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Implementation of the ISO 9001:2015 quality management model in scientific journals

Implementación del modelo de gestión de calidad ISO 9001:2015 en revistas científicas

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Abstract

The study aimed to implement and evaluate a Quality Management System (QMS) based on the ISO 9001:2015 standard in scientific journals, in order to standardize editorial processes, increase operational efficiency, and strengthen academic integrity. The applied research, with a descriptive design, was conducted as a case study following the PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act), integrating diagnosis, document planning, implementation, and evaluation to promote continuous improvement. Participants included institutional journals undergoing indexing, as well as editors, scientific committee members, peer reviewers, technical staff, and production personnel, encompassing all stages of the editorial workflow, from manuscript receipt to online publication. To assess the impact, a comparative record of indicators was developed to measure editorial performance before and after the QMS implementation. Key results from the system's adoption led to a significant reduction in average publication times, improved the allocation of responsibilities, and standardized procedures through forms, process maps, and change control logs. Furthermore, a similarity verification system with a maximum threshold of 20% was established, enhancing the transparency and originality of the evaluated texts. It is concluded that the implementation of the Quality Management System (QMS) in accordance with ISO 9001:2015 generates significant improvements in efficiency, document control, and user satisfaction, establishing itself as a sustainable, replicable model aligned with international standards for strengthening university publishing management.

Keywords: quality management, scientific journals, scientific publishing.

Resumen

El estudio tuvo como objetivo implementar y evaluar un Sistema de Gestión de Calidad (SGC) basado en la norma ISO 9001:2015 en revistas científicas, con el fin de estandarizar los procesos editoriales, aumentar la eficiencia operativa y fortalecer la integridad académica. La investigación, de enfoque aplicado y diseño descriptivo, se desarrolló bajo un estudio de caso que siguió el ciclo PHVA (Planificar, Hacer, Verificar, Actuar), integrando diagnóstico, planificación documental, implementación y evaluación para promover la mejora continua. Participaron las revistas institucionales en proceso de indexación, así como editores, miembros del comité científico, revisores pares, equipo técnico y personal de producción, abarcando todas las etapas del flujo editorial, desde la recepción del manuscrito hasta su publicación en línea. Para evaluar el impacto, se elaboró un registro comparativo de indicadores que permitió medir el desempeño editorial antes y después de la implementación del SGC. Como resultados destacados, la adopción del sistema produjo una notable reducción en los tiempos promedio de publicación, mejoró la asignación de responsabilidades y estandarizó los procedimientos mediante fichas, mapas de procesos y registros de control de cambios. Además, se estableció un sistema de verificación de similitud con un umbral máximo del 20%, elevando la transparencia y originalidad de los textos evaluados. Se concluye que la aplicación del SGC conforme a la ISO 9001:2015 genera mejoras significativas en eficiencia, control documental y satisfacción de los usuarios, configurándose como un modelo sostenible, replicable y alineado con estándares internacionales para fortalecer la gestión editorial universitaria.

Palabras clave: gestión de calidad, revistas científicas, publicación científica.

