



Faculty of Law

School of International Studies

**ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS FACTORS OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY AND
COMMON MARKET "CARICOM" FROM A
LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE.**

**Degree work prior to obtaining the degree of
Bachelor of International Studies**

Authors:

Danna Barbara Leon Valdiviezo

Juliana Margarita Vergara Campoverde.

Director:

Adrián Ramiro Alvarado Guzmán.

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DEDICATION

The pillars that have forged my path are strength, dedication, perseverance, and passion. Thanks to them, I have managed to become the person I am and want to become.

Strength has been with me since my birth, their unconditional love, support, and thousands of life advice will serve me for my self-esteem and the future.

The second pillar wears an apron, saves lives thousands of miles away, and taught me that dedication and a strong fraternal embrace motivate your dreams take you to explore new wonderful places, and puts you where you should be. Perseverance is the man who climbed each step with effort and in the end reached his goals, he taught me not to give up despite the adversities that arise in life.

And finally, passion. Passion moves mountains, it motivates you to be a better person, and it doesn't let you give up when you are drowning in a glass of water. Passion drives you to reach the clouds if you set your mind to it because you can achieve anything. You are capable and brave! Thank you for everything! It is to these pillars that this final project is dedicated.

Every day I wake up intending to be a better person and above all a happy one, therefore, in my life, some people help me to achieve it. This work is dedicated first of all to God for being the one who guides and illuminates my path. It is also dedicated to my father, for being my best teacher, my best friend, and above all for being that person who trusts blindly in me and my qualities. To my mother, for being my most beautiful love, my greatest happiness, and above all my best support. And finally, to my siblings Fiorella and Marquito, you are my greatest inspiration, everything I am and what I want to be is because of and for you. Everything I do in my life will always be for each one of you.

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With great effort and dedication, this project has been possible. Therefore, I thank all the people who were with me at every moment. I thank my thesis partner, my parents and brother, and my thesis advisor Adrián for their trust, instruction, and motivation in this distinguished step of my life.

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RESUMEN

La Comunidad del Caribe, una organización regional compuesta por 20 países con economías pequeñas y territorios en desarrollo, fue constituida en 1973 con la firma del Tratado de Chaguaramas, la cual alcanzó una fuerte integración que perdura hasta la actualidad. La siguiente investigación busca analizar cuáles han sido los factores de éxito de esta integración en el ámbito económico, político y sociocultural mediante una revisión comprensiva de literatura (CLR) para recopilar y sintetizar documentos académicos. Como resultados positivos se destaca el acuerdo CSME, la implementación de proyectos e iniciativas culturales, la institucionalidad y la libre circulación de factores de producción. Por otro lado, entre los obstáculos de la integración se muestra la falta de voluntad y compromiso político, la dependencia y la poca oferta exportable por la deficiencia en infraestructura, capacitación y conectividad, siendo estos factores el reto del bloque a largo plazo para mejorar y fortalecer la integración caribeña.

Palabras clave: CARICOM, Comunidad del Caribe, factores de éxito, factores económicos, políticos y socioculturales; integración regional.

ABSTRACT

The Caribbean Community, a regional organization integrated by 20 countries considered small economies and developing territories, was established in 1973 with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. It achieved a strong integration that has lasted until today. The following research seeks to analyze the success factors of this integration in the economic, political, and sociocultural spheres employing a comprehensive literature review (CLR) to compile and synthesize academic documents. Positive results include the CSME agreement, the implementation of cultural projects and initiatives, the institutional framework, and the free circulation of factors of production. On the other hand, among the obstacles of integration are the lack of political will and commitment, foreign dependence, and the limited exportable supply due to deficiencies in infrastructure, training, and connectivity. These factors are the challenge for this bloc in the long term to improve and strengthen Caribbean integration.

Keywords: CARICOM, Caribbean Community, and success factors., economic, political and socio-cultural factors; regional integration



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Analysis of the success factors of the Caribbean Community and Common Market "CARICOM" from a Latin American perspective

1. Introduction

The hopeful thought of unification among the heterogeneous and incomparable countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has allowed us to face the strong demands of a globalized society. The economic power, led by powerful countries, has encouraged the countries from the region to search for effective mechanisms of integration in order to satisfy their commercial and economic needs, as well as the political and social interests which are focused on the development and progress of the States, as the result of their historical past related to the colonial exploitation (Londres-Orsorio et al., 2018).

In other words, the regional integration is the process of putting together different groups in order to form a unit of great composition, where there is a complex network of solidary alliances within an economic and social context (Mendoza Álvarez, 2014). Thus, demonstrating, both the combination of unified work and the implementation of coordinated policies, are necessary to achieve common goals at an economic, political, and social level by seeking tariff elimination, improving competitiveness, and increasing sustainable development of the region from a vision of common cultural identity and political willingness of implicated countries (Aguirre et al., 2015).

The fundamental dimensions of regional integration are focused on the following areas: first, the economic areas, which refer to efficiency and productivity growth through the elimination of tariff and customs barriers among countries (Morales López, 2018); on the other hand, the political ambit, which is based on the government's willingness to form a new collective system where common and beneficial goals are built among all members (Aguirre et al., 2015); and finally, sociocultural ambit which serves to promote a collective identity (Di Filippo & Franco, 1999).

As a process of integration, countries follow five elementary stages to forge an organization. First, the free trade area is managed with preferential trade agreements between countries, then the customs union with an internal tariff to negotiate with third countries; the next step continues with a common market based on the free movement of production factors¹. On the other hand, the fourth stage refers to an economic union with the harmonization of economic and social policies; lastly, it is the economic community that evolves the elimination of all borders between member countries, becoming one (Aguirre et al., 2015).

For this reason, the Caribbean Community "CARICOM" has distinguished itself by achieving a third-level functional integration, which is a common market among its member countries. This organization generates the exchange of goods and services as a customs union, and also promotes the commercialization of production factors (capital and labor) with an economic and environmental focus, hand in hand with tourism and the sale of raw materials, resulting in a global value chain among small states.

Thus, the study of the Caribbean region and its integration processes are transcendental issues to understand what were the motivating factors that influenced these countries to carry out a constructive and unifying plan, and generate a productive and industrialized regional interdependence to obtain economic stability and common welfare. Thus, regional integration is the primary key in understanding the creation of international organizations as is the following case study of the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

1.1.1. Regional Integration Process

The process of formal and binding regional integration dates back to the years after World War II when European countries sought ways to collaborate each other to avoid military conflicts. This led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which laid the groundwork for Europe's economic and political integration as the current European Union (EU), thanks to the existence of a conducive political climate and the willingness of member countries to cooperate in a specific area (Malamud, 2011).

The European Union has become a role model for regional integration for other countries, which has led to the establishment of similar organizations in other parts of the world. During subsequent decades,

¹ The Common Market stage allows the circulation of the 4 freedoms: goods, services and factors of production such as labor and capital (Fuchs & Straubhaar, 2003).

regional organizations were established, such as 1959 the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 in sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, in Asia, the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 marked a turning point in Asian regional construction (Molano-Cruz, 2017).

In order to understand the historical perspective of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is necessary to comprehend two approaches to regionalism. The first posture occurred between 1950 and 1960, known as "closed regionalism" based on the implementation of the Import Substitution Industrialization Strategy² (ISI) in the region, that promoted economic growth through internal and regional markets, with a protectionist and state-supported posture. In this context, integration was perceived as just another instrument of economic policy, the main objective of which was protection against third parties. The second posture started in the mid-1970, so-called "open regionalism" focused on external markets and based on neoliberal ideology began. This change in approach initiated a process of restructuring most of the region's integration schemes and stimulated the emergence of new economic, trade, and market proposals (Londres-Orsorio et al., 2018).

The process of regional integration in Latin America has been a relevant issue that seeks to deepen cooperation and coordination between countries in economic and political spheres, as it would be a strategic tool for improving the productivity of the Latin American economy, specifically in interdependent dimensions such as the acceleration of growth, expansion, and diversification of exports and the advancement of industrialization. Furthermore, integration would also make it possible to expand the market and the productive resource base to take advantage of economies of scale and the benefits of industrial specialization in such a way as to increase productivity, boost the industrialization process, expand intra-regional and extra-regional trade and revitalize economic growth (Tavares & Gomes, 1998).

Under Bolivarian thought, Latin America has sought to consolidate its identity and achieve integration in such a way as to confront economic and political powers in better conditions. Since the 1950s, Latin American and Caribbean countries have established trade alliances, such as the Latin American Free Trade Association, which later became the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Central American Common Market (MCC), and the Andean Pact (Herrera, 2017).

Subsequently, more modern integration systems were created, such as the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) in 1969, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the Central American Integration System (SICA) in 1991, and, in the following period, political initiatives were promoted, for example, the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (Herrera, 2017).

Currently, one of the most recent integration processes in Latin America is the Pacific Alliance, which is an economic and trade initiative created in 2011 composed of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, to form an integration area with an open and free trade vision, progressively eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers to promote competitiveness, development, and social prosperity among its members. In addition, the Pacific Alliance projects itself towards the Asia-Pacific region and strengthens cooperation in areas such as education, culture, and innovation (Organización de los Estados Americanos [OEA], 2023; Subsecretaría de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales, 2023).

Based on the open regionalist ideology, one of the most representative regional organizations in the Caribbean was born, with a scope of participation in international organizations and multilateral negotiations, such as the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in 1994 and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973 (Laguardia Martínez, 2022).

1.1.2. Caribbean Community and Common Market

The Caribbean Community or CARICOM is an organization integrated by 20 countries³, 15 member states, and five associate members with different levels of economic and social development,

² The Import Substitution Industrialization Strategy (ISI) was an economic model developed in Latin America in the mid-20th century to promote industrial development and reduce the dependence of the region's countries on imports of manufactured goods (Mendoza Álvarez, 2014).

³ CARICOM member countries are made up of: 15 full members such as Antigua and Barbuda (1974), the Bahamas (1983), Barbados (1973), Belize (1974), Dominica (1974), Grenada (1974), Guyana (1973), Haiti (2002), Jamaica (1973), Montserrat (1974), Saint Lucia (1974), Saint Kitts and Nevis (1974), St. Kitts and Nevis (1974), St. Lucia (1974), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1995) Suriname (1995) and Trinidad and Tobago (1973) (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe [CEPAL] & Organización de Estados Americanos [OEA],

whose objective is to promote economic, political, and social cooperation among its members. Founded in 1973, it has evolved, throughout the years, to address the challenges and opportunities that have emerged in the region due to globalization (CARICOM, 2023a).

The Caribbean Community is considered a customs union integrated by heterogeneous states, which is in the process of forming a Single Market and Economy of the CARICOM (CSME) by 2015 (CEPAL, 2010), established as an Economic Integration Agreement⁴ (EIA). This agreement is a popular policy tool to access larger international markets by increasing their size and productivity (Boutorat et al., 2020).

In the economic approach to the Caribbean Community, Table 4⁵ indicates that the countries with the highest per capita income are the Bahamas, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Barbados, as a result of their specialization in the services sector, with a percentage of 74.4%, 67.8%, and 74.9% respectively, but with lower population percentages. On the other hand, there is an inverse reality, such as Haiti, where its economic values demonstrate the highest concentration of inhabitants in the region, with 60.5% and an income of 1,829.60 USD, making it the country with the lowest performance and high levels of poverty (Braithwait, 2020).

Regarding extra-regional trade in goods, the main trading partners are the United States, Great Britain, China, Canada, and the European Union (Braithwait, 2020). A trade analysis between 2012 and 2022 shows a deficit of -11'324,235 USD generated in the average trade balance because, during that period, exports reached a value of 16'761,084.73 USD, while imports amounted to 2'085,319.3 USD (International Trade Centre [ITC], 2023).

The most productive sectors of CARICOM member countries with approximate GDP values in 2019, shown in Table 5⁶, are agriculture, forestry, and fishing, with 6.6% of CARICOM GDP; tourism and services, 58.6% of GDP; industry such as mining, construction, electricity, with 24.2% of GDP; and manufacturing with 6.2% of GDP (Braithwait, 2020). Some of the major export products in the region include sugar, bananas, fruits and vegetables, petroleum and its derived products, chemicals, and manufactured goods. In addition, some countries, such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, have tourism industries that offer accommodation and food services, contributing significantly to the region's economy (International Trade Centre [ITC], 2022).

