

Special Issue Proposal for Journal of International Management

Improving Rigor in Research: Replication Studies in International Management

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Proposal

The international management (IM) discipline has long enthusiastically focused on both novel and practical topics due to the discipline's rich contextual nature (Buckley, Doh, & Benischke, 2017; Grøgaard, Sartor, & Rademaker, 2022). However, as with scholars in other social sciences, IM scholars have spent substantial efforts on identifying isolated evidence (Delios et al., 2022; Tsang & Kwan, 1999), with limited attempts of replicating prior studies (Dau, Santangelo, & van Witteloostuijn, 2022; Wang, Liu, Delios, Qian, 2023). In fact, replication studies, whether adopting the same or alternative research designs with respect to measurement, analysis, or population (Bettis et al., 2016a; Wang et al., 2023), are employed to assess the reproducibility and

repeatability of a particular prior study (Bettis, Helfat, & Shaver, 2016b; Popper, 1959; Tsang & Kwan, 1999). Yet, the literature reveals that many impactful studies in biomedical science and other scientific disciplines fails to replicate (Bettis et al., 2016a; Open Science Collaboration, 2015), implying a shakier foundation of scientific knowledge (Bettis et al., 2016b; Tsang & Kwan, 1999).

With few exceptions (e.g., Blagoeva, Jensen, & Merchant, 2020; Johnson Jr., Arya, & Mirchandani, 2013; McGuire, James, & Papadopoulos, 2016; Tsang & Yamanoi, 2016), replication studies are not common in the IM discipline. Yet, replication is particularly crucial to IM because IM studies are expected to deliver actionable results and implications (Grøgaard et al., 2022), and they are by definition context-specific as the findings are largely subject to heterogeneous institutional settings in both geographic and temporal aspects (Buckley et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2023). Such heterogeneities are prominent for both developed and developing economies under the recent dynamic, uncertain, and potentially decoupling era (Witt, Lewin, Li, & Gaur, 2023). Therefore, single studies without replication may not generate reliable implications for practitioners given that the significance of the p value indicates “only about the probability of finding a result in a particular sample” (Bettis et al., 2016a: 259). Worse still, researchers tend to focus on finding statistically significant relationships as opposed to substantive effect sizes because journals mostly accept papers in which hypotheses are supported.

This bias toward significant results leads to the practice of “HARKing” (Hypothesizing After the Results are Known) that represents “post hoc hypotheses in a

research report as if they were, in fact, a priori hypotheses” (Kerr 1998: 197). In the case of IM research, cross-country differences and complexities of multinational activities may also cause false positives and biased findings that obfuscate our theoretical understandings as findings derived from any single study are conditional on the sample, period, measures, etc. (Dau et al., 2022; Delios et al., 2022). The lack of replication studies not only runs counter to the fact that replication is a cornerstone of scientific research but also leads to a fragmented body of IM knowledge (Bettis et al., 2016; Tsang & Kwan, 1999).

Against this backdrop, more scholarly attention toward replication studies is required to strengthen the scientific foundation of IM research and to facilitate the integration of prior research results. While there are replication studies in topics such as performance (Berry & Kaul, 2016; Pisani, Garcia-Bernardo, & Heemskerk, 2020), diversification (Miller & Yang, 2016; Tsang & Yamanoi, 2016), corporate socially irresponsible practices (Bu, Xu, & Liang, 2023), corruption (Wu, Delios, Chen, & Wang, 2023), and international joint ventures (Wang et al., 2023) in the IM field, fewer than 20 replication studies have been published across the broad IM literature over the last five decades (see Dau et al., 2022 for a review). We surely need more replication studies that revisit prior seminal works to probe their robustness, external validity and generalizability by using different measurements, analyses, samples, and/or populations, with special attention toward contextual characteristics. In other words, replication studies help to define the boundary conditions of earlier theorization and harmonize inconsistent findings. After all, we need balanced evidence to build a

cumulative body of empirical knowledge that facilitates scholarly conversation (Bettis et al., 2016b; Ethiraj, Gambardella, & Helfat, 2016), and fine tunes theories by addressing where, who, when, and why questions (Dau et al., 2022). Given the rapid developments in computing technologies and the infant state of replication studies, both retests with advanced methods and proposals of newer templates of replication studies are urgently needed to establish the methodological protocols and culture of replication for the IM discipline.

