

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES IN MSMES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF CROSS-NATIONAL STUDIES



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Abstract

The significance of management accounting practices in enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is widely recognised. However, previous research remained fragmented, with limited theoretical integration, methodological diversity, and cross-national perspectives, which restricted a comprehensive understanding of how these practices were studied and applied. This study systematically reviewed developments over the past decade, drawing on open-access articles published in 2015-2025, and applied the PRISMA protocol with bibliometric and thematic analysis. Three major gaps emerged: the limited examination of advanced techniques such as Strategic Management Accounting and Activity-Based Costing, the methodological dominance of single-approach quantitative studies, and the regional concentration of research. The review also highlighted emerging clusters and trends, providing guidance for more context-sensitive studies and practical insights to support MSMEs in driving sustainable economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) form a vital component of the economic landscape in numerous countries, particularly within the Southeast Asian region (Anggadini, et al. 2023). In Indonesia, MSMEs play a highly significant role, contributing over 61% to the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) and accounting for 97% of total national employment (Jee Sinha, et al. 2024). Despite these substantial contributions, MSMEs continued to face fundamental challenges, particularly in financial management and in developing internal information systems essential for effective decision-making (Indrijawati et al. 2024).

Management accounting served a crucial function by supplying relevant information to support planning, control, and strategic decision-making processes (Dahal et al. 2024). Techniques such as budgeting, Activity-Based Costing (ABC), and strategic management accounting were widely utilised in large enterprises, where they had been shown to enhance organisational efficiency and performance (Parindingan et al. 2024). Nevertheless, the adoption of these techniques within the MSME sector remained limited. Prior studies indicated that many MSME practitioners lacked sufficient understanding and capacity to implement management accounting practices effectively. (Allah Bakhsh, et al. 2019). Beyond internal challenges such as limited human resources and low financial literacy, MSMEs also faced external barriers, including insufficient access to training opportunities and inadequate policy support.

Although management accounting practices (MAPs) had become increasingly important for strengthening the competitiveness of MSMEs, existing research in this area remained fragmented and insufficiently developed. Much of the literature was limited to country-specific studies and relied heavily on quantitative survey methods, which often overlooked the complex contextual realities faced by MSMEs. In addition, advanced tools such as Strategic Management Accounting (SMA) and Activity-Based Costing (ABC) were infrequently examined within the MSME context, and the theoretical frameworks employed were often underutilized or inadequately integrated. Accordingly, this study aimed to systematically examine the progression of MAP-related research in MSMEs across diverse countries and methodological approaches, to uncover prevailing trends, identify underexposed domains, and offer insights for future context-sensitive research initiatives.

From a theoretical perspective, the adoption of management accounting practices in the MSME sector could be analysed using several frameworks (Ahmad 2017). The Resource-Based View (RBV) highlighted the critical role of internal resources, such as managerial expertise and information systems, as sources of competitive advantage that were difficult for competitors to replicate. (Assensoh Kodua, 2019). Conversely, Institutional Theory suggested that normative, coercive, and mimetic pressures from the external environment, such as government regulations and industry standards, could shape the adoption of formal accounting systems among MSMEs (Lasyoud et al. 2023). However, the majority of existing studies had not consistently applied this theoretical framework, which restricted both the depth of analysis and the venerability of their findings.

From an academic perspective, research on management accounting in MSMEs had grown, yet remained fragmented and lacked systematic integration. This aligned with the findings of Dlamini (2024), who stated that the existing literature was still fragmented across various themes and approaches. Most research focused on local or national contexts, with survey-based quantitative approaches predominating (Moneva Abadía et al., 2019). Studies employing qualitative and contextual approaches, which could reveal the social and organisational dynamics of MSMEs, remained scarce. Furthermore, there was a noticeable lack of research contributions from regions beyond Southeast Asia, particularly from South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America (Kabil et al. 2022). This situation highlighted a gap in the literature regarding geographical scope, methodological diversity, and the depth of theoretical frameworks employed.

Similar findings were also observed in various other developed and developing countries. For example, studies in China (Wang and Li 2020), the United Kingdom (Vilakazi, et al. 2020), and Brazil (Zau Barreto and Antunes Brás 2023) showed that MSME practitioners encountered common challenges in adopting management accounting practices, including limited financial literacy, technological constraints, and insufficient policy support. Although these issues arose in diverse social and economic contexts, their consistent recurrence highlighted the global nature of the difficulties faced in implementing management accounting within MSMEs. Nevertheless, addressing these challenges effectively required locally tailored approaches that were responsive to the unique conditions of each country.

The urgency of this research stemmed from the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how management accounting practices were implemented by MSMEs across various contexts. Considering the strategic importance of MSMEs in both national and regional economic development, it was essential to examine the patterns of adoption for management accounting techniques to enhance the effectiveness of policy interventions and capacity-building initiatives for business stakeholders. Despite this need, no literature review to date had provided a holistic overview of research trends, methodological limitations, and the thematic as well as geographical distribution of studies on management accounting in MSMEs.

Given these circumstances, this study aimed at addressing three major gaps in the existing literature: (1) the limited application of robust theoretical frameworks in research on management accounting within MSMEs; (2) the lack of systematic synthesis across different countries and methodological approaches; and (3) the predominance of quantitative survey methods, which often overlooked the social and organizational dynamics underlying accounting practices. Identifying and bridging these gaps was essential for fostering more nuanced, contextually grounded, and globally relevant knowledge development in this field.

The current state of research in this area revealed that studies on management accounting within the MSME sector remained fragmented, with limited efforts to systematically map the field's development, predominant methodologies, and unexplored research opportunities. Although existing research had noted the problems of implementing management accounting practices in MSMEs, no literature review to that point had integrated these studies within a systematic framework such as PRISMA or any other scientifically recognized methodology. In addition, there had not been comprehensive multi-country, cross-methodological, or cross-theoretical comparative compilations of research findings, which were crucial for knowledge development in this area.

