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Configurational Theorizing and Multiple Theories in the Pursuit of Theoretical Advancement: A Systematic Review

Cayetano Medina Molina
Centro Universitario San Isidoro, Spain
cmedina@centrosanisidoro.es

Noemí Pérez-Macías
Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Spain
nperezmacias@icade.comillas.edu

Sierra Rey-Tienda
Escuela Universitaria de Osuna (Universidad de Sevilla), Spain
mariasierrart@euosuna.org

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ABSTRACT

The objective and significance of the study. The inherent complexity of social phenomena has resulted in a notable increase in the use of the configurational approach for its study. Adopting a configurational perspective has consequences for both the development of theories and the analysis of data. In the first case, it could involve the use of multiple theories as a means to more comprehensively explain the phenomena under investigation. Second, it concerns the implications of integrating different theoretical perspectives into the propositions established within the studies.

The methodology used. In light of the contributions of two publications that have delineated the integration of theoretical multiplicity from a configurational perspective, the present study undertakes a systematic literature review encompassing the period from 2020 to 2025.

Key findings. The identified studies emphasize the efficacy of theoretical multiplicity as a holistic perspective that facilitates the analysis of complex phenomena.

Study limitations. This work has limited the search to Scopus and can be extended to other repositories as well as different types of work beyond articles.

Practical value of the findings. Furthermore, the potential of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as an analytical method is emphasized, as it is predominantly employed in studies that integrate multiple theories into the formulation of their propositions.

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1. Introduction

Most of the challenges faced by agents and organizations are characterized by a high degree of complexity that renders their analysis through a single theoretical lens inherently risky (Furnari et al., 2021; Park et al., 2020; Ragin, 2014; Werder & Richter, 2022). Models developed in different academic disciplines are often isolated, offering a partial explanation of phenomena—assuming that their own approach has the greatest explanatory power—(Thomann et al., 2025). This is due to the fact that, when a single theory captures only a portion of the phenomenon under investigation, divergent cases—which may be instrumental in advancing knowledge—are excluded. These cases might suggest that, although the focal theory fails to account for them, an alternative theoretical framework could provide explanatory power (Park et al., 2020). Moreover, the significance of this issue is further underscored by the association between the degree of complexity exhibited by social phenomena and the level of scholarly interest they elicit (Ragin, 2014).

Evaluating complex phenomena requires formulating relevant research questions, providing a solid theoretical foundation, applying appropriate research methods, and providing theoretical and practical contributions (Aversa et al., 2024; Curado & Silva, 2025)—a situation that leads to a growing commitment to the application of multiple theories (Jaakkola, 2020; Park et al., 2020; Termeer & Dewulf, 2012). Such theoretical integration involves the synthesis and development of a parsimonious perspective tailored to complexity, enabling different strands of the literature to learn from one another (MacInnis, 2011; Weidig et al., 2023). Employing a diversity of theories fosters greater openness to alternative viewpoints and allows for a more comprehensive capture of complex phenomena, thereby enriching their understanding (Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023; Park et al., 2020; Termeer & Dewulf, 2012). This theoretical integration adopts a holistic perspective aimed at connecting previously differentiated phenomena and uncovering a novel, simplified, and higher-order understanding (El Sawy et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2019; MacInnis, 2011). The practice of theoretical multiplicity has gained attention (Van Eetvelde & Christensen, 2023), requiring a deeper investigation into how different theoretical perspectives might compete or complement one another in explaining multifaceted phenomena (Park et al., 2020). In light of the foregoing, the present literature review seeks to address a first research question: What are the prevailing views on the application of multiple theoretical approaches?

