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INFLUENCE OF SOCIOCULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON NEGOTIATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT: This article addresses sociocultural differences and their influence on negotiation processes, noting that their divergences can lead to misunderstandings when underestimated. Therefore, its overall objective is to analyze the influence of sociocultural differences on negotiations in Latin America by reviewing academic studies to determine the values and customs applied in negotiation processes. The research was conducted through a rigorous documentary analysis based on indexed academic sources and consultation of relevant research background, constituting a qualitative study with an exploratory-descriptive scope. The study recognized the challenges and the impact of sociocultural diversity on negotiation development through a series of comparative tables of conditioning factors, supported by the theoretical framework proposed. In addition, a sequence of strategies was provided to help negotiators prepare in advance, enabling them to anticipate potential situations and refine their strategies based on contextual conditions. Finally, it is concluded that cultural differences affect the outcomes of agreements, and ignorance of these differences can lead to significant losses.

***Keywords*:** negotiation, sociocultural differences, documentary analysis, negotiation strategies, Latin America.

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INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, sociocultural diversity plays a key role in negotiations; customs and traditions are cultural expressions of each country and significantly influence both daily life and the negotiation process. This raises the following question: What are the sociocultural differences in negotiation processes, and how do they influence negotiations in Latin America? The importance of this question lies in the increase in trade and the search for relationships between the cultures of each region (Čuhlová and Demel, 2024).

Culture is a key element in establishing relationships between individuals with different customs. A lack of knowledge on the subject can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, or even the obstruction of the negotiation process (Rueda Gómez et al., 2022). In this regard, the research gap addressed by this article lies in the limited classification of the specific sociocultural differences among Latin American countries in relation to their negotiation styles and outcomes.

The study focuses on the importance of adapting to the customs of the cultures with which one negotiates and on how understanding them can generate positive outcomes. To this end, the following general objective is proposed: to analyze the influence of sociocultural differences on negotiations in Latin America through a review of academic studies, with the aim of determining the values and customs that apply in negotiation processes. The specific objectives are: (a) to identify the values, customs, and beliefs stemming from Latin American cultures through a literature review aimed at classifying the sociocultural factors involved in negotiations; (b) to analyze the sociocultural practices present in negotiations by reviewing the compiled information, thereby determining their influence on decision-making; (c) to examine sociocultural differences in Latin America through a comparative study within the regional context, leading to an assessment of their impact on negotiation processes.

In this context, several variables stand out: negotiation, a process in which the parties involved seek to reach an agreement by prioritizing mutual benefit; language, which is specific to a nation's communication; and cultures, which reflect the identity and beliefs of their peoples and exert a direct influence on the relationships and negotiations of Latin American countries (Sikorski and Albrecht, 2025).

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The research scope covers 18 of the 21 Latin American countries, enabling an analysis of similarities and differences in negotiation cultures. However, the research was limited by the scarcity of specific and concrete information on negotiation practices in some countries in the region.

DEVELOPMENT

Negotiation and Culture

Within the business environment, negotiation is not limited to reaching agreements; it also involves understanding the differences between cultures, each of which negotiates based on its history, values, and traditions. Culture can be understood as an intangible element that guides every decision in daily life, demonstrating its influence on interactions between individuals from different cultures (Restrepo, 2013).

Beyond being an economic and administrative factor, negotiation is a process that fosters understanding and respect, as interactions highlight the value of the differences that characterize each individual (Salcedo, 2021). Intercultural negotiation involves not only reaching an agreement that satisfies the interests of both parties but also considering the other's customs; even if such customs seem irrational from one's own perspective, they may hold deep meaning for the other party.

Abril and Toaquiza (2024) noted that understanding cultural differences is an essential element of negotiation, as it allows for the management of discrepancies and fosters cooperation to achieve mutual benefit. In this context, where globalization has increased trade relations in Latin America, it is essential to recognize that negotiation is not limited to making an offer but also involves taking an interest in shared values and expectations. In this sense, the goal is to influence through dialogue and persuasion, without imposing obstacles, which takes on significant importance (Aguirre et al., 2025).