The necessity of this research arose from the increasingly strategic role of MSMEs in fostering economic development, which underscored the importance of robust internal management systems, particularly in the area of management accounting. However, the academic literature on this topic remained relatively underdeveloped compared to that of large enterprises. Many prior studies lacked strong theoretical foundations, offered limited international comparisons, and relied predominantly on single-method quantitative approaches. Furthermore, the minimal exploration of advanced accounting techniques, such as Strategic Management Accounting (SMA) and Activity-Based Costing (ABC), had significant implications for the operational and strategic decision-making capacity of MSMEs. Consequently, a systematic literature review that synthesized cross-national research over the last decade was essential not only to bridge these gaps but also to inform evidence-based policy-making and provide direction for future, contextually grounded research.

Based on the PICOS framework, this research examined the development of scholarly work on the adoption of management accounting techniques by micro, small, and medium enterprises across different countries between 2015 and 2025, with a focus on both the extent of adoption and the diversity of methods and contexts studied. Management accounting techniques, ranging from foundational tools such as budgeting and cost calculation to advanced approaches including Strategic Management Accounting, Activity-Based Costing, and Material Flow Cost Accounting, had the potential to enhance decision-making, competitiveness, and sustainability within MSMEs. However, existing studies revealed substantial variation in adoption patterns across regions and industries, as well as methodological, theoretical, and geographical limitations that hindered a comprehensive understanding. Consequently, this study addressed two core research questions: How had research on the adoption of various management accounting techniques by MSMEs evolved across countries during the period 2015 to 2025, and what critical research gaps remained for future investigation?

This research was important because it aimed to conduct a systematic review of scholarly articles published on the topic of management accounting in MSMEs from 2015 to 2025. The goal of this study was to outline the methodological and thematic developments within this literature, describe the predominant geographic focuses on MSMEs, and identify unexplored areas that could provide direction for further research. Utilizing a hybrid thematic and bibliometric approach, this study aimed to strengthen MSME-centred theory with a diversified methodology and responsive policy frameworks.

METHOD

This encompassed the sections that explained the research method, participant population and sampling, creation of study instruments, methods of obtaining the data, and analysis of the data. According to Krismajayanti et al. (2024), the purpose of conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) was to provide a detailed account of what was known in a particular field as well as to identify the gaps that had not yet been researched. The literature search was conducted on both a national and international scale using the Publish or Perish software to access peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus, Sinta, and Science-direct. Search terms used included “management accounting” AND “SMEs” OR “MSMEs.” These parameters also served as a measure of the selection’s quality. Following PRISMA guidelines, articles underwent a three-stage review: identification, screening, and eligibility. In the identification phase, 500 articles were captured across multiple databases; these were then screened by two independent reviewers based on title and abstract. The last stage involved comprehensive text analysis, which narrowed the count to 46 articles. Reviewers demonstrated strong reliability, with an inter-rater agreement of 89 per cent, and all disputes were resolved through consensus. See the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Question Formulation using PICOC Framework

Component	Description
Population (P)	MSMEs in various countries
Intervention (I)	Adoption rates of various management accounting techniques
Comparison (C)	Growth in the adoption rate of management accounting techniques during 20152025
Outcomes (O)	1. Trends and development patterns of the adoption of management accounting techniques 2. Identify gaps and challenges that still exist
Context (C)	The economic, social, cultural, and technological environment in developed and developing countries.

To provide clarity and focus for the study, the research questions were structured using the PICOC framework. This method allowed for the precise identification of essential elements within the literature and ensured that the questions developed were specific, measurable, and aligned with both theoretical and empirical gaps. Following the formulation of the research questions, the inclusion criteria were established following SLR standards. These criteria are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Systematic Literature Review Criteria

A	Literature Search Strategy
	a. Databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, International Journal, Science Direct.
	b. Keywords: "management accounting" AND "SMEs" OR "UMKM" OR “MSMEs”
	c. Search field: title, abstract, keyword
	d. Year range: 20152025
	e. Languages: Indonesian and English
	f. Document type: article, review
B	Inclusion Criteria
	a. Peer-reviewed, Sintaindexed, Scopus, or international journals
	b. Article open access
	c. The article explicitly discusses management accounting in MSMEs
	d. Articles published in the last 10 years, namely 20152025
	e. Articles in Indonesian and English
C	Exclusion Criteria
	a. Various nonarticle sources such as books, opinions, editorials, proceedings, etc
	b. Articles not indexed by Sinta, Scopus, or non-international journals
	c. The article does not explicitly discuss management accounting in MSMEs
	d. Articles published in 2015
	e. Articles in languages other than Indonesian and English
	c. Articles are not open access

D	Supporting Instruments
	a. Publish or Perish (literature search)
	b. PRISMA
	c. Mendeley (duplication and consistency of citation formats)
	d. Microsoft Excel (Data processing)
E	Article Quality Analysis Criteria
	a. Journal reputation
	Articles published in reputable journals (national or international) that have gone through a peer review process.
	b. Clarity of purpose and problem
	The purpose of the research is clear and relevant to the topic of accounting management in MSMEs and related factors
	c. Suitability of Research Methods
	The method follows the questions and research objectives, clearly explained, and relevant to the context of MSMEs.
	d. Relevance of the Findings
	The findings contribute directly to the topic of MSME accounting management and its supporting factors.
	e. Presentation Clarity and Consistency
	The results are presented systematically with logical arguments and conclusions that support the research results.
F	Data Analysis and Synthesis Techniques
	a. Descriptive bibliometric analysis: publication trends by year, country, journal (graph output)
	b. Thematic/narrative synthesis to answer research questions (RQ)