1.1.3. History and Current Situation of CARICOM

The beginning of Caribbean integration dates back to 1958, when the Federation of the British West Indies was formed with ten Caribbean islands, dealing exclusively with political and cooperation issues, without economic integration (Alburquerque, s. f.).

The Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) was founded in 1965 as an initiative to establish a common Caribbean market (Fuchs & Straubhaar, 2003). CARIFTA was a free trade agreement for the liberalization of trade in manufactured and agricultural products, characterized by the application of preferential measures for the smaller countries of the Eastern Caribbean. It ended in 1973 to make way for the Treaty of Chaguaramas and the formation of the Caribbean Community or CARICOM (Bishop et al., 2011).

CARICOM has the initiative to deepen Caribbean integration through the free movement of goods, services, and factors of production, interconnected with the coordination of foreign policies and the use of resources for functional cooperation in education, health, environment, and response to natural disasters, among others (Laguardia Martínez, 2022). However, in the 1980s, CARICOM's customs union failed to meet its objectives due to a lack of commitment from member countries to allow free movement, improve the region's international position through coordination of foreign policies, and pool limited resources through functional cooperation; and additionally, a recession due to the energy crisis in the 1970s and 1980s led to a decline in intraregional trade in the Caribbean (Al-Hassan et al., 2020; Bishop et al., 2011; Comisión Económica para América Latina [CEPAL], 1982).

2012); and 5 associate members: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands (Caribbean Community [CARICOM], 2023).

⁴ Regional trade agreements (RTAs) are pacts between two or more countries that establish norms and rules for trade and investment in a specific region. These agreements aim to reduce or eliminate trade barriers between member countries, foster economic cooperation, and promote economic growth in the region (Bedoya Puerta & Orrego Alvarez, 2017).

⁵ You will find Table 4 in the Annexes section.

⁶ Annexes.

In 2001, Caribbean leaders decided to review the Treaty of Chaguaramas to present a new main objective, an expanded common market in pursuit of a Single Economy (Piedra Rencurrell, 2013). Almost 30 years after the creation of CARICOM, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas was established to initiate a more solid fourth-level integration project, an economic union called the Caribbean Single Market and Economy⁷ (CSME), which aimed to create a borderless economic space with more state strengthening in the harmonization and coordination of economic policies and functional areas of CARICOM's institutional framework with a possible leap to a monetary union (Al-Hassan et al., 2020).

The institutional framework established by CARICOM has demonstrated welcome progress in areas related to the four basic pillars that have sustained the community to date in the integrationist project: economic integration, foreign policy coordination, social and human development, and security cooperation, which have enhanced the beneficial growth of the organization in areas such as health, disaster management, education and technical cooperation with third countries, among others (Piedra Rencurrell, 2013), contributing to an integrationist culture for the people and the member states of the community.

At this time, Caribbean countries are facing several economic, political, and social problems focused on food security with an economic recession due to the paralysis of tourism as a negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the activity of the economic sectors has temporarily decreased due to the sharp drop in demand for exportable production, adding to the dependence on imported food and goods, which jeopardizes supply chains in the Caribbean (Peña & Vélez, 2022).

Despite the negative outlook of the current situation of CARICOM member countries, there is still a complete commitment to the establishment of a common economic space to face the challenges they share among themselves, for the academic authorities, revitalizing the agenda of the "Caribbean Single Market and Economy" or CSME to continue with the liberalization of the movement of productive factors among the member states and redirect towards the main objectives that were have proposed since the beginning of the organization (Al-Hassan et al., 2020); therefore, the main tool for strengthening the economic capacity of the Caribbean Community and its integration into the global economy continues to be the CSME (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 2021).

1.2. Objectives

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of this research is to analyze the economic, political, and social factors that were determinants in the strengthening of CARICOM regional integration for the establishment of a common market in the Caribbean countries.

1.1.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives set for the following research are:

- i. To Analyze the determinants that have influenced Caribbean countries to form a regional integration bloc.
- ii. To Establish the causes that encouraged Caribbean countries to form an economic, political and socio-cultural integration.
- iii. To Describe the most transcendental developments in the integration of a common market among the Caribbean member countries of CARICOM.

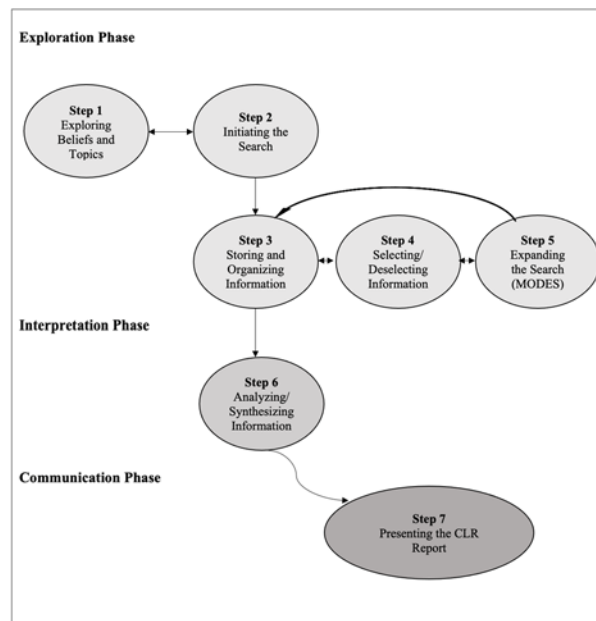
2. Methods

In order to answer the proposed research question, a qualitative analysis methodology of secondary literature collection had been used, such as the *Comprehensive Literature Review* (CLR) method, which has the ability to obtain information for the chosen topic with a greater permissiveness on the type of publications to be included in the data collection, focusing on the identification, collection, understanding, development of new concepts and dissemination of knowledge (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016). The method proposes the following 3 phases as shown in Figure 1:

⁷ CARICOM member countries that have ratified the CSME treaty are: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Haiti is a partial member of CSME (Al-Hassan et al., 2020).

Figure 1

Phases of the Comprehensive Literature Review (CLR) Methodology



Note: The following figure shows how the sequence of steps to follow in the literature review will be.

Source: Based on Onwuegbuzie & Frels (2016).

2.1. Exploration Phase

2.1.1. Exploring of Beliefs and Topics

The research topic addressed, arose from the need for knowledge on the functioning of integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, its successes, challenges and opportunities in the international stage. As the search for related topics progresses, the study was directed towards an analysis of a small, conflictive, unknown, but promising region such as the Caribbean region. To begin the research, a protocol was drawn up with a central question, objectives and a problem that required a critical response, always taking into an account the viability, feasibility and abundance of information on the topic of interest. Subsequently, the conclusion was reached that the topic to be researched would be an "Analysis of the success factors of the CARICOM Common Market Community from a Latin American perspective".

2.1.2. Initiating the Search

For the beginning of the research, a general exploration of information was carried out in several search engines. Consecutively, search engines that are related to the research area were selected, which are: Dialnet, Redarlyc, Scopus, and EBSCO. These libraries were chosen because of the proportion of information that will help to find information on the Caribbean Community and its integration process.

2.1.3. Storing and Organizing Information

The information obtained from the secondary bibliography, mainly academic articles and general reports, was synthesized through an electronic database made in Excel which had divided into sheets to filter, outline and select the information. Each sheet bears the name of the search engine to which each article belonged; then, the scheme for ordering the articles in the document was done with the initial of the library and a sequential number (Example: Dialnet = D001, D002, ...). Additionally, columns were added to the Excel sheet to provide sufficient information, which included Title, DOI/Link and Abstract/Abstract, this action helped to have the information in a more orderly and systematized way.

The use of specific terms of the subject supports a more advanced, exclusive, and organized search. The following search terms were used in English and Spanish with the strategy of using Boolean operators such as "AND", "OR", and "NOT" to have better combinations, specify and narrow down the search to specific articles on the topic (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016).

- Integration AND Caribbean Community OR CARICOM.
- Regionalism AND CARICOM OR CARICOM.
- Political Integration AND Caribbean OR CARICOM.
- Economic Integration AND Caribbean OR CARICOM.
- Socio-Cultural Integration AND Caribbean OR CARICOM.

2.1.4. Selecting/Deselecting Information

The inclusion and exclusion criteria will be useful to discard first and second-hand articles that lack essential information in this review and not to have inconveniences in the presentation of data. The criteria established were considered according to the subject matter and the information required regarding the strategies, mechanisms, policies, and agreements, among others, of the CARICOM integration processes, as shown in Table No. 1.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant academic articles on CARICOM regional integration issues. • Academic articles with relevant information on CARICOM economic policies. • Academic articles with relevant information on economic causes that have affected CARICOM. • Academic articles on the cultural identity promoted in CARICOM. • Conferences, reports, and publications on Caribbean integration, its successes, benefits, shortcomings, and problems. • Articles and documents on Caribbean integration throughout colonial history.
Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications unrelated to CARICOM Integration or Caribbean Integration. • Academic articles with restricted or incomplete access. • Articles that do not have information on political, social, or economic issues of CARICOM. • Incomplete publications of books and conferences. • Articles in a language other than English and Spanish • Publications on Latin America and Caribbean, with emphasis on Latin America.

Note: This table will be used to specify the criteria considered in the articles.

2.1.5. Expanding Research (MODES)

To expand the research, Onwuegbuzie & Frels (2016) propose an alternative to search for more information, such as the media, informative documents, experts, and secondary (data). In other words, in addition to libraries, you will have the facility to search on your own according to what needs to be substantiated.

For this reason, the use of external search sources such as Google or Google Scholar to obtain more favorable results in the study will be of vital support in the previously mentioned research topic if the other search chains were not sufficient. Some of the sources used were: the official web page of CARICOM, ECLAC reports, and official documents of international organizations.

2.2. Interpretation Phase

2.2.1. Analysis and synthesis of information

The results obtained from the systematic review include the following points:

- In the initial search around 547,577 were found with the key terms in English and Spanish.
- As a second filtering by title and summary or abstract, 172 articles were obtained.
- Finally, with the last review of the articles, 39 documents were obtained for writing, considering the different inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Of the articles obtained, 42% of the total were focused on economic integration, 35% on political integration, and 27% on sociocultural integration. The values do not coincide with 100% because some articles served to provide results in 2 or 3 areas of study.

The articles had at least the reading of the introduction, results, and conclusion or, in some cases, the entire article. This work is divided into three phases, in which an Excel sheet was made with the different phases: the first, economic integration, the second, political integration, and the third, social integration of CARICOM, because in this way it helped to answer the different objectives of the work.

3. Results

3.1. ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

3.1.1.Integration Process

The interest in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) lies in the fact that it is the oldest integration project still in force in the subcontinent. Since its inception, CARICOM has sought to establish economic integration to strengthen its member countries and facilitate the achievement of their individual development goals (González & Álvarez, 2016).

CARICOM's economic integration has made significant progress over time. These include the existence of regional associations, such as trade unions and chambers of commerce, which have contributed to regional coordination. Likewise, the creation of the Anglo-American Commission and later the Caribbean Commission, promoted by the colonial powers, strengthened coordination in the British West Indies. In the 1940s, regional professional organizations, such as the University College of the West Indies, emerged to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing in the region. In addition, the 1957 Treaty of Rome played an important role in allowing economic agreements between the colonies and non-independent territories of the member countries and the Common Market (Pantojas García, 2008).

The implementation of special measures and benefits by the community serves to promote the development of less favored regions, which include temporary suspension measures in the application of the common tariff, exceptions in the implementation of tax incentive regimes, the possibility of complying with more flexible requirements in the rules of origin, and the facilitation of capital flows so that a greater intensity of integration can emerge with this differential treatment in the constitutive treaty (González & Álvarez, 2016).