Introduction

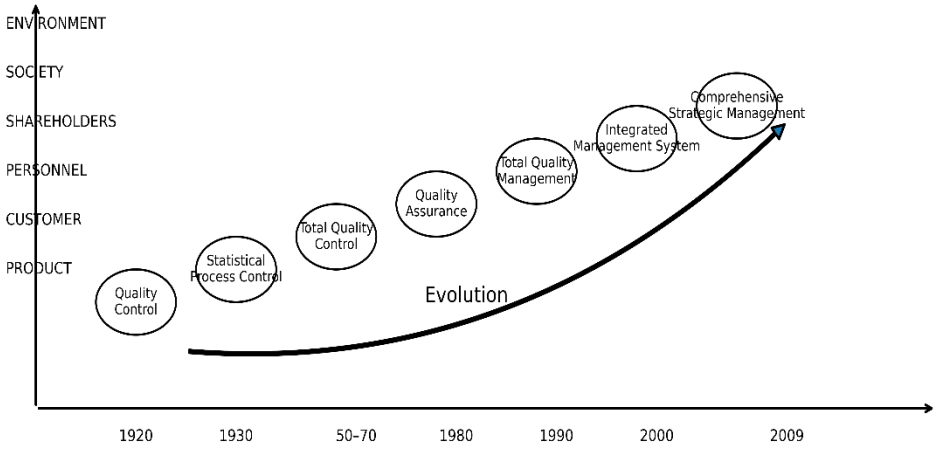
One of the primary concerns of researchers worldwide is identifying reputable scientific journals in which to publish their work. In recent years, the academic community has issued numerous warnings regarding the rise of so-called predatory journals, characterized by deceptive editorial practices, a lack of peer review, and processes that prioritize publication fees over scientific quality (Beall, 2012; Shen & Björk, 2015). In this context, many journals have yet to implement formal quality management systems that ensure originality, rigorous evaluation, and transparency in publication, thereby facilitating the proliferation of poor editorial practices (COPE, 2019).

Currently, the management and administration of scientific journals fall directly under the purview of their editorial boards, who also establish internal regulations regarding preliminary reviews, blind peer review, production, and publication, as well as their own quality management systems. However, some editors may not fully comprehend the complexities involved in the scientific publication process, neglecting fundamental aspects such as similarity control and the rigor of peer review. This situation has raised concerns and complaints from authors and editorial teams regarding the quality of the editorial process.

Quality management in scientific editing entails documenting multiple stages, from the receipt of the original manuscript and the cover letter to the editor, through similarity reports, and rigorous preliminary and peer reviews, to the final review, formatting, production, and publication. All these processes adhere to systems engineering principles grounded in general systems theory, structured around input, process, and output phases.

Historically, quality has been associated with competitiveness and organizational management, evolving towards the fulfillment of customer expectations (Lizarzaburu, 2016). It is defined as the set of properties and characteristics that satisfy explicit or implicit needs. This understanding has promoted a culture of continuous improvement, perceived as the ongoing application of quality across all spheres, from the individual to the collective level, propelled by inquiries that drive enhancements (Deming, 1993). According to Marcelino and Ramírez (2014), the concept of quality has shifted from a sole focus on the product to embracing decision-making within organizations.

Figure 1
Quality evolution



Source. Marcelino and Ramirez (2014)

In a competitive landscape, organizations strive to differentiate themselves by offering greater value than their competitors, necessitating efficient management capable of generating sustainable advantages. Nevertheless, these advantages compel competing entities to innovate and restructure their processes to maintain market positions (Díaz & Salazar, 2021). In this regard, the sustainability of continuous improvement gives rise to quality management, understood as the coordination of activities aimed at controlling and optimizing all aspects related to quality (Mejías et al., 2018). This approach, which emerged during the industrial era, has solidified its status as one of the foundational pillars of organizational management (Ruiz et al., 2015), emphasizing that informed decision-making is vital for sustaining such advantages (Puche et al., 2021).

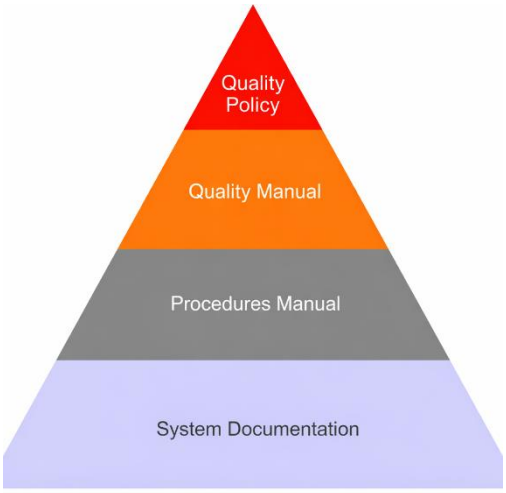
Presently, quality management is grounded in seven fundamental principles: customer focus, leadership, employee involvement, process orientation, continuous improvement, fact-based decision making, and mutually beneficial supplier relationships (Sánchez, 2017). These principles are applied progressively, beginning with customer attention and extending throughout the organization and its external environment, reflecting the evolution of quality management as an integral process that enhances organizational performance and sustainability.

