measurement and evaluation frameworks

### **3.1.3 Context of BRM research**

#### **3.1.3.1 Global geographic distribution of BRM publications**

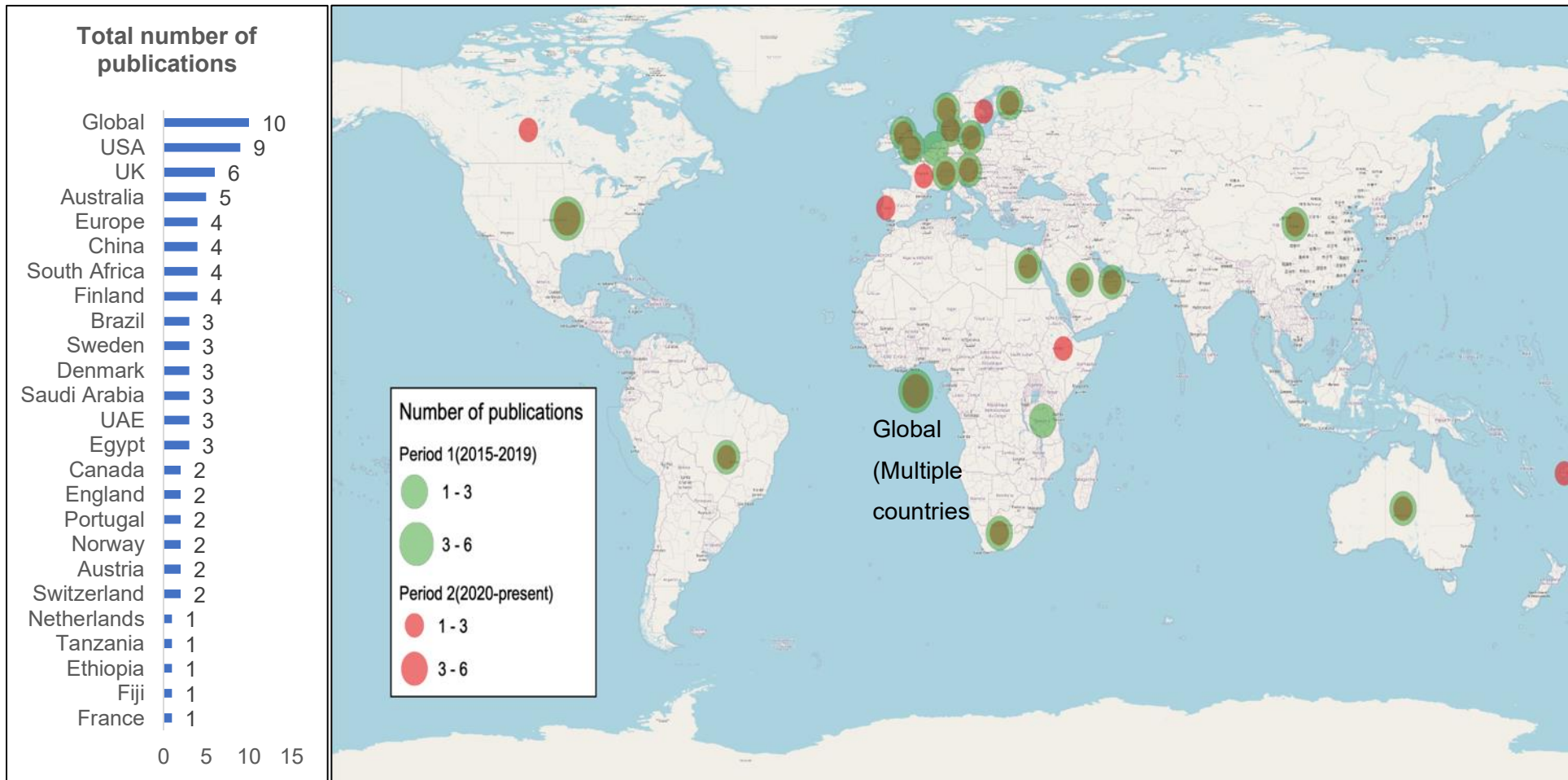
As shown in Figure 5, the global distribution of BRM publications indicates that academic research in this area is primarily concentrated in Europe, with smaller contributions from the United States, Australia, and the Middle East. Several studies that claimed to have a global footprint were also found to have sourced their data from the same regions (Badewi, 2016, 2022; Chih & Zwikael, 2015; Zwikael et al., 2018).

Aside from a small number of studies originating from South Africa (Einhorn et al., 2019, 2020; Marnewick, 2016, 2017) and Brazil (Serra & Kunc, 2015; Serugga et al., 2021; Terlizzi et al., 2017), much of the developing world (global South) is unrepresented.

The geographic distribution of BRM research has remained unchanged over the decade. Comparing the location of the studies published over the first half of the decade (2015-2019) and those published over the second half of the decade (2020-present)(Figure 5), it is observed that research on BRM has primarily continued to densify within the same regions in which it emanated from at the beginning of the decade. Only a small number of the recent studies have originated from outside of Europe and North America over the latter part of the decade. These studies were conducted in Ethiopia (Alade et al., 2022) and Fiji (Zwikael, 2024).