CARICOM members are classified in the category of small developing States with a high dependence on vulnerability factors mainly due to the absolute dependence on tourism and the environment thanks to the tropical geographic location that generates a particular international interest (González & Álvarez, 2016). Caribbean countries present many limitations on the availability of resources to be able to respond to the difficulties that arise in their region, including health crises, natural disasters such as earthquakes and landslides that hurt the economy of Caribbean countries, the fishing industry due to the inefficient production of certain countries that do not have the same infrastructure and technology, and, similarly, the manufacturing industry (González & Álvarez, 2016; Parthenay, 2021).

The community presents challenges to the equitable growth of the region's economies. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is concentrated in a small group of territories, while most islands have low GDP and experience volatile growth due to their heavy reliance on the offshore sector (offshore banking and tourism) (León & García, 2006). The Bahamas' offshore financial services have been successful, but the

anti-tax haven campaign and OECD blacklisting have weakened this option in the CARICOM region (Stewart, 2006).

To have an interpretation of GDP per capita and the existing asymmetries among CARICOM countries, Figure 9⁸ establishes the evolution of GDP from 1973 to 2012 to divide the groups by income levels using dispersion variables. The results show that the first group, with a level of 1 point, is the most developed economies⁹. The opposite case of the second group with scores above 1 is lower-income economies¹⁰. The standard deviation in real annual GDP per capita growth is about 25% for states that are relatively small compared to their higher-income neighbors (León & García, 2006).

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has played an important role in structural changes in the region, but its impact on reducing volatility and poverty is limited. As a result, economic integration still faces challenges in promoting sustainable and equitable development in the region due to the high dependence on these monetary inflows (León & García, 2006).

During the period between 2000 and 2003, there was a significant 12% decrease in net investment flows to the United States, especially in the tourism and apparel sectors. This reduction was the result of the contraction in U.S. domestic demand. It should be noted that this contraction had already begun before the slowdown in the U.S. economy became fully evident. In 2000, foreign direct investment experienced a sharp drop of 36.6% compared to 1999, followed by a 29% growth in 2001 and another 12% drop in 2002 (León & García, 2006).

Income inequality reaches a negative impact on development and economic growth at the regional level attacking the indexes of the groups of countries with high income, since the consumption of imported luxury goods makes them use scarce foreign currencies, reducing economic growth and national demand; and, in addition, it affects migratory flows due to free circulation and produces social dislocations slowing down the process of economic and political integration (Constantine, 2019). The Caribbean Community presents important findings regarding income heterogeneity showing a divided region where countries with abundant land and natural resources have higher incomes, comparing countries with land scarcity, promoting economic and political frictions or frictions that affect the commitment to continuous and community work, being devastating for small economies (Constantine, 2019).

CARICOM has demonstrated the difficulties in its asymmetries with the division of the region into more and less developed countries. The areas of more importance to the regional structure relate to the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, as well as the harmonization of trade regulations covering customs procedures, intellectual property, competition policy, taxation and legislation on unfair practices such as dumping and subsidies (González & Álvarez, 2016). However, despite the relevance of these issues, their implementation is still imperfect and not fully in place to this day.

3.1.2. Commercial Relationships

The free trade agreements signed, such as the CACM and DR-CAFTA between the Dominican Republic and CARICOM, show the need to overcome insularity through regional cooperation and integration. Treaties have also signed with Panama, Chile, and Mexico, and negotiations are underway for an FTA between CARICOM, Central America, and Panama, thus promoting regional cooperation. In 2005, the CARICOM-Central America Cooperation Agreement have been signed to promote cooperation in areas like trade, tourism, agriculture, and education. This agreement laid the groundwork for greater economic integration and the establishment of trade links between the two regions (Pantojas García, 2008).

In addition, CARICOM's bilateral trade agreements with the central and southern regions have focused their efforts on trade, cooperation, and investment, among others. The following chart is shown in the table:

⁸ Annexes.

⁹ Developed countries: Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, and Montserrat.

¹⁰ More or less developed countries: Belize, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Grenada, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and Grenadines.

Figure 2

CARICOM Regional bilateral trade agreements

Regional Trade Agreements	Main Features
CARICOM-Colombia	Agreement on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation Trade liberalization and facilitation, as well as promotion and protection of investment. Reciprocal trade applies to the MDCs. The agreement provides for the phasing out of non-tariff barriers.
CARICOM-Costa Rica	Free Trade Agreement Reciprocal for CARICOM MDCs. Duty-free or preferential access for a wide range of products.
CARICOM-Cuba	Trade and Economic Agreement Duty-Free treatment on specific goods agreed by both sides: specific treatment for a seasonal list of agricultural products, elimination of tariffs on specified products through four annual reductions. The Agreement also deals with taxation, trade promotion and facilitation, services, tourism investment, and intellectual property rights.
CARICOM-Dominican Republic	Free Trade Agreement Mutual granting of tariff concessions between CARICOM MDCs and the Dominican Republic. The Agreement also deals with services, investment, and government procurement.
CARICOM-Venezuela	Trade and Investment Agreement Non-reciprocal preferential agreement, granting most CARICOM exports to Venezuela preferential or duty-free access.

Source: based on information from WTO on Braithwait (2020).

With the Treaty of Chaguaramas, the Caribbean Community expanded its openness towards local and international markets with the approach of the single market and the circulation of goods and services. Thus, the United States, one of the richest and most powerful economic powers in the world, has become CARICOM's main trading partner with export values of \$11,807,190 and import values of \$18,401,357 due to its interest in extractive industries such as liquefied natural gas, crude oil, etc. (International Trade Centre [ITC], 2022a). In addition, for countries that are not endowed with natural resources, it may be a good opportunity to increase their exports by focusing their productivity towards the financial and commercial services sector, insurance services, among others, since in 2007, the United States invested close to 387,000 million dollars in imported services, with an increase of 7% concerning 2006 (Williams, 2012).

CARICOM countries have trade priorities from the United States such as the Caribbean Basic Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA), which allow CARICOM countries to sell most products duty-free in the U.S. market. However, technical barriers such as international standards are the cause of the export decline in developing countries, which do not show favorable results as in 2009, in the first quarter, CARICOM export revenues decreased by 41% compared to 2008 (Nicholls & Williams, 2016).

Thanks to the inefficient and insufficient resource capacity that CARICOM companies have, it produces that the certification of standards and the cost of compliance is too high, causing most companies cannot afford it, and a signal of low-quality products with many difficulties to sell in the international market is issued (Williams, 2012).

The idea that regional integration was crucial for economic recovery and development influenced economic relations with the Caribbean and other colonial regions; therefore, the inclusion of the Dominican Republic and Haiti in CARICOM through CARIFORUM, as part of the European Union's negotiating group for an Economic Partnership Agreement, demonstrates the need to build regional cooperation amid geopolitics (Pantojas García, 2008). This agreement known as the EU-CARIFORUM EPA replaces previous preferential agreements that CARICOM had with other countries, in which it establishes a framework for the liberalization of trade in goods and services between the two regions, as well as for cooperation in areas such as investment, intellectual property, financial services, sustainable development, and the environment (Pierre-Campo, 2009).

In addition, the European Union is the second largest export market for CARICOM, with over \$6'989,149, and, as with the U.S. market, most products enter duty-free (International Trade Centre [ITC], s. f.; Sandberg et al., 2006). However, of CARICOM's total exports to the EU, approximately 60%, on average, are destined primarily for the United Kingdom. In comparison, intra-CARICOM exports are

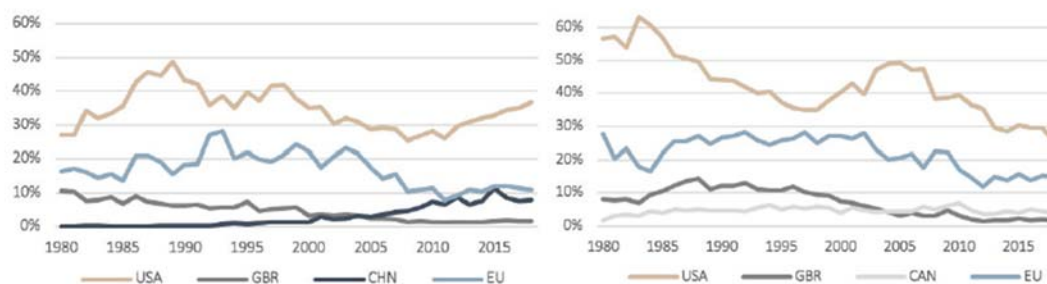
smaller in magnitude than CARICOM exports to the EU overall but have a higher average volume over the period compared to CARICOM exports to the UK or the rest of the EU (Sandberg et al., 2006).

Another trading partner of the Caribbean Community was born in January 2001, the governments of Canada and CARICOM member states agreed to begin exploratory work to establish a free trade zone during the VI Canada-CARICOM Summit. Although there was a previous trade agreement between CARICOM and Canada called CARIBCAN, this agreement was not reciprocal and did not comply with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. Therefore, Canada obtained a successful extension of the CARIBCAN waiver until 2023 through the WTO. In 2012, CARICOM's top import products from Canada included wheat, medicines, fish, meat, and paper, while CARICOM's top export products included aluminum ore, gold, alcoholic beverages, organic and inorganic compounds, and vegetables (Braithwait, 2020). In addition, the export of services could be beneficial for CARICOM to Canada in areas such as health, education, business, and finance, due to trade complementarities. However, regulatory barriers were identified as a major obstacle to the significant penetration of the Canadian services market (Braithwait, 2020).

To show the trade relations with some of CARICOM's main partners, Braithwait (2020) presents the following graphs for the period 1980-2018 demonstrating the percentage share of imports and exports over the years.

Figure 3

CARICOM Merchandise Imports and Exports (1980-2018)



Source: based on IMF Statistics on Braithwait (2020).

The United States has dominated trade with a peak share of 35% of imports and 25% of exports in CARICOM. On the other hand, imports from Europe have declined and account for less than 15% of the total, approximately 10% after 2005. Importantly, imports from the United Kingdom have experienced a steady decline over the period from 1980 to 2018. Apparently, in exports, they have had complications with their increase from all countries showing their increased dependence on the world powers.

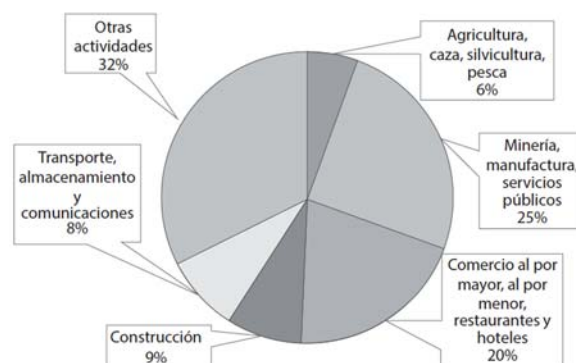
3.1.3. International Trade

By a brief analysis of León & García (2006) show that interregional trade in the Caribbean has experienced growth, but it is also volatile due to the disparity in tariff agreements and the application of different systems, which has led to the existence of four lists of exceptions. In addition, it is highly concentrated in four main categories and 18 products, revealing a lack of diversification. The following table shows the diversification of CARICOM's business sectors, with mining and services being the most represented (González & Álvarez, 2016). Likewise, Table 4¹¹ further corroborates CARICOM's productive sectors.

¹¹ Annexes

Figure 4

CARICOM Trade Sectors



Source: based on González & Álvarez (2016).

In the region, services represent a significant share of value-added, accounting for 60% and even reaching 90% of gross domestic product (GDP) in countries such as Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat. Sectors linked to industry and mining are in second place. In terms of manufacturing, they account for about 23% of GDP in countries such as Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, while in other countries such as Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, they only account for about 3%. As for mining, its importance varies, with more than 30% of GDP in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and less than 0.5% in countries such as St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia (González & Álvarez, 2016).

