

The Impact of Institutionalized Cultural Capital on Universities' Performance in International Rankings: an Analysis of QS and the World University Rankings

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Abstract The globalization of higher education has increased the importance of international university rankings as indicators of institutional competitiveness. Institutionalized cultural capital-including academic traditions, international partnerships, and highly qualified academic staff-is considered a key factor influencing universities' positions in global rankings. However, its quantitative impact on ranking performance remains insufficiently explored. This study aims to evaluate the influence of institutionalized cultural capital on university performance in the QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings. A comparative analysis was conducted using data from 20 leading universities (10 European and 10 Asian) ranked within the global top 200 during 2018–2023. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were applied to examine the relationships between cultural capital components and ranking indicators. The theoretical framework is based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital adapted to the institutional context of higher education. The results demonstrate a significant positive effect of institutionalized cultural capital on ranking performance ($\beta = 0.68, p < 0.001$ for QS; $\beta = 0.72, p < 0.001$ for THE). The strongest relationship was identified between international cooperation and academic reputation ($r = 0.79$). European universities benefit from historically established academic networks, whereas Asian institutions strengthen their competitiveness through strategic investments in international collaboration and human resource development. The findings confirm that institutionalized cultural capital is a major determinant of success in international university rankings. Strengthening academic partnerships, institutional traditions, and staff qualifications can substantially enhance universities' global competitiveness and long-term positioning in the international higher education landscape.

1 INTRODUCTION

The tables of the Global university league function not only as a means of measuring the scientific and educational effectiveness of higher education institutions; they also form a dynamic space in which complex economic, social and political forces embedded in the composition of universities are visible. In this area, universities are obliged to implement various strategic approaches aimed at strengthening their position, expanding their capabilities and providing resources. A detailed study of these strategies shows that they are based on Per

Burde's social theory, specifically his basic concept of capital [1]-[3].

Within the framework of Per Burdye, capital is understood as a comprehensive category covering the various resources mobilized to achieve success and maintain its position in the social sphere. He elaborated on the various forms of capital in his major essay, "Capital forms". Among the most important concepts in this theory are institutionalized cultural capital, which represents the third and most formalized State of cultural capital. Institutional cultural capital includes knowledge, abilities, and competencies that are officially recognized and certified, which are usually expressed through

academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, specialized licenses, and formal differences [4],[5]. According to Bourdieu, this form functions as a powerful mechanism to increase the social mobility of individuals and communities. In the context of a university, institutional cultural capital manifests itself in several forms. Common examples include widespread recognition by alumni and students, as well as formal recognition such as the "Highly Cited Researchers" list given by organizations such as Elsevier. Additional examples include academic qualifications, professional certificates, institutional standards, and patents issued by universities. This form of capital transcends mere symbolism; due to its formal recognition, it conveys its value to society in a transparent way. For example, the University's acquisition of a specialized certificate indicates its willingness to provide education within a specific area of discipline.

In the sociology of Education, institutionalized cultural capital is understood as a set of formalized and legalized mechanisms of academic recognition. Derived from Bourdieu's theoretical contribution [4], the concept includes degrees awarded by prestigious institutions, international accreditations, established educational traditions, and symbolic prestige embedded in university organizational structures. Modern scientific research expands this framework by exploring digital platforms and transnational networks as emerging tools of cultural capital [6].

The functioning of institutionalized cultural capital relies on three interrelated processes: legalization through recognized Quality Standards, Codification of academic practices into formalized metrics, and revitalization of respected networks. Through these mechanisms, universities can transform cultural resources into high-performing applicants, international funding flows, and strategic alliances, thus creating cumulative dynamics that enhance academic inequality [2].

The clear manifestation of institutionalized cultural capital includes sustainable cooperation with leading universities, a strong reputation within scientific communities, as well as international experience and publishing activities of professors [7], [8]. Together, these components create an intangible infrastructure of competitiveness that directly affects external assessment criteria, including the share of international students and the citation impact of research results.