This study adopted a systematic literature review approach, supported by several instruments and tools to ensure rigour and replicability. The primary source of data was Google Scholar, selected for its extensive coverage of open-access academic publications. Citation metadata was extracted using the Publish or Perish (PoP) software, while Mendeley Reference Manager was employed to organise bibliographic data, remove duplicates, and store selected articles. Microsoft Excel was used for sorting, filtering, and thematically categorizing the final data-set. The data collection process followed a structured protocol based on the PRISMA framework. Relevant articles were identified using a combination of keywords such as “management accounting,” “MSMEs,” “SMEs,” “small business,” and “accounting practices” connected with Boolean operators (AND/OR). The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published between 2015 and 2025, (2) written in English, (3) accessible in full text through open-access platforms, and (4) explicitly focused on management accounting practices within the MSME context. Exclusion criteria included non-academic sources, conceptual papers without clear methodology, articles unrelated to MSMEs or MAPs, and duplicate entries. To ensure data quality and reduce subjectivity, article selection was conducted independently by two reviewers, with discrepancies resolved through discussion and consensus. This multistep review process minimised bias, enhanced transparency, and improved the reliability of findings derived from the selected literature.

Data analysis and synthesis in this study employed two primary methods: descriptive bibliometric analysis and narrative thematic synthesis. The bibliometric analysis aimed to identify trends related to publication year, country of origin, research methodology, and the distribution of articles across journals. All data were processed manually using Microsoft Excel, which facilitated the creation of frequency tables and various graphical representations. For the thematic synthesis, the selected articles were organized into conceptual clusters based on recurring themes, methodological approaches, and geographic focus. Through this clustering process, the researchers identified prevailing themes as well as notable gaps within the existing literature. The conclusive analysis included 46 articles, narrowed down from an initial pool of 500 through identification, screening, and inclusion following a three-tier PRISMA protocol. The selection of articles was conducted independently by two reviewers, who achieved an inter-rater reliability of 89 per cent. This meticulous and systematic strategy enabled the study to address the research questions comprehensively and contributed valuable insights into the evolving trends in management accounting practices among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across various countries and settings.

After establishing the parameters for the systematic literature review (SLR), the researchers proceeded to identify relevant articles. The deliberations that led to these criteria were neither arbitrary nor casual; rather, they resulted from detailed and reasoned discussions among the authors. Defining

such criteria ensured that only studies of sufficient relevance and quality were included, thereby safeguarding the integrity and transparency of the research outcomes. The selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram as shown in Figure 1.

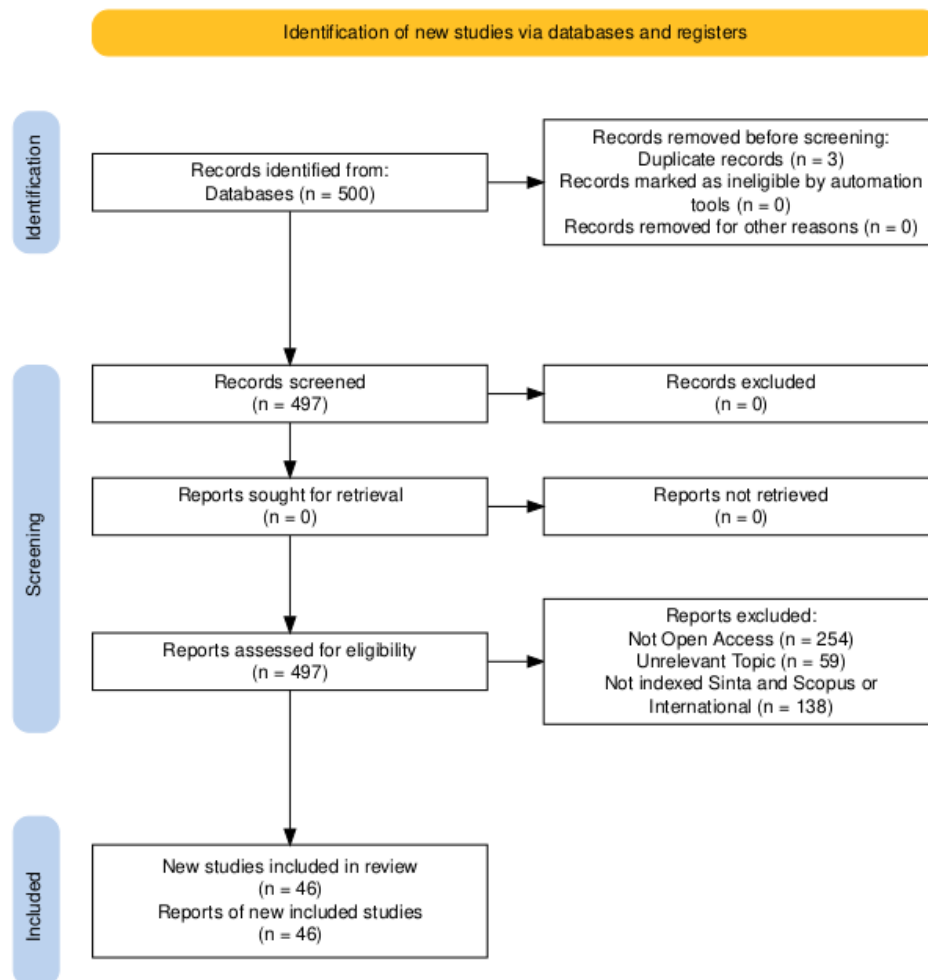


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The research team initially identified approximately 500 articles from key scientific databases, including Scopus, Sinta, and ScienceDirect. To facilitate data collection, the Publish or Perish software was employed. Following the initial retrieval, references were cross-checked using the Mendeley reference management software, which identified three duplicate records. These duplicates were removed, leaving 497 articles for screening. At this stage, no articles had been excluded automatically by the system or removed for other reasons.

