PUBLISH AND PERISH: CITATION (OR LACK THEREOF) IN ACCOUNTING RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine journals of accounting and auditing indexed by the Scopus database. We observed the citations received until 2010 by the articles published between 1996 and 2002 as a way of identifying patterns in citations. We calculated the chances of an article published in those journals not to be quoted and identified journals that are more likely to publish an article that will get many citations. We collected data from the page of Scopus and selected only the journals with the terms accounting or auditing in their names. We removed from the sample the journals that were discontinued or that have not been regularly published between 1996 and 2002. The books were also excluded. The final sample includes 20 journals. The results show that the Journal of Accounting and Economics has the highest average number of citations (38.71 per article). The percentage of articles that are never cited within eight years after its publication varies from 0.05% to 35.29% depending on the journal. The results also show that, for some journals, the mean number of citations per year continues to rise at least up to the eighth year, suggesting that important papers usually need some time to be recognized as such.

1 INTRODUCTION

The field of academic research resembles a sport competition when it comes to its practitioners and the quest for improved performance and recognition. While in sports the goal is to win cash awards, recognition and medals, in academia the prizes also include promotion (BRUSA; CARTER; HEILMAN, 2010, GRABER; LAUNOV; WÄLDE, 2008; MEHO; 2008) and financing (ABRAMO; D'ANGELO, 2010) being considered some kind of strategic information (BANEYX, 2008). In both fields the competition is fierce and contenders are constantly evaluated and compared. Therefore, an important the decision of the papers' evaluation but not limited to this, and also the journals and researchers, and the main question: what criteria should be used to separate the wheat from the chaff?

One criterion used to measure the quality of journals, publications and researchers is the citation analysis. Meho (2008) comments that the number of citations obtained by a paper or a researcher involves the amount of times that this material or researcher is cited and the assumption that the most important works and the most influential researchers will be cited a higher number of times when compared to other researchers.

Citations can be used, in the field of assessment work, as we admit in the work, in three different levels: The first and more simple (maybe intuitive) level is just the sum of all of is usually used simply counting the number of citations to define what is a work that contributes to the progress of science (MACROBERTS; MACROBERTS, 1996). When it comes to journals, the most famous indicator used is the so-called Impact Factor, developed by Eugene Garfield in 1963, which relates to the amount of citations received by the journal in a given period of time (GARFIELD, 1972). In turn, to evaluate authors, it is used the H-index, relating the number of citations and number of papers published by the author (HIRSCH, 2005; BORNMANN; DANIEL, 2007). Meho (2008) also points that the web offers some alternatives to this kind of evaluation, mentioning the download counts, for

example.

Previous work emphasized the importance of citation and the highlight through awards in the three levels mentioned: Papers and Journals (BONNER et al., 2006) Journals (SAHA; SAINT; CHRISTAKIS, 2003; ARCHAMBAULT; LARIVIÈRE, 2009) and authors (GLÄNZEL; PERSSON, 2005; WALLACE; LARIVIÈRE; GINGRAS, 2009; HIRSCH; 2005; AHMED et al., 2004, GARFIELD; MALIN, 1968; SCHREIBER, 2009).

The term "impact" used in this paper refers not only to the 'impact factor' of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). The meaning of the term as we used in this paper refers to an event with more wide assumption of the word, not limiting the methodology used by the developers of the famous index. It concerns the ability of an event, as a research or an author, to make a difference and influence others and thus change the course of science. As we mentioned previously, the main focus of this work is the figure of the citation. We adopt the citations as our impact's unit. Therefore, at first, it is admitted that the work that most impacted are those with the highest number of citations. Morgan (1983) comments that, when making a citation, given researcher is not only recognizing the contribution of a third party in his work, but is also giving credit to the cited researcher. In other words, the service contributes to the maintenance of a prestigious career of the researcher or a journal, since it, in terms of publications, depends on the number of times their papers are cited by other researchers and journals.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the journals of accounting and auditing available in Scopus, aiming to understand the patterns of citations received by papers published at different journals. More specifically, we want to know what a researcher can expect when publishing in a high prestige journal. What are his chances of receiving no citations? And which journals are more likely to publish widely popular papers, with dozens of citations? We will also analyze the evolution of the number of citations, with the objective of knowing how long it takes for a paper to be noticed by other researchers and receive citations.