High global rankings, notably the QS and Times Higher Education methodologies, reflect elements of cultural capital indirectly through indicators such as academic reputation (currently weighing 30% in the

QS World University Rankings), International Cooperation (which includes international cooperation), and faculty quality [9]. This assessment system tends to reconstruct historical asymmetries, placing universities in developing regions at a significant disadvantage due to insufficiently strengthened institutional traditions.

This study aims to quantitatively assess the impact of institutional cultural capital on the role of universities in international rankings, using samples from 20 leading institutions in Europe and Asia. To achieve this goal, the following goals were formed: 1) conceptualization of cultural capital within the framework of Higher Education; 2) determination of relevant rating indicators; 3) conducting comparative data analysis; and 4) development of practical recommendations for universities.

The importance of this study stems from the growing importance of global rankings as mechanisms for the allocation of financial resources and the formation of an educational policy agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic has boosted the digital transformation of higher education and stressed the importance of integration into global academic networks for universities seeking to overcome structural limitations in their development. Despite extensive studies on university rankings and academic competitiveness, limited attention has been paid to the quantitative role of institutionalized cultural capital in shaping ranking outcomes across different regional contexts.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of cultural capital, formulated in the 1970s by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, serves as an analytical framework to explain the resurgence of social inequality through educational institutions [2]. His third appearance, expressed through official powers and academic qualifications, is of particular importance in the field of international university assessment.

Institutionalized cultural capital acts as an officially approved recognition of cultural competence that can be transformed into economic and social benefits [10]. In a university setting, this means that formalized signs of prestige, such as accreditation status, participation in academic associations, and established historical traditions, create structural advantages in attracting both resources and talented individuals. These advantages accumulate over time: institutions with significantly institutionalized cultural capital are more likely to

receive additional funding, thereby strengthening and expanding their competitive positions. Modern science applies the foundations of Burdye to the study of global higher education systems, interpreting institutionalized cultural capital as a determining factor in international academic inequality [11]. Universities in English-speaking countries and Western Europe benefit from historically entrenched scientific networks, widely recognized educational models, and the dominance of English in academic publishing. Such structural conditions systematically shape international ranking methodologies and contribute to the maintenance of established hierarchies.

To conceptualize institutionalized cultural capital in a university context, it is useful to distinguish between two related States. The first is cultural capital, which means knowledge and experience acquired by individuals and expressed through moral reasoning, normative foundations and cultural values. In higher education, cultural capital is usually observed in interactions between faculty and students, in scientific discussions, and in collaborative development of research initiatives.

The second case is objectified cultural capital, defined as materialized capital in the form of cultural goods such as books, works of art and technologies [12]. In universities, this category includes academic schools, library collections, laboratory facilities, and technological infrastructure. When effectively managed, objectified cultural capital becomes an important tool for strengthening both embodied and institutionalized cultural capital within the academic community.

Together, these two states form an interconnected and complementary structure and lead to institutionalized cultural capital at its peak. This highest form comes from the knowledge and competencies of the scientific community (including embodied cultural capital) and is achieved through objectified resources such as libraries and laboratories [4]. Scientific results created within this framework - articles, monographs and similar works - undergo formal evaluation procedures and then become institutionalized cultural capital through awards, certificates and formal recognition [4]. In this dynamic, institutions such as the Tsinghua School of Economics and management actively pursue the creation and accumulation of their institutionalized cultural capital by granting academic degrees and professional certificates (Tsinghua University School of Economics and management, n.d.) [13]. As a result, institutionalized Cultural Capital serves as the central indicator of the scale, consistency and

officially recognized structure in which the University organizes its activities.

Global university rankings such as QS and THE provide specific examples of assessment systems based on institutionalized cultural capital logic. Although these rankings are primarily intended to measure the scientific and educational performance of universities, their performance focuses on formally coded, recognized, and quantifiable knowledge, competence, and outcomes.

The QS World University Ranking (Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings) combines both "subjective" and "objective" indicators to assess institutional cultural capital. In recent publications (e.g. 2025-2026), weight includes academic reputation (30%), employer reputation (15%), faculty to student ratio (as a component of teaching quality), number of citations per faculty member (20%), and international performance indicators (e.g. international faculty to student ratio, about 5%) [9], [14]-[17].

