

ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL EDITORS' FORUM ON CITATIONS

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

For better or for worse (and many would say worse), the importance of being cited by others is growing for both individual researchers and the journals in which they publish. In light of the increasing importance of citation rates to researchers' careers, this month's Editor's Forum focuses on the factors associated with citations to management research articles.

In "What Causes a Management Article to Be Cited—Article, Author, or Journal?," Timothy Judge, Daniel Cable, Amy Colbert, and I examine the extent to which article citation counts are attributable to characteristics of authors (e.g., previous productivity, university placement), the articles themselves (e.g., idea, writing, and method), and the journals in which they are published (journal citation rate and subjective prestige). In data from 614 articles appearing between 1990 and 1994 in 21 highly ranked management journals, we find that the characteristics of articles, authors, and journals and the placement of an article within the issue in which it appears (first versus last) are all associated with subsequent citation levels. Moreover, characteristics of articles (e.g., idea and writing) are more closely associated with citations than are characteristics of authors, suggesting that the merits of an article per se trump the impact of its author(s)' prestige or prior productivity.

However, although article and author characteristics both have an impact on subsequent citations, the most powerful predictor of all is the average citation rate of the journal in which an article is published. This finding has a number of implications. First, as citations become more and more important in promotion, tenure, and salary decisions, the pressure on authors to place their work in the highest-tier journals can be expected to increase. Where this trend will lead is uncertain, but it is already affecting the operations and outcomes of top-tier and specialty journals alike. In addition, it may be shifting the balance of the types of research produced (for example, toward meta-analyses and away from primary studies). Finally, because there is considerable overlap in article quality both within and between management journals, the potential for making poor promotion or tenure decisions based primarily or even exclu-

sively on the number of "top tier" publications is increased.

Because of the growing importance of the issues involved, we asked two former editors to comment on our findings. In "Citations to Management Articles: Cautions for the Science about Advice for the Scientist," Daniel Ilgen points out that, if anything, Judge and his colleagues have underestimated the impact of journal placement on subsequent citations, because of the restriction of range in their sample (i.e., to the top 21 journals). However, Ilgen strongly cautions against attempting to apply what is known about correlates of *article* citations to higher levels of analysis, such as individual researchers, academic departments, or colleges. He says, "There are . . . dangers in reaching back to article-level predictors to influence unit-level citations and in assuming that the latent construct, scholarship, is similarly captured in citations at all levels." For example, encouraging authors to focus primarily on reviews and theoretical articles (which receive the most citations in Judge et al.'s analyses) would not be consistent with a model of good scholarship, since "the long-run viability of the field cannot be maintained on theoretical models and reviews not accompanied by empirical works." Nor would urging scholars to publish only certain types of research in highly cited journals facilitate the interdisciplinary and problem-centered research that so many people feel is sorely needed.

In "The Glory and Tyranny of Citation Impact: An East Asian Perspective," Kwok Leung indicates that the push to publish in top-tier journals is also very strong in East Asia. He says, "Generally speaking, the current discourse in top business schools in East Asia mirrors that in the best research universities in the United States. The big buzzword—especially among untenured professors—is 'hits' in top-tier journals. Lists that prescribe the recognized journals and their status are commonplace, and hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions are significantly affected by publications in major journals. In parallel with this development, citation impact has also become an important yardstick for evaluating senior academics."

On the positive side, Leung notes that this pres-

sure for top-tier publications has rapidly improved the conceptual and methodological rigor of East Asian research. However, on the negative side, he argues that East Asians' publishing success has been achieved almost exclusively by molding their research methods and topics to Western norms. Given that, Leung believes that East Asians' fast-growing success in Western empirical journals may be impeding the development of East Asian management theory: "It is ironical that the same force that propels East Asian academics to fly high and seek to publish in high-impact journals may also 'clip their feathers' in the theoretical realm." Still, he predicts that East Asians' theoretical contributions will follow as they establish their own top-tier journals and "after their status as world-class empiricists is firmly established."

In sum, the authors of all three of the articles

included in this forum believe that the increasing importance of citation counts and journal status may have long-term institutional effects on the fields of organization and management science. Thus, we hope that this forum will spur further discussion and debate about this topic. Without explicit attention to the growing role of both citations and journal impact ratings, it seems likely that current trends will continue (or even escalate), with uncertain consequences. Although most of the speculations offered to date have been negative, it is possible that some positive results might ensue as well, particularly if the issues are increasingly attended to and appropriate actions taken in response.

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