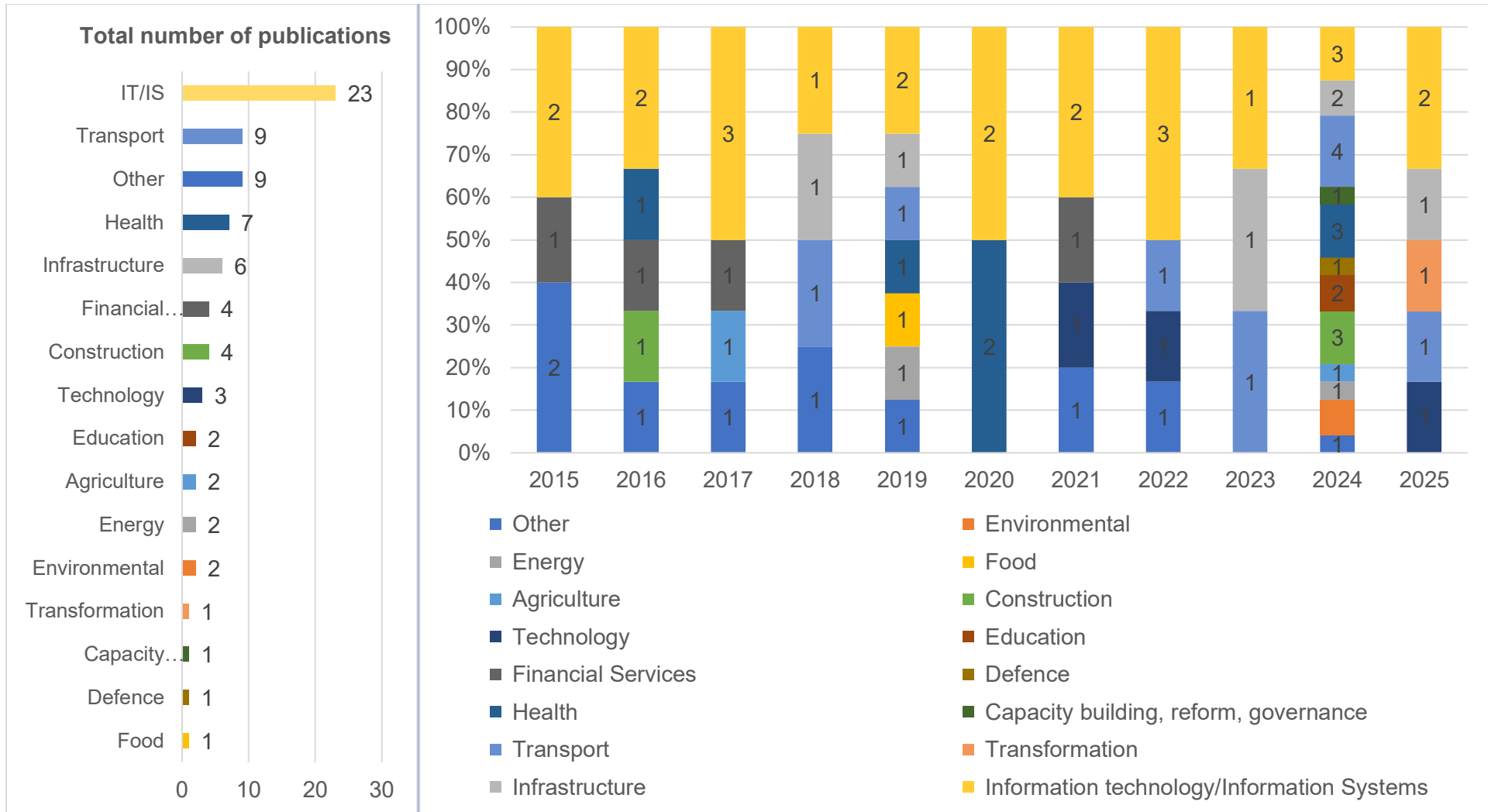
#### **3.1.3.2 Distribution of BRM publications across industries**

Despite a recent expansion into a wider set of industries, much of the academic knowledge on BRM still overwhelmingly stems from the Information Technology/Information Systems (IT/IS) industry. As shown in Figure 6, IT/IS articles comprise more than 40% of all BRM publications. The next largest industries are the transport, health, and infrastructure sectors, which account for 17%, 13%, and 11% respectively. The “other” category represents publications that span multiple industries and accounts for 17% of BRM publications. It can, however, also be seen from Figure 6 that recent publications on BRM (2024-2025) have focused on significantly more diverse industries.



**Figure 5**

*Global map of BRM publications*



**Figure 6**

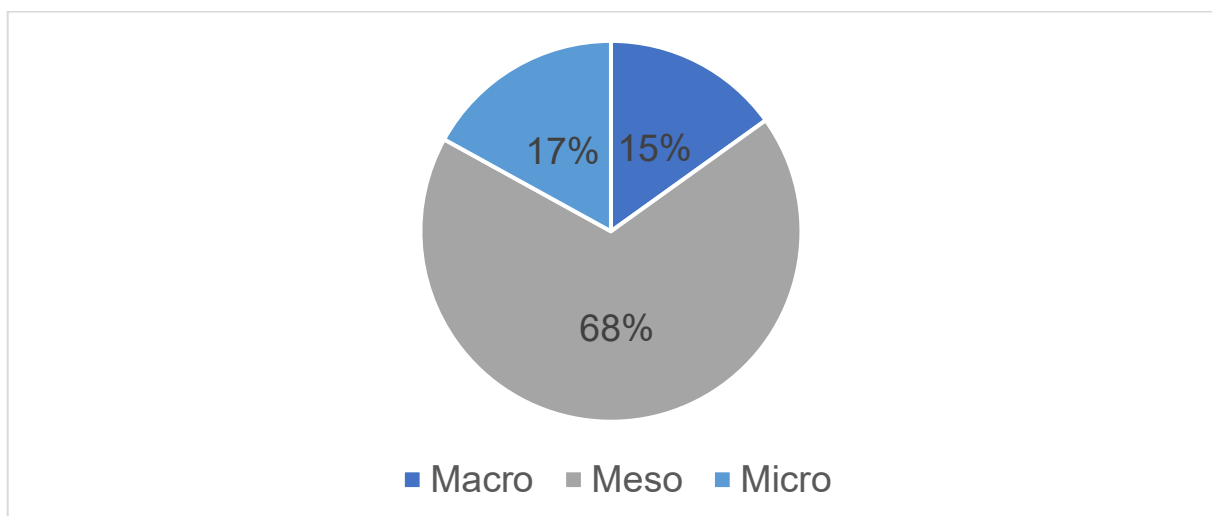
*Distribution of BRM publications over time and across industries*

### 3.1.3.3 Analytical level of BRM research

BRM has primarily been studied at the meso level. As depicted in Figure 7, more than two-thirds (68%, 36 articles) of the studies have investigated aspects of the construct at the organisational level or project level. Half of these papers (18 articles) are in the IT/IS industry, and half of those 9% focus on BRM practices and processes. This category represents approximately 17% of all BRM publications.

A small number of publications (nine articles) focused on BRM at the micro level. This category is dominated by studies related to various roles and responsibilities of the various individuals involved in BRM, including the project owner, project sponsor, line managers, project managers, and benefits managers (Breese et al., 2020; Dupont & Eskerod, 2016; Sun et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021). Two of the studies in this category focused on enablers and barriers of BRM, specifically focusing on the effect of BRM frameworks on the performance of various stakeholders, including project managers, benefits managers, and other project stakeholders (Badewi, 2022; Grahn et al., 2021). The remaining two studies, by Chih and Zwikael (2015) and Marnewick and Marnewick (2024), propose frameworks for BRM processes and practices, focusing on the formulation of target benefits and principles-based BRM in agile environments, respectively.

An equally small number of studies (eight articles) have focused on the macro level, which have mostly been industry-level case studies emanating from various countries. The focus of these studies has primarily been the impact or influence of BRM (Chapman, 2024; Williams et al., 2020; Young & Grant, 2015; Zhang & Shukla, 2023). The paper by Breese et al. (2015) is the only notable outlier, focusing on the dissemination and adoption of BRM globally. It is thus evident that much of what we know about BRM primarily pertains to the organisational or project level. The macro- and micro-level aspects of BRM remain under-researched.