2 PRIOR STUDIES

Given the constitutive nature of research quality, accounting research is a social and institutional practice within which the 'precise notions of what is good research are constructed' by 'legitimate and certified members' of a specific scientific community (PANOZZO, 1997, p. 474). By defining the 'quality' of research, an elite group constructs 'a systematic perpetuation of a blinkered view of the world' (EVERETT et al., 2003, p. 163). Top tier journals have their own narrow definitions for legitimizing 'financial accounting research' (MATHIEU; MCCONOMY, 2003). As a result, certain types of research are not published in these top journals because the studies are considered to lack scientific rigor or quality (BAKER; BETTNER, 1997).

At the same time, citation analysis is being increasingly used to assess the impact of an article, the career success of researchers, and the quality and status of academic journals. This means that academic success depends not only on the researcher's ability to create research projects and articles that fit the strict criteria of journal editors, but also on his or her ability to draw attention and be cited.

Citation research provides insights into journals, topics, papers, and authors which have had a significant "impact" on research (O'LEARY, 2009). "Impact" may be construed as scholarly "influence" or "quality." A journal's "impact" is important in assessing its

contributions to and relative importance within its field. “Impact” can be measured as the average number of citations to articles published (MCKEE, 2010).

Interesting observe that Werner Karal Heisenberg, co-founder of quantum mechanics, he is one of the most important physicists of the twentieth century. He discovered one of the central principles of modern physics, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1932. His work is still influential today — still highly cited and influencing today’s award-winning scientists. An article’s ongoing influence: A view of backfile citations to “On the dispersal of radiation by atoms” 1925-2008 sum 4184 of the times cited until 2008 and Heisbenber H-index was 29 (ISI WEB OF KNOWLEDGE, 2008). In the accounting area, the author of the most cited paper, with 441 citations until 2010 is Paul M. Healy, which is called “The effect of bonus schemes on accounting decisions” published in the Journal of Accounting and Economics in 1985 (SCOPUS, 2010)

For McKee (2010) the reasons for conducting a citation analysis include:

a) To establish the impact that a particular work has had by identifying which other authors based their work upon it or cited it within their own papers.

b) To learn more about a field or a topic by identifying seminal works in that area.

c) To determine what impact a particular author has had within his/her own discipline and beyond by looking at his/her total number of citations broken down by discipline and by country.

d) For promotion and tenure purposes by looking at the quality of sources where a scholar’s work has been published and cited.

Research on accounting journals and faculty has been addressed different authors. Zeff (1996) identified a total of 77 accounting journals published in English; Chang, Cheng and Cheng (2005) utilized a sample of 23 journals to establish a ranking 119 accounting programs in Asia. These are some examples of studies addressing accounting journals. Other studies have evaluated and ranked accounting journals using different approaches. Table 1 shows some of these researches.

A number of studies have been conducted on the growth of professional literature. Many of these studies have attempted to estimate the quality or utility of specific professional journals.

Table 1: Studies evaluating accounting journals

Authors / Journal	Research
Hull and Wright (1990) *Accounting Horizons*	Developed a study based on Howard e Nikolai (1983) that utilized perception of faculty members to rank 79 accounting journals.
Tahai and Rigbsy (1998) *Information Processing & Management*	Ranked the relative influence of 48 journals to accounting literature using a citation impact factor.
Brow (2003) *Review of Quantitative Finance and Accounting*	Ranked accounting journals by number of times an article was downloaded in The Social Science Research Network (SSRN).
Ballas and Theokarakis (2003) *Contemporary Accounting Research*	Ranked 40 accounting journals based on the opinion of 6994 accounting faculty worldwide
Hopp (2004) Management Science	Shows the ten most influential papers publishing of Management Science since 1954 until 2003. The papers selected through a three-step process
Lowe e Locke (2005) *Accounting, Organization and Society*	Utilized a web-based survey to evaluate and rank accounting journals using United Kingdom faculty perception.
Reinstein and Calderon (2005) *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*	Examined journals rankings utilized by accounting departments members of the AAA’s Accounting Leadership Program Group.

3 METHOD

The sample was obtained by searching in the Scopus database. In the web page of Scopus, we added in the page search tool the journals with the terms "accounting" and "auditing" in their names and belonging to the subject areas of business, management and accounting. Thus, there might be relevant journals that were not included in this study because they do not have these keywords in their names.