Placing greater emphasis on configurational research could strengthen theory development (Ketchen et al., 2022), recommending a shift in theorization toward configurational frameworks (Spedekamp et al., 2020). Although research methods serve as pillars for developing and testing theories (Curado & Silva, 2025), sometimes there is a mismatch between the theory and the methods applied (Cabrilo et al., 2024). The need to show how multiple conjunctural causation affects the conceptualization of social phenomena requires diversity in the approaches to theorize organizational and management phenomena (Meuer & Fiss, 2020). Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) helps to resolve this mismatch, allowing the integration of different theories to answer complex problems (Doll & Woodside, 2025; Medina-Molina et al., 2025a; Oana et al., 2021). Although the application of the configurational approach has led to significant advancements in knowledge within the fields of marketing and management, the underlying theorization process remains largely implicit and underexplored (Furnari et al., 2021). The application of QCA in business and management is often pointed out as the trigger for the emergence of a second wave of studies marked by developments that deepen the consolidation of QCA from both an analytical and conceptual perspective (Meuer & Fiss, 2020), resulting in the neo-configurational perspective that enables a refined conceptualization—also called theorization or thinking—and empirical research—or analysis—of causal complexity through set-theory logic (Curado & Silva, 2025; Dahms et al., 2025; Meuer & Fiss, 2020; Misangyi et al., 2017; Parente & Federo, 2019; Strohmeier et al., 2022; Tekic & Tsyrenova, 2024).

The neo-configurational perspective implies a holistic stance that argues that combinations of conditions should be viewed as a whole and that the influence of their components could emerge only through their interaction (Nikou et al., 2024; Pezeshkan et al., 2022; Tekic & Pacheco, 2024). From a neo-configurational perspective, the construction of the theoretical framework could draw on different currents of literature, enabling the simultaneous consideration of multiple interdependent antecedents, including their complementarity and substitutability, showing the tradeoffs between their strengths and weakness (Anton et al., 2022; Cabrilo et al., 2024; Dahms et al., 2025; Pezeshkan et al., 2022). The use of QCA as an analytical technique has renewed interest in the alignment of theory and methods, considering it the distinguishing feature of the neo-configurational perspective (Meuer & Fiss, 2020). Despite the existence of causal recipes, which are formal explanatory statements detailing how causally relevant elements combine into configurations associated with specific outcomes, the link between theoretical multiplicity and configurational analysis is not always made explicit (Park et al., 2020). Among the extant approaches for selecting conditions to include in configurational models, the "integrated model approach" (Mello, 2021) is one of the few approaches that explicitly posits that conditions are drawn from different theories and combined into a single set of conditions. Consequently, it becomes imperative to ascertain whether such theoretical multiplicity is integrated into studies through propositions that reflect distinct theoretical perspectives or through propositions in which conditions from disparate theoretical frameworks interact. Based on this, a second research question is proposed: Does the use of theoretical multiplicity imply the incorporation of conditions derived from different theories within the propositions?

To address the first research question, the present study conducts a systematic review grounded in the configurational theorizing process developed by Furnari et al. (2021). In addition, it draws on two concepts linked to configurational theorizing that have received considerable attention in relation to the initial stage of this process: theoretical multiplicity (Park et al., 2020) and theory synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020). To answer the second research question, the study analyzes the composition of the propositions in those reviewed works that employ multiple theories within QCA-based research designs.

Therefore, this work aims to identify the different contributions that have been made aligned with the possibility of jointly using different theories in the explanation of phenomena of interest. And since propositions are the explicit expression of the elements to be investigated, the analysis examines how the use of different theories is reflected in the formulation of these propositions. The present study highlights the growing commitment across various domains to the adoption of theoretical multiplicity, as well as the increasing prominence of publications related to this approach. The works analyzed demonstrate how theoretical multiplicity offers advantages in research where the use of a single theory would only provide a partial answer to the research question. The sample of works presents a theoretical approach, without offering hypotheses or propositions. Moreover, the majority of the reviewed studies that pose hypotheses or propositions tend to integrate multiple theories in their formulation.

2. Methodology

The present study is conducted in accordance with the stages proposed by Bannor and Amponsah (2024), in their adaptation of the process detailed by Briner and Denyer (2012): (1) defining the research questions and objectives, (2) identifying existing knowledge and retrieving relevant studies, (3) screening the selected articles on the basis of inclusion and exclusion criteria, (4) assessing the quality of the articles and extracting relevant information, and (5) synthesizing and interpreting the findings. Furthermore, it conforms to the core principles that systematic reviews should be systematic/organized, transparent/explicit, replicable/updatable, and synthesize/summarize (Briner & Denyer, 2012). Scopus has been selected as the unique source because of its broad multidisciplinary coverage, extensive indexing of literature per review, and greater inclusion of journals, making it a more comprehensive source (Donthu et al., 2021; Raman et al., 2025).