A total of 497 articles were manually screened by the research team, which comprised all six authors. The initial review involved examining the titles and abstracts of each article to assess their relevance to the research focus. Notably, no articles were excluded at this stage, as all were considered potentially suitable for further evaluation. This inclusive approach ensured that the initial selection encompassed any material that might be relevant before applying more stringent exclusion criteria in the subsequent stages.

The researchers conducted an in-depth assessment of the eligibility of all 497 articles by reviewing the full-text manuscripts. During this stage, 451 articles were excluded based on three main criteria. First, 254 articles were not available in an open-access format and therefore could not be fully accessed. Second, 59 articles were deemed irrelevant to the research focus, either because they did not address management accounting in MSMEs or were not classified as scientific journal articles (e.g.,

opinion pieces or books). Third, 138 articles were not indexed in the required databases, namely, Sinta, Scopus, or other recognized international journals. Following this rigorous screening process, 46 articles met all inclusion criteria and were selected as the primary material for the systematic review.

After selecting 46 articles that met the established criteria and documenting the selection process in the PRISMA flowchart, the data were organized and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. This approach enabled a systematic examination of the material, ensuring that the research questions were addressed comprehensively and that the findings could be presented clearly to readers. Based on these criteria, Table 3 presents an overview of the 46 articles from various journals included in this study.

Table 3. Journal Identity

No	Journal Name	Total
1	Accounting Practices Journal	1
2	African Journal of Contemporary Management Issues	1
3	Asia Pacific Management Review Journal	2
4	Business Perspective Review Journal	1
5	Clausius Scientific Press Journal	1
6	Cogent Journal	3
7	Enrichment Journal of Management	1
8	Environment, Development and Sustainability	1
9	European Journal of Business, Economics and Accountancy	1
10	frontiers journal	1
11	GMJACS journal	1
12	Internation journal of business quantitative economics and applied management research	1
13	International Business Research Journal	1
14	International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal	1
15	International Journal of Business and Society	1
16	International Journal of Economic Research	1
17	International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy	2
18	International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management (IJFAM)	1
19	International Journal of Management, Economics and Social Sciences	1
20	Journal of Accounting & Organisational Change	1
21	Journal of Applied Sciences in accounting, finance and tax	1
22	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	1
23	Journal of Enterprise and Business Intelligence	1
24	Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business	1
25	Journal of Information Systems, Applied, Management, Accounting and Research	1
26	Journal of language, technology & entrepreneurship in Africa	1
27	Journal of Management Accounting Research	1
28	Journal of the Knowledge Economy	1
29	JSAP Journal Syariah and Accounting Public	1
30	MDPI Journal	1
31	Oresta Journal	1
32	Research Journal of Finance and Accounting	1
33	Saudi Journal of Economics and Finance	1
34	Social Space Journal	1
35	Society and Economy Journal	1
36	South ASIAN Journal of Business and Management Cases	1
37	Sustainability Journal	1
38	Tangible Journal	1
39	The Journal of Nepalese Business Studies	1
40	Universal Journal of Accounting and Finance	1
41	Veridian EJournal	1
42	Vietnam Journal of Agricultural Science	1
43	World journal of advanced research and reviews	1
Total		46

Source: Data processed (2025)

Upon identifying several relevant publications across different journals, the corresponding authors for each work were cataloged. This approach aimed to enhance the accuracy of the research and strengthen trust in its validity by ensuring proper attribution of all pertinent information and studies included in this review (Table 4).

Table 4. Journal with Author's Name

No	Journal Name	Authors Name
1	Accounting Practices Journal	(Malavige and Wijesinghe 2021)
2	African Journal of Contemporary Management Issues	(Ntshonga and Kamala 2019)
3	Asia Pacific Management Review Journal	(Azudin and Mansor 2018), (Mihaylova and Papazov 2022)
4	Business Perspective Review Journal	(Osim Etim et al. 2020)
5	Clausius Scientific Press Journal	(Zhang 2022)
6	Cogent Journal	(Hasan, Waghule, and Hasan 2024), (Ratmono, Frendy, and Zuhrohtun 2023), (Le et al., 2020)
7	Enrichment Journal of Management	(Susilawaty and Lubis 2023)
8	Environment, Development and Sustainability	(Nartey and van der Poll 2021)
9	European Journal of Business, Economics and Accountancy	(Lynn and Legaspi 2018)
10	frontiers journal	(Javed et al. 2022)
11	GMJACS journal	(Kashif 2019)
12	International journal of business quantitative economics and applied management research	(Amalia, Kordlouie, and Hosseinpour 2018)
13	International Business Research Journal	(Caputo, Veltri, and Venturelli 2017)
14	International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal	(Roffia, Benavides, and Carrilero 2024)
15	International Journal of Business and Society	(Salim et al. 2023)
16	International Journal of Economic Research	(Zuriana et al. 2018)
17	International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy	(Zandi and Lee 2019), (Susanto and Meiryani 2019)
18	International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management (IJFAM)	(Pranata and Adhariani 2023)
19	International Journal of Management, Economics and Social Sciences	(Setyo Budiarto and Agung Prabowo 2015)
20	Journal of Accounting & Organisational Change	(YläKujala et al., 2023)
21	Journal of Applied Sciences in accounting, finance and tax	(Setiawan and Izzaty 2021)
22	Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	(TRAN, HOANG, and NGUYEN 2020)
23	Journal of Enterprise and Business Intelligence	(Armenian 2022)
24	Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business	(Acintya 2020)
25	Journal of Information Systems, Applied, Management, Accounting and Research	(Tidajoh et al. 2023)
26	Journal of language, technology & entrepreneurship in Africa	(Mbogo, Orlando, and Macharia 2021)
27	Journal of Management Accounting Research	(López and Hiebl 2015)
28	Journal of Knowledge Economy	(Huy and Phuc 2025)
29	JSAP Journal Syariah and Accounting Public	(Puyo 2023)
30	MDPI Journal	(Ma et al. 2022)
31	Oresta Journal	(Astuty et al. 2023)
32	Research Journal of Finance and Accounting	(Onumoh 2019)
33	Saudi Journal of Economics and Finance	(Shaik 2023)
34	Social Space Journal	(Kulwadee Limusanno et al., 2022)
35	Society & Economy Journal	(Da Silva Laureano, Machado, and Da Silva Laureano 2016)
36	South ASIAN Journal of Business and Management Cases	(Latif et al. 2023)
37	Sustainability Journal	(Vărzaru et al. 2022)
38	Tangible Journal	(Rani, Saleh, and Rukmana 2023)
39	The Journal of Nepalese Business Studies	(Sharma 2015)
40	Universal Journal of Accounting and Finance	(Diegtiar et al. 2021)
41	Veridian EJournal	(Lohapan, Phornlaphatrachakorn, and Raksong 2018)
42	Vietnam Journal of Agricultural Science	(Trang et al. 2022)
43	World journal of advanced research and reviews	(Beryl Odonkor et al. 2024)