Culture should not be considered unimportant, as its influence is central to development and the results achieved. Thus, there are four ways to perceive it: (1) influence based on perceptions rooted in each person's values; (2) it generates resistance to the other party's

perspectives; (3) it affects understanding and communication styles in each region, leading to misinterpretations; and (4) it attributes intentions based on mistaken assumptions and limited knowledge that hinder the negotiation process (Rueda Gómez et al., 2022).

To analyze the impact of culture on negotiation processes, Gerlach and Eriksson (2021) highlighted the importance of the cultural iceberg model, which indicates that only 10% of a person's identity is visible and reflects aspects such as language and customs, while 90% remains hidden and manifests itself in behaviors and values. This model highlights the complexity of intercultural negotiation, as even negotiations between individuals from the same culture can fail if both visible and hidden aspects are not considered.

Culture is classified into values and norms: values constitute the attitudes that define the framework of legitimacy for social norms; these norms, in turn, regulate relationships and behaviors among individuals, as expressed in customs. Within this framework, the essential thing is to maintain one's own negotiation style while showing respect for the other party's culture, as respect carries greater weight than the negotiation style itself.

Dismissing the other party's customs as irrelevant can be detrimental to the company or institution, affecting the product or service offered and causing reputational damage that, in certain cases, may lead to legal consequences. The variables involved in the relationship with the counterpart are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1

Factors that influence the negotiation process

Variables	How does it affect things?
Language	When beginning a negotiation, it is important to know the predominant language of the country, as this facilitates communication and understanding of cultural norms.
Customs and taboos	Recognizing and respecting the customs that characterize the other party; in other words, countries have implicit codes, and a lack of understanding of these can lead to superficial interpretations.

Values and attitudes	These are the values that define a community and vary according to each individual's predominant culture. For example, punctuality or dress in specific situations takes on different levels of importance depending on the country.
Religion	In certain countries, religion exerts a profound influence on decision-making to the point that it is incorporated into public law. It is crucial to respect these practices to avoid tensions.

Note. Adapted from Heredia (2020, pp. 8–14).

In intercultural negotiations, the parties involved must recognize and value their own customs and show respect for those whose customs differ from their own. (Heredia, 2020).

Čuhlová and Demel (2024) identified the four cultural dimensions to consider in negotiations, derived from the model proposed by Hofstede and validated by Gerlach and Eriksson (2021):

Power Distance

Typically, negotiations follow a hierarchical model of authority in which the initial negotiator acts as an intermediary and may initiate a series of negotiations. In contexts with high power distance, the final decision rests with a higher-ranking figure; in countries with low power distance, the initial negotiator makes the decision directly.

Individualism/Collectivism

This aspect concerns the different ways cultures reach agreements. Individualistic cultures tend to base their decisions on personal interests and benefits, fostering the autonomy of their members; conversely, collectivist cultures make decisions collectively, maintaining a relationship of interdependence (Gerlach and Eriksson, 2021).

Masculinity/Femininity

This is associated with gender values and stereotypes. Cultures oriented toward high achievement focus on competition, efficiency, and success; cultures oriented toward

cooperation focus on collective interests and decision-making that considers the well-being of others.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This factor refers to the degree to which a culture accepts uncertain situations. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to prefer clearly established procedures and guidelines to reduce risks. In contrast, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance show greater flexibility in the face of change and adapt easily to unexpected circumstances, acting more spontaneously. These characteristics help us understand the predominant values of each culture and the way its members manage negotiation processes (Čuhlová and Demel, 2024). The following section presents the types of culture and their respective negotiation styles (Table 2).