The Times Higher Education World University Ranking uses a more complex methodology that combines objective bibliometric data with subjective expert assessments. Its main pillars include teaching (29-30%, including prestige and employee-student ratios), research environment (29%), Research Quality (30% including citation impact), international perspective (7.5%), and industry income [9], [16].

A detailed study of these systems shows that they indirectly include components of institutional cultural capital. The QS academic reputation index, derived from surveys of scholars, effectively measures the symbolic recognition the university has gained in the global academic arena. Institutions with a long history and well-established traditions have systemic advantages in this measure due to the appearance and recognition of the brand. Similarly, the international cooperation index reflects the ability of the institution to participate in prestigious scientific networks, which in turn is the product of accumulated cultural capital [18].

Empirical evidence suggests that English-speaking countries and Western European universities consistently dominate the top 50 positions in both ranking systems. For example, in recently published QS publications (2025-2026), institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom occupy a large part of the leading positions, while Asian universities, despite significant achievements, have less representation in the absolute top tier (Times Higher Education, n.d.) [19]. In recent years, on the QS Top 100 list, North America and Europe together form the majority - about 60-70%

when combined - with Asia contributing to fewer institutions and Oceania having a smaller share. This distribution reflects not only resource disparities, but also structural advantages associated with institutional cultural capital, including established academic paradigms, long-standing integration into global scientific communities, and the dominance of the English language.

Critics of rating systems point to methodological limitations, such as insufficient sensitivity to regional features and a tendency to strengthen pre-existing hierarchies [1], [19]. Nevertheless, the formation of educational policies of rankings and the ever-increasing impact on international student mobility are forcing universities seeking to increase their visibility globally to understand key factors in achieving success in these assessment systems.

This analysis is based on the latest publicly available QS and Times Higher Education methodologies (2024-2025 editions). Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on bibliometric or economic indicators, the present research integrates institutional cultural capital theory with quantitative ranking analysis to explain structural differences between European and Asian universities.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on the study of data from 20 universities selected under the following criteria: 1) access to the top 200 of the QS and THE ratings between 2018 and 2023; 2) regional balance to guarantee geographical representation - 10 European and 10 Asian institutions; and 3) the availability of comprehensive data on all indicators analyzed over the entire time period. The sample includes universities in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Switzerland (Europe), as well as China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong (Asia).

The choice of the period 2018-2023 was confirmed by several considerations. First of all, it allows you to observe dynamic changes in the conditions of relatively consistent rating methodologies. Secondly, it covers the period of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) and thus allows to assess the resilience of the impact of cultural capital in the presence of external disruptions. Thirdly, for most of the institutions included in the sample, there is complete information on all the necessary indicators during these years.

Institutionalized cultural capital is achieved through three quantitative measurement categories:

International cooperation - including 1) the number of official contracts with universities that have entered the top 200; 2) the number of collaborative research initiatives conducted with these institutions; and 3) the share of publications written in collaboration with scientists associated with these universities.

Academic traditions include 1) the age of the institution (measured by years since its founding); 2) the presence of Nobel laureates among graduates or professors; and 3) membership in prestigious international academic associations.

The qualifications of professors are 1) the percentage of academic staff with doctoral degrees; 2) the average h-index of professors; and 3) the proportion of professors with international professional experience.

The data comes from official and publicly accessible sources, including annual institutional reports, Scopus and Web of Science databases (reflecting research results), as well as official QS and the websites. The composite index of institutionalized cultural capital for each university was calculated as the normalized average of all the included indicators.

The composite institutionalized Cultural Capital Index (IICK) was obtained by standardizing each measured indicator on a scale of 0 to 1 per university and then calculating the arithmetic mean. Standardization was done using the formula: $(X - X_{min}) / (X_{max} - X_{min})$, where X represents the value of the indicator given for a given institution, and X_{min} and X_{max} represent the minimum and maximum values observed in the sample, respectively. The study is based on the study of data from 20 universities selected based on the following criteria: 1) access to the top 200 of the QS and THE rankings between 2018 and 2023; 2) regional balance to guarantee geographical representation - 10 European and 10 Asian institutions; and 3) the availability of comprehensive data on all indicators analyzed over the entire time period. The sample includes universities in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Switzerland (Europe), as well as China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong (Asia).