RESULTS

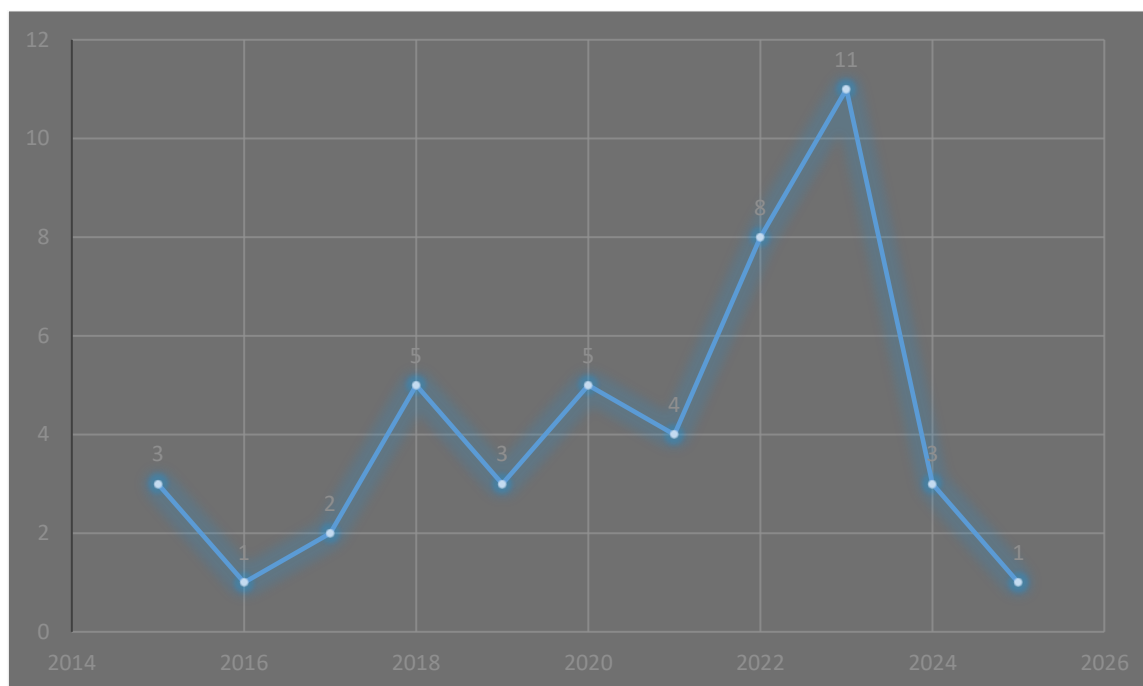


Figure 2. Development of the Number of Management Accounting Journals in MSMEs in 2015-2025

Figure 2 illustrates the annual trends in journal publications on management accounting in MSMEs from 2015 to 2025. The data show considerable year-to-year variability. In 2015, three articles were published, but the number declined sharply to just one in 2016. The figure then began to rise gradually, with two publications in 2017 and a significant increase to five in 2018. This upward trend was interrupted in 2019, when the total fell back to three, before increasing again to five in 2020.

The period from 2021 to 2023 shows a marked upward trend, culminating in a peak of 11 publications in 2023. This surge is likely linked to the growing interest in MSME management accounting in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as digital transformation and the pursuit of business sustainability became pressing priorities for MSMEs. The data further indicate that the academic community was highly responsive to these emerging challenges during this period.

However, the data for 2024 show a sharp decline to only three publications, followed by a further drop to a single publication in 2025. This pronounced decrease suggests that management accounting in MSMEs has not maintained a consistent level of academic attention over the long term. Such fluctuations raise important questions about the underlying factors driving this instability in scholarly focus, particularly given that, in principle, management accounting plays a strategic role in the growth and sustainability of MSMEs.

From a conceptual perspective, this pattern can be explained through the contingency approach, which asserts that management accounting practices are influenced by both internal and external organizational dynamics (Fuad et al. 2023). The surge in publication output from 2021 to 2023 reflects how complex factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated digitalisation encouraged MSMEs to adopt more effective management frameworks. Conversely, the subsequent decline in output underscores the absence of sustained political commitment or an articulated research agenda necessary to maintain academic attention on the topic.

Therefore, presenting data through graphs and figures serves not only to chronicle publication trends but also to highlight the key shifts occurring in MSME management accounting research. These findings emphasize the need for more targeted and sustained scholarly inquiry, supported by coherent policy measures and academic strategies that can foster greater stability and continuity in the field.