To draw IM researchers' attention to replication, we propose a special issue of the *Journal of International Management* with the title "Improving Rigor in Research: Replication Studies in International Management." The purpose of this special issue is to foster more of a spirit of replication in the IM field with a focus on contextual characteristics and methodological dialogues. We are interested in heterogeneous institutional settings that may affect the generalizability of impactful IM studies, including but not limited to replications with different samples, time periods, countries and other salient aspects. Potential submitters should think of findings that anchor important topical areas of IM, are widely referenced, or have produced controversial results. It should be noted that replications we seek can either confirm or disconfirm a result. What is important is that they bring additional knowledge to the issue at hand. In this regard, we welcome both primary replications (i.e., a replication of an original empirical study) and secondary replications (i.e., a replication of a prior replication study; e.g., Pisani et al., 2020) that adopt a newer methodology or a more comprehensive dataset. We are also curious about any new methodological thoughts in

regard to the approaches to and protocols of replication studies for establishing a more solid methodological foundation. The theme of this special issue is broad enough to attract a quantity of high-quality manuscripts to fill a special issue yet shares enough common elements to provide the cohesion required to make a significant contribution to the IM field.

Sample Topics

This proposed JIM Special Issue seeks to provide a better understanding of the theoretical importance of replication studies in IM. New theoretical perspectives, methodological discussions, and empirical evidence can help perfect the theoretical understanding of internationalization behaviors in the new institutional landscape, and how replication studies can be better integrated with IM literature.

We welcome both theoretical and empirical contributions, and studies at the regional, network, business, or personal level, as well as those adopting multiple levels in their research design. We offer a few questions below to provide a sense of what the special issue seeks to address. These questions are illustrative and not intended to set boundaries in terms of the key themes of interest.

Within the scope of the special issue, potential themes for individual submissions include, but are not limited to:

1. How do changes in the current institutional conditions such as geopolitical tensions and de-globalization sentiments affect the generalizability of prior IM theorization?
2. Do results of certain prior IM studies still hold during or after the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. Are there any mixed findings across some areas of International Business (IB) studies that replication studies may help reconcile the equivocalness? (We do not seek meta-analyses as they are different from replication studies.) Are

there any impactful IM studies that a replication can provide better measurements, an improved model specification, a larger or different sample, etc.?

4. How does the advancement in methodology, especially machine learning, affect the reliability and robustness of earlier IB studies?
5. Are there any better approaches to conduct replication studies, and what are the criteria and why?
6. Is it really troublesome to advocate replication of qualitative studies (i.e., Pratt, Kaplan, & Whittington, 2020) and are there any better ways to conduct such replication studies?
7. There is often a presumption that findings of a highly culture-specific study are not generalizable to a different cultural context. Whether and to what extent is the presumption true?

All papers will be subject to JIM's usual review process and must meet the publication standards of the journal. Final acceptance of papers will be contingent on incorporating reviewers' feedback to the satisfaction of the editors.

Submission Process and Deadlines

* All manuscripts will be reviewed as a cohort for this special issue. Manuscripts must be submitted by **November 1st, 2024**.

* For informal inquiries related to the Special Issue, proposed topics, and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives, please contact the guest editors.

Special Issue Workshop

We will arrange an initial JIM Special Issue workshop to help authors with this topic and give some feedback to those have submitted a short proposal. The workshop to be held at **Xiamen University, August 29th, 2024, located in the city of Xiamen, Fujian province, People's Republic of China**. The special issue editors and JIM editorial board members will provide developmental feedback to paper presentations during the workshop to enhance the quality and contribution of papers in order to maximize the impact of the SI. But presentation at the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of a paper for publication in JIM and attending the workshop is not a precondition for acceptance into the Special Issue.

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