

# **A systematic literature review to understand cross-organizational relationship management and collaboration**

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***Abstract.** Organizations increasingly need to establish partnerships to face environment changes and remain competitive. This cross-organizational relationship allows organizations to share resources and collaborate to handle business opportunities better. However, besides all benefits, these organizations usually face several challenges during the partnership. This research aims to explore the cross-organizational relationship management, thus outlining the systematic literature review performed to understand the collaboration between different organizations and organizing an ICT related body of knowledge about the topic.*

## **1. Executive Summary**

Organizations increasingly need to understand their operating environment and cross their borders for establishing partnerships with other organizations to remain competitive. When investing in a cross-organizational relationship, organizations combine resources, knowledge and/or power in benefit of participating organizations; have a wider range of tools at a more favorable cost than they would on their own; organize information of a given business process that is often distributed in isolated databases; handle new business opportunities, respond to market challenges and costumers' demands and deliver products and services more quickly and with more quality by complementing existing skills; and share all the risks, responsibilities and benefits arising from the partnership.

Despite all these benefits of cross-organizational relationships, participating organizations may face several challenges. Cross-organizational relationships stimulate the interaction of organizations with different characteristics, cultures, and values. It increases the probability of facing misunderstandings and conflicts, thus influencing the partnership performance alignment. Organizations should develop skills to work in this new dynamic by identifying, integrating, and managing all shared elements to ensure that these elements favor the execution of activities supporting the group strategy integration and mutual goals achievement. If it is not possible to establish a compromise between all existing dynamics, the cross-organizational relationship may fail, even leading to the partnership dissolution.

The current research explores the challenge of managing cross-organizational relationships. As a broad and not a well-structured topic, a systematic literature review was performed to understand what has been investigated on cross-organizational relationship management in the last decade. The SLR has followed the steps in Figure 1, and relevant information from the 30 selected studies was consolidated in a mind map<sup>1</sup>.

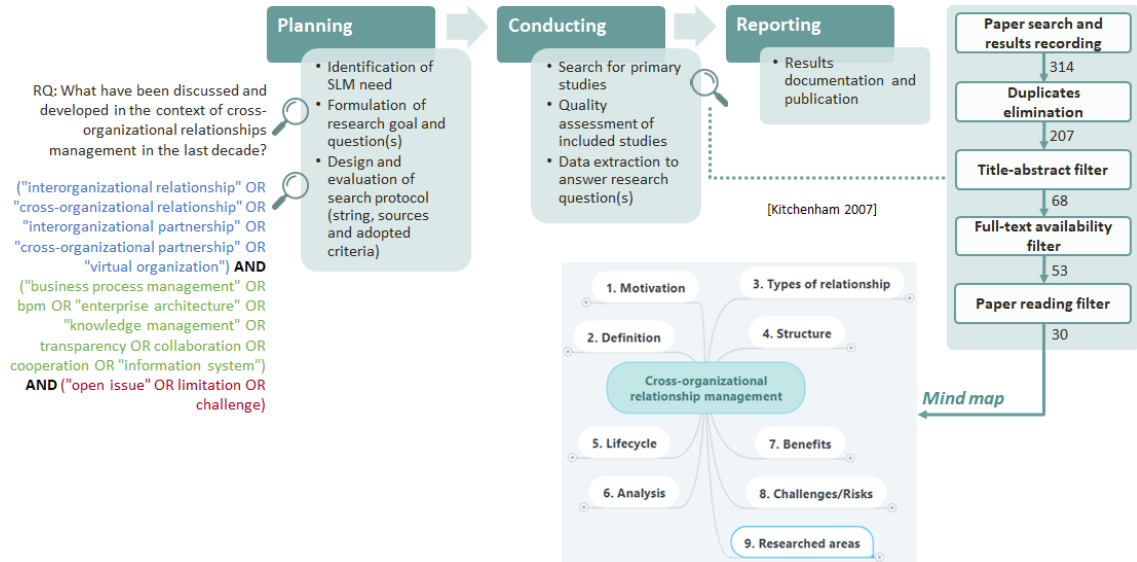


Figure 1. SLR process

The SLR results have allowed understanding the cross-organizational relationship management better, with studies investigating several ICT areas (e.g. CSCW, Enterprise Architecture, Knowledge Management, Business Process Management and Information Systems) and detailing approaches to help organizations in different aspects when engaging in partnerships with other organizations. However, besides much work has been done, retrieved literature is only interested in some aspect of cross-organizational relationship management, with many issues still open for investigation such as identification and selection of partners; planning partnership collaboration and operation; provision of infrastructure for collaboration and integration; managing distributed and heterogeneous knowledge; establishment and monitoring of organizational and cross-organizational performance indicators; definition of collaboration inheritance etc. Therefore, some mechanism that supports organizations to identify what is relevant and necessary for the partnership is still required. There are many factors to consider, but little guidance is provided to make the cross-organizational relationship effective and successful. Further research on making organizations more integrated, prepared to interoperate their processes and information, and able to achieve mutual goals are necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Full version available at <https://goo.gl/tLncJK>