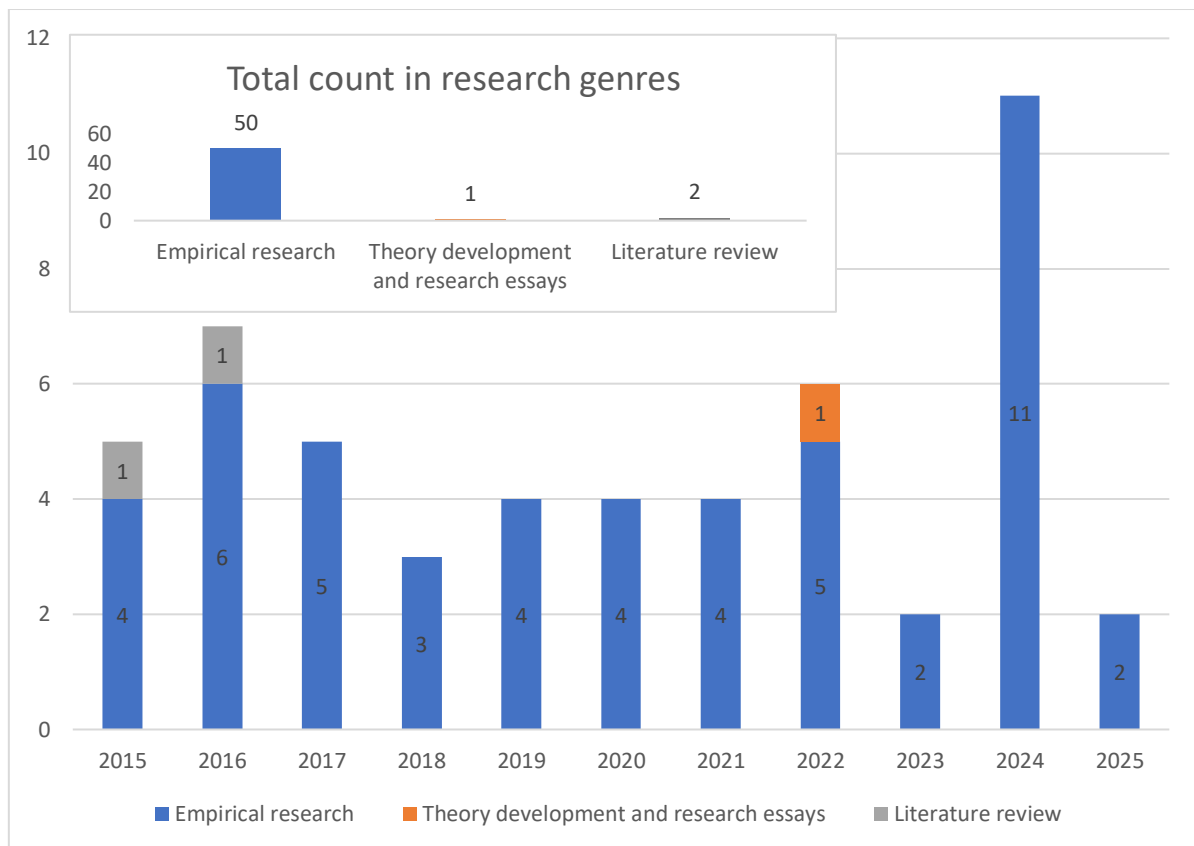
**Figure 7**

*Analytical level of BRM research*

### 3.1.4 Methods employed in BRM research

#### 3.1.4.1 Distribution of publications across research genres

The distribution of BRM publications across research genres over the past decade (Figure 8) indicates that the field remains strongly empirical in focus. There are numerous empirical papers, but very few literature reviews, theory development, and research essays. The two literature reviews date back to the beginning of the decade (Breese et al., 2015; Laursen & Svejvig, 2016), whilst the article by Ika & Pinto (2022) draws on more recent research to propose an updated model for project success, incorporating both long-term and short-term benefits realisation. There, however, evidently remains a dearth of theoretical publications in the field.



**Figure 8**

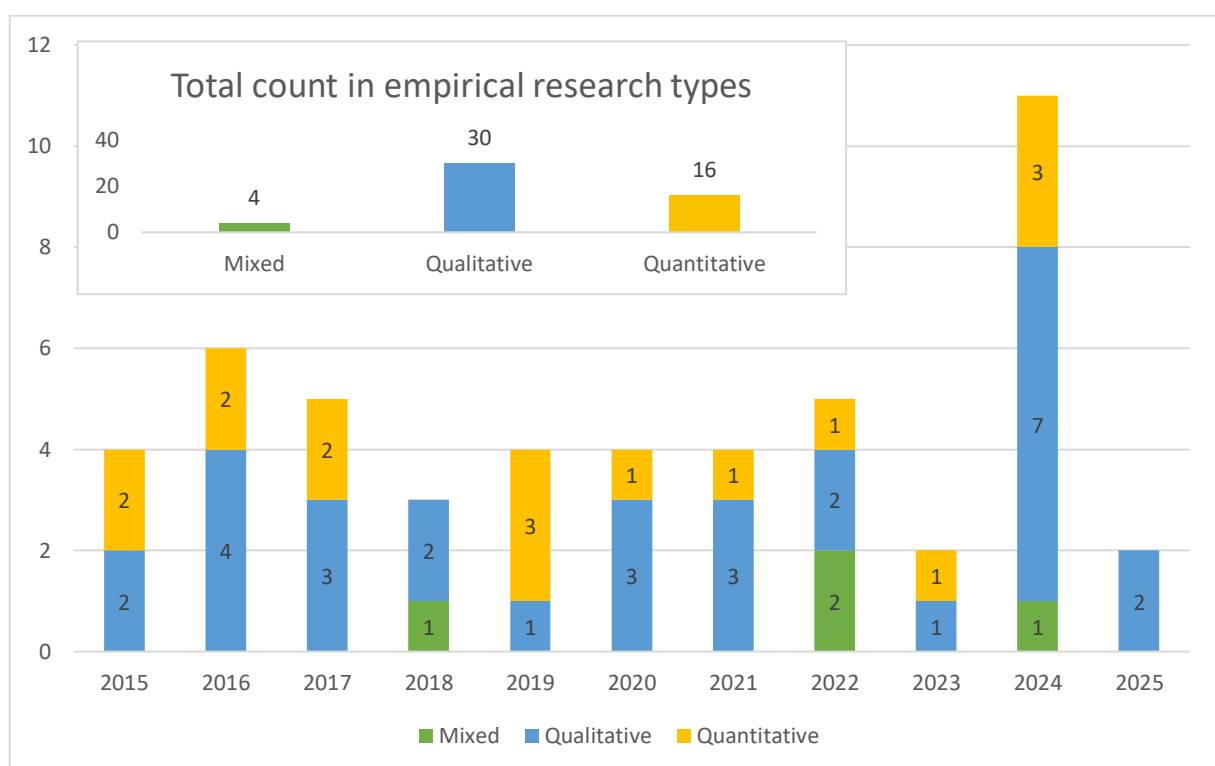
*Distribution of publications over time and across research genres*

#### 3.1.4.2 Distribution of publications across research types

The majority of BRM studies (58%, 31 articles) have adopted qualitative research methodologies. Close to half of these studies (48%, 14 studies) focused on BRM processes and practices at the project or organisational level (meso). This is the most extensive grouping of studies on BRM research. The study by Chih & Zwikael (2015) (on target benefit formulation) was the only qualitative study to focus on BRM practices and processes at the micro level. No qualitative studies focused on BRM practices and processes at the macro level.