Continuous improvement is thus an essential component of business management, closely linked to quality management. In this context, Quality Management Systems (QMS) emerge, defined as the coordinated set of organizational activities based on specific elements, aimed at achieving quality in products or services (Puche et al., 2021). The implementation of a QMS empowers top management to manage processes and resources efficiently, thereby providing more transparent, effective editorial services aligned with current quality standards.

The significance of adopting a QMS lies in its contribution to competitive advantage through various strategies that respond to the demands of a highly competitive business environment (Díaz & Salazar, 2021). Consequently, the decision to implement a QMS is strategic, equipping the organization with a solid and distinctive foundation that promotes behaviors, activities, and processes that create added value, meeting the needs and expectations of both customers and other stakeholders (León-Ramentol et al., 2018).

The development of a Quality Management System encompasses multiple aspects, with documentation as a crucial element that specifies the system requirements. This documentation is organized into four predetermined levels, among which the procedures manual is the most critical. Meanwhile, the quality manual serves to establish the relationship between the organization's quality system and applicable regulatory requirements (Arevalo & Avendaño, 2004).

Figure 2
QMS documentation pyramid



Source. Arevalo and Avendaño (2004)

The process sheet is deemed essential as it supports the information needed to collect relevant characteristics for managing activities within processes (Ruiz-Fuentes et al., 2014). This document is crucial for each process, systematically organizing key elements that facilitate analysis, redesign, and continuous improvement (Morales et al., 2017).

To adequately represent a process, it is necessary to follow a structured sequence of activities that allows for the development of both the process sheet and the associated indicators. In this regard, Medina et al. (2014) point out that the first step involves assembling a team for improvement, composed of individuals with extensive knowledge of the process and critical analytical capabilities for its review and optimization. Subsequently, the process is defined by delineating its scope and its connections to other organizational components, ensuring coherence in planning, execution, and evaluation.

Once the process is identified, top management assigns a process owner, who must possess technical expertise, a systemic vision, and responsibility for meeting strategic objectives. Objectives and policies for the process are then established, which must be aligned with the quality and environmental management principles set forth by ISO standards.

The general representation of the process is created using a model based on IDEF (Integration Definition for Function Modeling), incorporating inputs, mechanisms, controls, and outputs. This stage also involves identifying distinctive competencies, defined as the capabilities that add value to the customer and reinforce organizational strategy. Additionally, associated risks are recognized to mitigate vulnerabilities, and supplementary information is documented to facilitate knowledge management and continuous improvement.

Ultimately, all this information is consolidated into the process sheet, which describes the essential characteristics of the activity and enables the selection of performance indicators by which the effectiveness and efficiency of the implemented process are measured.

On another note, General Systems Theory (GST), which originated in biology, has expanded across multiple disciplines due to its multidisciplinary approach (Bertalanffy, 1989). Its application facilitates the understanding of phenomena and processes in various systems (De la Peña & Velásquez, 2018). Gaining insight into how a system operates provides an objective view of reality by comprehending its essential characteristics. Every system comprises subsystems organized hierarchically, possessing a stable structure while being subject to change. As a dynamic process, its operation generates transformations in both structural elements and the relationships among them. Interaction with the environment and the integration of its components define the quality and coherence of the system (Afanasiev, 1977).

The use of General Systems Theory has fostered the development of new approaches and methodologies that address subjects of study from a comprehensive systemic perspective. In this sense, Weinberg (2001) proposes a series of premises that enhance a deeper understanding of systems:

a. Every system can be conceptualized as a set of relationships.

b. A system comprises equilibrium processes, where "process" refers to relationships understood as sequences of change.
c. Energy, matter, or information that generates movement or work may be indistinguishable within certain relationships.
d. Every system exhibits resistance to change.
e. Systems are selective regarding their potential relationships.
f. Within each system, antagonistic relationships exist, balanced through the interaction of their elements.
g. Internal interactions determine diversity within subsystems, the development of the system, the variety of external relationships, and its boundaries.
h. Systems possess the potential to change based on their external relationships.
i. Systems have limits that define what they include or exclude.
j. External relationships determine which elements are inside or outside the system, considering that external elements may belong to larger systems.
k. The universe consists of a continuous sequence of synthesis and disintegration processes of systems or systems of systems.