2.1. Article Search and Identification Strategy

The study began with a scoping review of the works of Furnari et al. (2021) and Park et al. (2020), given their acknowledged relevance. After an initial review of these foundational

texts, it was deemed appropriate to include theory synthesis in the analysis. Although Jaakkola (2020) introduces this concept primarily for conceptual research, it can help delineate the first phase of the configurational theorizing process proposed by Furnari et al. (2021). Accordingly, the keywords used in the search were "configurational theorizing," "theory synthesis," and "theoretical multiplicity."

2.2. Study Selection and Data Extraction

The content of the articles was assessed through full-text reading. To be eligible for inclusion, articles had to be published in English, indexed in Scopus, appear in peer-reviewed journals, and fall within the period between 2020 and 10 March 2025. The review period began in 2020, as this year marked the publication of two foundational works related to two of the core topics analyzed (Jaakkola, 2020; Park et al., 2020), followed by the publication of Furnari et al. (2021) in the subsequent year. To establish the suitability of the articles, they were read by two of the researchers. The initial search yielded 124 articles. After reviewing the abstracts, 91 articles were excluded due to lack of relevance to the research focus. The lack of relevance was established when the works presented some of the terms investigated but analyzed them from a different perspective than the present work. This resulted in a preliminary selection of 33 articles. Through the full-text review of these, an additional 19 articles were identified as relevant based on alignment with the targeted keywords. Consequently, the final sample included 52 articles (Fig. 1).

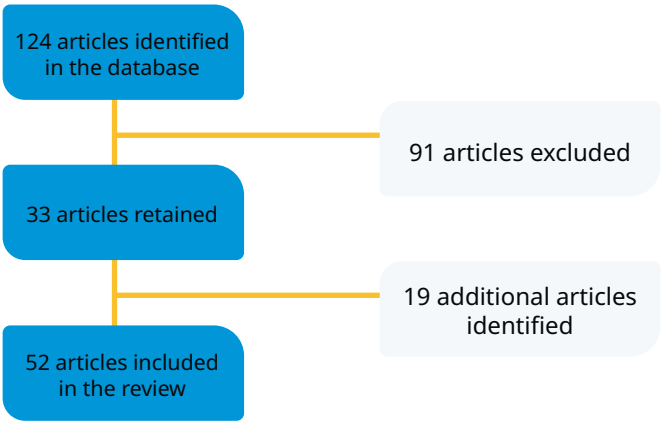

Fig. 1. Flow diagram for database search.

3. Results

3.1. Description of the Identified Studies

Of the 52 studies identified, 1 was published in 2012 and 2016, and 2 in 2019. Within the time frame considered for the search, there was a noticeable increase in publication output: 4 articles in 2020, 2 in 2021, 6 in 2022, 11 in 2023, 15 in 2024, and 10 in 2025 (Fig. 2).

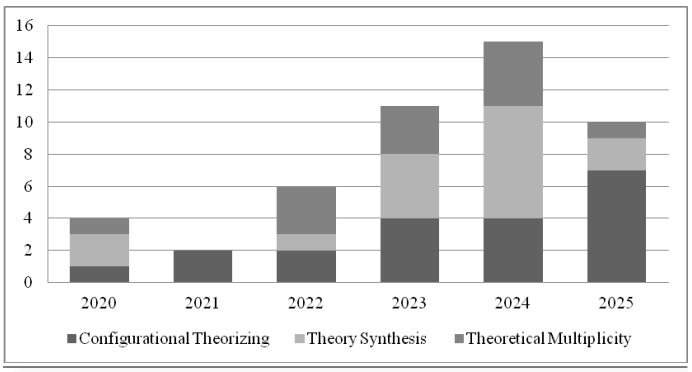

Fig. 2. Articles published in Scopus from 2020 to 2025 with the following terms: "configurational theorizing," "theory synthesis," and "theoretical multiplicity".