The past decade, however, has seen an increase in quantitative studies on BRM. Not unlike the qualitative studies, most of the quantitative studies (48%, seven articles) had a singular focus, in this case being measuring the impact of BRM on project success and benefits realisation at both the meso and macro analytical levels (Badewi, 2016; Chapman, 2024; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Young & Grant, 2015; Zhang & Shukla, 2023). A slightly smaller number of studies (36%, comprising five articles) focused on quantifying the effects of various enablers and barriers to BRM (Alqershy et al., 2024; Badewi, 2022; Bandé et al., 2024; Einhorn et al., 2020; Zwikael & Meredith, 2019). Two studies focused on BRM processes and practices (Svejvig et al., 2019; Zwikael et al., 2018), and only one proposes a novel framework or model (Serugga et al., 2021). The overall focus of quantitative empirical research on BRM has thus primarily been on establishing the relationship between BRM and project success.

A small number of studies employed mixed methods (7.5%, four articles)(Alade et al., 2022; Tanilkan & Hannay, 2024; Varajão et al., 2022; Zwikael et al., 2018). All of the studies focused on BRM at the meso level. BRM practices and processes were again the most studied theme (2 articles)(Tanilkan & Hannay, 2024; Varajão et al., 2022), whilst Zwikael et al. (2018) provide a framework for measuring the effectiveness of benefits setting, and Alade et al. (2022) investigate the enablers and barriers of BRM in cross-nation transport projects. Mixed-method studies have thus not been employed in examining the other identified themes, namely, BRM roles, the impact or influence of BRM, or the development of BRM frameworks.



**Figure 9**

*Distribution of publications over time and across research types*

## **3.2 What are the dominant themes and theories in BRM literature?**

### **3.2.1 Themes in BRM literature**

A summary of the main themes explored in BRM research, along with the publications categorized under each theme, is presented in Table 3. The research is characterized by six themes: benefits measurement and evaluation frameworks, BRM Enablers and Barriers, BRM frameworks and models, BRM impact and influence, BRM processes and practices, and BRM Roles. A description of each theme, along with the relevant literature, is provided in the table.

The extent to which the themes in BRM research have evolved is illustrated graphically in Figure 10. It can be seen from the graph that at the beginning of the decade, indicated as Period 1 spanning 2015-2019, BRM research primarily focused on the relationship between BRM and project success (nine articles) and BRM practices and processes (eight articles each). The studies all established that a positive relationship exists between effective BRM and project success, as well as effective business strategy execution. This interest in establishing the relationship between BRM and project success has, however, waned in recent years (Period 2: 2020-present) (four articles), while conversely, interest in BRM processes and practices has increased (12 articles). The most recent studies have expanded the focus to BRM practices and processes in various industries and organisational contexts, shifting away from the IT/IS-heavy focus at the beginning of the decade. This includes the transport sector, university-industry collaboration projects, defence sector projects, health, and agile environments (Asadabadi, 2024; Fernandes & O'Sullivan, 2021; Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022; Varajão et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2025).

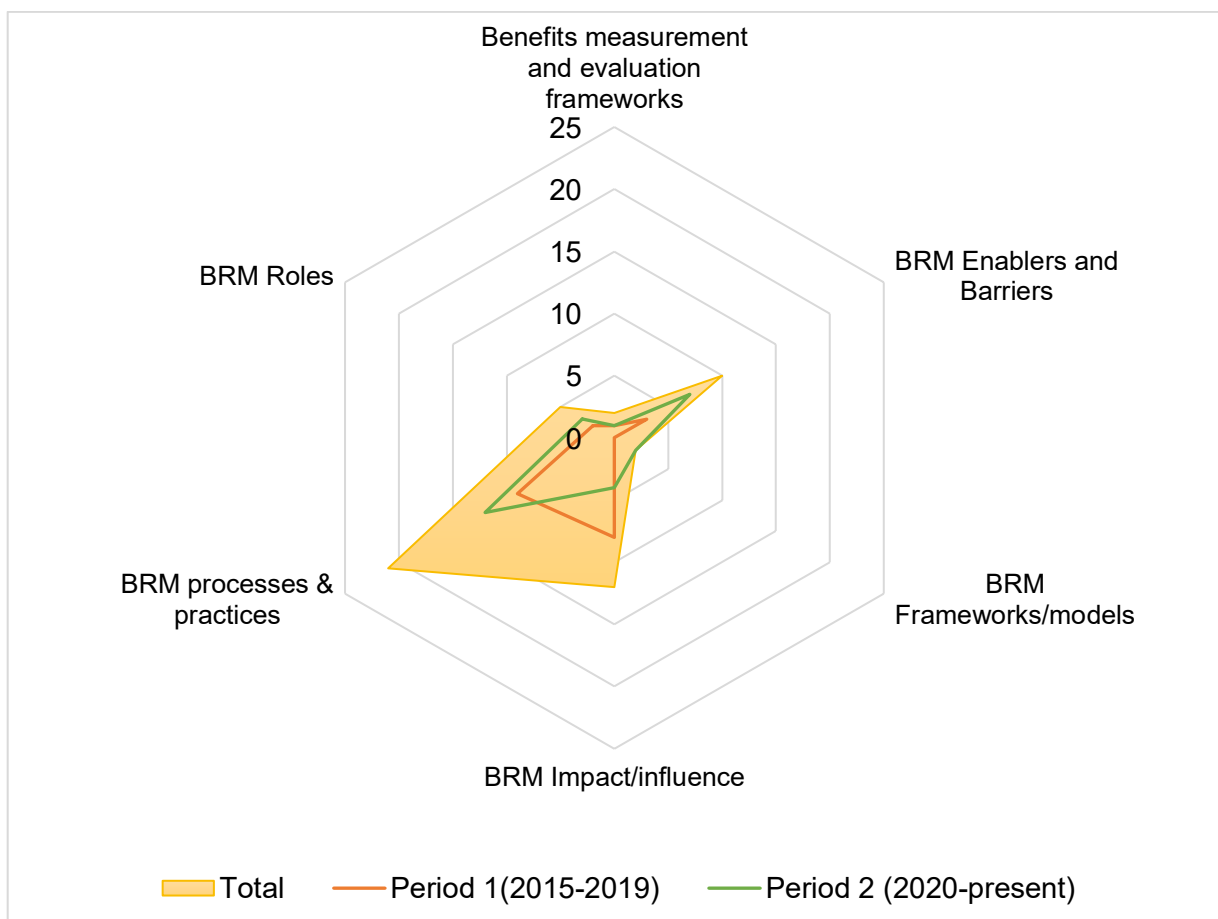
Likewise, during the latter part of the decade, a minimal number of studies focused on BRM enablers and barriers (three articles)(Coombs, 2015; Terlizzi et al., 2017; Zwikael & Meredith, 2019). These publications primarily focused on organisational factors that were barriers to benefits realisation within the IT/IS sector. These studies identified a poor organisational climate, implementation challenges such as technical capacity building and change management, and structural challenges, including the lack of incorporation of BRM into project appraisal and performance measurement systems.

However, this theme garnered the most significant traction among the studies published since 2020. A total of seven new studies were published on BRM enablers and barriers during this period. These studies mainly continued the discussion around organisational factors. These include the use of project management frameworks within organisations, operationalizing sustainable innovation and top management support (Alade et al., 2022; Badewi, 2022; Einhorn et al., 2020; Grahn et al., 2021; Paravano et al., 2025). The most recent articles also expanded the discussion to factors outside the organisation, such as isomorphic pressures,

external stakeholder participation, and various challenges unique to cross-national collaboration in transport projects (Alade et al., 2022; Alqershy et al., 2024; Bandé et al., 2024).