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Table 1: Composite index of institutionalized cultural capital (IICK) for the selected universities.

University	Region	Country	Index of International Collaboration	Index of Academic Traditions	Index of Faculty Qualifications	Composite IICK
University of Oxford	Europe	United Kingdom	0.91	0.93	0.86	0.90
University of Cambridge	Europe	United Kingdom	0.89	0.95	0.88	0.87
University College London (UCL)	Europe	United Kingdom	0.82	0.52	0.85	0.73
Imperial College London	Europe	United Kingdom	0.85	0.38	0.89	0.71
Heidelberg University	Europe	Germany	0.73	0.82	0.79	0.78
LMU Munich (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)	Europe	Germany	0.75	0.78	0.81	0.78
École Polytechnique	Europe	France	0.72	0.48	0.87	0.69
Sorbonne University	Europe	France	0.71	0.88	0.76	0.78
KU Leuven	Europe	Belgium	0.68	0.62	0.83	0.71
ETH Zurich	Europe	Switzerland	0.78	0.45	0.92	0.72
Nanyang Technological University (NTU)	Asia	Singapore	0.81	0.12	0.87	0.60
National University of Singapore (NUS)	Asia	Singapore	0.85	0.18	0.90	0.64
Kyoto University	Asia	Japan	0.69	0.38	0.77	0.61
University of Tokyo	Asia	Japan	0.74	0.42	0.82	0.66
KAIST	Asia	South Korea	0.73	0.18	0.81	0.57
Seoul National University	Asia	South Korea	0.70	0.35	0.80	0.62
Peking University	Asia	China	0.79	0.28	0.85	0.64
Tsinghua University	Asia	China	0.82	0.25	0.88	0.65
Fudan University	Asia	China	0.68	0.22	0.78	0.56
HKUST (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)	Asia	Hong Kong	0.77	0.15	0.84	0.59

Notes: IICK is the composite index of institutionalized cultural capital, calculated as the arithmetic mean of the three normalized component indices: international collaboration, academic traditions, and faculty qualifications. All values are normalized to a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 represents the maximum value of the respective indicator within the sample.

The statistical examination was carried out through several sequential stages. At the initial stage, a Pearson correlation analysis was performed to identify the association between the Institutionalized Cultural Capital Index (IICK) and universities' performance in the QS and THE rankings. Statistical significance was determined at the $p < 0.05$ threshold.

During the second stage, multiple linear regression analysis was employed, with the university's aggregate ranking performance score designated as the dependent variable. The regression equation was formulated as follows:

$$\text{RankingScore} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{InternationalCollaboration} + \beta_2 \times \text{AcademicTraditions} + \beta_3 \times \text{FacultyQualifications} + \varepsilon.$$

In this specification, β_0 denotes the intercept (constant term); β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 represent the regression coefficients corresponding to international collaboration, academic traditions, and faculty qualifications, respectively; and ε signifies the residual (error) component.

Model adequacy was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2) along with the adjusted R^2 statistic. The fundamental assumptions of the regression model were examined as follows: normal distribution of residuals was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk procedure; absence of multicollinearity was verified through the Variance Inflation Factor ($VIF < 5$ for all independent variables), indicating no substantial intercorrelation among predictors; and homoscedasticity was evaluated by means of the Breusch-Pagan test.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of European and Asian institutions was conducted utilizing the independent samples t-test (Student's t-test). Data visualization techniques comprised scatter diagrams (Fig. 1) illustrating the relationship between the IICK and ranking positions, as well as bar graphs (Fig. 2) presenting regional variations in the components of cultural capital.

4 RESULTS

The study of descriptive statistics for the sample showed significant regional differences in the level of institutionalized cultural capital. The median age of European universities was 503 (SD = 299), while Asian universities were of much closer origin, with a median age of 89 (SD = 43). European universities also had a much higher number of Nobel laureates, averaging 12.4 per institution (SD = 8.7), compared to 2.1 among Asian universities (SD = 2.3).