Fifty different results were obtained with these criteria. Our next step was the to remove the results identified in the page with a “B” (which stands for books), reducing 6 results from our sample. Next, we also rejected the journals with their coverage discontinued (7 cases). At last, we discarded the ones with irregular publication between the 1996 and 2002. Our final sample consisted of 20 journals (Table 2).

Table 2: Sample selection procedure

Results with "accounting" or "auditing" in their names, in the areas of business, management and accounting	50
(-) Books	6
(-) Coverage discontinued	7
(-) Irregular publication between 1996 and 2002	17
(=) Journals in the sample	20

In these journals we observed the number of citations of all the articles published until 2010. Despite the official Scopus’ coverage beginning in 1996, some journals have papers published in the prior years, labeled papers “before 1996” This category does not include all the papers of a determined edition before 1996, but just some selected works. There is no explanation about this event in the Scopus’ website. In order to avoid potential biases, we opted to remove papers published before 1996 from the sample.

An important point to mention is that we exclude from the articles published until 2010 all the editorials and erratum-type documents. We did this because this kind of material is usually less cited and keeping them in the sample could distort the results.

We expect older papers to have a larger number of citations than newer papers, just because they have been around for longer. It is therefore not possible to compare the number of citations of a paper written twenty years ago with the number of citations of a paper written just five years ago. To create a uniform measure of the total number of citations of a paper, we count only the citations received in the eight years after the publication of a paper. The total number of citations of a paper published in 1996, for example, is the sum of the citations received from 1997 to 2004. Because of this procedure, we analyze only papers published between 1996 and 2002.

4 RESULTS

We ranked the journals by mean number of citations received in the eight years following publication (Table 3). The journal with the highest mean number of citations is the Journal of Accounting and Economics (JAE), with an average of 38.71 citations per article.

Although JAE also has the highest SJR and SNIP, it should be noted that these indicators of journal impact are not perfectly correlated with the mean number of citations. Ranking the journals by SJR would yield different results. The Journal of Accounting Research (JAR), for example, would swap positions with The Accounting Research (TAR). One of the most striking changes, however, would happen with the position of Accounting Horizons (AHo). This journal has the eighth highest mean number of citations, but has the fourth highest SJR. This happens because the SJR accounts for the importance of the journal issuing the citation: citations in prestigious journals are worth more (GONZALEZ-PEREIRA; GUERRERO-BOTE; MOYA-ANEGON, 2009).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the number of citations received in the eight years after publication.

		Cumulative Citations				
Rank	Journal	Mean	SD	n	SJR	SNIP
1	Journal of Accounting and Economics (JAE)	38,71	51,01	172	0,07	4.000
2	Accounting Review (TAR)	28,11	32,84	199	0,055	3.280
3	Journal of Accounting Research (JAR)	24,79	30,82	243	0,056	2.870
4	Accounting, Organizations and Society (AOS)	18,26	16,92	243	0,049	3.660
5	Review of Accounting Studies (RAS)	13,97	20,15	93	0,045	1.760
6	Contemporary Accounting Research (CAR)	13,13	19,85	160	0,043	1.790
7	Management Accounting Research (MAR)	12,58	14,97	146	0,041	2.180
8	Accounting Horizons (AHo)	9,69	18,65	236	0,052	1.340
9	Auditing (AUD)	8,50	10,55	133	0,04	1.880
10	Journal of Accounting and Public Policy (JAPP)	8,06	11,93	115	0,038	1,340
11	Accounting and Business Research (ABR)	6,06	6,68	138	0,037	1.170
12	Critical Perspectives on Accounting (CPA)	5,95	5,76	235	0,033	0,62
13	British Accounting Review (BAR)	5,52	7,34	138	0,037	1.110
14	International Journal of Accounting (IJA)	5,19	6,29	118	0,033	0,81
15	Journal of Business Finance and Accounting (JBFA)	5,18	6,82	449	0,04	1.090
16	Journal of International Financial Management and Accounting (JIFMA)	4,76	4,94	76	0,035	0,42
17	Accounting & Finance (A&F)	3,72	3,99	79	0,033	0,86
18	Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation (JIAAT)	3,02	5,86	85	0,037	1.180
19	Review of Quantitative Finance and Accounting (RQFA)	2,48	3,70	256	0,035	0,68
20	Journal of Accounting Education (JAEd)	2,24	2,82	176	0,032	0,31
	Total	11,51	21,35	3490		

Note. The table also shows the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) and the Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) for each journal.