Moreover, the ISO 9001:2015 standard is applicable to any type of organization, regardless of sector or size. Implementing this tool encourages significant positive changes, enhancing organizational performance and contributing to the achievement of goals that favor the satisfaction and loyalty of customers, employees, and other stakeholders (Huerta, 2020). Additionally, it elevates system efficiency through its rigorous focus, highlighting key aspects that impact the organization's development and competitiveness (Cruz et al., 2016).

It is crucial for QMS to be managed from a systemic and strategic perspective, without losing sight of the quality focus, while being supported by models that promote continuous improvement (Pico & Burgos, 2022).

A QMS based on the ISO 9001:2015 standard guides and strengthens control over production processes, stimulating increases in output and enhancing innovation and continuous improvement, thereby ensuring the quality of the products and services offered by the organization (Amasifén et al., 2022). Furthermore, its implementation aligns the organization with the fulfillment of its mission-related goals and objectives (Franklin et al., 2019).

Implementation of the quality management process with ISO 9001:2015 in scientific journals

The process map represents a coherent sequence of activities that guides the development of an organization’s core function, placing special emphasis on the quality of products and/or services. This map begins with the identification of customer needs and concludes with their satisfaction, integrating three levels of processes: strategic processes, led by upper management and responsible for direction; core or mission-critical processes, tasked with executing the essential operations of the business; and supportive processes, which encompass the human, technical, and logistical resources necessary to ensure the proper execution of central activities.

The scope of the Quality Management System (Clause 4.3) includes a detailed description of the organizational characteristics and activities related to product or service development, specifying the tasks subject to certification as stipulated in ISO 9001:2015 (ISO, 2015). It is also essential to clearly identify any non-applicable requirements of the standard, justifying the processes or activities that the organization does not undertake in the provision of its products or services.

Furthermore, the quality policy (Clause 5) defines the institutional commitment to continuous improvement, compliance with national laws, and the principles that underpin certifiable activities. This policy directs efforts toward customer satisfaction, process efficiency, and the achievement of strategic objectives, thereby consolidating a quality culture within the organization.

Quality objectives (Clause 6.2) arise directly from the commitments expressed in the quality policy. These objectives are formulated sequentially, in a quantifiable manner, and with specific indicators, establishing clear targets (percentages or expected outcomes) to be achieved within a specified timeframe, typically annually. The indicators allow for the measurement of compliance levels and progress in enhancing organizational performance.