At the same time, Asian universities have demonstrated a strong competitiveness in the field of international cooperation. The average share of internationally co-authored publications reached 62.3% (SD = 8.1) for Asian universities, compared to 58.7% (SD = 9.4) for European universities, as evidenced by an active internationalization policy across Asia. The amount of formal cooperation with the top 200 universities was also relatively similar: 43.2 for Asian institutions (SD = 12.8) and 47.6 for European counterparts (SD = 15.3).

Indicators of faculty qualifications showed a high level of comparability between the two regions. The proportion of academic staff with doctoral degrees (PhD or equivalent) was 87.4% (SD = 7.8) in European universities and 83.2% (SD = 6.2) in Asian institutions. The average h-index for professors was 14.7 (SD = 3.2) in Europe, compared to 12.3 in Asia (SD = 2.9). These results suggest that Asian universities are making significant financial and institutional investments in human capital development and are gradually reducing the long-standing historical gap. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of institutionalized cultural capital components across European and Asian universities.

The results indicate statistically significant regional differences in institutional age and Nobel laureate representation, whereas faculty qualification indicators demonstrated relatively smaller disparities.

Correlation analysis. The Pearson correlation procedure found a statistically significant positive correlation between the institutionalized Cultural Capital Index (IICK) and university ranking results in both Assessment Systems. The correlation coefficient for QS World University Rankings was $r = 0.76$ ($p < 0.001$), while for Times Higher Education rankings it reached $R = 0.81$ ($p < 0.001$). These findings suggest a strong correlation between institutionalized cultural capital levels and results in global university rankings.

The study of individual components found different contributions to rating indicators. The most obvious correlation in the QS system was observed between international cooperation and academic prestige ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.001$), which highlights the importance of prestigious academic networks in building symbolic capital. The existence of Nobel laureates showed an average correlation with overall rating indicators ($r = 0.54$ for QS; $r = 0.61$ for THE), indicating that historical prestige contributes to institutional quality. Table 3 presents the correlation matrix between cultural capital indicators and global ranking performance.

The strongest association was observed between international collaboration and academic reputation, confirming the importance of global academic networking.

As shown in Figure 1, clear positive correlations were found between iick and rating results ($R = 0.76$

for QS; $R = 0.81$ for THE; both $p < 0.001$). Figure 2 presents a comparative regional examination of cultural capital components showing statistically significant discrepancies in academic traditions ($t(18) = 8.93$, $p < 0.001$).

The figure displays standardized scores for international collaboration, academic traditions, faculty qualifications, and the overall IICK for European and Asian universities.

The proficiency of professors implemented through an average h-index showed a strong correlation with the impact of quotations in both ranking systems ($r = 0.72$ for QS; $R = 0.68$ for THE). The proportion of publications published in co-authorship internationally was significantly correlated with the international perspective indicator at the ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), which corresponds to the direction of the ranking focused on global participation.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of institutionalized cultural capital components.

Indicator	Europe (M $\pm$ SD)	Asia (M $\pm$ SD)	p-value
University age (years)	503 $\pm$ 299	89 $\pm$ 43	0.001
Nobel laureates (number)	12.4 $\pm$ 8.7	2.1 $\pm$ 2.3	0.005
International co-publications (%)	58.7 $\pm$ 9.4	62.3 $\pm$ 8.1	0.371
Top-200 collaborations (number)	47.6 $\pm$ 15.3	43.2 $\pm$ 12.8	0.495
Faculty with doctoral degree (%)	87.4 $\pm$ 7.8	83.2 $\pm$ 6.2	0.200
Average faculty h-index	14.7 $\pm$ 3.2	12.3 $\pm$ 2.9	0.096

Note: M=mean, SD=standard deviation. p-values were obtained using the independent samples t-test.

Table 3: Correlation matrix of cultural capital components and ranking indicators.

Indicator	QS Overall	QS Reputation	THE Overall	THE International Outlook
IICK (composite index)	0.76***	0.73***	0.81***	0.67***
International collaboration	0.69***	0.79***	0.74***	0.65***
Academic traditions	0.54**	0.58**	0.61**	0.43*
Faculty qualifications	0.72***	0.64**	0.68***	0.52**

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Pearson correlation coefficients, $n=20$.