The articles were published across 45 journals, with *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* having the highest representation with three articles, while other journals published two articles each (*Information Systems Journal*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, *MIS Quarterly*, and *Public Management Review*). The authors were affiliated in 28 countries, with the USA contributing the most articles (13 articles), followed by the UK (12 articles), Germany (8 articles), the Netherlands (5 articles), and Finland (4 articles). A total of 143 authors contributed to the reviewed articles, with Iannacci being the only author appearing in five publications.

3.2. Theoretical Multiplicity

A total of 15 articles related to theoretical multiplicity were identified, although 3 of them corresponded to works published prior to the period under review (2012, 2016, and 2019). These were complemented by one article published in 2020, three articles in 2022 and 2023, four articles in 2024, and one article in 2025. The identified articles were published across 13 different journals, with *Information Systems Journal* and *MIS Quarterly* featuring two articles. The authors were affiliated with institutions in 17 countries, with the UK (six articles) and Germany (four articles) showing the highest levels of output. A total of 50 authors contributed to these articles, with Iannacci and Park appearing in two publications.

Theories can be enriched through simultaneous application, such that they are no longer fragmented, contradictory, or incomplete (Lee et al., 2019). In fact, the term "intersection" refers to the development of research contributions derived from adopting different disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives (Aversa et al., 2024). Multiplicity is a meta-paradigmatic approach that explores areas where theories overlap or can inform one another, without constraining the distinctiveness of each individual theory (Fallon et al., 2022; Karpouzoglou et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019; Termeer & Dewulf, 2019). Introduced by Park et al. (2020), theoretical multiplicity refers to situations in which the phenomenon under consideration is more comprehensively understood through the application of more than one perspective, with each theory defining which factors matter, how they are connected, and how causalities emerge (Huang et al., 2024; Iannacci et al., 2023). Given that phenomena tend to evolve with a high degree of continuity, the theories used to explain

them are more often complementary than competitive (commonly referred to as occurring within "grey zones"). This has contributed to the consolidation of the practice of theoretical multiplicity (Anton et al., 2022; Karpouzoglou et al., 2016; Van Eetvelde & Christensen, 2023; Werder & Richter, 2022).

Theoretical multiplicity is recognized as a means to generate new insights into the phenomenon under study, to nuance the understanding of complex issues, and to enhance their explanation (Carrard et al., 2024; Fallon et al., 2022; Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023; Karpouzoglou et al., 2016; Park et al., 2020; Werner & Richter, 2022). Theoretical multiplicity can foster strong synergies among different approaches within the same field (Karpouzoglou et al., 2016), through an integrated theoretical framework that combines diverse theories under a holistic perspective (Lee et al., 2019). Theoretical multiplicity has been applied from a configurational multiplicity perspective (Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023). In this regard, it is identified as a key area for further development (Anton et al., 2022; Park et al., 2020; Werder & Richter, 2022) and is even considered to be a "looking ahead" research theme (Van Eetvelde & Christensen, 2023). Since fuzzy-set QCA (fsQCA) can serve as a bridge between theoretical and configurational multiplicity (Bley et al., 2024), it is frequently employed as the analytical technique in studies grounded in theoretical multiplicity (Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023; Iannacci et al., 2025b).

3.3. Theory Synthesis

A total of 16 articles addressing theory synthesis were identified: 2 published in 2020, 1 in 2022, 4 in 2023, 7 in 2024, and 2 in 2025. These articles were published across 15 different journals, with ***Public Management Review*** being the only journal featuring two publications. The geographical distribution of the studies' origins reveals global participation, with 12 countries, of which the USA had the highest representation (five publications), followed by Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, each with two publications. A total of 45 authors contributed to these articles, with Jaakkola being the only author appearing in more than one publication.