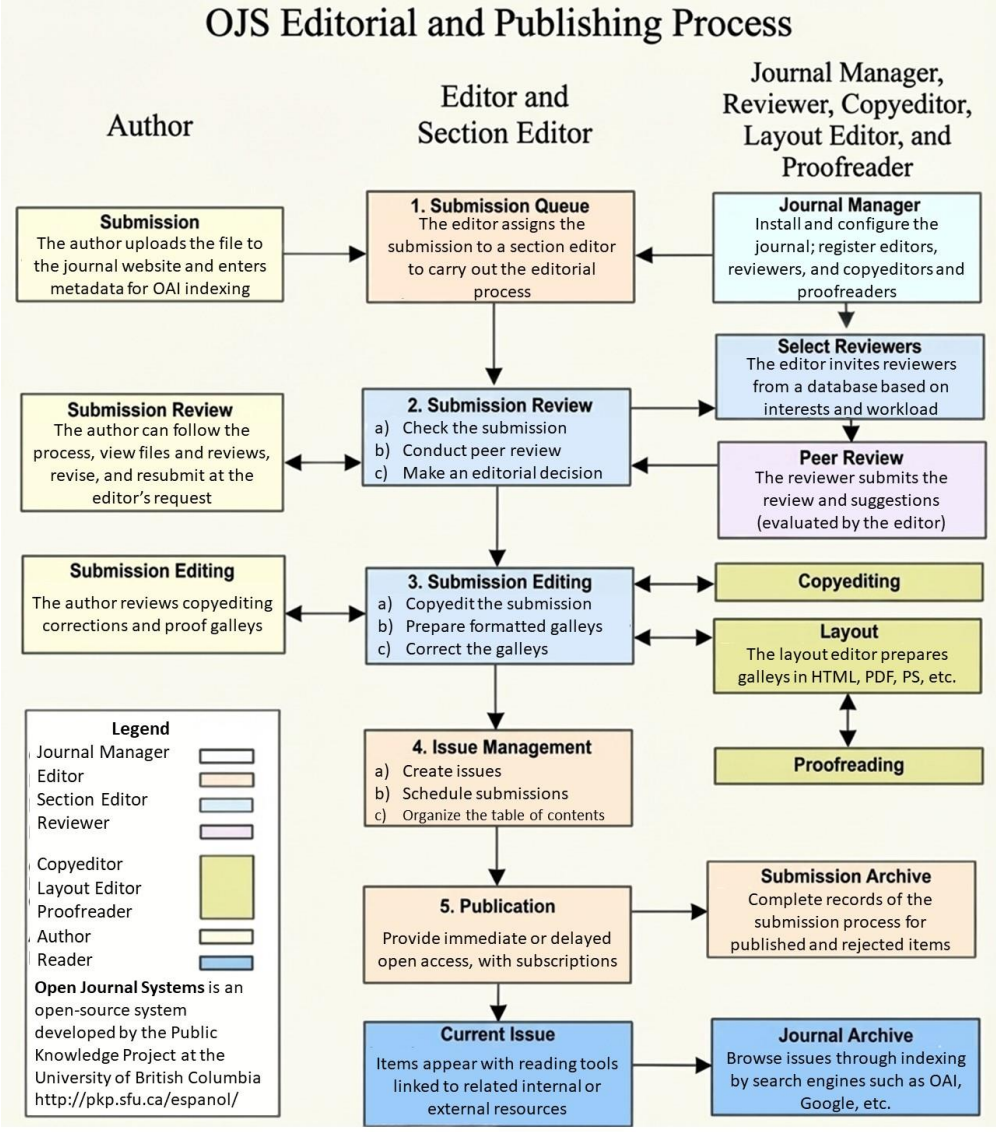
Regarding the outcomes of change reviews (Clause 8.5.6), their management is conducted through a control format that records the quantity, date, description, rationale, and analysis of the change, along with the necessary authorization. This procedure ensures traceability and control over modifications in production or service delivery, thus promoting continuous improvement.

Lastly, the records associated with the authorized release of products and services (Clause 8.6) include acceptance criteria and the identification of the individual responsible for authorizing delivery. Tools such as context analysis (SWOT matrix), risk and opportunity management, and stakeholder evaluation are employed to ensure compliance prior to customer delivery.

Non-conformities and corrective actions (Clause 8.7) are documented through specific procedures that identify deviations, analyze their causes, and establish necessary corrective actions. These records reflect the decisions made by the competent authority and the authorized concessions, contributing to the strengthening of the continuous improvement system.

Figure 3

OJS Publishing Process – PKP



Source. OJS – PKP. This image was obtained from OJS – PKP in the "About this publishing system" section, where it illustrates the Author–Editor workflow

The performance evaluation and effectiveness of the Quality Management System, as outlined in Clause 9.1.1, is conducted through indicators that reflect the commitments established in the quality policy. This evaluation

may occur on a monthly, semi-annual, or annual basis, measuring results against set targets and ensuring process effectiveness through continuous monitoring and control.

Moreover, the documentation of the audit program (Clause 9.2.2) is based on key documents such as the annual audit program, the audit plan, internal audit procedures, resulting reports, and corrective actions derived from findings. Both internal and external audits are essential for verifying system compliance and promoting continuous improvement.

