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To Partial or Not? Re-Examining the Unmeasured Latent Method Construct (ULMC)

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Abstract

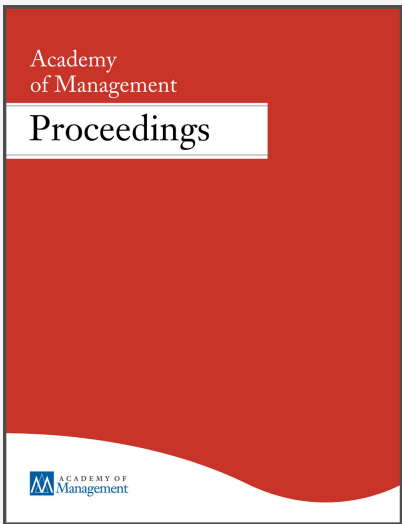
There is continuing interest in using statistical methods to address method variance in top management and applied psychology journals. One approach, the unmeasured latent method construct (ULMC), is versatile. One need not understand the role that method variance plays in order to apply a conservative test for method bias. However, scholars appears divided regarding its use. While many scholars criticize the ULMC, others rely on it as a defense against method bias. Sampling the literature over the past 10 years, we find that scholars who have used the ULMC often note that it detects common method variance, what is detected is negligible and, therefore, method variance is not likely to play a biasing role. This suggests some confusion surrounding both (i) whether the ULMC works and (ii) how well it works, particular under circumstances it is not designed for (i.e., there are multiple sources of method variance). To resolve this confusion, we embarked on two simulation studies. We examine the efficacy of the ULMC under both ideal circumstances (a single source of common method variance contaminates the data) and less ideal circumstances (two method factors contaminate the data). Our findings suggest that scholars often lack the power to reliably detect method variance when it is present. Also, although the ULMC works under conditions of common method variance, its performance is poor when distinct sources of method variance are present (in which case it can be better to ignore method variance rather than to partial).

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