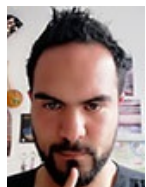


# Latin American research in business, management, and accounting is still dwarfed by Spain and the Global North



*Faced with institutional requirements to publish in top-tier international journals, researchers from Ibero-American countries often express concern that their work is becoming distant from their local communities. The value of participating in international debates and being able to influence the direction of research globally is sometimes provided as justification for this. But does this withstand scrutiny? [Julián David Cortés Sánchez](#) (Universidad del Rosario, Colombia) has analysed Ibero-American research to determine to what extent it is recognised by scholars from the Global North and by international excellence indicators. The reality is that even the most-cited research from Ibero-American countries has struggled to make an impression internationally, with just a few countries overwhelmingly responsible for much of this limited output and impact.*

I recently moderated a symposium on business, management and accounting research organised by my institution, Universidad del Rosario, in Colombia. After several participants had presented, the same question had already been raised umpteen times: “what’s the point of publishing in top-tier journals if we’re far from our local community, private sector, and state?” One answer to this question is that by participating in international debates we might be able to influence the direction of research globally.



Research from Latin America has remained distant from global academic debate ([Free-Photos](#), CC0)

If this is true, I figured, the business and management research published in top-tier journals by researchers in Colombia and other Latin American countries should be recognised by international research excellence indicators and be cited by scholars from the Global North, including those at powerhouses such as the Wharton School, London Business School, or INSEAD.

So I did a little investigating, looking at two sources: the [Mapping Scientific Excellence](#) website (up to March 2018), and [a study](#) conducted by Philip Podsakoff et al. which aimed to identify the universities and researchers that had had the greatest impact on the field of management during the preceding 25 years, as well as the factors influencing that impact.

In the former, just one Latin American business school appeared: the University of São Paulo. In the Podsakoff et al. study, just 15 of the 100 most-cited universities were from outside the USA, with none from Latin America. It seemed that Latin American research on business, management and accounting did not fulfil the criteria for inclusion in either analysis.

Two questions arose. What is the current state of the most-cited research on business, management, and accounting in Latin America? And how does this compare with research from business schools and scholars in the Global North?

Several bibliometric studies have been conducted on Latin American research on business, management, and accounting, including those focused on specific topics (such as [accounting](#) or [corporate governance](#)), journals (e.g. [Revista de Administração de Empresas](#)), or countries (e.g. [Brazil](#)). My contribution to this discussion was to use Scopus data to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the ten most-cited business, management, and accounting documents in the [22 countries of Ibero-America](#) (in the broad sense, including Spain and Portugal) from 1996 to 2017.

Besides pure citation counts, I also considered a number of additional variables, including document type, openness of access, number of authors, year of publication, author gender, documents published by author, author and journal h-indices, [Field-Weighted Citation Impact](#), institutional affiliation, and institutional accreditation. This analysis produced a number of interesting findings.

## 1. Spain far outweighs Latin America, but both are eclipsed by the Global North

Intellectual production across Ibero-America is growing, but Spain is the true powerhouse in terms of productivity and influence. Over the last 22 years, Spain has produced more documents than all of the Latin American countries in the dataset combined. Spain also has the highest average number of citations and Field-Weighted Citation Impact score.

The [most cited paper](#) (with more than 1,000 citations) was published in 2004 by [Elisabet Garriga](#), then of IESE (Barcelona), but even Spanish authors barely make an impression globally. Compared to scholars such as [Kathleen Eisenhardt](#) (Stanford University), Garriga's total citations amount to just five per cent of Eisenhardt's total. As for Latin America, just to match Eisenhardt's total ( $\approx 20,000$  citations) one would have to add up all citations to the 50 most-cited papers in the region.



EGADE Business School at the Monterrey Institute of Technology ([Alex Ruiz](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#))

## 2. Most publications are articles, the majority behind paywalls

Those researchers, institutions, students, practitioners, or policymakers without the (abundant) resources required to access the most-cited papers are being excluded from intellectual discussions and denied opportunities to make potentially valuable contributions to decision-making in practice or policy.

### 3. One particular journal takes up a lot of space

*Espacios* is the journal to have published most Ibero-American business, management and accounting research. In 2017 alone, this journal [published more than 1,700 articles](#) (or 141 per month), with 13 of the 22 Ibero-American countries represented with at least one paper. The average number of articles published in this journal by these 13 countries is a considerable 280. *Espacios* is an open access journal with a relatively low submission fee of USD\$100.

It also appears to have an extremely efficient peer-review process; having examined ten of 32 articles from its 2018 volume (39:2), the average time from submission to publication was one month. In two cases the entire process took just six days.

While these reasons may make the journal attractive for researchers looking to submit papers, visibility and international impact is another matter. *Espacios* has an h-index of 3 with more than 4,500 documents published since 2007, whereas the *Academy of Management Journal* has an h-index of 252 with just 1,636 documents published since 1975.

### 4. Female authors are underrepresented

Less than three out of ten authors were women. This estimate is similar to the global proportion of female researchers, which [stands at 28.8 per cent](#), but averages for Latin America, Spain, and Portugal (Ibero-America) are significantly higher.

### 5. (Hyper) Matthew effect

There was a highly skewed distribution among documents and citations, with a very small percentage of documents (1%) accounting for the majority of all citations (between 951-1,000). Moreover, this distribution is becoming more skewed with each passing week. The 17 most-cited papers received an average of 2.2 citations over two weeks, whereas 2,607 (67%) of 3,835 Ibero-American research articles published in 2017 have yet to receive a single citation.

### 6. Relation to accreditation (AACSB)

Accreditation with the [AACSB](#) (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) was also found to be significant, with researchers from those AACSB-accredited Ibero-American institutions scoring highly in a number of metrics, including Field-Weighted Citation Impact, total citations, and journal h-index.

## Conclusion

Business, management, and accounting research in Ibero-America is in the midst of a fertile period. It is reaching its highest overall production in more than 20 years, but on closer inspection much of this production and influence can be attributed to a few powerhouse countries, namely Spain, Brazil, and Portugal.

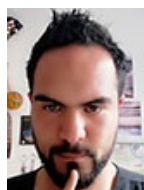
For those countries found to have less output and impact, it may be that research policies and evaluations which only consider publications in top-tier journals should be reconsidered. Universities and research institutions should make decisions on hiring and promotion by considering a wider range of factors, such as academic responsibilities or community outreach. This would incentivise and reward good practice, allow researchers to strengthen their competencies, and perhaps encourage them to engage in global discussions without necessarily ignoring local relevance.

In terms of female participation in business, management, and accounting, national and institutional policies should be reconsidered to increase women's involvement as professors and researchers, not only in these subjects but in science more generally.

The results obtained in this study provide for a comparative analysis between Latin American countries, including those with relatively low production or impact in business, management, and accounting research (e.g. Guatemala and Paraguay). This will allow national science and technology institutions to measure how near or far their countries are from their neighbours in terms of research production and impact.

*Notes:*

- *The views expressed here are of the authors and do not reflect the position of the Centre or of the LSE*
  - *This post is a slightly modified version of an article originally published by [LSE Impact Blog](#)*
  - *This article is based on the author's preprint: "[A bibliometric analysis of the most cited documents in business, management, and accounting in Ibero-America](#)" (2018)*
  - *Please read our [Comments Policy](#) before commenting*
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