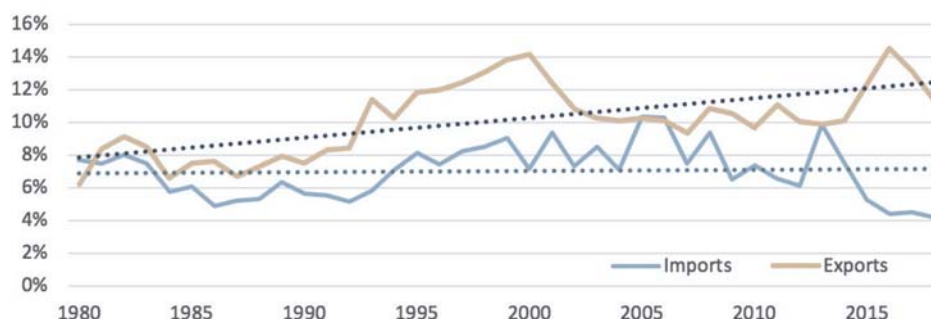
In contrast, the agricultural and fishing sectors have historically had a small presence in the regional product, although they are common activities in all the countries of the region. In some cases, they account for more than 15% of GDP in countries such as Guyana and Haiti, while in others, such as Trinidad and Tobago and Montserrat, their contribution does not exceed 1% (González & Álvarez, 2016).

In terms of share, three countries dominate intra-regional trade, while intra-regional exports are led mainly by Trinidad and Tobago at around 70% (Martínez Alfonso, 2013). Despite this, intra-regional trade has not acted as a counter-cyclical factor to counteract economic slowdowns.

Intra-CARICOM trade, which is between member countries, accounts for a larger proportion of their total exports compared to imports. Although intra-CARICOM trade has a relatively low share, the difference between exports and imports indicates the region's dependence on trade with countries outside the region, especially in terms of imports (Braithwait, 2020).

Figure 5

Intra-Regional Trade in CARICOM (1980-2018)



Source: based on IMF Statistics on Braithwait (2020).

In terms of participation, three countries dominate intra-regional trade, while intra-regional exports are led mainly by Trinidad and Tobago. Despite this, intra-regional trade has not acted as a counter-cyclical factor to counteract economic slowdowns. In terms of intra-Caribbean investment, growth has been

observed, although the amounts are still relatively small. The main countries of origin of investment are Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. In 1999, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica accounted for the largest share of intra-Caribbean investment, indicating the emergence of a Caribbean business system in sectors such as light manufacturing, trade, and financial services.

The gravity model of international trade is a widely used tool in international economics. The fundamental idea behind this model is that bilateral trade between two countries can be explained by factors like: 1) capturing a country's export potential, 2) reflecting a country's import propensity, and 3) influencing the attraction or inhibition of bilateral trade (Sandberg et al., 2006).

The need to analyze the effects of CARICOM bilateral trade and the impact of international standards on trade with the United States makes the gravity model the best alternative to distinguish international trade flows, where variables affecting trade are involved, which, it postulates is directly proportional to the economic size of the parties and inversely proportional to the distance or trade barriers between them (Sandberg et al., 2006; Williams, 2012). The studies yielded the following results:

In the case of CARICOM and the United States, had been founded that international standards (ISO and HACCP) do not play a major role in trade flows. Rather, small CARICOM countries are forced to adopt these standards imposed by developed countries to improve the quality of their products and sell them abroad (Williams, 2012).

Respect to the distance factor, the influence is specific because exporting to distant markets is more costly due to a deficient infrastructure that makes it difficult to export goods to the ports. Their maritime and airport infrastructures are not sufficiently developed, representing an additional barrier for companies in the region seeking to bring their products to the international market with high transaction and transportation costs (Sandberg et al., 2006; Williams, 2012). In front of this situation, countries cannot alter the existing distance, so they must work to develop infrastructure that meets international standards to expedite the transport of goods to the appropriate market (Williams, 2012).

Moreover, the study has shown that economic size, as measured by per capita income, plays an important role in CARICOM-US trade, since as CARICOM countries become more prosperous, their exports to the US decline, explained with the income elasticity of demand for exports given that as CARICOM countries become richer, the demand for goods and services also increases, causing firms to prefer to meet the needs of the local market thus neglecting the likelihood of exporting abroad (Williams, 2012).

Exporting countries with larger territories have a broader product base, which gives them more opportunities for economies of scale and a greater capacity to export goods to the global market compared to smaller countries. It is consistent with CARICOM's export pattern, which is dominated by the biggest member countries (Sandberg et al., 2006; Williams, 2012). However, due to their limited geography and resources, these economies have not focused on developing domestic markets and have relied on volatile international markets for goods, services, and capital for growth since their inception without diversification (León & García, 2006).

Commodities specialization has led to structural rigidity in these economies, with few backward and forward links in the production chain and little value added at the end. The manufacturing sector, except in Trinidad and Tobago, is basic and relies heavily on final assembly. Even in Trinidad and Tobago, despite its oil industry, there have been difficulties in moving up the production ladder and producing high-value-added goods. Investment in research and development is minimal or non-existent in most cases, and economic activity is centered on trade, with an increasing reliance on the tourism industry to compensate for declining banana and sugar production. However, tourism is also vulnerable, as its performance depends on growth in Europe and North America, where tourists come from (Stewart, 2006).

The existence of neo-colonial trade links between the UK and Caribbean economies has contributed to CARICOM trade but has also created a dependence on unilateral preferences, which could have significant implications for CARICOM exports to the UK (Sandberg et al., 2006; Williams, 2012).

As a complement, in 2012, a strategy was implemented focused on providing resources and tools to promote and improve the competitiveness of CARICOM in the international market known as the "Regional Aid for Trade Strategy"; which was financed by the IDB Aid for Trade Initiative that seeks to strengthen the productive capacity and infrastructure of governments and the private sector, to take advantage of trade liberalization, improve infrastructure, diversification and trade expansion; and finally, to promote the integration of CARICOM with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to maximize the new opportunities offered by trade agreements (Gutiérrez, 2013).

3.1.4. Monetary Policies

The economic structure of CARICOM countries is characterized by a high dependence on extra-regional sources for investment, technology, food, raw materials, and manufactured products; therefore, the devaluation policy, considered by Caribbean countries, is an alternative to enhance the region's competitiveness, encourage domestic consumption and promote tourism due to the attractive destinations available to foreign visitors (Griffith, 2015).

However, the devaluation theory analyzed is focused on the reality of industrialized countries, leading the expected benefits for Caribbean countries to limitations, deficiencies, and challenges, where devaluation does not significantly improve and the trade balance does not accelerate industrialization, producing a greater dependence on imported goods, decreased productivity in the hotel industry due to extra-regional forces and the lack of social and economic structures capable of adjusting economic policies and colonial thinking to the devaluation of the currency (Griffith, 2015).

The original Treaty of Chaguaramas established the need to harmonize monetary and payment policies in the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM). A bilateral currency clearing scheme was implemented to promote monetary stability and facilitate trade. However, this system proved limited and complicated to manage, leading to its transformation into a multilateral fund known as the CARICOM Multilateral Clearing Fund (CMCF). Although initially successful, the CMCF failed in the 1980s due to the inability of some member countries to clear their debts. During this time, the only activities carried out under the CMCF were the rescheduling of debt obligations and the operation of the CARICOM Traveler's Check Center. However, the use of this facility also declined due to the elimination of exchange controls and the devaluation of currencies in the region. Finally, the CARICOM Travelers' Cheques Facility was closed in December 1993 (CARICOM, 2023b).

3.2. POLITICAL INTEGRATION

3.2.1. Political Commitment

CARICOM shows the political will to promote regional integration and cooperation through the initiative of member countries that have expressed their commitment to work together to address common challenges and achieve shared objectives, reflected in the creation of CARICOM institutions and decision-making mechanisms with the establishment of a number of agreements and treaties in areas such as trade, transport, security, health, and environment, among others. However, there are shortcomings in their political commitment as inconsistent implementation, challenges in decision-making, limited political coordination, lack of adequate funding, and challenges in citizen participation that cause a hindrance to the progress and effectiveness of regional integration in the Caribbean region (Simms & Simms, 2007).

The engagement of the region had its beginning in British colonialism assorted several years ago. The freedom and sovereign independence of the Caribbean countries have been a transcendental milestone to inform the world about a new, unknown, and novel region. The political representatives felt the need to innovate and develop the small states, so they initiated the integration processes with a determination without implying the surrender of the sovereign power of each country, but to forge a political union among the Caribbean territories (O'Brien & Foadi, 2008).

The political will required for integration processes is valuable when it comes to signing binding commitments and protocols thanks to the Caribbean unity, identity, and common ties shared since independence, however; the fear of ceding sovereignty is what holds back its course and the implementation of common policies.

3.2.2. Caribbean Single Market and Economy Agreement (CSME)

Following this treaty, in 1989 in Grande Anse, Grenada, CARICOM heads of government transformed the Common Market into the Single Market and Single Economy, formally called the Caribbean Single Market and Economy - CSME. In 2002, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas was revised and updated to remove existing trade barriers and establish a single market space that included services, capital, technology, and the free movement of skilled professionals (CARICOM Caribbean Community, 2023).

The CSME seeks to implement provisions for the elimination of trade and professional restrictions. These provisions facilitate the right to establish businesses, to provide regional services, the free movement of capital, and the coordination of economic policies. In the following years, some Caribbean economies, under the auspices of the multilateral financial institutions, implemented structural adjustment programs that had at their core economic, financial, and trade liberalization programs that far

exceeded their commitments as expressed in the Treaty of Chaguaramas (CARICOM Caribbean Community, 2023). The fundamental aspects of CSME are the following:

- Consumer Affairs.
- Competition Policy.
- Social Security.
- Quota Rights.
- Immigration agreements for the free movement of people.
- Administrative provisions for commercial establishment.
- Government procurement.
- Trade and competitiveness in CARICOM.

According to Simms & Simms (2007), the main challenges facing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) are economic divergence among its members due to conflicts caused between community decisions and specific national interests; because the importance of national interests is stronger and they are not represented in the institutional arrangements and trade policies outlined by the Treaty of Chaguaramas, causing a reluctance to relinquish part of their sovereignty. Lack of support from regional populations, including business actors is another challenge in integration because they are not convinced of the positive effects of integration and how it will improve the profitability of their businesses or their standard of living; therefore, increasing public awareness of the need for integration and the benefits it brings will be essential.

In addition, the lack of compliance with the actions of the treaties signed by CARICOM as by the CSME by the members has not been very progressive because only 56.5% of the actions required to establish the CSME have been completed as shown in the graph, having already a 70% scope with institutionalization and legislation to be implemented (Al-Hassan et al., 2020; Braithwait, 2020).

Table 2

Summary of Implementation Status of CSME Actions (December 2016)

CATEGORIES	FULL TITLE OF LEGISLATION/COMMENT	ACTIONS REQUIRED	ACTIONS COMPLETED	PERCENTAJE COMPLETED
A. Legal and Institutional Infrastructure (All sub-categories)		261	192	73.6%
B. Single Market	Free Movement of Goods	39	22	56.4%
	Movement of Temporary Service Providers	26	8	30.0%
	Free Movement of Persons	163	115	70.6%
	· Free Movement of Skills	26	13	50.0%
	· Facilitation of Travel	72	63	87.5%
	· Mechanism for Accreditation and Equivalency	39	18	46.2%
	· Agreement on Social Security	13	13	100.0%
	· Protocol Amending Agreement on Social Security	13	8	61.5%
C. Single Economy	Macroeconomic Policy Harmonization and Coordination	130	13	10.0%
	· Financial Services Agreement	13	0	0.0%
	· Capital Market Integration	26	0	0.0%
	· Investment Policy and Code	26	0	0.0%
	· Intra-CARICOM Double Taxation Agreement	26	0	0.0%
	· Public Procurement Protocol	26	13	50.0%
	· Consumer Protection	13	0	0.0%
Total	Free Trade and Processing Zone Act, No.25 of 2015	619	350	56.5%

Source: based on Al-Hassan et al. (2020); Braithwait (2020).

3.2.3.Common External Tariff

The CARICOM Common External Tariff (CET) is a unified tariff system that applies to imports of goods from outside the region. It has been established to promote economic integration and trade among

CARICOM member countries by eliminating trade barriers and establishing a consistent tariff framework throughout the community. Under this system, CARICOM member countries agree to apply the same tariffs to external imports, which means that customs tariffs are uniform throughout the region to encourage local production and protect regional industries from external competition. By having a common tariff, unfair competition is avoided, and a more integrated internal market is created (Arteaga, s. f.).