Theory synthesis, developed by Jaakkola (2020), begins defining the theoretical lenses that guide the summarization and integration of the literature streams used to study a given phenomenon (Gofen et al., 2024; Jaakkola, 2020; Trischler et al., 2023). This involves distinguishing between domain theories (bodies of knowledge focused on a specific substantive topic that define the field of inquiry) and method theories (meta-level conceptual systems that offer new insights into domain theories by framing the phenomena from a different perspective) (Hörisch et al., 2020; Jaakkola, 2020; Lukka & Vinnari, 2014; Riss et al., 2023). Theory synthesis helps clarify key concepts and develop premises that enable the integration of diverse theories into a unified perspective—or under the umbrella or big picture of a new theory—particularly when conceptualizations and knowledge are fragmented across disconnected or incompatible domains and disciplines (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013; Hörisch et al., 2020; Jaakkola, 2020; Mohr et al., 2022; Purmonen et al., 2023; Trischler et al., 2023; Weidig et al., 2023; Yap, 2024). Meier et al. (2025) synthesize Jaakkola's (2020) framework into four phases: (1) delineating the scope and nature of the focal phenomenon, (2) selecting a method theory to list the analysis and consolidation of existing conceptualizations of the phenomenon, (3) systematically reviewing the literature to identify domain-specific theories and conceptualizations, and (4) integrating existing views into a comprehensive conceptual framework.

Theory synthesis enables a more refined understanding of the phenomena under investigation by developing conceptual frameworks that draw attention to underexplored dimensions (Gofen et al., 2024). This process begins with the identification of a shared foundation from which to build a novel and reinforced conceptualization (Huseynov & Mitchell, 2024), resulting in a theoretical framework based on a deliberate selection of theories and concepts applicable across different contexts (Anisimova et al., 2023; Zenasni et al., 2024). Such integration of theories, which may even result in theoretical synergies, requires identifying differences or even contradictions among theories that are often considered unrelated or incompatible (Emans et al., 2025; Peters et al., 2023; Riss et al., 2023). On the basis of this process, after identifying the dominant theories, these perspectives are summarized and critiqued; these theories are then integrated in a way that seeks to capitalize on the different advantages of the main currents (Reed, 2025).

Since theory synthesis enables the integration of diverse theories into a unified perspective (Hörisch et al., 2020; Jaakkola, 2020; Lukka & Vinnari, 2014; Riss et al., 2023), or the umbrella of a new theory (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013; Jaakkola, 2020; Mohr et al., 2022), it is aligned with theoretical multiplicity. In fact, we may find ourselves facing the intersection described by Aversa et al. (2024), and it may reflect situations in which phenomena are better understood by employing multiple theoretical perspectives (Park et al., 2020).

3.4. Configurational Theorizing

A total of 21 articles related to configurational theorizing were identified: 1 published in 2019, 1 published in 2020, 2 in both 2021 and 2022, 4 in 2023 and in 2024, and 7 in 2025. These publications appeared in 19 different journals, with the ***Journal of Supply Chain Management*** and ***Technological Forecasting and Social Change*** being the only journals featuring two articles each. The countries with the highest number of contributions to these publications are the USA (six contributions) and the UK (five contributions). The articles were authored by a total of 52 authors, with 1 author contributing to three publications (Iannacci) and 9 authors contributing to two publications each (Bosse, Carter, Chari, Crilly, Kaufmann, Krauss, Medina-Molina, Pérez-Macías, and Rey-Tienda).

Configurational multiplicity recognizes that, within a theoretical perspective, there could be different configurations of conditions that explain the result; there is no single best way, but rather multiple effective ways to organize it (Huang et al., 2024). When conditions are evaluated as wholes or gestalts, highlighting their holistic or configurational nature (Calic et al., 2025), configurational thinking and theorizing are

chosen (Garaus et al., 2025). Configurational theorizing is an approach that investigates how different combinations of conditions interact in complex, and often divergent, ways to produce an outcome (Huang et al., 2024; Iannacci & Kraus, 2024; Medina-Molina et al., 2025b; Parente & Federo, 2019; Roshan et al., 2025).

Furnari et al. (2021) propose a configurational theorizing process that involves three iterative phases: scoping (identifying relevant attributes that could form configurations), linking (considering how these attributes might be connected), and naming (labeling the configurations to evoke their overarching themes). The scoping phase, which is most closely aligned with the objective of the present study, comprises three key steps: complexify for an anchor, identify plausible coherence, and simplify the higher-order constructs. The complexifying stage is particularly important for phenomena for which no single theory provides a sufficient explanation, as each captures only a partial view (Furnari et al., 2021; Swiatczak, 2021). To address this, multiple theoretical domains are considered, expanding knowledge beyond the primary theoretical lens by identifying boundary conditions (Furnari et al., 2021; Zhang, 2024), thereby revealing the dominant factors examined in the literature (Thakur-Wernz & Bosse, 2023). Subsequently, to simplify existing theories, current theoretical findings are interpreted through a higher-order perspective that connects previously distinct phenomena, thus subsuming their complexity (Furnari et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024; MacInnis, 2011; Thakur-Wernz & Bosse, 2023; Purmonen et al., 2023; Yap, 2024).