Table 2

Types of culture that influence negotiating styles

Types of culture	Forma de negociar
High-context culture	It is characterized by avoiding a direct or confrontational style and refraining from explicit expressions, as these are perceived as an insensitive way of negotiating, which can lead to offense or misinterpretation. This type of culture tends to predominate in Asian, African, Arab, and Latin American countries (Burmann and Semrau, 2022).
Low-context culture	This culture tends to be direct and explicit, prioritizing precision to define and clarify all the details of the negotiation. It is common in Anglo-Saxon, European, and Scandinavian countries (Burmann and Semrau, 2022).
Polychronic culture	Adopted by high-context cultures, in which multiple activities are carried out simultaneously (Tamayo and Canal, 2020).
Monochronic culture	Adopted by low-context cultures, where time is a valuable resource and one activity is performed at a time, following strict schedules (Tamayo and Canal, 2020).

Understanding the different types of culture fosters peaceful coexistence among the parties and prevents the use of coercion to achieve objectives by recognizing each party's aspirations.

Negotiation Customs and Styles in Latin America

America encompasses a wide variety of historical backgrounds, languages, and shared cultural characteristics. However, each nation retains distinctive traits that shape how it interacts and negotiates with others. Therefore, it is important to recognize the particularities of the region's major countries, as these play a significant role in interaction processes (Hoffmann, 2013).

Argentina

Argentine negotiators are often deeply influenced by their pride, rooted in their historical legacy. They are highly educated individuals who value building personal connections when closing deals, so they typically seek to establish rapport and build trust before finalizing an agreement. It is common for them to interrupt the conversation to ask questions or make comments in order to make the negotiation process more interactive. They are persistent negotiators and quickly shift from formality to a more relaxed interaction, provided a foundation of trust and mutual respect has been established. They also place great importance on detailed documentation and expect the agreement to be put in writing.

Brazil

Brazilian negotiators tend to be flexible regarding rules and procedures, adapting easily to different situations. They are known for their ability to improvise and solve unforeseen problems. In addition, they are known for their hospitality and for maintaining a warm and informal rapport when the context allows. During negotiations, they are known for listening attentively to the other party, demonstrating interest and attention to their opinions (Burmann and Semrau, 2022).

Chile

Chilean negotiators are known for their spontaneous sense of humor and their strong tendency toward physical contact, even with strangers. It is common for them to greet one another in meetings with a handshake, a kiss on the cheek, and direct eye contact. They are known for their warmth in conversations, a style that may feel uncomfortable to more reserved cultures. They value enthusiasm, positivity, and clarity of expression.

Cuba

Most Cuban negotiators have a college education, so they possess a broad general knowledge. They value physical contact, especially when emphasizing a key point, and tend to interrupt and change the subject unexpectedly. The Cuban bureaucratic system is complex and slow, especially when it comes to paperwork, so it is necessary to have local contacts to facilitate the process.

Mexico

Mexican negotiators are known for their friendly, cordial demeanor, though in certain situations they may act impulsively. In the business world, their meetings are typically held in an informal setting, where time is spent on general conversation before directly addressing the terms of the agreement. Likewise, it is customary to negotiate actively to secure more favorable terms, so opportunities to improve a proposal are highly valued. Furthermore, providing detailed and transparent information about the agreement to be finalized is a sign of integrity that conveys trust and honesty—qualities highly valued in their culture (Parrado et al., 2018).

Venezuela

Venezuelan negotiators are known for their modesty; most are young people who take pride in representing their communities. They typically negotiate as a group and make decisions based on the group's well-being, prioritizing collective interests over individual ones.

Peru

According to Parrado et al. (2018), some Peruvian negotiators employ strategies that involve prolonging the conversation to wear down the other party, forcing it to concede more than it initially was willing to. This practice aims to induce fatigue, increase the likelihood of gaining an advantage, weaken the other party's interests, and advance the other party's objectives.

Colombia

Menjura (2014) noted that Colombian negotiators are characterized by their great ability to adapt to various challenges. They are distinguished by their flexibility and by maintaining a positive attitude throughout the negotiation process. Additionally, they possess the ability to recognize and capitalize on strategic opportunities, act with patience, and address and resolve unforeseen issues using available resources.