Since its initiation, the structure of the Common External Tariff has been the subject of recurrent discussions in CARICOM. Although a maximum tariff level of 45% was set to take effect on January 1, 1991, only eight of the thirteen member countries adopted it. At the Conference of Heads of State in October 1992, it was decided to adjust the CET to adapt to new global and regional realities. As of January 1, 1993, a new tariff structure was established with a minimum level of 5% and a maximum range of 30% to 35%. Through periodic reductions every two years, the aim was to achieve a CET structure with a minimum level of 5% (0% to 5% for the least developed countries) and a maximum level of 20% by January 1, 1998 (OEA, 1995).

Table 3

Tariff Structure

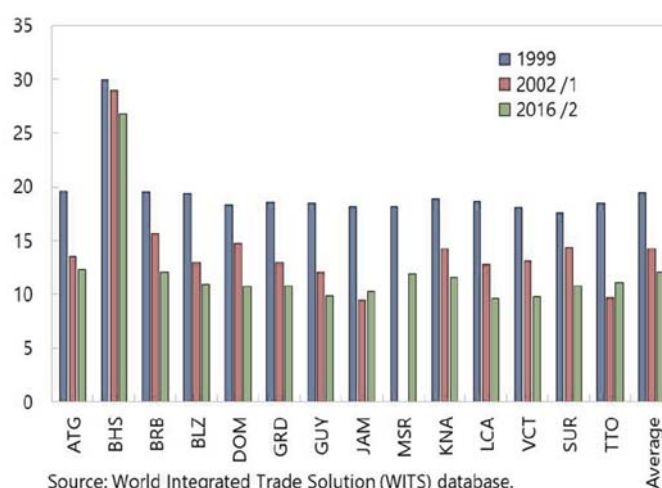
Implementation Period	Tariff Structure
January 1993/July 1993	5% (0-5 Least Developed Countries) to 30%/35%.
January 1995/July 1995	5% (0-5 LDCs) to 25%/30%
January 1997/July 1997	5% (0-5 LDCs) at 20%/25%
January 1998/July 1998	5% (0-5 LDCs) at 20%

Source based on OEA (1995)

All countries agreed to implement the common external tariff for imports from outside the region. During the transition from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, most countries, except the Bahamas, managed to reduce their average import tariff rates, and progressively, countries have reduced modestly, with an average as of 2016 between 10% to 15% (Al-Hassan et al., 2020).

Figure 6

Average Tariff Rates (In percent)



Source: World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) database.

1/ Showing 2000 value for SUR.

2/ Showing 2013 values for BRB, SUR and TTO due to limited data availability.

Source: based on Al-Hassan et al. (2020).

However, according to a 2009 study by the World Bank and the OAS, the implementation of the common external tariff has been affected by exceptions and impositions by certain members. Applied tariffs vary considerably, ranging from 7% to 30%, while maximum tariffs reach between 40% and 400%. In addition, non-tariff barriers are imposed that are not authorized for imports (Warner & Anatol, 2015).

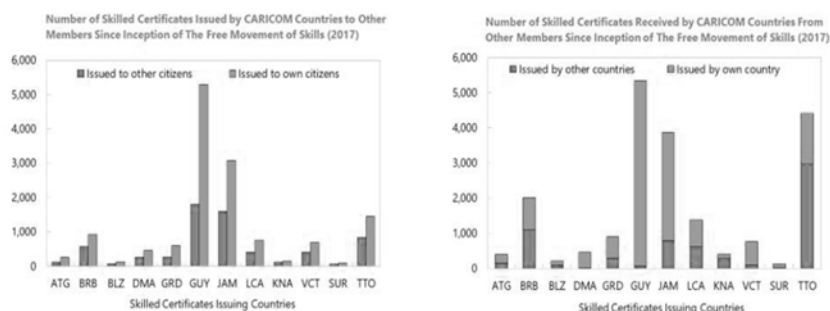
3.2.4. Free Movement of Labor Migration

The report issued by the International Organization for Migration in 2019, analyzes from a comprehensive regional perspective the management and implementation of free movement in the CARICOM CSME agreement to identify the progress, opportunities, shortcomings, and challenges presented towards the integrity of compliance with a common market. Since the Caribbean countries do not have a homogeneous productive capacity due to their population and distribution of resources that favors each nation, they have high rates of migratory flows that influence regional development and integration through trade and cultural exchange that enriches the Community. When the Treaty of Chaguaramas was implemented, it did not enforce freedom of movement among the countries, so it did not have any valid factor to achieve regional labor interconnection. With this precedent, the Grand Anse Declaration and Work Program established the necessary progress toward the free movement of goods, services, and labor (skilled or professional personnel) in 1989 (Aragón & Mawby, 2019).

Thanks to the changes and creation of the CSME, the treaty was established as the focal point for the harmonization of commercial, monetary, and fiscal rights, international relations, and environmental programs, among others; with this, the protocols signed were focused on the mobilization of labor through educational and professional training agreements. However, the same report shows the lack of compliance with the requirements for entry with challenges in monitoring, security, and fraud towards the control authorities, and also shows a vision of economic and political impact caused by free mobility and the common market with high unemployment rates, but with shortcomings in the publication of information by CARICOM and its competent bodies (Aragón & Mawby, 2019). Figure 7 shows the estimated number of labor certificates issued for the free movement of persons with certain handicaps reflecting the difficult conditions and long delays in granting certificates with administrative obstacles that discourage people from using this program (Al-Hassan et al., 2020).

Figure 7

Intra-Regional Movement of Skilled Persons



Source: based on information from ILO on Al-Hassan et al. (2020).

3.2.5. Institutionalization within CARICOM

The institutional structure of CARICOM is headed by the conference of heads of government with competence to establish policy for the community, from which, descend institutions with themes focused on food disasters and emergencies, development, and environmental sustainability with integrationist objectives for the strengthening of foreign trade, its external relations and market trends (Herrera, 2017); furthermore, by a Council of Ministers, composed of a minister appointed by each of the member states who has the responsibility to ensure the efficient functioning and development of the common market. Below these main bodies were the 'Institutions' of the community, which consisted of a set of Ministerial Committees responsible to the conference and charged with addressing various areas of functional cooperation, such as finance, industry, mining, education, health, labor, foreign policy, and transport. These Ministerial Committees operated similarly to a cabinet, each being head by the minister responsible for the corresponding portfolio in their country (O'Brien, 2011).

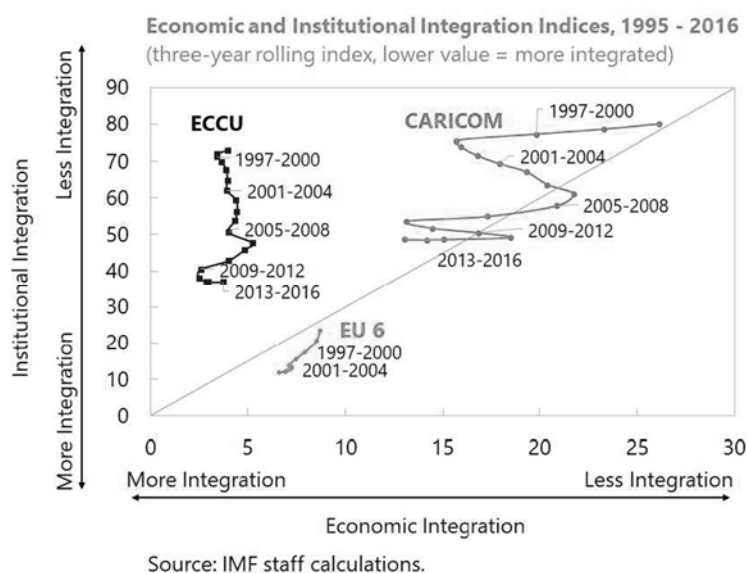
The Community Secretariat, headed by a Secretary General, was the main administrative body of the community. It was supported by an undersecretary and five directors. The Secretariat was responsible for servicing the meetings of the Conference, the Council, and the Ministerial Committees, as well as for providing appropriate follow-up to the decisions taken at these meetings. It was also responsible for conducting studies related to CARICOM's objectives and carrying out the corresponding actions (O'Brien, 2011).

Facing the international reality of large markets, the Caribbean countries must maintain a balance between the benefits and sovereignty of the countries with a view to the expansion and opening of markets; however, the conditions in which the prices of the products of this region are founded harm the dynamics of the market caused by meteorological phenomena that destroy the regional economic infrastructure (Herrera, 2017).

It is well known that from the beginning this integration had to face difficulties in harmonizing foreign policies, despite this, CARICOM has been able to be a fundamental part and play an important role in matters of coordination of its member states in relation to the exterior, mainly within the financial institutions, the various organizations and the Summits of the Americas. In addition, crisis situations such as occurred in 2009 with the economic crisis, also in 2010 with the Haitian earthquake, and also the damage caused by hurricanes in the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Haiti, and Grenada have been regulated by its main body which is the Summits of Heads of Government (Parthenay, 2021). With the Figure 8, economic and institutional indicators show the lack of integration arising from CARICOM for not interconnecting economic and political institutions that promote the motivation to meet the objectives set out in both treaties and trade agreements (Al-Hassan et al., 2020).

Figure 8

Economic and Institutional Integration Indices (1995-2016)



Source based on IMF information on Braithwait (2020).

3.2.5.1. CARICOM Regional Entities

The acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) has had a significant impact on the Caribbean Single Market and Economy because it has been granted jurisdiction as a regional judicial institution to interpret and apply the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, hear cases related to Caribbean Community Law, and ensure the proper functioning and application of the rules and regulations governing the CSME with confidence and stability in the regional political integration process (Caserta & Rask Madsen, 2016).

However, this integrationist process may face challenges, some of which could affect political integration and the role of the CCJ. These challenges include political divisions among member states, sovereignty concerns, resource constraints, and the public perception and awareness of the CCJ towards the region, however; rulings handed down by the Caribbean Court under its original jurisdiction are binding, and CARICOM member states or individuals must mandatorily abide by the rulings to promote the rule of law in CARICOM (Berry, 2012; Caserta & Rask Madsen, 2016).

In addition, the Caribbean Community and Common Market have bodies¹² that work to comply with the regional commitment present in the agreements (Gutiérrez, 2013), and these are:

¹² A chart of the complete organization of CARICOM institutions is shown in Annex 1.

Caribbean Tourism Organization: Caribbean Tourism Development Agency has the primary objective of providing its members with the services and information necessary for the development of sustainable tourism, for the economic and social benefit of the peoples of the Caribbean.

Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA): It is the Caribbean agency for disaster and emergency management established in 1975, CARDI's objective is to contribute to the development of agriculture by conducting research and exposing farmers and others involved in agriculture to appropriate technologies. It encompasses all the Members of the Common Market, as well as the Associate Members of CARICOM.

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA): This is the Caribbean Public Health Agency. It was legally established in July 2011 by an Intergovernmental Agreement signed by the member states of the Community and became operational in January 2013. The agency streamlines public health provisions in the region by combining the functions of the five Regional Health Institutes:

1. *The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute,*
2. *The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre,*
3. *The Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute,*
4. *The Caribbean Health Research Council, y*
5. *The Caribbean Regional Drug Testing Laboratory.*

Caribbean Development Bank (CDB): is a regional development finance institution established by an Agreement signed on October 18, 1969, by eighteen countries and territories, including all of the then CARIFTA member states, Belize (formerly British Honduras), and The Bahamas. The Agreement entered into force on January 26, 1970. The Bank's purpose is "to contribute to the economic growth and harmonious development of the member countries and to promote economic cooperation among them, with special and urgent regard to the needs of the less developed members of the region". It finances specific projects or national, sub-regional, or regional development programs, in fields such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry, marketing, manufacturing, extraction, refining, tourism, export services, transportation, housing, education, pure water, sewerage, and infrastructure and services related to the development of sectors of the economy, waste management, environmental protection, and poverty reduction.