Interest in BRM roles has increased only slightly over time. During the first half of the decade, two articles were published on the roles of project owners and line managers as project benefit managers (Dupont & Eskerod, 2016; Olsson, 2018). Over the second half, three additional articles were published, focusing on the role of the project sponsor, the relationship between the project owner and the project manager and the role of the project manager in managing the interface between the project owner, CEO and the Top management team (Breese et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021).

Examining the overall state of the field, it is evident that BRM processes and practices, as well as the impact and influence of BRM, are the most widely studied themes in the area. The recent interest in BRM enablers and barriers has also led to this aspect being relatively well studied. BRM roles, BRM adoption, and frameworks for both BRM measurement and evaluation remain under-researched. As do BRM frameworks and models, which have not seen many updates since the early days of when the construct was first proposed.



**Figure 10**

*Themes explored in BRM literature*

**Table 3***Main themes in BRM research*

Theme	Description	Literature
Benefits measurement and evaluation frameworks	Frameworks for measuring and evaluating benefits and other aspects of project success.	(Ika & Pinto, 2022; Zwikael et al., 2018)
BRM Enablers and Barriers	Articles exploring enablers and barriers of BRM.	(Alade et al., 2022; Alqershy et al., 2024; Badewi, 2022; Bandé et al., 2024; Coombs, 2015; Einhorn et al., 2020; Grahn et al., 2021; Paravano et al., 2025; Terlizzi et al., 2017; Zwikael & Meredith, 2019)
BRM Frameworks/models	Frameworks and models for BRM.	(Marnewick & Marnewick, 2024; Serugga et al., 2021)
BRM Impact/influence	The impact and relationship between BRM and project success.	(Badewi, 2016; Badewi & Shehab, 2016; Chapman, 2024; Hamidi, 2017; Marnewick, 2016, 2017; Scheepers et al., 2022; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Williams et al., 2020; Young & Grant, 2015; Zhang & Shukla, 2023)
BRM processes & practices	How BRM processes and practices are or should be carried out.	(Artto et al., 2016; Asadabadi, 2024; Breese et al., 2015; Chih & Zwikael, 2015; Einhorn et al., 2019; Eskerod et al., 2018; Fernandes & O'Sullivan, 2021; Isik et al., 2024; Jensen et al., 2023; Keeys & Huemann, 2017; Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022; Martinsuo et al., 2019; Matinheikki et al., 2016; T. Olsson et al., 2024; Rajabi Asadabadi & Zwikael, 2024; Svejvig et al., 2019; Svejvig & Schlichter, 2020; Tanilkan & Hannay, 2024; Varajão et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2025; Zwikael, 2024)
BRM Roles	The various roles in BMR, their respective responsibilities, and the relationships between them.	(Breese et al., 2020; Dupont & Eskerod, 2016; Olsson, 2018; Sun et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021)

### 3.2.2 Theories in BRM literature

An increasingly larger number of theories have been applied to BRM research. As shown in

Table 4, a total of 25 theories are mentioned in the reviewed literature. When compared to the findings by Laursen and Svejvig (2016), who identified only six theoretical frameworks mentioned or applied in the literature reviewed, this represents a significant and notable increase. This signifies increasing maturity of the discipline.

The types of theories applied to BRM research have also become more diverse. Although, most of the theories used in the literature reviewed originate from the management field, there are an increasing number that stem from other fields of study including economics (Bid Rent theory), philosophy (Normative Decision theory), probability and uncertainty modelling (Dempster-Shafer theory), innovation studies (Sustainable innovation), sociology (Sociology of Worth), and general systems theory (Open Systems theory). This highlights the complexity of the construct, as it requires multiple lenses to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of it.

Shifting our focus to the most widely used theories in BRM, we note that Stakeholder theory is the most frequently adopted theoretical lens (Bandé et al., 2024; Keeyes & Huemann, 2017; Martinsuo et al., 2019; Scheepers et al., 2022). The various studies underpin the importance of adopting a broad stakeholder perspective in BRM to improve project outcomes and ensure sustainable long-term value creation. Other frequently applied theories are Institutional theory, Principal-Agent theory, and Goal-setting theory. Along with stakeholder theory, these theories make up the core theoretical basis of BRM scholarship.

A final observation of note is that a large proportion (25%, 13 articles) of the empirical papers reviewed do not mention the theoretical underpinnings for their research, neither in the form of the theoretical lens or the theoretical framework they have employed.

**Table 4**

*Main theories in BRM research*

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Core propositions/application in BRM literature</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Benefits dependency network	Identifies several interlinked constructs, including strategic goals, required business changes, and enabling changes such as training, that are likely to influence the realisation of project benefits	(Coombs, 2015; Jensen et al., 2023)

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Core propositions/application in BRM literature</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Bid Rent theory	The level of accessibility of a property has an impact on its value.	(Zhang & Shukla, 2023)
Contingency theory	There is no one-size-fits-all. The best approach depends on the context or situation.	(Ika & Pinto, 2022)
Dempster-shafer theory	A theory used to make decisions when there is uncertainty due to limited information	(Serugga et al., 2021)
Ethical theories	Guidance for decision making based on distinct ethical frameworks	(Marnewick & Marnewick, 2024)
Goal-setting theory	Setting effective goals leads to enhanced performance	(Chih & Zwikael, 2015; Zwikael et al., 2018; Zwikael & Meredith, 2019).
Institutional theory	Explains how the development of an organisation's structure is influenced by the wider social environment in which it operates	(Alqershy et al., 2024; Badewi, 2022; Badewi & Shehab, 2016)
Inter-organisational network perspective	A theoretical lens that looks at how organisations operate within networks of relationships to create project value.	(Matinheikki et al., 2016)
Open systems theory	Views organisations as open systems that are influenced by the environment in which they operate	(Artto et al., 2016; Svejvig et al., 2019)
Organisational integration	The processes by which various components of an organisation are aligned in working towards a common objective.	(Artto et al., 2016; T. Olsson et al., 2024)
Paradox theory	Explains how organizations manage contradictory tensions. In the project management context, these tensions arise as a result of competing demands that can occur at various levels, including individual, project, organisational, interorganisational, and institutional levels.	(Sun et al., 2024)
Principal-agent theory	Explores the relationships between the Principal and his Agents within the context of information asymmetries and potentially conflicting interests.	(Badewi, 2016; Tanilkan & Hannay, 2024; Zwikael, 2024)