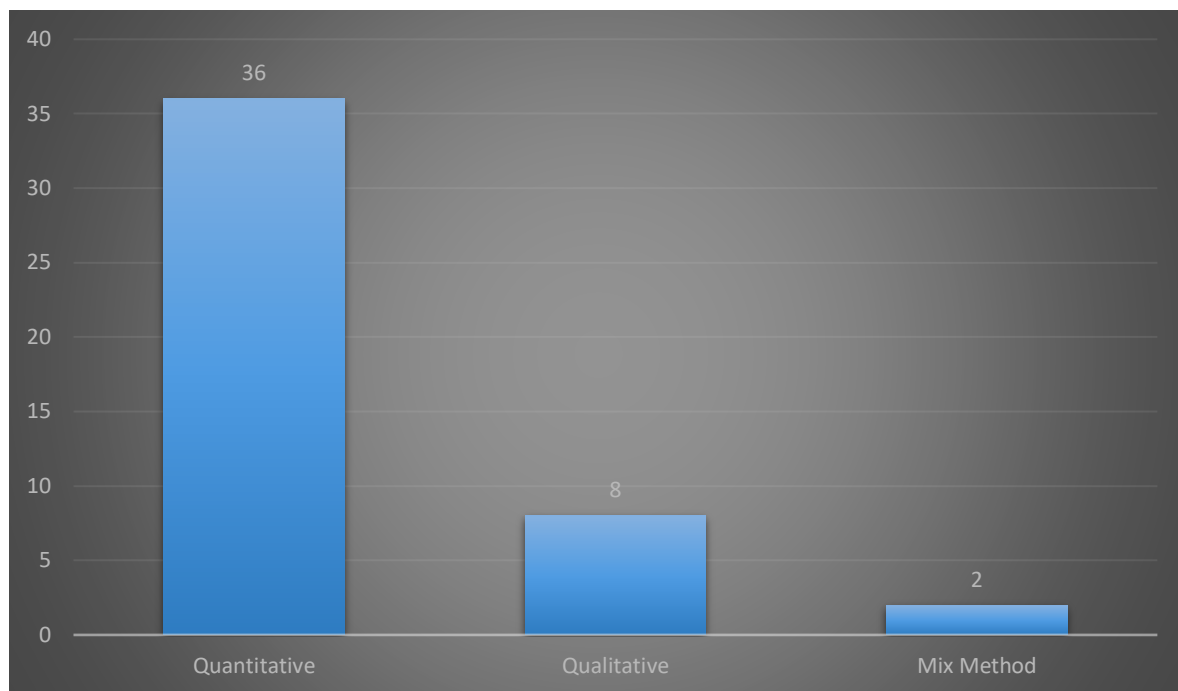


Figure 3. Research Paradigm

Figure 3 presents the distribution of research paradigms in management accounting studies across the 46 articles reviewed. The analysis indicates a clear dominance of quantitative approaches, applied in 36 articles (78.3%). Qualitative methods appear in 8 articles (17.4%), while mixed-method designs are employed in only 2 articles (4.3%).

The prevalence of quantitative strategies in MSME management accounting research indicates a continued emphasis on hypothesis formulation and numerical data collection, predominantly through surveys and statistical regression. While this approach is valuable for systematically examining relationships between variables, it risks oversimplifying the field by overlooking the complexity and contextual nuances of accounting in the MSME environment. In contrast, qualitative methods, which account for 17.4% of the studies reviewed, have received comparatively less attention. This suggests that the literature has yet to fully engage with in-depth analyses of accounting practices, the perspectives of business actors, and organizational structures. Although qualitative research is often perceived as less rigorous, it offers an essential counterbalance by highlighting practical aspects of accounting techniques, elements that are adaptable, locally relevant, and responsive to the diverse challenges faced by MSMEs across different regions.

The limited adoption of mixed methods, representing only 4.3% of the studies, indicates that attempts to integrate quantitative data with rich contextual narratives remain relatively uncommon in this field. However, considering the diverse and dynamic nature of MSMEs, mixed-method approaches hold substantial potential for producing more comprehensive and nuanced insights into the phenomena under investigation.

This finding addresses Research Question 1 by identifying the predominant methodological approach in MSME management accounting studies, while also reinforcing the observation in Research Question 2 of a substantial methodological gap. Consequently, there is a clear need to diversify research approaches not only by increasing the volume of studies but also by deepening their epistemological foundations and strengthening local contextualization. Such efforts are essential for building a more comprehensive and practically relevant understanding of management accounting practices within MSMEs.