Configurational theorizing addresses the causal complexity underlying many management phenomena (Furnari et al., 2021) due to its ability to provide a holistic evaluation of such phenomena by orchestrating elements from diverse fields (Harrison et al., 2023; Iannacci et al., 2025a; Parente & Federo, 2019; Su & Fan, 2023; Woelfl et al., 2023). Likewise, configurational theories are based on a double logic (Parente & Federo, 2019): complementarity—a synergistic relationship—and substitution—the attributes can be replaced. In doing so, configurational theorizing enriches and contributes to various research streams applied within a specific domain (Ketchen et al., 2022), even stating that QCA should not be used if configurational theorizing is not involved (Parente & Federo, 2019). However, although configurational theorizing remains relatively underdeveloped, this could be produced with researchers clarifying why QCA is the appropriate method given the phenomenon under investigation (Meuer & Fiss, 2020). In many cases, the use of configurational theorizing is integrated with the application of fsQCA (Iannacci et al., 2025a; Ketchen et al., 2021; Medina-Molina et al., 2025a; Medina-Molina et al., 2025b; Nowinska & Solheim, 2024; Su & Fan, 2023; Woelfl et al., 2023), and the propositions are formulated following their approaches (Tekic & Tsyrenova, 2024).

Recognizing in the complexifying phase that no single theory provides a sufficient explanation, capturing only a partial view (Furnari et al., 2021; Swiatczak, 2021), or that the findings are interpreted through connecting or orchestrating previous distinct phenomena (Furnari et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024; MacInnis, 2011; Thakur-Wernz & Bosse, 2023; Purmonen et al., 2023; Yap, 2024) shows a field in which theory synthesis has potential for application. In this way, the integration of diverse theories into a unified perspective is made possible through their identification as domain and method theories (Hörisch et al., 2020; Jaakkola, 2020; Lukka & Vinnari, 2014; Meier et al., 2025; Riss et al., 2023).

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The suitability of QCA for the study of complex phenomena has led to a surge in its application. However, such complexity not only increases scholarly interest in these phenomena but also necessitates a rethinking of the theoretical modeling process, specifically, advocating for the use of complementary theories. The review presented confirms a growing interest in topics related to the use and integration of multiple theories and their connection to configurational analysis. The treatment given to configurational theorizing is particularly prominent. Table 1 presents some of the identified elements that support the use of different theories.

Table 1. Main alignments between the perspectives studied.

	Why?	How?
Theoretical multiplicity	Theories can be enriched through simultaneous application, such that they are no longer fragmented, contradictory, or incomplete (Lee et al., 2019); research contributions derived from different theoretical perspectives connect (Aversa et al., 2024).	Exploration of where theories overlap, without constraining the distinctiveness of each individual theory (Fallon et al., 2022; Karpouzoglou et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2019; Termeer & Dewulf, 2019).
Theory synthesis	It enables a more refined understanding of the phenomena under investigation by developing conceptual frameworks that draw attention to underexplored dimensions (Gofen et al., 2024).	Identification of a domain theory (focused on a specific topic) and method theory (offering insights from a different perspective) (Jaakkola, 2020). In other cases, the order is reversed (Meier et al., 2025).
Configurational theorizing	Configurational theorizing addresses the causal complexity underlying many management phenomena (Furnari et al., 2021), providing a holistic evaluation orchestrating elements from diverse fields (Harrison et al., 2023; Iannacci et al., 2025a; Parente & Federo, 2019; Su & Fan, 2023; Woelfl et al., 2023).	Integrated with the application of fsQCA and in the formulation of the propositions (Iannacci et al., 2025a; Ketchen et al., 2021; Medina-Molina et al., 2025a; Medina-Molina et al., 2025b; Nowinska & Solheim, 2024; Su & Fan, 2023; Tekic & Tsyrenova, 2024; Woelfl et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the first research question posed in this study was: What are the prevailing views on the application of multiple theoretical approaches?