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Core propositions/application in BRM literature</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Process Theory	Describes the antecedents, interactions, and consequences of changes in a system.	(Einhorn et al., 2019, 2020)
Resource-based view	Organisations gain a competitive advantage by developing and deploying their resources in a manner that is difficult for competitors to imitate.	(Terlizzi et al., 2017)
Role Theory	Individuals' attitudes and behaviours are influenced by the roles they occupy.	(Breese et al., 2020)
Sociology of worth	Explains how people assign value in a social setting. In PM research, this theory has been used to describe the emergent and changing nature of benefits.	(Williams et al., 2025)
Stakeholder theory	Recognises stakeholders as parties who can affect or are affected by an organisation's activities and for whom organisations need to generate value.	(Bandé et al., 2024; Keeys & Huemann, 2017; Martinsuo et al., 2019; Scheepers et al., 2022)
Sustainable innovation	Emphasizes how organizations leverage their internal resources and processes to undertake innovative practices sustainably.	(Paravano et al., 2025)
Translation theory	Explains how meaning is transferred.	(Breese et al., 2015; Isik et al., 2024)
Upper Echelons Theory	Explains how the characteristics and interests of the top executives influence organisational outcomes	(Yang et al., 2021)
Actor-Network Theory (ANT)	Explains how human and non-human actors interact in networked relationships.	(Williams et al., 2025)
Awareness-Motivation-Capability (AMC) competitive dynamic framework	Explains how firms respond to competitive forces.	(Yang et al., 2021)
Benefits Management adoption framework of analysis (Hesselmann & Mohan, 2014)	Explains the enablers and barriers to BRM in practice.	(Terlizzi et al., 2017)
Normative Decision Theory	Explains how rational agents should make decisions based on a formal logical framework.	(Artto et al., 2016)

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Core propositions/application in BRM literature</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Top Management Team theory	Explains how the characteristics and interests of the Top Management Team influence organisational outcomes	(Alqershy et al., 2024)
None stated	No theory mentioned	(Alade et al., 2022; Chapman, 2024; Dupont & Eskerod, 2016; Grahn et al., 2021; Marnewick, 2016; Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022; Musawir et al., 2017; Olsson, 2018; Serra & Kunc, 2015; Svejvig & Schlichter, 2020; Varajão et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2020; Young & Grant, 2015)

Figure 11 presents a heatmap of the theories applied in BRM research, categorized by the analytical level at which they were employed and the themes to which they were applied. Firstly, turning our focus to the analytical level, it is evident from Figure 11 that the meso level has received the widest variety of theoretical inquiry. At this level, 30 papers applied 22 different theories in studying BRM. A significantly smaller number of theories have been applied to study BRM at the micro level (nine articles) and even fewer at the macro level (four articles). It is also evident from Figure 11 that no theories have been applied across all three analytical levels in BRM research. Translation theory and Goal-setting theory are the only theories that have been applied across multiple analytical levels.

Translation theory has been applied at both the macro and meso levels of analysis. The two studies in question both applied translation as a theoretical lens through which they examined the process by which BRM policy and guidelines are translated into practice and ultimately realized. Breese et al. (2015) apply the theory at the macro level in their investigation of the global adoption of BRM. Isik et al. (2024) have a finer focus, using the theory at an organisational level. In both instances, Translation theory has provided a useful theoretical lens through which the process of adopting and implementing BRM can be studied.

Goal setting theory has been applied at the meso and micro analytical level as a theoretical lens in studying different aspects of setting effective target benefits (Chih & Zwikael, 2015; Zwikael et al., 2018; Zwikael & Meredith, 2019). Firstly, Chih & Zwikael (2015) propose a framework for target benefit formulation. The paper by Zwikael et al. builds on this by further proposing measures to appraise the effectiveness of the formulated target benefits. Zwikael & Meredith (2019) deviate slightly from the other two studies by focusing their work on

investigating the role that organisational climate plays in the process of setting target benefits. The three papers combined provide valuable insights into the process of setting effective target benefits and the environmental context it requires.

Overall, it can be concluded that our theoretical understanding of BRM is primarily at the organisational and project level. Much less theoretical diversity is observed at both the macro and micro levels, indicating that our theoretical understanding at these levels remains limited. Similarly, very few theories have been applied across the analytical levels. This, in turn, implies that the theoretical basis of BRM remains underdeveloped.

THEORIES	ANALYTICAL LEVEL			Total
	Macro	Meso	Micro	
<b>Benefits dependency network</b>		2		2
Bid rent theory	1			1
Contingency theory		1		1
Dempster-shafer theory		1		1
Ethical theories			1	1
Goal-setting theory		2	1	3
Institutional theory		2	1	3
Inter-organisational network perspective		1		1
Open systems theory	1	1		2
Organisational integration		2		2
Paradox theory			1	1
Principal-agent theory		3		3
Process theory		2		2
Resource-based view		1		1
Role Theory			1	1
Sociology of worth		1		1
<b>Stakeholder theory</b>		4		4
Sustainable innovation		1		1
Translation theory	1	1		2
Upper echelons theory			1	1
Actor-Network Theory		1		1
AMC competitive dynamic framework			1	1
Benefits Management adoption framework of analysis		1		1
Normative Decision Theory			1	1
Top management team theory		1		1
None stated	4	7	2	13
Total	7	35	10	

**Figure 11**

*Heatmap of theories applied in BRM publications across analytical levels*

## 4 Discussion

This section synthesizes the findings of my study. In this section, I provide a synthesis of the findings discussed in the previous section regarding the evolution of BRM research over the past decade. In synthesizing my findings, I first examined the results from each category and then integrated the findings holistically to draw insights into the evolution of the field as a whole.

### 4.1 What are the gaps in our understanding of BRM and how can future research address this?

In undertaking this study, I set out to contribute to the field of project management by identifying the research practices that inform our current scholarly understanding of BRM, identifying trends and gaps in the research, and providing guidance on how future research can address these gaps.

As stated previously, my study builds on the previous reviews by Laursen & Svejvig (2016) and Pereira et al. (2021) while addressing the various methodological shortcomings identified in those studies. My contribution is achieved by answering the following research questions: **RQ1: How has BRM been studied in academic literature over the past decade? RQ2: What are the dominant theories and themes in BRM research? RQ3: What are the gaps in our understanding of BRM, and how can future research address this?**

To address my research objectives, I employed the structured quantitative literature review methodology, as proposed by Pickering and Byrne (2014), to generate insights into the evolution of BRM publications through quantitative analysis. I employed the Themes, Theories, Contexts, and Methods (TTCM) framework to structure my findings. Paul et al. (2021) recommend the use of structured frameworks in domain-based reviews to enhance the clarity and holistic coverage of the review. This approach has been employed by numerous scholars seeking to structure their reviews in a manner that facilitates the easy identification of areas that require further attention. It was thus the most appropriate approach for my review, which had the same objective.

#### 4.1.1 Evolution of the context of BRM research

My analysis began with an examination of the changes in the number of BRM publications and their corresponding research fields. By reviewing the timeline bar graphs for these variables, the growth in interest in the field and the increase in diversification across various research fields became evident. I further reviewed the content of the most cited papers in the field, which revealed the most influential publications in the field and how the focus of these key publications has shifted over the decade.

My analysis of the context of BRM research explored the geographic distribution, industries, and analytical level of BRM research. By mapping out the areas across the globe from which BRM research originates, I was able to visually identify clusters of research and the regions where BRM research was sparse. Similarly, the graphical representation of the industries studied enabled me to identify which industries were well-represented and those that were not, as well as to determine whether any diversification had occurred over the years. Lastly, the pie chart of the analytical level provides a clear picture of the proportions of studies that focused on each level of analysis.