The different rankings that are obtained using different metrics show the shortcomings of the mean number of citations as an effective indicator of journal importance. It was used, however, because the analysis performed in this article are based in the number of citations obtained by each paper in the sample, regardless of subject field or journal prestige.

The mean number of citations also has the shortcoming of ignoring the distribution of the number of citations. It is not possible to say, for example, that an article published in JAE is expected to receive 39 citations in eight years. The median would be a better statistic for this kind of prediction, but it is also not capable of telling the whole story. In some journals (actually most of them), many articles will receive very few citations or even none at all. Table 4 attempts to investigate the citation distribution. Indeed, 12.58% of the articles in the sample received no citations in the eight years following publications. In some journals just a few articles receive no citations; in TAR, for example, this happened with only 1 paper (0.5%). In other journals the percentage of ignored papers can be much larger. In the Journal if International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation, for example, it reaches 35.29%.

On the other hand, just 3.72% of the articles published in these journals receive 51 or more citations. While half of the journals in the sample published no article with at least 51

citations between 1996 and 2002, the JAE presented a surprising percentage of papers meeting this criterion (23.26%).

In Table 4, we shown the total number of citations received in the eight years following the publication. Disaggregating the data can allow us to see the evolution of the citations during this period (Table 5). The mean number of citations received by the papers in the full sample grows until the eighth year after the publication. Supposing that the means are heavily influenced by the few papers that receive many citations, this result suggests it can take as long as eight years for the full potential of a paper become evident. The classic papers are not instantly recognized and widely cited from the onset; they become so after some years. The pattern is similar for every journal in the sample; it can be noted, however, that for some of them the number of citations falls for the first time as soon as in the fourth year (JAPP, RAS). It is important to notice that the decline in the number of citations is usually small and growth sometimes resumes in the following years. So, rather than leading to the conclusion that these old papers are getting outdated and being forgotten, the results show that the number of citations stabilizes. Perhaps the decline happens after a few more years, but unfortunately this could not be seen with the data we have available.

Table 4: Absolute and relative frequency of articles in each class constructed based in citation frequency.

	Number of citations											
	0		1-5		6-10		11-20		21-50		51+	
Journal	Freq.	%	Freq.	%.	Freq.	%.	Freq.	%.	Freq.	%.	Freq.	%.
A&F	16	20.25%	42	53.16%	16	20.25%	5	6.33%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
ABR	17	12.32%	64	46.38%	33	23.91%	18	13.04%	6	4.35%	0	0.00%
AHo	30	12.71%	97	41.10%	48	20.34%	33	13.98%	23	9.75%	5	2.12%
AOS	7	2.88%	35	14.40%	52	21.40%	79	32.51%	59	24.28%	11	4.53%
AUD	9	6.77%	60	45.11%	32	24.06%	23	17.29%	8	6.02%	1	0.75%
BAR	23	16.67%	74	53.62%	19	13.77%	16	11.59%	6	4.35%	0	0.00%
CAR	11	6.88%	56	35.00%	42	26.25%	26	16.25%	16	10.00%	9	5.63%
CPA	26	11.06%	111	47.23%	51	21.70%	42	17.87%	5	2.13%	0	0.00%
IJA	25	21.19%	55	46.61%	21	17.80%	13	11.02%	4	3.39%	0	0.00%
JAE	2	1.16%	26	15.12%	24	13.95%	38	22.09%	42	24.42%	40	23.26%
JAEd	32	18.18%	129	73.30%	11	6.25%	4	2.27%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
JAPP	15	13.04%	52	45.22%	24	20.87%	13	11.30%	8	6.96%	3	2.61%
JAR	11	4.53%	43	17.70%	39	16.05%	57	23.46%	62	25.51%	31	12.76%
JBFA	81	18.04%	231	51.45%	72	16.04%	46	10.24%	19	4.23%	0	0.00%
JIAAT	30	35.29%	43	50.59%	6	7.06%	4	4.71%	2	2.35%	0	0.00%
JIFMA	14	18.42%	34	44.74%	20	26.32%	7	9.21%	1	1.32%	0	0.00%
MAR	6	4.11%	44	30.14%	40	27.40%	30	20.55%	22	15.07%	4	2.74%
RAS	2	2.15%	36	38.71%	15	16.13%	21	22.58%	17	18.28%	2	2.15%
RQFA	81	31.64%	146	57.03%	20	7.81%	6	2.34%	3	1.17%	0	0.00%
TAR	1	0.50%	18	9.05%	33	16.58%	56	28.14%	67	33.67%	24	12.06%
Total	439	12.58%	1396	40.00%	618	17.71%	537	15.39%	370	10.60%	130	3.72%