The revised Treaty of Chaguaramas mainly assigned the Council for Human and Social Development, also known as COHSOD, the responsibility to promote and develop coordinated policies and programs to improve the living and working conditions of workers, as well as to facilitate the organization and development of harmonious labor and industrial relations in the Community, in addition, these are some of the instruments included in the 1995 CARICOM Declaration on Principles of Labor and Industrial Relations and the 1996 Agreement on Social Security. A Charter that sets out the fundamental principles and harmonization of laws through the regional development of model laws it is one of the most prominent mechanisms. These two aspects of CARICOM reflect efforts to encourage participation in the development of spaces for incorporating social issues into integration initiatives (Blackett, 2007).

In the 1990s, new integration mechanisms were introduced in the Caribbean to strengthen CARICOM's institutional structure. These mechanisms include the Association of Caribbean States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and CARIFORO. However, except for the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union, which became operational in 2011, the other agreements mentioned only express the intention to achieve integration without demonstrating concrete actions that impact the decisions made by economic actors (González & Álvarez, 2016).

According to the principle of intergovernmental, the decision-making powers of the conference and the Council of Ministers were limited in two important aspects. First, decisions made by these two bodies required the affirmative vote of all members of the conference or the Council of Ministers, respectively. This guaranteed autonomy of decision-making at the national level, as it allowed the leader of any member state to veto any decision or recommendation that he or she did not approve. Secondly, only the decisions taken by these bodies were binding and only to the extent that member states were obliged to take action, as soon as possible, to implement them in their national legislation. The decisions of the conference and the Council of Ministers did not create rights that could be legally enforced by the citizens of the member states (O'Brien, 2011).

In addition, the resolution of disputes through the procedures established by the TOC varied depending on whether the dispute arising from the interpretation or application of the treaty or the breach

of an obligation in the common market, but in essence, they were consensual and non-binding. In the case of disputes over the interpretation or application of the treaty, they were to be resolved by the conference. However, since a conference decision required a unanimous vote of all members, one of the parties involved in the dispute could use its veto power to prevent a decision from being reached, for fear of an unfavorable ruling. In the case of disputes relating to the breach of obligations in the common market, they were to be settled by the Council of Ministers, which could refer the dispute to a court, either on its initiative or at the request of a member state. However, the tribunal's decisions were not binding; its role was simply to report its findings to the Council of Ministers, which could then make a recommendation to the Member State(s) concerned. Even then, such a recommendation would not be binding. The only sanction available to the council in the event of non-compliance with a recommendation by a member state would be, by majority vote, to authorize any member state to "suspend the application of the obligations under the Annex towards non-member countries" as deemed appropriate by the council (O'Brien, 2011).

3.2.5.2. Education Governance

Jules (2022) describes the emergence of educational trans-regionalism as a result of CARICOM's development agenda and its focus on productive integration through the Caribbean Single Economic Market (CSEME), which has had indirect implications on national education systems reflected in the vision of the "Ideal Caribbean Citizen".

Educational trans-regionalism and its functional and cross-border integration processes are driven by the interaction of institutions and states at the regional level in a multilevel and multinational environment. These interactions take place within trans-regional spaces that are formed as the borders of national states metaphorically recede. In this sense, educational developments in these trans-regional spaces are defined, as *transitologies*, which encompass global conditions (identification of educational problems), discourse (semantic construction of educational problems), projects (framing of educational problems), scales (actors involved in educational problems), and means of identifying the scope of specific actors (level of educational problems) (Jules, 2022).

Educational trans-regionalism differs from educational fundamentalism and educational multilateralism. While educational fundamentalism and educational multilateralism focus on the role of non-state actors, such as international organizations, donor agencies, and non-governmental organizations, educational trans-regionalism focuses on the emergence of new governance mechanisms at the regional level. Unlike these approaches, educational trans-regionalism involves both external and internal factors that interact in the regulation and coordination of education, generating a form of multilevel educational governance (Jules, 2019).

"Functional projects" are instruments of educational governance and institutional arrangements, and are part of the overall architecture witnessing the decline of multilevel governance and the rise of multi-scale and meta-governance based on collaborative governance and encompass multi-partner governance arrangements, with the state, private sector, civil society and the community, as well as hybrid public-private and private-social partnerships and co-management regimes that promote government integration towards the area of education (Jules, 2017).

The concept of governance has been introduced in the field of Comparative and International Education as an explanation of the changing social relations that emerge as education expands to different scales and plays a more direct and functional role in capital accumulation. This expansion and governance of education at supra-regional and global scales can be understood as a new functional, institutional and staggered division in the functioning of educational systems (Jules, 2022).

While CARICOM maintains the principle of proportionality and avoids exceeding the institutional arrangements necessary to comply with the revised Treaty, it has not achieved supra-regional enlargement to the extent conceptualized. Instead, CARICOM represents an extension of trans-regionalism through intergovernmental networks and regional scales that seek to foster labor mobility within the Caribbean Single Market (Jules, 2022).

Governance in CARICOM focuses on cooperation and utilizes network governance as a model of policy formulation, which allows for the simultaneous extension of regulatory and organizational boundaries. Networked governance is perceived as a horizontal form of partnership that can address implementation problems and policy paralysis (Jules, 2019).

CARICOM represents an example of scaling up trans-regionalism through intergovernmental networks and regional scales, rather than a supranational formulation. Governance in CARICOM focuses on cooperation and uses network governance as a model for policy formulation. Thus, the regional perspective acts as a filter that picks up discursive patterns at the international and national levels and then

examines them through a regional lens. This lens allows us to visualize the predominant discourses in national education systems, as well as the divergent strategies that are implemented (Jules, 2022).

3.2.5.3. "Blue Economy" policy

The concept of "Blue Economy Policy" refers to a set of guidelines that promote sustainable and inclusive economic development in the context of the marine and coastal environment to balance economic growth with conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, taking into account social equity and environmental considerations with long-term visions, guiding principles and objectives related to the sustainable development of ocean resources; in this case, it can address various sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, maritime transport, and marine biotechnology because, in the policy framework, it seeks to maximize economic opportunities while minimizing negative impacts on the marine environment and coastal communities (Hassanali, 2022).

In the context of the Caribbean Community, the development of a blue economy policy framework is considered crucial to promote regional stability, enhance integration and participate effectively in international fora. The policy formulation process involves collaboration between stakeholders and state governments to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the socio-ecological system, its status, opportunities, and challenges (Hassanali, 2022).

Most CARICOM member countries have not yet fully developed their blue economy strategies. In these countries, activities such as, fishing, offshore oil and gas extraction, and maritime transport (including cruise tourism) are recognized as key elements of the blue economy. In addition, aquaculture, marine renewable energies, bioprospecting, deep sea mining, and carbon sequestration are seen as avenues with great potential. In the region, the blue economy approach is being adopted, albeit in different ways (Hassanali, 2020).

However, CARICOM does not acquire the necessary knowledge due to the lack of common regional strategies to implement ocean-sustainable policies because of the diverse priorities and approaches of each country in terms of economic development and sustainability, due to the lack of specialized technical training, financial limitations in investments towards infrastructure, technology, etc., the lack of solid governance and coordination between the different actors in the public and private sectors; and finally, the vulnerability to climate change such as sea level rise, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification, which can damage the oceans and make them less productive (Hassanali, 2022).

3.3. SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION

3.3.1. History, Identity and Colonial Past

The dream of achieving a union with hard work and capacity is not limited by geography and guarantees the well-being of people united with an agenda of rights seeking equality and equity with efficient integration of ethical mechanisms towards the protection and sustainability of the environment (Herrera, 2017).

Within the Caribbean region, there is a Caribbean ethos that demonstrates the lack of a political project. The most successful case of integration in the Caribbean is the one that receives the name of CARICOM, which after 34 years of its existence, seeks to become a single market this integration also restricts the movement of populations between islands to prevent low-income people from the less developed islands, seeking to migrate to the richer, and more developed islands. On the other hand, Caribbean elites show great concern for maintaining their share of the benefits derived from their participation in the central system of economic, political, and social power. Speaking on the subject of popular culture, it said that in the Caribbean, there is this existence of a *Caribbeanness*¹³, while at the level of governments and on the subject of the nation-state, it is reaffirmed that Caribbean countries put their national interests ahead of their regional ones (Pantojas García, 2022).

The contradictions of neoliberal globalization have served as an impetus for the existence of integration alternatives within the region. However, these guidelines have followed historical-cultural and political issues rather than regional guidelines. In the Caribbean region, CARICOM represents a consolidated English-speaking integration. Faced with this situation, the destiny that the Caribbean region seems to have is that they are going to be integrated and separated. They will be integrated by popular culture, and separated by the national interests of each region. In the 21st century, Caribbeanness seems to remain at a

¹³ The meaning of Caribbeanness is the feeling of belonging to be Caribbean.

level of pride and socio-cultural tradition, on the other hand, at the level of state institutions, it is realigned, according to the metropolitan circuits of power and influence (Pantojas García, 2022)..

In accordance with Nicholls & Williams (2016), the disadvantages of the small size of the Caribbean region have led to the recognition that unity and economic integration are necessary to mitigate these disadvantages. This indigenous recognition of the need for unity has been a central impetus driving the economic integration of the Caribbean region.

3.3.2. Functional Cooperation

Currently, one of the most remarkable achievements of CARICOM was the adoption and coordination of regional early measures to face the COVID-19 crisis using displacement protocols several weeks in advance compared to the rest of the world (Alvarez, 2022).

Alvarez (2022) emphasizes the rapid reaction at the national level of the Caribbean countries as the action of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), which activated an Incident Management team in January 2020, in collaboration with the secretariat and other regional institutions, to coordinate a prompt response at the regional level, thus regular meetings of the COVID Coordination Group were managed to inform and discuss the challenges and developments of the pandemic, presenting recommendations to the community bodies.

The continuous work of the Caribbean regional bodies facilitated interaction and integration towards social welfare, such as the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security or IMPACS, which ensured the identification of all travelers from China and other affected countries, the Regional Security System (RSS) which has been used for the transportation of samples, the Joint Regional Communication Center (JRCC) which connects the CARPHA Communication Unit with the Regional Health Communication Network to update, move the region's activities and facilitate entry or exit from ports and airports in the Caribbean region (Parthenay, 2021).

In addition, the presidents of CARICOM countries played an important role in showing support and willingness for functional cooperation with numerous meetings addressing measures to address the social and economic consequences of the pandemic, as well as the implementation of various protocols and recommendations for procuring health supplies, managing borders, repatriating Caribbean nationals working on cruise ships with a "CARICOM travel bubble" policy, facilitating intra-regional travel, and working together with organizations such as PAHO, WHO, and CBD to jointly procure medical equipment, and benefit from economies of scale (Alvarez, 2022).

Thanks to these actions, CARICOM was more successful in managing the pandemic than the rest of the world, reflected in low numbers of cases. On September 1, all member states were below the 5% daily growth rate of infection, with the exception of Jamaica, which was at 11.5%. Although developing countries are highly dependent on external factors due to the vulnerability of their economies, by taking early measures, the region was able to avoid the growth of the virus by managing to control regional spaces (Alvarez, 2022).

Despite the size of the weak economies and the vulnerability of the region, CARICOM was one of the few integration schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean that was prepared to face a pandemic such as COVID-19 with its strategies, measures, alternatives, mechanisms, and effective actions were very important for the successful management of this health crisis (Alvarez, 2022; Parthenay, 2021).

3.3.3. Cultural movements, projects and initiatives

Several years ago, the Caribbean was seen as a group of small vulnerable islands in the Caribbean Sea, with a common past characterized by the experience of conquest, colonization, and slavery, considered as the only link between the countries. However, since its independence and yearning for freedom, the Caribbean Union has been strengthened by solid commitments through institutions, unifying and diverse ties at the same time. For this reason, the Community plays an important role in this process, since from the beginning it has set the main objective of promoting cohesion among peoples and rescuing, from diversity, the common elements to face the regional challenges faced by each of its members and contribute to the revitalization of the Caribbean identity (Gutiérrez, 2013). Among the most representative socio-cultural initiatives we have:

- **C@ribNET** (*Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network*): A broadband, fiber optic network configured to connect institutions of higher learning, hospitals, schools, and other entities involved in the development of knowledge and research in the Caribbean, and with other institutions in the rest of the world, with funding of 10 million euros from the European Union.