As can be seen, customs vary from country to country; however, individuals from these countries share a common value: being hospitable and relaxed, although each demonstrates this in their own way. Part of this characteristic of Latin Americans is their exception to the rule: they are individuals who do not adhere to strict norms or rigorous schedules, without this diminishing their commitment or seriousness regarding the matter. Regarding time management, Parrado et al. (2018) noted that Americans tend to place a high value on punctuality and time efficiency, seeking to avoid any loss of time, whereas Latin Americans have a more flexible perception of time. This gives rise to stereotypes that describe Americans as rushed and Latin Americans as unpunctual.

Based on the above, trust plays a fundamental role in Latin American negotiation processes. This is partly due to trust; Sikorski and Albrecht (2025) argue that Arab cultures are similar to Latin American cultures, as they focus on building trust between the parties involved. Thus, it is observed that Latin Americans are very sociable and that their closeness to the counterpart influences the course of the agreement, as they trust those they call "friends." Ogliastri (1998) described the Latin American negotiator as a friendly, flexible, and spontaneous person; a natural haggler. Their negotiating style is shaped by the level of trust

and closeness. They prioritize immediate benefits and, at the same time, show little tolerance for delays. When it comes to decision-making, they rely on their leader, who acts as their representative and bears ultimate responsibility.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach with an exploratory-descriptive scope, as its purpose is to identify, describe, and interpret the sociocultural differences present in negotiation processes in Latin America, without intervening in or manipulating variables. The design consists of a systematic literature review based on a documentary analysis of indexed academic sources.

The literature search strategy was conducted in the Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar databases, as well as in institutional repositories such as CLACSO and ECLAC. The following search terms were used: “intercultural negotiation,” “sociocultural differences,” “Latin America,” “negotiation,” “cross-cultural,” combined with the Boolean operators AND/OR.

The inclusion criteria applied were: (1) scientific articles published in indexed journals; (2) academic books and book chapters with institutional backing; (3) publications in Spanish or English; (4) works focused on intercultural negotiation, sociocultural factors, or Latin American cultures; and (5) sources published preferably between 2020 and 2025, with the exception of seminal works of recognized academic relevance in the field. The exclusion criteria were: (1) gray literature without academic backing; (2) blogs or websites without peer review; (3) duplicate works or those without verifiable access. The selection process yielded 22 final references, drawn from an initial pool of approximately 35 sources consulted.

The data collection process involved a close reading of the selected texts, the extraction of relevant information on negotiation styles, cultural dimensions, and intercultural strategies, and the organization of this information into comparative tables. Data validation was performed through source triangulation, comparing the findings of different authors to ensure the consistency of the information presented.

RESULTS

Differences and Similarities in Intercultural Negotiations in Latin America

Although Latin Americans tend to rely on their intuition, this is not enough when negotiating with a different culture. Latin America is a diverse subcontinent, rich in traditions that may align or clash. In this context, differences represent a cultural clash that can lead to disagreements, while similarities facilitate agreement by allowing parties to share common cultural traits.

On this basis, the negotiation approach in Latin American countries is analyzed, classifying them into: collective groups, which seek benefits for their groups and maintain a shared objective; individualists, in which responsibility and the outcome fall on a single person; and the intermediate approach, which requires maintaining a balance between personal and collective benefits, thereby fostering long-term relationships (Table 3).

Table 3

Classification of Latin American countries according to their predominant tendency

Countries	Collectivist	Individualist	Intermediate
Guatemala	X		
Ecuador	X		
Argentina		X	
Colombia	X		
Peru	X		
Venezuela	X		
Brasil	X		
Chile			X
Panama	X		

El Salvador	X	
Uruguay		X
Costa Rica	X	

Note. Adapted from The Culture Factor (2023).

As shown in Table 3, 75% of Latin American countries exhibit a collectivist approach, characterized by membership in groups with a shared goal, which is most evident in the business sector, where workers form associations to assert their rights. On the other hand, Argentina and Uruguay are classified as individualistic cultures, in which negotiators seek their own benefit, while retaining certain collective traits. Chile, for its part, maintains a balance between both approaches.

