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Risk management in the public sector: a structured literature review

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Abstract:

Purpose

Risk management (RM) is receiving increasing academic and practitioner attention in the public sector. Despite this, there is a lack of systematization of this body of knowledge. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the state of art by examining the knowledge gaps and defining the emerging themes of RM in the public sector to guide future research agendas.

Design/methodology/approach

The authors conducted a structured literature review (SLR). They analyzed 63 papers, by using Scopus database, published from 1990 to 2018. All papers were categorized and analyzed according to 11 criteria defined by the literature.

Findings

Results show that there is an increasing attention to RM with a need for more effort to consolidate research knowledge. Findings also established a lack of theorization, with a limited explanatory capacity of most studies. The paper defined four main areas for future developments to increase the body of knowledge. Namely, RM and managerial systems (i.e. MCSs and performance management), integrating RM systems and the building blocks of RM that the authors identify will also play a role in helping the authors to understand the diffusion of RM within public sector organizations.

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Originality/value

Despite the increasing attention to RM in the public sector, more research is required. Considering RM in public sector risks to be a “black box”, this paper revealed some new insights that could help to analyze better RM in the public sector, to open the black box and to avoid a symbolic use of the RM. In fact, integration with the managerial systems and the strengthening of the building block could help to exploit the potential of RM in the public sector.

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