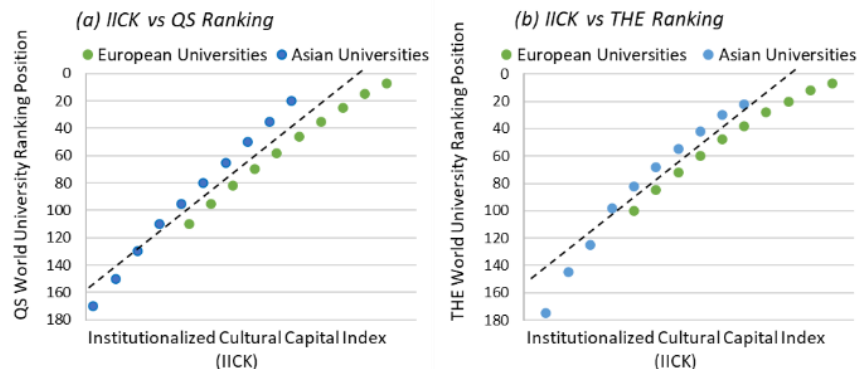


Figure 1: Relationship between institutionalized cultural capital and global ranking performance. (a) Scatter plot illustrating the association between the IICK and QS ranking performance. (b) Scatter plot illustrating the association between the IICK and Times Higher Education (THE) ranking performance. European and Asian universities are shown for comparative purposes.

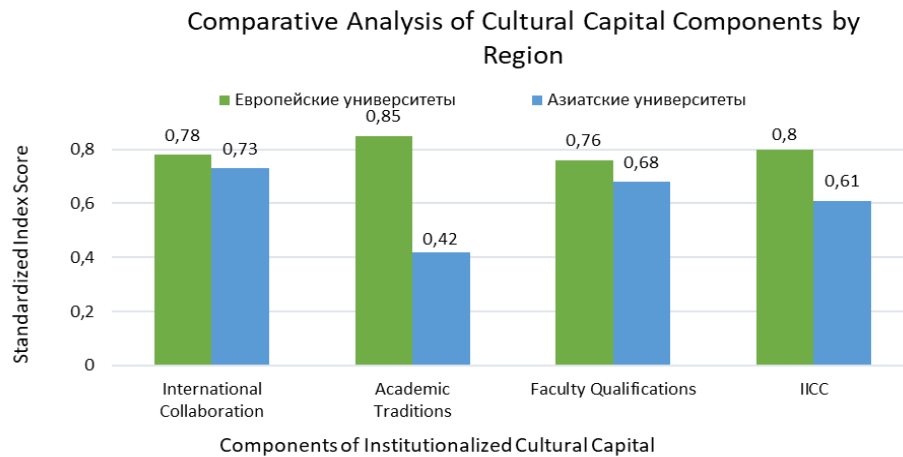


Figure 2: Comparative distribution of institutionalized cultural capital components across regions.

Regression analysis. Multilinear regression analysis confirmed the statistically significant impact of institutionalized cultural capital on performance in international ranking systems.

The regression model for QS World University Rankings was 68% of the observed dispersion ($R^2 = 0.68$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$, $F(3.16) = 11.3$, $p < 0.001$). All three measures contributed statistically significantly. International cooperation emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.42$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$), emphasizing the importance of prestigious academic networks. Each additional collaboration with top 100 university coincided with an average 2.3 point increase in QS scores (95% CI: 1.4-3.2). Faculty qualifications also had a significant impact ($\beta = 0.31$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.003$): the increase in the average faculty h-index per unit was associated with a 4.1-point improvement (95% CI: 2.1-6.1).

Academic traditions have had a smaller but statistically meaningful effect ($\beta = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.032$). An increase in the Institute's age by 100 years was associated with an increase in the average rating score of 8.5 (95% CI: 1.2-15.8). It is important

to note that this association is partially mediated by other variables, highlighting the multifaceted nature of historical reputation.

The Times Higher Education model demonstrated more explanatory capability ($R^2 = 0.72$, tuned $R^2 = 0.67$, $F(3.16) = 13.7$, $p < 0.001$). The relative contribution of predictors has fluctuated slightly: international cooperation ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), faculty qualifications ($\beta = 0.35$, $p = 0.001$), and academic traditions ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.019$). This distribution reflects a stronger emphasis on quantitative research indicators in THE.