These differences reflect the region's diversity. Table 4 highlights the variations in language across Latin American countries.

Table 4

Linguistic diversity characteristic of Latin American countries

Native languages	**Countries where the language is predominantly spoken**
Quechua	Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador
Guaraní	Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia
Aymara	Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru
Nahuatl	Mexico
Maya	Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico
Mapundungun	Small population in southern Chile and Argentina
Portuguese	Brazil
French	Haiti, French Guiana

Note. Adapted from Silva (2021, p. 41).

Regarding cultural differences, distinct approaches were identified among Latin American countries in establishing relationships and negotiating, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Differences in cultural relations among selected Latin American countries.

Countries	Differences
México	They focus on long-term negotiations; for their negotiators, it is important to study and respect the other party's customs (Heredia, 2020).
Perú	They seek to weaken their counterpart and wear them down until they give in, in order to secure their own benefits (Parrado et al., 2018).
Colombia	They use their cultural values and attributes to achieve success in their negotiations (Menjura, 2014).
Brasil	They need a leader who acts as a mediator to guide the group and make decisions during the negotiation (Menjura, 2014).

Another aspect of culture is nonverbal communication. According to Silva (2021), gestures, facial expressions, and body language can be interpreted differently across countries. These differences can lead to confusion or misinterpretations, negatively affecting the progress of negotiations and business relationships. Table 6 presents the meanings of some nonverbal expressions in Latin American countries.

Table 6

The Use of Nonverbal Communication in Latin American Countries

Nonverbal expressions	Meaning
OK (finger gesture)	It is considered a vulgar gesture in Mexico and Brazil.
Snapping one's fingers	In Guatemala, it expresses surprise.
Hand resting on the neck	In Colombia, it is used to say that something is impossible in a given situation.

Kiss on the cheek	In Argentina, it serves as a greeting, regardless of gender.
Clenched fist below the elbow	Common throughout Latin America; it means "How stingy!"

Note. Adapted from Silva (2021, p. 41).

Comparative tables show that even the most common gesture can take on different meanings across countries. What may seem like a normal gesture in some cultures can be offensive in others. This highlights the importance of understanding verbal and nonverbal cues in cross-cultural negotiations, taking into account the other party's perspective and showing respect for all aspects of their traditions.

Cultural Barriers in Negotiation and Strategies for Addressing Them

A lead negotiator acting as a representative in multicultural contexts must develop intercultural communication skills to reach successful agreements. To do so, it is essential to understand, analyze, and adapt to the cultural characteristics of the person with whom they are interacting. Each culture is governed by its own norms, values, or protocols that influence its approach to negotiation; for this reason, knowledge of these characteristics fosters relationships and strengthens communication, while ignorance of them can create barriers and difficulties in negotiation (Catalá, 2024).

Likewise, Liu (2024) emphasized that the application of strategies should focus on several essential aspects:

- Foster relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- Establish clear and effective communication to facilitate understanding of each other's interests.
- Adapt to the other party's customs to strengthen cooperation during negotiations. Remain flexible in the face of future challenges that may arise during the negotiation process.

Similarly, Rendón (2007) notes that cultural preparation plays an essential role for negotiators operating in the international arena, as it enables them to anticipate cultural

differences and adapt more easily to unforeseen situations. To this end, the following is recommended:

- Learn about the most important aspects of the country where the negotiations will take place.
- Research and analyze the social norms and protocols that influence the way you negotiate.
- Understand and respect the customs and traditions of each culture, avoiding value judgments and misinterpretations.

The following is a list of obstacles that hinder cultural interactions and may limit communication and understanding between the parties (Table 7).

Table 7

Barriers that hinder the progress of negotiations.