In response to this question, it is worth noting that the complexifying phase of configurational theorizing emerges as a relevant approach for situations in which explaining a phenomenon requires more than a single theory. In its application, clear overlaps with theory synthesis can be observed. Specifically, while configurational theorizing enables the expansion of a theoretical domain toward boundary conditions that complete it (Furnari et al., 2021; Swiatczak, 2021; Zhang, 2024), theory synthesis refers to the integration of disconnected domains of the domain theory through a method theory that provides new insights into the former (Hörisch et al., 2020; Jaakkola, 2020; Mohr et al., 2022; Purmonen et al., 2023; Trischler et al., 2023; Weidig et al., 2023; Yap, 2024). In other words, the expansion and integration of different, potentially complementary theories is acknowledged. Furthermore, both approaches refer to the integration of such findings into a higher-order perspective that connects previously distinct phenomena, thereby subsuming their complexity. As such, the approaches analyzed demonstrate how, starting from a main theory applied to the phenomenon under study, new findings can emerge that enrich its theoretical contribution. Additionally, several studies explicitly identify theoretical multiplicity as an approach to be applied in the development of their respective fields of analysis (Anton et al., 2022; Park et al., 2020; Van Eetvelde & Christensen, 2023; Werder & Richter, 2022).

Once the relevance of theoretical multiplicity has been established, the second research question to be addressed is: Does the use of multiple theories imply the incorporation of conditions derived from different theories into the propositions?

In their work, Park et al. (2020) refer to both theoretical and configurational multiplicity. The latter, configurational multiplicity, entails the existence of multiple configurations explaining the phenomenon of interest (Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023) and is closely linked to the foundational principles of QCA—asymmetry, conjunction, and equifinality (Anton et al., 2022). However, in some cases, theoretical complementarity is observed in the structuring of propositions, such that configurational multiplicity, from this perspective, refers to the existence of multiple configurations of relevant factors within a given theoretical lens (Iannacci et al., 2023; Park et al., 2020). From a second, more prevalent perspective, conditions derived from different theoretical frameworks are integrated into the propositions. In this line, it is noteworthy that Park et al. (2020) establish different propositions for each theory, starting from the same set of conditions. The usual pattern is to integrate conditions from different theories into the propositions (Hajiheydari & Delgosha, 2023; Lee et al., 2019; Medina-Molina et al., 2025a; Medina-Molina et al., 2025b; Su & Fan, 2023; Woelfl et al., 2023). In fact, although only 28% of the works analyzed in this study present hypotheses or propositions—in line with their theoretical approach—60% of those that do include hypotheses or propositions from different theories. Thus, it appears that configurational theorizing is gaining relevance alongside the establishment of the neo-configurational approach.

On the basis of the findings of the present study, we can conclude that there is a clear advancement in the application of theoretical multiplicity in the study of complex phenomena. This theoretical multiplicity enhances the suitability of configurational methods, aligning with the growing adoption of QCA as both a research methodology and an analytical technique. Furthermore, it has been observed that configurational multiplicity, closely linked to theoretical multiplicity, is predominantly reflected in the integration of conditions derived from different theories within the propositions being formulated. In this way, since the propositions tend to emphasize the effect of conjunctural causation, it can be affirmed that authors are increasingly advocating for a synergistic effect of the integrated theories.

Two major limitations affect the results presented in this study. The first relates to the use of Scopus as the sole source for the initial search of the reviewed articles. While there are arguments supporting this exclusive use, considering a wider range of repositories would likely have allowed for the identification of additional works. Second, the study focuses on the field of business and marketing. The main future line of research emerging from this work is linked to the fact that the neo-configurational approach posits that theorizing should be done from a configurational perspective and that this theorizing should be reflected in the formulation of propositions. In this sense, it is of interest to analyze the implications of analyzing the conditions that make up propositions as wholes since this could approximate the intersectional view proposed by Ragin and Fiss (2024)—which considers combinations of attributes as qualitatively distinct states, not reducible to their component attributes.

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