Additionally, the management of non-conformities and subsequent actions (Clause 10.2.2) is carried out through a communication matrix that integrates all elements of the Quality Management System: policy, objectives, scope, documented information, indicators, customer satisfaction results, audits, corrective actions, and stakeholder requirements. This comprehensive approach reinforces traceability, transparency, and the effectiveness of the QMS, ensuring ongoing enhancement throughout the organization.

In this framework, the present article describes the design and implementation of a Quality Management System based on ISO 9001:2015 in the institutional scientific journals of a public university in Peru. It also analyzes its impact on publication times, the satisfaction of authors and reviewers, and the strengthening of academic integrity. The proposal offers a replicable editorial management model for other university journals seeking to align with international quality standards.

Methodology

This study is framed within an applied research approach characterized by its descriptive nature and case study design, aimed at addressing a specific institutional problem: the lack of standardization and efficiency in the editorial processes of scientific journals. In this context, challenges were identified, including delays in publication times, the absence of quality indicators, limited documentation of processes, and a lack of editorial policies aligned with international standards. Hence, the study's applied nature involved introducing a model of continuous improvement designed to transform the institutional reality through the optimization of editorial flows and the strengthening of scientific management.

The study population included institutional scientific journals, prioritizing those in the process of national or international indexing. Key stakeholders in the editorial process were also integrated, including editors, members of the scientific committee, peer reviewers, technical staff, and production team members. The scope encompassed all stages of the editorial cycle, from manuscript receipt and preliminary review to peer evaluation, final editing, issue management, and online publication on institutional digital platforms.

The implementation of the Quality Management System (QMS) was developed in four sequential phases, structured according to the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, as established by ISO 9001:2015.

In the first phase, corresponding to the initial diagnosis, information was gathered regarding the current editorial process, and gaps were identified in relation to regulatory requirements. This diagnosis considered previous indicators such as average publication time, the number of editorial rejections, and feedback from authors.

During the second phase, focused on planning and documentation, process sheets and maps were developed to standardize activities, responsibilities were defined for each stage, and quality policies and objectives were established. Concurrently, technical procedures were formulated for document control, change management, handling non-conformities, and corrective actions.

The third phase, involving implementation and training, emphasized socializing the QMS with the editorial team and stakeholders, alongside training in best practices for peer review, similarity checks, and the use of Open Journal Systems (OJS) software. In this stage, tools for monitoring indicators and mandatory records were activated, ensuring traceability and consistency across processes.

Finally, the fourth phase, focused on evaluation and continuous improvement, included internal audits to verify regulatory compliance, satisfaction surveys for authors and reviewers, and the identification of improvement opportunities. Based on the results, procedural adjustments and document updates were made within the system.

To measure the impact of the QMS implementation, management indicators were defined around four key dimensions: efficiency, assessed by the reduction in average publication time; effectiveness, evaluated by the percentage of objectives met; satisfaction, measured through surveys administered to authors and reviewers; and scientific quality, estimated according to the percentage of articles approved in the initial similarity review at an index lower than 20%.

The study employed various technical and documentary tools, highlighting the Open Journal Systems (OJS–PKP) for comprehensive manuscript management, supplemented by a quality manual, process sheets, change management formats, indicator matrices, and audit records. The implementation was grounded in ISO

9001:2015, the guidelines of the National Superintendence of Higher University Education (SUNEDU, 2020), and internationally recognized editorial best practices.

Thus, the applied research not only described the existing editorial dynamics but also proposed and implemented a real intervention model, verifying its effectiveness through empirical evidence and ensuring the sustainability of the system through a continuous improvement and results-oriented management approach.

Results and discussion

The implementation of the Quality Management System based on ISO 9001:2015 significantly improved the editorial management of university scientific journals. The results demonstrate measurable advancements in operational efficiency, document control, academic integrity, and user satisfaction throughout the editorial process. Below are the main findings obtained by comparing the editorial situation before and after the QMS implementation.