- CARIFESTA (*Caribbean Festival of Arts*): Multicultural event held periodically, every 3 or 4 years, by CARICOM and Caribbean countries to bring together writers, artists, and musicians and exhibit the region's folklore and cultural manifestations (CARICOM, 2023b).
- CARIBNATION Television: A television program created in 1996, which discusses current issues of the Community, as well as the main problems of the Caribbean people and the Diaspora. Its motto is: "One People, One Culture, One Caribbean, One Nation".
- CARICOM VIEW MAGAZINE: Monthly magazine, available online. It develops social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the Community and its members.
- CARICOM NEWS NETWORK: News portal.
- CARICOM passport: Valid document for travel within the Community and abroad. It is currently used by 12 members, except Montserrat, which is a British Overseas Territory, Haiti, and the Bahamas.

The CARICOM Civil Society Charter, adopted in 1997, complements the Caribbean Community Treaty. It recognizes the importance of strengthening civil society and establishes commitments to promote principles, such as freedom of movement, equal employment opportunities, and economic participation. It guarantees labor rights, consultation among social actors, and the issuance of periodic reports. However, its implementation has been limited and lacks enforcement mechanisms. Greater integration and participation of civil society is recommended to build a more inclusive CARICOM and challenge the neoliberal approach (Blackett, 2007).

Labor law harmonization project, an initiative to reconcile CARICOM's attempt to recognize the free movement of people in the context of liberal trade, as well as to promote some labor and human rights, all of which still depend on the unanimous agreement (Blackett, 2007).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Although CARICOM is an integration that has functioned for many years, it continues to function as an imperfect customs union, demonstrating that it has not been able to fulfill its oldest and most ambitious objective, to become a common market. One of its main objectives is the reduction of asymmetries with the lack of effectiveness, not a total, but partial economic gap between more and less developed countries that take control of the functioning of CARICOM and seek to satisfy their national needs rather than the good of the entire region. A clear Latin American example is MERCOSUR integration, made up mostly of developing countries, which presents similar difficulties in terms of asymmetry. Powerful countries such as Brazil and Argentina seek to satisfy their own needs and do not consider the impact on other members due to their economic power and trade diversification. For this reason, countries must accept and comply with their decisions. This is why asymmetries are a major difficulty that prevents CARICOM from functioning as a common market.

The use of a common external tariff is another of CARICOM's difficulties. In principle, the external tariff is used so that all members can negotiate under the same conditions, thus promoting local production and also protecting regional industries from external competition. By having a common external tariff, CARICOM seeks to have a more integrated internal market and, above all, to avoid unfair competition. Although tariffs were lower than in previous years, they were still quite high in the food and manufacturing sectors, which in turn generated imbalances in trade.

On the other hand, the fluidity in the exchange of products also encountered difficulties mainly due to the persistence of barriers that do not involve taxes, and some members of the group imposed unauthorized levies on regional goods. Restrictions were also encountered in trade in services, such as the lack of full implementation of licensing mechanisms for service providers, obstacles in work permits, discrimination in tax benefits, and limitations mainly in maritime, financial, and air transport services. The decline or lack of growth in economic activity has generated aggravated macroeconomic imbalances. This happens because of the negative effects of the global situation on these nations, mainly due to the specific characteristics of how these nations are integrated into the international arena, their structural vulnerabilities, and their lack of trade diversification.

For years, it has been said that CARICOM has a limited infrastructure, the lack of modern roads, ports, and airports makes it more difficult to trade in this region, and it limits the region's economic growth. Import dependence is another of the biggest challenges facing CARICOM; the member countries of this integration have a significant dependence on imports to meet their consumption and production needs. It shows that the region has an unfavorable trade balance and above all a high dependence on international markets. CARICOM is composed mainly of developing islands, which in turn are small and vulnerable economies, which hampers their ability to compete in the global market. These islands are extremely

dependent on tourism and agriculture, which makes them dependent on tourist countries to be able to trade tourism.

Finally, in the area of trade agreements, after a complex negotiation process, an Economic Partnership Agreement was implemented in 2008 between the European Union and the CARIFORUM countries. However, the implementation of this agreement has not had the expected beneficial effects for the Caribbean nations. This is because they have not been able to access the financial resources and technical assistance committed by the Europeans, which are essential for the development and diversification of their productive capacities, the strengthening of institutions, and the sustainable improvement of the competitiveness of their economies. In addition, CARICOM institutions are focused on the objective of promoting the coordination, harmonization, and execution of favorable policies with the creation of a regulatory head and a judging institution. Community bodies make integration work as the pandemic case however, it is the only recognized case. There is no further progress in fostering regional governance without the political commitment of states to move the organization towards new challenges such as sustainable ocean development and new ways of implementing sustainable tourism for the benefit of the environment. CARICOM has initiative, but no long-term commitment.

The colonial past of the Caribbean Community has sown its initiative of independence without leaving aside state sovereignty with a mixture of unification and cooperation among the small Caribbean states giving birth to this integration. Its ideals are strong and powerful, but its execution and implementation to the international reality cause deterioration as the CSME agreement. All policies and laws are to form a common market and economy between countries. If you sign an agreement, you have the obligation to fulfill the final goal. It is not possible that only 60% of the policies are fulfilled because of a national interest or the impossibility to improve institutionally.

The decision to suspend efforts to implement the CSME (CARICOM Single Market and Economy) and the lack of commitments in this regard in the declaration of the recent summit of the Caribbean group in July 2013 reflect the crisis of the economic integration process in the Caribbean. Despite this, considering the serious social and environmental problems faced by CARICOM countries, there have been relevant discussions in recent times on "extra-economic" issues about the social dimension of the process and the agenda for the reconfiguration of these integration efforts.

CARICOM is an integration made up of several countries that boast a great cultural diversity, which generates several challenges in terms of religion, traditions, language, and identity. Managing this diversity and trying to promote a common regional identity can be quite challenging and complex for this integration. On the other hand, CARICOM presents many linguistic barriers, being an integration that has great cultural diversity, it will have to overcome several challenges, one of these is the language, in CARICOM there is no official language as such, rather there are several official languages, some of these are: Spanish, French, English, Dutch, what causes having several languages in a region is the difficulty to communicate effectively and to be able to have joint cooperation. The language should be the basis for negotiating in a region, if there are several, it will be difficult to negotiate.

The policies implemented by the CSME for free labor mobility have been one of the greatest advances in improving the CARICOM common market. However, these same policies are not taken into account or are not topics of discussion for some countries that have a significant migratory flow, which leads to a lack of good migratory movement. Not all countries agree with the policies. That is to say, the rich countries set their policies and do not allow their members to leave the nation. Therefore, if not all countries do their part, then this policy will not work accurately, therefore, nationalism is a key factor so that certain countries tend to close their borders in favor of their citizens.

In conclusion, the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM has been one of the oldest and most complex regional integration processes in the world, which is working to promote a commitment to unification and cooperation among all its members as a valuable integrationist platform for Caribbean countries for over 50 years.

Throughout its history, the Caribbean Community has worked tirelessly to strengthen economic, political, social, and cultural ties among its members, seeking to achieve sustainable development and greater economic prosperity for the region. In this way, the present study took into account the compilation of the perspectives of several authors, who have different positions from the analyzed perspective that have helped to nurture the results with both positive and negative variables of the functioning of CARICOM since its creation in 1973.

The Caribbean Community has successfully implemented policies that encourage trade expansion into new international markets. It also promotes policies to establish monetary integration, including a

common currency, travelers' checks, and devaluation policies. These achievements are the result of the will and commitment born of a colonial past that has helped forge a Caribbean identity. The Caribbean Single Market and Economy Agreement (CSME) is a significant milestone in the quest for deeper integration to reach the fourth level of integration in 2001. This agreement seeks to establish the free circulation of goods, services, and factors of production, including labor and capital, with high intentions of forging a common market.

In addition, institutions play a crucial role in regional decision-making through the establishment of bodies with binding power to ensure compliance with agreements by member states. Likewise, functional cooperation has been a notable success evidenced in the coordination between regional institutions to combat and mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and regional social initiatives and projects promote cultural integration moving the region towards a Caribbean identity. However, in 20 years, it has not had transcendental events in the implementation of the community's regional agreements with about 60% of the policies completed, but a setback in integration because the member countries do not have a strong imposition in non-binding decisions, but necessary for their progress.

However, the authors emphasize the difficulties, obstacles, and challenges that have to face Caribbean countries. Economic asymmetries are the first challenge that CARICOM has had to deal with since the differences in trade specialization, geographic and population size of each country increase the gap between rich and poor in the same region. It is caused by severe dependence on external factors such as natural disasters, the existence of non-complementary trade flows in the region due to high transportation and production costs, and a lack of competitiveness due to a lack of technical capacity, infrastructure, and technology. Another obstacle that deteriorates the integration process is the lack of commitment by member countries to comply with signed agreements, such as the CSME, which have not been ratified by all CARICOM countries. Despite being one of the most important objectives of the organization, national interests and the fear of losing national sovereignty do not motivate political openness in regional governance.

Nevertheless, the negative aspects should not be seen as weaknesses, but as opportunities. Regional integration in the Caribbean is the path to progress and prosperity. By joining efforts and working together, Caribbean countries will be able to overcome these challenges and strengthen their global position without trade barriers that limit intra-regional trade, thus contributing to job creation, increased negotiating capacity, strengthening productive sectors, and promotion of regional tourism. The diversity and cultural richness of the region is the Caribbean's strength.

For this reason, CARICOM should focus its efforts on creating mechanisms to strengthen economic and strategic cooperation, regional infrastructure, and connectivity, attracting foreign investment to improve technical and educational capacity, and finally, improving governance opportunities to ensure common goals and more equitable decisions. With commitment, determination, and solidarity, Caribbean countries will be able to achieve great goals and take full advantage of the benefits of being a great community.

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6. Annexes

Table 4

Economic information of CARICOM member countries

Country	Population (2021)		GDP per capita (2021)	Income Group
	Value	Percentage of region		
Antigua and Barbuda	93,220	0.5%	\$15,781.40	High
Bahamas	407,910	2.2%	\$ 27,478.40	High
Barbados	281,200	1.5%	\$ 17,225.50	High
Belize	400,030	2.1%	\$ 6,228.30	Medium High
Dominica	72,410	0.4%	\$ 7,653.20	Medium High
Grenade	124,610	0.7%	\$ 9,010.60	Medium High
Guyana	804,570	4.2%	\$ 9,998.50	Medium High
Haiti	11,447,570	60.5%	\$ 1,829.60	Low
Jamaica	2,827,700	14.9%	\$ 5,183.60	Medium High
Montserrat ¹⁴	4,992	0.0%	\$ 12,754.00	N/A
Saint Kitts and Nevis	47,610	0.3%	\$ 18,082.60	High
Saint Lucia	179,650	0.9%	\$ 9,414.20	Medium High
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	104,330	0.6%	\$ 8,666.40	Medium High
Suriname	612,990	3.2%	\$ 4,869.10	Medium High
Trinidad and Tobago	1,525,660	8.1%	\$ 16,032.50	High

Note: this table shows 3 interesting points to consider to analyze regional blocs economically in order to know more deeply the full members.

Source: Based on World Bank World Development Indicators statistics (2023); Braithwait (2020).

¹⁴ Montserrat being a British Overseas Territory (BOT), it is not possible to obtain current information to perform an analysis, so the updated statistical data of Montserrat that was found was from 2018 (GDP Per Capita) and 2020 (Population).