Barrier	How does it affect things?
Lack of knowledge about the opponent's profile	When entering negotiations, it is essential to research the counterpart. Their culture cannot be ignored, as it encompasses both visible and invisible aspects deeply rooted in their country; similarly, understanding their institutional background represents a strategic advantage (Restrepo, 2013).
Lack of cultural knowledge	An intercultural leader must know and understand the cultures with which they interact, become familiar with them, and be able to communicate in the native language of those cultures (Aguareles and Nevado, 2024).
Lack of training for employees	One must be familiar with the culture of potential partners and, likewise, understand that work teams may lack training that prevents them from communicating assertively (Aguareles and Nevado, 2024).
Lack of cultural intelligence	Training leaders and employees is essential to achieving intercultural competence and succeeding in their roles (Aguareles and Nevado, 2024).

Table 7 identifies cultural barriers in negotiation processes, reflecting the diversity of customs among Latin Americans and how they adapt to different contexts. In this regard, language proficiency is an essential part of negotiations; therefore, Martinetti and Chóez (2015) recommend hiring a translator when communication difficulties arise. This measure helps foster a better understanding of the client's needs, promotes effective communication, and facilitates active listening during the negotiation process.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of this study are consistent with those of Čuhlová and Demel (2024), who emphasize that intercultural skills are an essential element in intercultural negotiation, regardless of the globalization or deglobalization processes shaping the environment. Likewise, Aguirre et al. (2025) asserted that culture is a determining factor in building relationships with individuals involved in international business in Latin America, which supports the findings presented here.

Regarding the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, Gerlach and Eriksson (2021) validated the model's relevance for analyzing current contexts, highlighting that individualism and power distance remain the most influential factors in explaining organizational behaviors and negotiation processes. This aligns with the classification presented in Table 3, which shows that 75% of Latin American countries exhibit collectivist characteristics, implying collective decision-making and the building of trust before finalizing agreements.

On the other hand, the relevance of nonverbal language (Table 6) aligns with the findings of Burmann and Semrau (2022), who demonstrated that differences between high- and low-context cultures are reflected in both verbal communication and nonverbal cues and interaction gestures. In light of the above, this study contributes to a comparative compilation of nonverbal expressions specific to Latin America, offering a distinct perspective on nonverbal expressions in globalized contexts.

Similarly, Sikorski and Albrecht (2025) confirmed that trust is a critical factor in intercultural negotiations, particularly in Latin American and Arab cultures, where agreements are reached only after strong personal relationships have been established. This finding reinforces the strategic approach proposed by Liu (2024), who identified relationship-building as a priority for successful negotiations in multicultural settings.

A limitation of this study is its reliance on secondary sources, which limits the ability to directly analyze the behaviors under study. Future research could incorporate primary methodologies such as interviews with international negotiators or comparative studies across different countries. Additionally, including the three Latin American countries not covered in this analysis would broaden the geographic scope and strengthen the study's focus on Latin America.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the sociocultural factors that influence negotiation processes in Latin America by reviewing the literature and prior studies, and identified the values, customs, and traditions that characterize Latin American cultures. It was determined that these factors exert a direct influence on decision-making and the development of negotiation processes, highlighting that most cultures in the region exhibit collectivist, high-context, and polychronic traits, which give rise to negotiation styles based on informality, trust, and temporal flexibility.

The sociocultural practices present in negotiations were studied by classifying the collected information, which allowed us to determine that the cultural iceberg model (Gerlach and Eriksson, 2021) is a useful tool for understanding the complexity of intercultural interactions, given that 90% of people's behaviors remain hidden during negotiation.

The effect of sociocultural differences on negotiation processes was evaluated by comparing various contexts across the region, revealing that differences in nonverbal communication, communication styles, and cultural orientations lead to misunderstandings and conflicts

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when they are not recognized or properly managed. However, when managed effectively, these differences can become a competitive advantage for those with intercultural skills.

It is concluded that sociocultural differences directly affect negotiation outcomes in Latin America, and that a lack of awareness of these particularities can lead to significant economic and relational consequences. Prior cultural preparation, adaptability, and trust-building are key strategies for achieving successful agreements in a regional environment characterized by cultural diversity.

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