The findings of my study revealed a steady growth in BRM research over the past decade, with a significant increase over the last five years. This recent increase in publications coincides with the growing diversity of the research fields in the journals where these articles have been published. Although most articles on BRM are still published in Project Management journals, an increasing number of studies are being published in journals from different fields of research, including economics, general management, engineering, construction, and operations. The implication of this is that there is growing interest amongst scholars in BRM research. The increasing number of publications in non-project management-related journals also speaks to the complex and multifaceted nature of the BRM construct, which requires a multi-disciplinary research approach.

It is, however, noted that despite the increased diversity in the journal fields of research, the geographic and industry focus of the studies on BRM remains narrow. Most of the studies on BRM originate from Europe and the United States. Aside from a small group of studies originating from South Africa and Brazil, much of the developing world is vastly underrepresented in BRM research. The implications of this are that much of what we know about BRM is within the context of the developed world. It may thus be difficult to generalize our findings, especially considering the governance, infrastructure, social, and cultural characteristics of developing countries, which differ significantly from those in the developed world, and could impact the effectiveness of BRM policies and practices.

Similarly, despite a recent increase in publications focusing on other industries (transport, infrastructure, construction, financial services), the most significant proportion of BRM publications primarily focuses on the IT/IS industry. The implication of this is that not much is known about BRM in sectors such as infrastructure development projects, where benefits may only be realised over much longer periods as compared to IT/IS projects. Public infrastructure development projects also differ distinctly from private sector IT/S projects, as the beneficiaries in these projects may not traditionally be directly involved with the project implementation. In this instance, the process of identifying, creating, managing, and capturing the value created by projects may look completely different from that employed in private sector IT/IS projects.

Lastly, I also observed that most studies have focused on the meso analytical level. Meso-level studies comprise more than two-thirds of all BRM research. Micro and macro-level studies are few and focus on a small number of themes. The studies that investigate the construct at the micro level primarily focused on different roles in BRM. Similarly, macro-level studies have primarily focused on investigating the impact or influence of BRM on project success. Other themes remain virtually unresearched at these two levels of analysis.

These observations essentially mean that our scholarly understanding of BRM is still primarily based on a narrow context, namely, organisation- or project-level observations within the IT/IS industry in developed countries. Pereira et al. (2021) reported a similar finding in their systematic review of the literature. This phenomenon can be described as a population gap, as defined by Miles (2017). This occurs when populations are under-researched in prior studies. The primary challenge posed by this research gap is the uncertainty surrounding the generalizability of findings from previous studies. It may also be the case that certain aspects of BRM are unique to specific geographies, industries, and organisational contexts.

#### **4.1.2 Evolution of the research methods in BRM research**

My analysis explored the research methodologies and genres employed in BRM research. By analysing bar charts depicting the numbers of each paper falling into each genre and type, I was able to identify the methods that had been employed most frequently and how this had evolved over the years.

We have witnessed a steady increase in empirical research on BRM over the past decade. Although the majority of this research remains qualitative in nature, we have also observed a steady rise in quantitative studies, as well as a small number of mixed-method studies. There was a relatively high level of homogeneity in the focus themes of the studies, with the qualitative studies primarily focusing on BRM processes and practices, and the quantitative studies focusing on measuring the impact of BRM on project success. These observations indicate a field that is in an intermediate state as researchers gain a common understanding of the construct and employ varied methodologies to study it. There is a need for additional quantitative and mixed-method studies. Quantitative studies enable us to gain insights into measurable aspects of BRM and are less susceptible to interpretation bias. Whilst mixed method studies are likely to yield deeper insights than either quantitative or qualitative methods could produce on their own.

A final observation of note regarding the methodologies used in the field is that, despite the prevalence of numerous empirical studies, there are very few literature reviews and theory development studies in the field. This highlights the need for more theoretical development and review papers, which can consolidate the findings of the empirical studies conducted to date.

### **4.1.3 Evolution of themes in BRM research**

My final analysis focused on the themes and theories employed in BRM research over the past decade. By analysing radar graphs of the themes studied in BRM research over the first half of the decade, as well as the second and overall, I was able to determine which themes were most prominent during these periods and how they had changed over time. Content analysis of these studies also provided deeper insights into the development of what we know about BRM and which themes have seen growing interest in recent years.

BRM research focused on six primary themes over the past decade. The studies reviewed can be categorized as focusing on either the impact or influence of BRM on project success, BRM processes and practices, different roles in BRM, Benefits measurement and evaluation, BRM enablers and barriers, and frameworks for BRM.

The relative importance of each of these six themes has changed over the period. At the beginning of the decade, the focus of BRM research was primarily on establishing the relationship between BRM and project success. Over the latter part of the decade, the focus has shifted to BRM processes and practices, including BRM Enablers and Barriers, as well as BRM roles. BRM Enablers and Barriers have garnered the most interest over the past two years. This can be interpreted as signifying a shift in scholarly interest from studying the aspects of the construct itself towards gaining an understanding of the factors that influence it. This could imply an oversaturation of articles on the former topic. Further suggesting that scholars are comfortable with what we know about the BRM process and practices.

This observation is further supported by the fact that, despite the increase in publications focusing on various themes in BRM, BRM processes and practices remain the most widely studied theme, while the others remain comparably under-researched. One could attribute this to the highly practitioner-driven nature of project management research and the need for scholars to respond to practitioners' demand for methodologies with a sound theoretical basis. Nonetheless, there is a need for further academic enquiry into the remaining themes to gain a holistic understanding of the construct.

Another gap in the research is the significant dearth of papers focusing on the development of new BRM frameworks and models over the past decade. The models for BRM currently in use date back over two decades. Our study thus echoes the need identified by Laursen and Svejvig (2016) for updated models and theories of BRM that incorporate the new knowledge derived from recent research.

#### **4.1.4 Evolution of theories in BRM research**

My analysis of the theories applied in BRM research began with the extraction and tabulation of the theories and their core propositions as they were used in BRM research, along with the articles in which they were utilized. Based on this information, I was able to determine the most widely applied theories, the fields of research from which they originate, and the number of papers that did not mention any specific theories. This analysis provided insights into the main theoretical underpinnings of BRM, enabling me to determine the extent to which theory building in the field had developed over the decade by comparing it with the findings of previous reviews. Finally, an analysis of the heatmap of the theories against the analytical level yielded insights into the levels at which and across which the theories mainly had been applied.

The number of independent theories applied in BRM research has grown significantly over the past decade. Whereas the earlier review by Laursen & Svejvig (2016) found that only six independent theories had been mentioned in BRM research, my study found a significantly larger number of 25. This is evidence that the field is maturing.

The academic disciplines from which the theories applied in BRM research originate have also become more diversified. Scholars have drawn from a wide range of disciplines, illustrating the complex nature of BRM. Despite this diversification, however, my study reveals that the theoretical basis for BRM currently remains primarily rooted in management theory, with Stakeholder theory, Principal-Agent theory, and goal-setting theory forming the core theoretical basis.