Table 5: Mean number of citations received in the years following publication

	Years since publication							
Journal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A&F	0.177	0.278	0.266	0.481	0.544	0.456	0.709	0.810
	(0.549)	(0.505)	(0.548)	(0.798)	(0.844)	(0.797)	(1.040)	(1.122)
ABR	0.268	0.529	0.558	0.688	0.891	0.964	1.138	1.022
	(0.657)	(0.898)	(0.783)	(1.093)	(1.242)	(1.421)	(1.743)	(1.447)
AHo	0.551	0.941	1.068	1.225	1.305	1.453	1.504	1.644
	(1.007)	(1.483)	(1.969)	(2.317)	(2.845)	(3.145)	(3.787)	(4.173)
AOS	0.601	1.239	1.782	2.185	2.605	2.984	3.325	3.535
	(0.988)	(1.570)	(2.096)	(2.428)	(3.224)	(3.481)	(3.487)	(4.138)
AUD	0.429	0.534	0.767	1.128	1.180	1.218	1.541	1.699
	(0.791)	(0.875)	(0.999)	(1.777)	(1.723)	(1.920)	(2.340)	(2.671)
BAR	0.181	0.333	0.572	0.710	0.848	0.819	1.036	1.022
	(0.502)	(0.687)	(0.903)	(1.341)	(1.382)	(1.395)	(1.834)	(1.830)
CAR	0.619	0.969	1.288	1.669	1.706	2.081	2.238	2.563
	(1.045)	(1.456)	(1.914)	(2.428)	(3.038)	(3.422)	(4.132)	(4.747)
CPA	0.187	0.447	0.672	0.753	0.872	1.072	1.004	0.945
	(0.452)	(0.757)	(0.991)	(1.132)	(1.216)	(1.405)	(1.316)	(1.334)
IJA	0.042	0.263	0.492	0.593	0.737	0.907	1.025	1.127
	(0.202)	(0.561)	(0.959)	(0.980)	(1.194)	(1.346)	(1.588)	(1.842)
JAE	1.302	2.884	3.721	4.767	5.384	6.465	6.901	7.285
	(2.095)	(3.635)	(4.965)	(5.804)	(8.056)	(9.223)	(10.443)	(10.513)
JAEd	0.193	0.551	0.335	0.261	0.176	0.216	0.239	0.267
	(0.410)	(0.739)	(0.530)	(0.659)	(0.463)	(0.613)	(0.676)	(0.625)
JAPP	0.296	0.643	0.870	0.843	1.017	1.383	1.539	1.470
	(0.607)	(1.397)	(1.448)	(1.636)	(1.649)	(2.277)	(2.829)	(2.549)
JAR	1.358	1.905	2.654	3.136	3.436	3.938	3.963	4.395
	(2.217)	(2.345)	(3.537)	(4.181)	(4.406)	(5.501)	(5.486)	(6.342)
JBFA	0.223	0.379	0.577	0.630	0.719	0.746	0.873	1.029
	(0.590)	(0.740)	(0.982)	(1.092)	(1.245)	(1.279)	(1.581)	(1.763)
JIAAT	0.106	0.059	0.306	0.306	0.482	0.624	0.424	0.718
	(0.310)	(0.237)	(0.724)	(0.756)	(1.278)	(1.739)	(1.004)	(1.517)
JIFMA	0.145	0.342	0.539	0.579	0.579	0.895	0.829	0.855
	(0.390)	(0.776)	(0.791)	(0.788)	(0.898)	(1.281)	(1.258)	(1.262)
MAR	0.452	0.938	1.055	1.322	1.890	2.103	2.459	2.363
	(1.004)	(1.250)	(1.647)	(1.513)	(2.660)	(2.961)	(3.547)	(3.351)
RAS	0.946	1.462	1.538	1.505	1.699	2.108	2.333	2.376
	(1.703)	(2.019)	(2.287)	(2.430)	(2.678)	(3.580)	(3.699)	(4.209)
RQFA	0.059	0.141	0.254	0.309	0.379	0.352	0.438	0.551
	(0.320)	(0.391)	(0.602)	(0.732)	(0.803)	(0.817)	(0.918)	(1.083)
TAR	1.492	2.417	2.960	3.196	3.925	4.286	4.704	5.126
	(1.880)	(2.656)	(3.277)	(3.913)	(5.049)	(5.563)	(6.836)	(7.330)
Total	0.506	0.902	1.177	1.387	1.597	1.826	1.984	2.131
	(1.190)	(1.709)	(2.252)	(2.668)	(3.286)	(3.788)	(4.218)	(4.512)