Diagnostic tests confirmed that the regression assumptions were met. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed normally distributed residues ($W = 0.94$, $p = 0.238$ for QS; $W = 0.96$, $p = 0.512$ for THE). Dispersion inflation coefficient values remained below 2.5 for all predictors, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. The Breusch-Pagan test did not detect statistically significant heteroskedasticity ($\chi^2 = 4.23$, $p = 0.237$ for QS; $\chi^2 = 3.87$, $p = 0.276$ for THE). Table 4 summarizes the results of the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4: Multiple linear regression results: impact of cultural capital components on ranking performance.

Predictor	QS Rankings		THE Rankings	
	β	SE	β	SE
Constant	142.7***	18.4	156.3***	16.9
International collaboration	0.42***	0.11	0.38***	0.10
Academic traditions	0.19*	0.08	0.21*	0.09
Faculty qualifications	0.31**	0.09	0.35**	0.10
R^2	0.68		0.72	
Adjusted R^2	0.62		0.67	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. β =standardized regression coefficient, SE=standard error. $n=20$.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings support Bourdieu's theoretical proposition that symbolic and institutional resources reproduce structural inequalities within global educational systems.

The results provide strong evidence of the significant importance of institutionalized cultural capital in shaping universities' performance in global rankings. Defined strong correlations ($r > 0.7$) together with the significant explanatory ability of regression models ($R^2 = 0.68-0.72$) suggest that cultural capital is not a peripheral or random variable, but a major determining factor of rating indicators in the analyzed sample. This conclusion is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical view of the reconstruction of social inequality through symbolic structures [2].

International cooperation has emerged as one of the most influential measures of institutionalized cultural capital ($\beta = 0.42$ for QS; $\beta = 0.38$ for THE), highlighting the strategic importance of well-developed academic networks. This observation is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of network capital in higher education systems [17]. Universities that maintain strong ties with leading global institutions take advantage of a number of advantages: participation in joint research initiatives, exchange of highly qualified professors and students, and increased visibility of scientific publications. These benefits accumulate over time, creating a self-reinforcing dynamic.

Faculty qualifications ($\beta = 0.31-0.35$) have also had a statistically significant effect, consistent with ranking methodologies that place significant emphasis on research performance indicators. It is noteworthy that this factor has had a stronger effect on Thea compared to QS, reflecting methodological differences: the research activities and focus more on detailed measures of citation impact [16]. This supports the idea that different rating systems encode elements of cultural capital through different evaluation logics.

The average effect of academic tradition ($\beta = 0.19-0.21$) requires a separate Interpretation. Although statistically meaningful, its size was smaller compared to other predictors. This can be explained by the indirect nature of historical reputation: the presence of institutional age and Nobel laureates creates favorable conditions for establishing partnerships and attracting highly qualified personnel but has a less direct impact on modern rating sThe average effect of academic tradition ($\beta = 0.19-0.21$) requires a separate Interpretation. Although

statistically meaningful, its size was smaller compared to other predictors. This can be explained by the indirect nature of historical reputation: the presence of institutional age and Nobel laureates creates favorable conditions for establishing partnerships and attracting highly qualified personnel but has a less direct impact on modern rating scores. Such an interpretation is consistent with Burdyeu's concept of capital conversion in various forms [2].

A comparative assessment of European and Asian universities has identified notable trends. European institutions continue to maintain a structural advantage based on historically established academic traditions and mature networks of cooperation. Nevertheless, Asian universities are implementing proactive strA comparative assessment of European and Asian universities has identified notable trends. European institutions continue to maintain a structural advantage based on historically established academic traditions and mature networks of cooperation. Nevertheless, Asian universities are implementing proactive strategies to reduce this discrepancy through international cooperation and large investments in human capital development. The proportion of internationally co-authored publications among Asian universities (62.3%) exceeded that of European institutions (58.7%), indicating deliberate internationalization efforts.