Analysing the application of these theories across different analytical levels, I observed that most theories have been applied at the meso level, with very few being used across multiple levels. Consequently, our theoretical understanding of BRM at the macro and micro levels remains limited.

A final observation is that theories in the field remain fragmented. The application of various theories suggests that BRM is a multifaceted construct that cannot be fully understood from a single theoretical lens. Applying different theories provides us with multiple perspectives on the construct. What is, however, lacking is a holistic view of the construct. There is thus a need for more studies in the field that unify our current scholarly knowledge of BRM.

#### **4.2 Benefits and limitations of this study**

This study provides an account of the evolution of BRM research over the past decade. The study identifies the main trends in BRM research over this period, highlighting the most recent developments in the field. By identifying gaps in the research carried out to date, I reveal opportunities for future research to enrich our understanding of BRM.

A significant benefit of this study is that it employs the structured literature review methodology, which seeks to ensure rigour, reproducibility, and transparency whilst limiting author bias in the selection of studies included in the review. The choice of a quantitative analysis methodology further ensured that the insights drawn from the study are based on objective measures of the scholarly developments in BRM research.

By employing the TTCM framework, I have provided a holistic view of the field by identifying the theories and themes, contexts, and methods that have been applied in BRM research. This study reveals several gaps in the research for each of these categories. The integration of the findings for each of these categories provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on this topic, revealing opportunities for future investigation.

My study, however, is not without its limitations. The exclusion of grey literature and literature from unranked journals means that a significant proportion of literature on this topic may have been excluded from this study. Not least of these publications are the various practice guides from professional bodies such as the Project Management Institute. As a highly practitioner-influenced field, our study may have certainly benefited from this literature, if not at least to gain an understanding of the discourse on BRM among practitioners.

It is, however, argued that since the purpose of this study was to review our current scholarly understanding of BRM, the inclusion of grey and poor-quality literature, which is often not peer reviewed, would possibly reduce the academic credibility of my study. As such, my study findings represent the current state of the highest-quality scholarly knowledge on BRM, which is what I set out to achieve.

The SQLR methodology employed also has its limitations. Firstly, the literature selection process was not entirely devoid of author bias, as I still had to use my judgment in determining which papers were relevant and which were not to the study. This was made more difficult due to the lack of an agreed-upon lexicon for the topic. Additionally, the use of a quantitative analysis methodology is limited in that it does not capture much of the more nuanced insights that an expertly conducted qualitative analysis would yield.

However, despite these limitations, the SQLR methodology proved to be the most suitable approach, given the limited time and resources available for the study. This study can serve as a foundation for other studies and literature reviews that incorporate a more robust qualitative assessment of the literature.

## 5 Conclusion and avenues for future research

My study aimed to identify the practices, trends, and gaps in BRM research over the past decade and provide guidance on how future research should address the identified gaps. By conducting a structured quantitative literature review of high-quality journal articles, I was able to identify the prevailing context in which BRM has been studied, the dominant methodological approaches, themes, and theories applied over the past decade.

My analysis revealed that BRM research has expanded gradually over the past decade, indicating an increasing interest in the topic among scholars and practitioners. The field has become more diverse over the last five years in terms of study contexts, research methodologies applied, thematic scope, and the application of theories.

However, despite this progress, BRM research remains unevenly distributed. Most studies in the field still focus on the IT/IS industry in developed economies. There is also a shortage of research focused on the micro and macro levels of BRM. Methodologically, the literature remains dominated by qualitative research, with very few, albeit increasing, quantitative and mixed-method studies. The contextual and methodological evolution of the field suggests that it is in an intermediate state, still requiring increased diversification.

Thematically, six areas of focus emerged: the impact or influence of BRM on project success, BRM processes and practices, roles in BRM, benefits measurement and evaluation, BRM enablers and barriers, and frameworks for BRM. The focus on these themes has evolved, with earlier studies primarily focusing on establishing the relationship between BRM and project success.

Although the thematic focus of BRM research studies has expanded to other themes in recent times, some areas remain under-researched. For instance, a gap remains in our understanding of how benefits are defined, measured, and evaluated across different contexts. Similarly, we still have limited knowledge of how enablers and barriers to BRM may vary across different geographic contexts and industries. Lastly, further research is needed on the roles of various stakeholders in BRM.

The application of theories in BRM research has expanded and matured over time. Over the past five years, BRM scholars have increasingly drawn from a wide range of fields and management disciplines to contribute to our theoretical understanding of BRM. However, the research is still primarily rooted in the business management field, with the most widely applied theories being Stakeholder theory, Principal-Agent theory, and goal-setting theory.

Unfortunately, despite the progress made over recent years, the application and development of theory in BRM research remain sparse and fragmented. Very few theories have been applied at both the micro and macro levels, and even fewer have been applied across multiple levels of analysis. There is thus a need for more theory development and integration in BRM research.

### **5.1 Avenues for future research**

The preceding discussions have revealed several gaps in our current understanding of BRM. These gaps provide opportunities and guidance for avenues into which scholars should direct their future research.

Firstly, future studies should expand BRM research into a broader range of geographies, industries, and organisational contexts. As identified through my review of the literature, much of what we know about BRM is based on the IT/IS industry in Europe and the United States. There is thus a need to expand our scholarly enquiry on BRM to other contexts, particularly in the developing economies. Research in these contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of BRM.

Secondly, future studies should enhance our understanding of BRM by expanding the methodologies applied in BRM research. Future research should employ quantitative and mixed-method studies to enrich our understanding of this construct through a combination of objective assessments and the identification of the underlying meaning driving BRM.

Lastly, this review revealed that some themes in BRM are relatively well researched. There is, however, a need for further research to understand how benefits are identified, measured, and evaluated. Likewise, future research should examine the various roles in BRM. Future studies should look at the responsibilities, competencies, and practices that various project proponents, including the project sponsor, project managers, and project beneficiaries, must possess to facilitate effective BRM. There is also a need for more theory-building papers that consolidate the most recent scholarly findings and provide unifying theoretical models and frameworks.

Key questions for future research would relate to how project benefits can be best defined, planned for, created, measured, managed, and captured under different contexts. Some questions that scholars should explore are the following: What are the barriers and enablers of BRM in developing countries? How do BRM practices and processes differ across industries? What influence does organisational context have on BRM? Answering these questions would provide insights into BRM under contexts other than those that have already been studied, leading to improved generalizability of findings.

## **5.2 Implications for scholars and practitioners**

The findings of my study have implications for both project management scholars and practitioners. Firstly, scholarship needs to focus on increasing theory development within the field of research. This requires support from increased contextual and methodological diversification to ensure a more comprehensive scholarly understanding of BRM.

For practitioners, the findings of this paper highlight the fact that the relationship between BRM and project success is well established in academia. Organisations should thus seek to adopt BRM if they are to increase project success, capture the benefits planned through projects, and ultimately achieve their strategic objectives.

Lastly, practitioners need to note that much of what we currently know about BRM is derived from the context of the IT/IS sector in developed countries. Due caution is thus required amongst practitioners when applying BRM standards and guidelines outside of this context.

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