Note. The table shows the means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of the number of citations received by papers in the years following publication. The first column, for instance, show the statistics of the number of citations received by the papers analyzed in the first year after publication.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the number of citations using box plots, without the arbitrary division of the observations in classes. It presents the papers with a very high number of citations more clearly (as dots) instead of aggregating them in a class comprising all the papers with 51 or more citations.

The highest median observed was in the JAE (median = 19). In a close second comes TAR (median = 18). In the third quartile, however, the difference between JAE (Q_3 = 41.5) and TAR (Q_3 = 32) becomes apparent. It should be noted that some journals that have a relatively low median number of citations (compared to JAE) sometimes publish papers with a very high number of citations.

The most cited paper in the sample was *Audit Committee, Board of Director Characteristics, and Earnings Management* (Klein, 2002), published in JAE. Others journals also have articles with more than 200 citations (AHo, JAR and TAR).

The distribution of the number of citations received by each article is positively skewed (i.e. the right tail is longer). There are several papers with a number of citations larger than the third quartile plus 1.5 interquartile range; these are shown as dots (outside observations) in Figure 1.

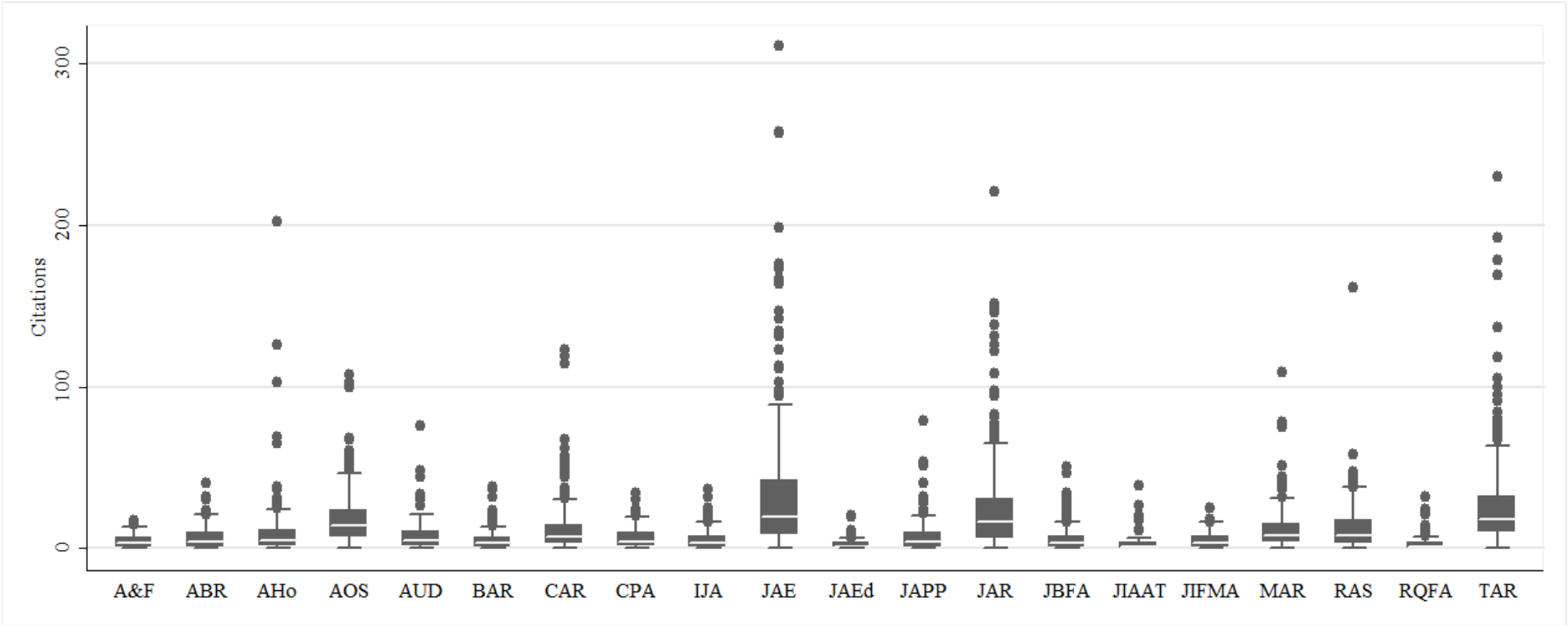

Figure 1: Box plots of the number of citations received by each article in the 8 years following publication. The sample comprises only articles published between 1996 and 2002.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results allow us to conclude that the distribution of citations in accounting is very unequal. While this is not surprising, the results also show that some journals are able to publish relatively more articles with a high number of citations: at least one out of five papers published in the Journal of Accounting are cited 51 times or more in the eight years following publication. Other journals are also able to have a reasonably high percentage of articles with 51 citations or more (at least when compared to less prestigious journals): the JAR (with 12.76%) and TAR (12.06%). While the popularity of these journals might help them achieve these results, there is no reason to believe they should be attributed only to prestige: a bad paper published in these journals would probably receive as few citations as if it was published in a less know journal. The individuals who research a specific subject (and are therefore more likely to cite articles in this given subject field) are usually able to evaluate papers written by their fellow researchers, and are therefore more likely to cite relevant papers that present a solid increase to the knowledge in that field. It is thus more likely that the high percentage of papers with a high number of citations published in journals like JAE, JAR and TAR are due to the stricter standards for publication enforced. These stricter standards result in papers with higher quality.