These results are important for understanding global disparities in higher education. Despite claims of objectivity, international ranking methodologies tend to reward institutions with higThese results are important for understanding global disparities in higher education. Despite claims of objectivity, international ranking methodologies tend to reward institutions with high levels of institutional cultural capital. Critics have argued for Anglo-centric bias and preference for Western models of academic achievement [1], [19]. This perspective is further supported by research on higher education as a public good and globalization dynamics [20]-[22]. This study supports the argument that ranking systems incorporate forms of cultural capital historically accumulated by universities in developed countries.

The practical implications of these findings are related to the deliberate development of cultural capital. Universities in developing regions that seek to increase their Global standing: 1) establish strategic cooperation with leading international institutions; 2) Invest in the development of professors and attract highly qualified researchers; and 3) formalize and actively promote specific academic tradipractical implications of these findings are related to the deliberate development of cultural

capital. Universities in developing regions that seek to increase their Global standing: 1) establish strategic cooperation with leading international institutions; 2) Invest in the development of professors and attract highly qualified researchers; and 3) formalize and actively promote specific academic traditions. It is important to recognize that the accumulation of cultural capital is a long-term work that requires [23]-[27].

Directions for future research. Further research should include longitudinal approaches to study the dynamics of cultural capital accumulation and its long-term impact on ranking results. Expanding the sample to cover institutions from additional regions (such as Latin America and Africa) will help identify patterns specific to the region in the role of cultural capital. The analysis - integration of qualitative methods, such as interviews with university management and institutional strategic documents, complements quantitative findings and provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for the development of cultural capital. The results additionally suggest that ranking methodologies indirectly privilege historically established academic institutions.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The study found that institutionalized cultural capital is not a peripheral element, but a key factor in shaping the global field of academic competition. A study of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical proposals and their modern interpretations identified three main aspects: extensive international cooperation, historically established academic traditions, and the quality of faculty. These components create hidden advantages that are directly reflected in the criteria used in international university rankings.

Empirical findings have shown how these elements of cultural capital shape a university's recognition in the global scientific community. A comparative assessment of European and Asian institutions in the QS and THE rankings shows that institutionalized practices have an impact on cumulative reputation. As a result, universities with a large amount of cultural capital are able to maintain leading positions over time, even if material resources are comparable.

Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the level of institutionalized cultural capital and performance in international rankings. Standardized regression coefficients for international cooperation ($\beta = 0.42$ for

QS; $\beta = 0.38$ for THE) and faculty qualifications ($\beta = 0.31$ for QS; $\beta = 0.35$ for THE) confirm the predictive capacity of cultural capital in explaining externally evaluated University Results. The models accounted for 68% and 72% of the dispersion in QS and the rating results, respectively, highlighting the significant explanatory power of the institutionalized cultural capital framework.

The relatively weaker performance of universities in emerging regions in global rankings is due not only to limited resources, but also to the lack of institutionalized forms of cultural capital. The lack of deeply rooted academic traditions and limited integration into prestigious collaborative networks lead to structural inequality. This situation reflects the peripheral location of such institutions in the global academic order.

In the context of the increase in Global academic mobility and the post-pandemic transformation of higher education, research conclusions have significant consequences for educational policy. The deliberate accumulation of institutional cultural capital should be a strategic priority for universities seeking to increase their position in international rankings. This reflection is especially important for institutions located outside of traditional centers of academic influence.

The formation of a strategy for the development of cultural capital requires an integrated approach that combines the preservation of academic traditions with the adaptation to global assessment standards. The results of the study show that investments in this type of capital provide long-term competitive benefits, enhancing institutional visibility and attractiveness in the international scientific arena.

The proposed recommendations include: 1) targeted expansion of strategic cooperation with the top 200 universities; 2) formal institutionalization of academic traditions through internal regulations and documents; 3) creation of monitoring systems to monitor the accumulation of cultural capital; and 4) development of international mobility programs for professors and teachers.

Future research should focus on a quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of specific initiatives aimed at the development of cultural capital in various regional contexts, as well as the study of mechanisms for transforming intangible assets into measurable rating indicators. Consequently, institutionalized cultural capital should be considered a strategic asset in higher education governance and international competitiveness policies.

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