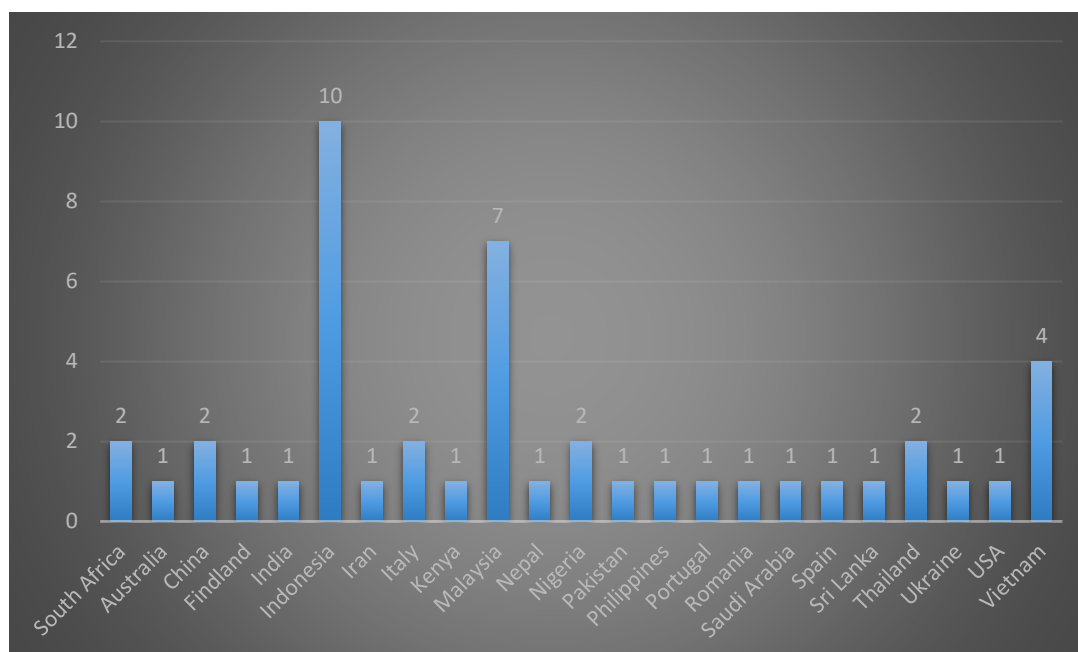


Figure 4. Research Development on the topic of Accounting Management in MSMEs in Various Countries

Figure 4 presents the geographical distribution of research on management accounting in MSMEs, derived from the review of 46 articles. Indonesia emerges as the most prolific contributor, producing 10 publications (21.7%). Malaysia follows with 7 publications (15.2%), while Vietnam ranks third with 4 publications (8.7%). Other countries, including South Africa, Australia, Kenya, and Thailand, each contributed 2 publications (4.3%). In contrast, countries such as India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, and the United States each accounted for only a single publication (2.2%).

Descriptively, the data indicate that Southeast Asia serves as the primary hub for MSME management accounting studies, with Indonesia and Malaysia demonstrating particular dominance. From an interpretive perspective, however, this trend reveals an epistemic imbalance in global knowledge production. Indonesia's leading position may stem from supportive national policies for MSME research and strong institutional incentives for academic publication within universities. Yet, such concentration risks introducing locality bias, thereby limiting the generalizability of findings beyond the regional context. The minimal representation from other countries with substantial MSME sectors, such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines, further underscores a gap in geographical coverage within the literature. This finding addresses part of Research Question 2 by highlighting the weak cross-border diversity in MSME management accounting research. In practice, variations in economic structures, organizational cultures, regulatory frameworks, and the social characteristics of MSME stakeholders across nations can profoundly influence the adoption and application of management accounting techniques.

Concerning Research Question 1, which examines the development of management accounting technique adoption among cross-border MSMEs, these findings indicate that the existing literature has yet to adequately reflect the global complexity of MSME accounting practices. Consequently, future research should prioritize two key areas: (1) Enhancing cross-border research collaborations to enable more robust comparative studies and foster a deeper, multicultural understanding of accounting practices within MSMEs. (2) Increasing the representation and contributions of developing countries, currently underrepresented in the literature, to broaden both the theoretical foundations and practical relevance of MSME management accounting research.

Therefore, this geographical distribution not only reveals where research activities are concentrated but also reinforces the argument that the current knowledge landscape remains insufficiently inclusive and global in scope. Addressing these limitations requires fostering greater cross-border collaboration and ensuring more regionally balanced representation in future research agendas.

Table 5. Distribution of Research Methodological Approaches by Country

Country	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mix Method	Total
Indonesia	10	3	2	15
Malaysia	6	0	0	6
Vietnam	3	0	0	3
South Africa	1	1	0	2
China	2	1	0	3
Italy	1	1	0	2
Nigeria	2	0	0	2
Thailand	2	0	0	2
India	1	0	0	1
Philippines	1	0	0	1
Pakistan	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Australia	1	0	0	1
Sri Lanka	1	0	0	1
USA	0	1	0	1
Spain	0	1	0	1
Saudi Arabia	0	1	0	1
Finland	0	0	1	1
Portugal	1	0	0	1
Romania	1	0	0	1
Nepal	1	0	0	1
Ukraine	1	0	0	1
Kenya	1	0	0	1

Table 5 presents the methodological approaches employed in MSME management accounting research across various countries. The results indicate a strong predominance of quantitative methods, which are utilized in 36 studies (78.3% of the total). Qualitative approaches appear in 8 studies (17.4%), whereas mixed-method designs remain uncommon, accounting for only 2 studies (4.3%).

From a geographical standpoint, Indonesia emerges as the leading contributor, producing 15 studies in total—10 employing quantitative methods, three utilizing qualitative approaches, and two adopting mixed-method designs. This not only underscores Indonesia's quantitative dominance in the literature but also reveals a relatively greater methodological diversity compared to other countries. By contrast, all six studies from Malaysia exclusively employed quantitative methods, with no representation of alternative approaches. Similar patterns are evident in Vietnam (three studies) and Nigeria (two studies), where research relied solely on quantitative methods. A limited number of countries, including China, South Africa, Italy, and the United States, incorporated qualitative approaches, albeit to a minimal degree. Apart from Indonesia, Finland is the only country to have adopted a mixed-method design, represented by just one study.

The findings reveal a pronounced methodological bias toward positivist paradigms, which emphasize narrowly defined hypothesis testing and rely heavily on quantitative data. While this approach offers notable advantages, particularly in enhancing objectivity and enabling generalization, it also raises important epistemological concerns. Given the socially multifunctional, culturally embedded, and organizationally complex contexts in which MSMEs operate, there is a pressing need to expand the use of qualitative and mixed-method approaches. These alternatives are better equipped to uncover the context-specific, nuanced, and subjective dimensions of practitioners' lived experiences, elements that typically elude purely numerical analysis.

The limited application of qualitative and mixed-method approaches underscores a significant methodological gap in the literature, as highlighted in the second research question (RQ2). This gap reflects not only an epistemic imbalance but also an under-utilization of the advantages afforded by data triangulation. In practice, the prevailing reliance on a single analytical approach could be mitigated through the systematic integration of diverse methodologies, thereby enhancing the depth of critical analysis and strengthening the validity and robustness of research findings.