Table 5*GDP and productive sectoral composition*

Country	GDP (USD billion)	Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (% GDP)	Industry (% GDP) ¹⁵	Manufacturing (% GDP)	Services (% GDP)
Antigua and Barbuda	\$1.70	2%	21%	2%	66.8%
Bahamas	\$12.80	1%	13%	3%	74.2%
Barbados ¹⁶	\$5.20	1%	13%	5%	74.9%
Belize	\$1.90	10%	12%	6%	65.5%
Dominica	\$ 0.60	12%	16%	2%	52.5%
Grenade	\$1.20	6%	13%	3%	66.3%
Guyana	\$4.30	12%	35%	5%	38.4%
Haiti	\$8.50	19%	71%	N/A	12.1%
Jamaica	\$16.50	7%	20%	8%	59.3%
Saint Kitts and Nevis	\$1.10	1%	26%	6%	76.8%
Saint Lucia	\$2.10	2%	10%	3%	75.2%
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	\$ 0.80	7%	14%	4%	62.6%
Suriname	\$ 4.00	10%	33%	14%	50.2%
Trinidad and Tobago	\$24.10	1%	42%	19%	55.1%
CARICOM Simple Averages ¹⁷	\$ 84.40	6.6%	24.2%	6.2%	58.6%

Note: this table is a sample of the year 2019 to reference the percentage of representation in the productive sectors of each CARICOM country.

Source: Based on Braithwait statistics, 2020.

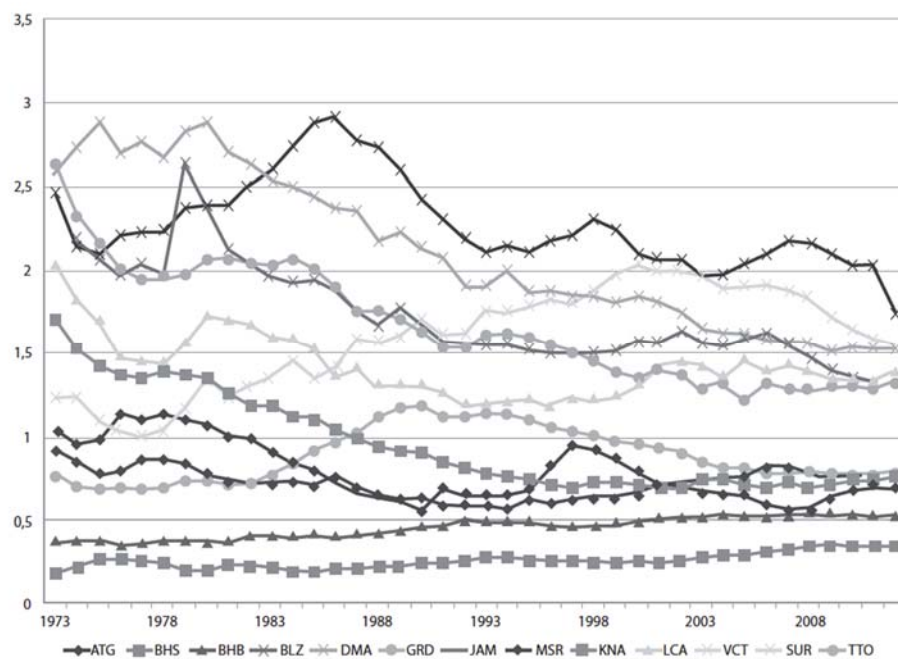
¹⁵ Industry includes mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water and gas.

¹⁶ Barbados sectoral information is for 2018.

¹⁷ Simple averages, except GDP in USD.

Figure 9

Evolution of average relative GDP per capita by economy. CARICOM countries 1973-2012

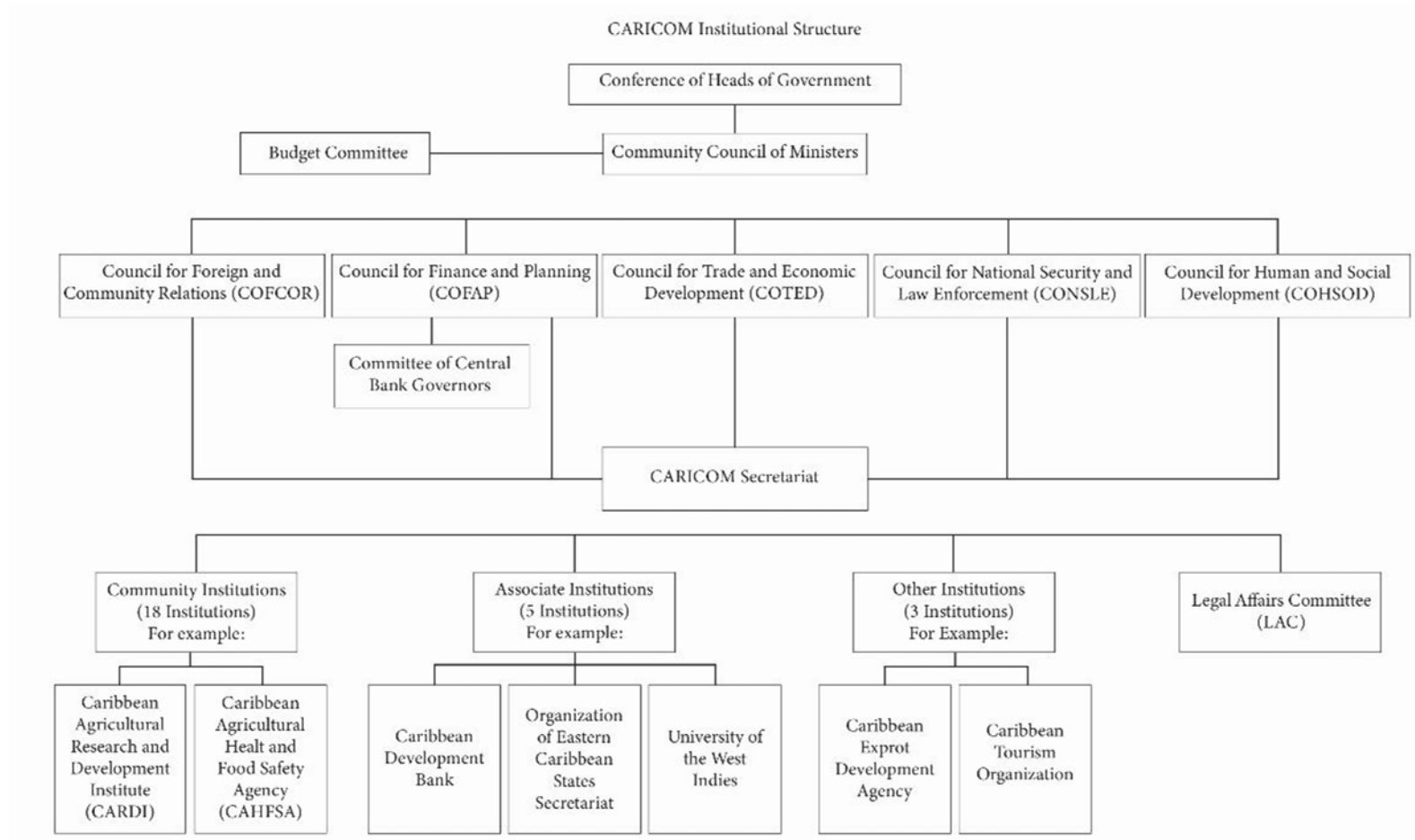


Note: the total number of countries analyzed is 13 CARICOM members.

Source: based on UNCTADstat data on González & Álvarez (2016).

Annexe 1:

CARICOM Institutional Bodies



Annex 2

Tabla de Revisión de Literatura

Tipo de fuente	Autor	Codificación de las fuentes	Año de publicación	Contenido teórico General	Contenido teórico específico	Base de datos
Artículo de revista	González, Germán Héctor; Álvarez Stefania Soledad	D038	2016	Factor económico	Desarrollo económico	DIALNET
Artículo de revista	Pantojas García, Emilio	R017	2008	Factor Socio cultural	Identidad caribeña	REDALYC
Artículo de revista	Parthenay, Kevin	D021	2021	Factor Socio cultural	Cooperación funcional: salud	DIALNET
Artículo de revista	León Segura, Carmen Magaly; García Lorenzo, Juana Tani	R016	2006	Factor económico	Comercio de la CARICOM	REDALYC
Artículo de revista	Williams, Densil	D015	2012	Factor económico	Los estándares internacionales en el comercio y el modelo de gravedad	DIALNET
Artículo de revista	O'Brien, Derek	S007	2011	Factor económico	Características económicas de la CARICOM	SCOPUS
Artículo de revista	Herrera, Carlos Luis	D013	2017	Factor político	Institucionalidad de la CARICOM	DIALNET
Artículo de revista	Blackett, Adelle	R011	2007	Factor político	Funcionamiento de las instituciones de la CARICOM	REDALYC
Artículo de revista	Jules, Tavis	D023	2022	Factor Socio cultural	El trans-regionalismo educativo	DIALNET

Artículo de revista	Hassanali, Kahlil	S005	2020	Factor político	La economía azul como factor político de la CARICOM	SCOPUS
Artículo de revista	Álvarez, María Victoria	D017	2022	Factor Socio cultural	Cooperación funcional: salud	DIALNET
Artículo de revista	Pantojas García, Emilio	R015	2008	Factor económico	Avances integración económica de la CARICOM	REDALYC
Artículo de revista	Sandberg Mikael H; Seale James L; JR; Taylor Timothy g.	S013	2006	Factor económico	Modelo de gravedad de la CARICOM	SCOPUS
Artículo de revista	Jules, Tavis D.	S001	2017	Factor Socio cultural	Regionalismo en la educación	SCOPUS
Artículo de revista	Constantine Colin	E001	2020	Factor Socio cultural	Desigualdades existentes en la CARICOM	EBSCO
Artículo de revista	Caserta Salvatore; Madsen Mikael Rask	E007	2016	Factor político	Legados postcoloniales del TJC	EBSCO
Artículo de revista	Nicholls Alicia; Williams Yentyl	E027	2016	Factor económico	Problemas económico de la CARICOM	EBSCO
Artículo de revista	Griffith Winston H	E028	2015	Factor político/económico	Estructuras sociales y económicas coloniales	EBSCO
Artículo de revista	Hassanali, Kahlil	E032	2022	Factor político	Conexión medio ambiente marino y costero	EBSCO
Artículo de revista	Simms Rachel; Simms Errol	E045	2007	Factor político/económico	Que se debe y no hacer para tener una integración	EBSCO

Artículo de revista	Berry David S.	E048	2012	Factor político	Potencial de la CCJ para impulsar el CSME y la integración regional	EBSCO
Página Web	CARICOM	M001	2023	Factor económico	Habla del CSME y sus funcionalidades	Google Scholar
Página Web	CARICOM	M002	2020	Factor Socio cultural	Proyectos e iniciativas de la CARICOM	Google Scholar
Informe	Aragón Estela; Mawby Briana	M003	2019	Factor político	Libre movilidad de las personas en la CARICOM	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	Gutiérrez Bueno Derly Juliana	M004	2013	Factor Socio cultural	Proyectos e iniciativas culturales	Google Scholar
Working Paper	Al-Hassan, A., Burfisher, M. E., Chow, J. T., Ding, D., Di Vittorio, F., Kovtun, D., McIntyre, A., Ötoker, I., Santoro, M., Shui, L., & Youssef, K.	M005	2020	Factor político/económico	Análisis en general de la CARICOM	Google Scholar
Artículo	Arteaga, O	M006	S.F	Factor político	Arancel Externo Común	Google Scholar
Reporte	Braithwait, S.	M007	2020	Factor político/económico	Análisis en general de la CARICOM	Google Scholar
Página Web	ITC (Trade map)	M008	2013	Factor económico	Valores económicos comerciales	Google Scholar
Página Web	ITC (Trade map)	M009	2022	Factor económico	Valores económicos comerciales	Google Scholar

Artículo de revista	Jules, T.D	M010	2019	Factor político	Gobernanza regional	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	Martínes Alfonso, L	M011	2013	Factor económico	Valores comerciales	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	O'Brien, D & Foadi, S.	M012	2008	Factor político	Compromiso político	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	OEA	M013	1995	Factor político	Arancel Externo Común	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	Pierre Campo, N	M014	2009	Factor económico	Acuerdos comerciales	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	Stewart, T	M015	2006	Factor económico	Flujos comerciales	Google Scholar
Artículo de revista	Warner, R & Anatol, M	E009	2015	Factor económico	Flujos comerciales	EBSCO