1. Improvement in average publication times

Editorial records reflect a considerable reduction in the duration of the editorial flow. Before the QMS implementation, the overall average time was 92 days; this figure was reduced to 45 days post-implementation, representing an improvement of 51.1%, as shown in Table 1. The most notable reductions were observed in the preliminary review and final publication phases, primarily attributed to the standardization of activities, clear assignment of responsibilities, and systematic application of process sheets alongside change management.

Table 1

Average publication times before and after QMS

Stage	Before QMS (days)	After QMS (days)
Preliminary review	24	10
Peer review	38	22
Editing and correction	20	9
Issue management	10	4
Online publication	12	6
Total average	**92**	**45**

Note. This table compares the average times for each stage of the editorial process before and after the implementation of the ISO 9001:2015 QMS

2. Achievement of quality objectives

During the first year of the QMS operations, significant advancements were recorded regarding institutional goals. Four out of five objectives set forth were met, especially those related to efficiency, transparency in the process, and user satisfaction.

Table 2

Achievement of quality objectives

Quality objective	Annual target	Obtained result	Compliance level
Reduce publication times	40%	51,1%	Achieved
Increase author and reviewer satisfaction	80%	90%	Achieved
Decrease rejections due to similarity	< 20%	14%	Achieved
First review approval	60%	64%	Achieved
Internal training sessions conducted	6 sessions	4 sessions	Partial

Note. This table summarizes the progress made towards the quality objectives defined in the QMS during the first year of implementation

3. Results from author and reviewer surveys

Surveys administered to authors and reviewers, both prior to and following the QMS implementation, indicated significant improvements in perceptions of the editorial process. The dimensions evaluated exhibited increases exceeding 20 percentage points, reinforcing enhancements in communication, transparency of decisions, and clarity of procedures.

Table 3

Survey results from authors and reviewers

Evaluated Dimension	Before QMS (%)	After QMS (%)
Clarity of the editorial process	55	86
Response time	48	82
Transparency of decisions	60	88
Editorial communication	62	90
Overall satisfaction	67	90

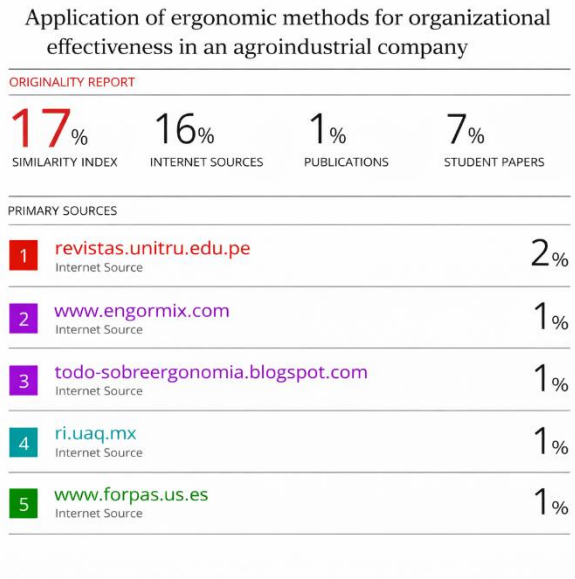
Note. This table presents the percentage of satisfaction reported by authors and reviewers in various dimensions of the editorial process, both before and after the implementation of the QMS

4. Similarity control and strengthening of academic integrity

The adoption of a maximum similarity threshold of 20% led to a significant reduction in the incidence of manuscripts rejected for plagiarism or self-plagiarism, reinforcing the academic integrity of publications and the trust of authors and readers. Systematic similarity checks were integrated as a mandatory step within the editorial roadmap.

Figure 4

Similarity control report for scientific manuscripts



Note. The report presents the similarity percentage obtained for each manuscript evaluated using plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin). The editorial policy establishes, based on each journal's policies, a permissible threshold of 20% similarity, in accordance with international standards for academic integrity and ethics in scientific publishing

5. Blind peer review and improvement of methodological quality

The standardization of peer evaluation forms significantly enhanced the methodological consistency of the assessments and the quality of accepted manuscripts. In this context, the proportion of articles rated as

"Publishable without modifications" increased from 38% before the QMS implementation to 64% afterwards, demonstrating greater alignment between editorial criteria, the quality of submitted manuscripts, and reviewers' expectations.