At the same time, publishing in important journals like the JAE is not a one-way ticket to the academic Olympus. One can still be ignored or receive just a few citations. Given the assumption that these prestigious journals have very strict requirements for approving a paper, we suspect that writing a good article is not enough to be cited. It is possible to create a research project that is scientifically rigorous and methodologically adequate, and still have no impact in the academic community. Since researchers are often evaluated by the number of citations they receive, the results presented in this paper suggest that researchers may ultimately be evaluated by more than the plain quality of their work. To receive more than just a handful of citations, scientists should be able to know what their academic communities want to read. They should pick research topics that are marketable.

On the other hand, many important research topics might not be trendy or draw the attention of the crowds. The research problems that are now deemed interesting were once considered dull. But, if the scientific community simply has no stimulus to pursue those topics that are not (right now) in the spotlight, how will science evolve? The appreciation of highly cited authors should not demotivate those who dedicate themselves to topics that are still little known.

Our conclusion can be enriched when we note that papers in the subject field of accounting appear to receive fewer citations when compared to other business disciplines (HECK; JENSEN, 2006). It should also be noted that the top journals in accounting tend to publish fewer articles than comparable journals in other business disciplines. For instance, from 1990 to 2002 the premier accounting journals averaged 28 articles per year versus 53 for finance, 43 for management and 35 for marketing (LOWE & FLEET, 2010; SWANSON, 2007). This additional information helps us raise the hypothesis that many papers in accounting and auditing are left with no citations simply because the field is relatively small. It is also possible that both these factors (topics deemed uninteresting and small field) play a role in the cause of the large number of papers with very few or no citations.

It should also be noted that important or seminal papers are not always readily recognized as such. Our analysis of the evolution of the number of citations over the years supports this conclusion: it might take eight years or more for an article to show its full potential. What are the causes of this delay between publication and acceptance among the

scientific community? This might happen because, when a paper is widely cited and recognized as important, other researchers and newcomers to the field are more likely to cite it. This is a pattern of reinforcement: the more an article is cited, the more it will be cited. Common sense suggests this behavior will continue until the article is deemed outdated and no longer relevant.

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