Thus, the results presented in Table 5 underscore the need to diversify methodological approaches in management accounting research. The current over-reliance on quantitative methodologies should give

way to more reflective, probing, and context-sensitive designs. Such a shift is critical to ensure that knowledge development extends beyond the mere application of statistical calculations and is instead grounded in empirical realities, managerial practices of MSMEs across different countries, and the nuances of cross-cultural dynamics.

DISCUSSION

A critical examination of forty-six studies on the adoption of management accounting techniques in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) between 2015 and 2025 reveals notable structural limitations that constrain both theoretical development and practical relevance. The marked surge in publications during 2022 and 2023, followed by a sharp decline, can be interpreted as a reflection of episodic incentives within the academic system, such as time-limited funding calls, targeted special issues, and shifting editorial priorities. Such drivers often produce short bursts of research activity that are not necessarily aligned with the long-term knowledge needs of MSME communities. This pattern underscores the importance of establishing sustained research agendas that transcend opportunistic publishing cycles and address deeper, longitudinal questions.

Methodologically, the field remains dominated by cross-sectional quantitative survey designs, which account for approximately 78% of the reviewed studies. While such approaches offer statistical precision, they often operationalize adoption as a static variable or an attitudinal measure, thereby limiting construct validity and obscuring the processes through which capabilities emerge, techniques evolve, and accounting practices interact with organizational routines. Addressing these limitations requires a more diverse methodological repertoire, including in-depth qualitative inquiry to develop grounded process theories, comparative multi-site case studies to reveal contextual contingencies, longitudinal panel studies to capture temporal change, and pragmatic evaluations capable of testing causal relationships in applied settings. This observation is consistent with (Sunar et al. 2025), who found that most research in the field relies on quantitative cross-sectional survey designs, with very few studies employing qualitative approaches, multi-site case studies, or longitudinal designs. According to the authors, such methodological dominance restricts the capacity of scholarly work to capture the contextual nuances and processional dynamics inherent in the adoption and adaptation of management accounting practices.

From a measurement perspective, advances are needed in the use of objective financial indicators, multi-informant data collection, and validated instruments capable of distinguishing between the use, competence, and behavioral integration of accounting techniques. The geographical distribution of research is similarly imbalanced, with a heavy concentration in Indonesia and Malaysia and minimal representation from other regions. This narrow scope restricts external validity and hinders theoretical generalization. Strengthening coordinated cross-national research networks, harmonizing research protocols, building capacity among scholars in underrepresented countries, and fostering funding mechanisms that prioritize comparative work would substantially enhance the breadth and relevance of the literature. These observations align with (Buchori, et al. 2025), who found that Indonesia produces the highest number of publications on management accounting in MSMEs, followed by Malaysia, with very limited contributions from other countries. According to the authors, this imbalance risks introducing geographical bias and reducing the generalizability of research findings.

The limited integration of research findings into policy and practice further highlights a persistent gap between academic output and real-world impact. Bridging this divide requires moving beyond knowledge production toward its effective translation and application. Achieving this necessitates close collaboration with practitioners and policymakers in the co-design of studies, embedding pilot interventions within operational contexts, and employing implementation science approaches to evaluate fidelity, adaptation, scalability, and cost-effectiveness. Conceptually, greater theoretical integration is also needed, combining contingency theory with institutional and capability-based perspectives to explain when and why particular accounting techniques are adopted, and how they influence firm performance across diverse institutional environments.

A forward-looking research agenda should prioritize three complementary streams. First, exploratory qualitative studies using ethnography and process tracing can generate context-rich, mid-range theories. Second, comparative longitudinal studies employing multi-level modelling and structural equation modelling can test and refine hypotheses concerning the determinants and outcomes of adoption. Third, pragmatic intervention studies including quasi-experimental or randomized evaluations combined with process and economic assessments can provide rigorous evidence on what works, for whom, and under what conditions. Realizing this agenda will require sustained editorial support for methodological plurality, funding for long-term and comparative projects, and institutional arrangements that facilitate ongoing engagement between researchers and MSME stakeholders. By pursuing these directions, future research can produce cumulative theoretical contributions while delivering actionable insights to strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of MSMEs in an increasingly dynamic global economy.

CONCLUSION

This review synthesizes a decade of research on management accounting practices in MSMEs, highlighting notable progress while identifying critical gaps that warrant further attention. The literature demonstrates an increased understanding of how both basic and advanced techniques, such as Strategic Management Accounting, Activity-Based Costing, and Material Flow Cost Accounting, are applied across different MSME settings. However, adoption patterns remain uneven, with most studies concentrated in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, while other regions with substantial MSME sectors receive little focus. Methodologically, research continues to be dominated by quantitative cross-sectional surveys. Although such approaches offer statistical precision, they provide limited insight into the social, cultural, institutional, and organizational factors that influence adoption. The scarcity of longitudinal studies further restricts understanding of how these practices evolve and generate long-term strategic value. Collectively, these findings underscore the need for stronger theoretical integration and broader coverage in both geography and research methods.

Future studies should integrate qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches, supported by longitudinal designs that track changes in management accounting practices over time and in response to economic, technological, and policy shifts. Expanding cross-national collaboration, establishing shared research standards, and enhancing the skills of scholars in underrepresented regions will improve both the quality and global relevance of research. Strengthening the connection between academic work and practical application is also essential. This can be achieved through participatory, action-oriented approaches that engage MSME practitioners and policymakers from the outset. Such strategies will help ensure that research findings translate into concrete improvements in policy-making, training, and management practices. By combining diverse methods, broader geographic coverage, and active stakeholder engagement, research in this field can generate actionable knowledge that enhances the competitiveness, resilience, and long-term sustainability of MSMEs worldwide.

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