Additionally, significant changes were observed in the editorial decisions made by peer reviewers. The number of articles accepted without modifications rose considerably after the QMS implementation, while more rigorous decisions decreased. These results are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4

Distribution of editorial decisions before and after QMS implementation

Decision Alternative	Before QMS n (%)	After QMS n (%)
Publishable without modifications	19 (38%)	32 (64%)
Publishable with minor modifications	13 (26%)	10 (20%)
Publishable with substantial modifications	12 (24%)	6 (12%)
Not publishable	6 (12%)	2 (4%)

Note. This table illustrates the distribution of editorial decisions before and after the implementation of the ISO 9001:2015 QMS. The increase in the "Publishable without modifications" category indicates an improvement in the methodological quality of evaluated manuscripts and greater consistency in review criteria

These results confirm that the standardization of review criteria improved the consistency of editorial decisions and elevated the quality of manuscripts accepted for publication.

6. Overall impact of the QMS on editorial management

Overall, the results demonstrate that the implementation of the Quality Management System significantly strengthened operational efficiency by optimizing workflows and reducing response times at each stage of the editorial process. Additionally, documentation traceability increased, facilitating a detailed and transparent tracking of all activities related to manuscript management, from receipt to final publication. This traceability contributed to minimizing administrative errors and ensuring strict compliance with quality standards.

Moreover, the consolidation of a culture of continuous improvement within the editorial team enabled the integration of best practices into daily operations, fostering a collaborative work environment committed to excellence. A key factor in this advancement was the integration of the QMS with the Open Journal Systems (OJS–PKP) platform, which facilitated the registration, tracking, and control of each phase of the editorial process, thereby enhancing order and systematic operations.

This management model, aligned with the principles and requirements of the ISO 9001:2015 standard, not only elevated the internal standards of the involved journals but also represents a robust and replicable proposal for other university scientific journals. Thus, it contributes to enhancing quality, transparency, and academic integrity in editorial management, fundamental aspects for strengthening the reputation and visibility of scientific publications both nationally and internationally.

Conclusions

The implementation of the Quality Management System based on the ISO 9001:2015 standard in scientific journals has established an editorial management model focused on excellence, transparency, and continuous improvement. The standardization of editorial processes, covering everything from manuscript receipt to final publication, ensured rigorous compliance with quality criteria, thereby strengthening the reliability and academic integrity of the publications.

The detailed development of the Process Map, alongside systematic documentation through sheets, procedures, and performance indicators, facilitated a clear allocation of responsibilities and a significant optimization of response times. This, in turn, allowed for a considerable reduction in operational errors. Additionally, the establishment of effective mechanisms for change control, timely management of non-conformities, and regular internal audits promoted traceability, efficiency, and the long-term sustainability of the editorial system.

The results indicate that certification in accordance with ISO 9001:2015 has produced a significant and verifiable impact on university editorial quality. This model not only elevated institutional and academic standards but also reinforced organizational culture, promoted scientific ethics, and improved the international

competitiveness of the journals. Consequently, it establishes a robust and replicable framework that enhances the positioning of scientific publications in global contexts, contributing to the consolidation of modern, rigorous editorial management aligned with the best worldwide practices.

Lastly, this experience demonstrates that the adoption of a Quality Management System is not merely a regulatory requirement but a key strategy for strengthening the trust of authors, reviewers, and readers, while simultaneously enhancing the visibility and academic prestige of institutional journals.

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DECLARATION ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The authors declare that, during the drafting process of this manuscript, generative artificial intelligence tools were used solely as support for linguistic tasks, such as style enhancement, syntactic organization, and grammatical correction. In no case were these technologies used to generate original scientific content, interpret results, or substitute the academic and ethical judgments of the authors. Full responsibility for the integrity, validity, and originality of the manuscript rests exclusively with the authors, in accordance with recognized editorial best practices and ethical principles of scientific publishing.