

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING THE ISO 9004:2018 STANDARD

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Purpose: The paper's main objective is to indicate the current state of knowledge regarding the results of implementing the ISO 9004:2018 standard, with a particular focus on identifying the potential benefits and limitations of its implementation. The study is in line with the research stream on improving quality management systems and striving for sustainable market success.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper is based on a narrative literature review through analysis of the publications available in scientific databases. It was then combined with the method of scientific reflection.

Findings: The paper highlights the opportunities that the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 standard and its integrated self-assessment model offer to organisations. The analysis also revealed limitations associated with the implementation of the standard's recommendations.

Practical implications: The research contributes to the development of knowledge in the practical application of the standard and the self-assessment model. It can serve as a reference point for practitioners and scholars interested in the aforementioned subject matter.

Originality/value: The originality of the paper lies in its comprehensive analysis of the requirements of the ISO 9004:2018 standard, addressing significant issues both for the academic environment and practitioners in the field of quality management. The study highlights the benefits of applying the self-assessment model, and outlines the challenges associated with its implementation.

Keywords: ISO 9004:2018 standard, self-assessment model, quality improvement, sustainable success.

Category of the paper: Literature review.

1. Introduction

Operating in the current uncertain and dynamically changing environment requires organisations to maintain continuous readiness to implement changes aimed at improvement. This is a consequence of external market, financial and socio-legal changes, as well as changes occurring within the organisation. As a result of changes in customer preferences, the diversity

of products is increasing, and new expectations are continually emerging. Improvement focused on enhancing the ability to meet quality requirements is deeply ingrained in modern quality management systems. It finds its place among the seven principles of ISO 9001:2015. Improvement can also be seen as a distinguishing factor in a competitive market and in the process that ensures an organisation's sustained success. In this context, it seems justified to refer to the use of the recommendations of ISO 9004:2018, which enable the identification and assessment of areas requiring improvement, the implementation of innovative solutions, and the enhancement of the maturity level of the quality management system. The current version of ISO 9004:2018 was published in 2018 and provided guidelines for improving both quality management systems and actions taken throughout the organisation. Simultaneously, in comparison to ISO 9001:2015, it offers a broader perspective on the improvement process.

The available research provides partial knowledge regarding organisations' experiences in implementing the guidelines of ISO 9004:2018, which is much less frequently analysed in scientific publications than ISO 9001:2015 (Rogala, 2020, p. 130). This topic is insufficiently understood, creating a significant research gap that directed the aim of this study, that is the characterization of the content of ISO 9004:2018 and the identification of the benefits and limitations of its application in the practices of various organisations.

The objective outlined above guided the structure of the article. The first part characterizes ISO 9004:2018, followed by a presentation of the adopted research methodology. The subsequent section describes the potential benefits arising from the application of ISO 9004:2018, as well as its limitations. The article concludes with the research findings, and provides recommendations for the future.

2. Characteristics of the ISO 9004:2018 standard in the context of using the excellence model

The ISO 9004:2018 standard is often presented as a kind of complement to the requirements contained in the ISO 9001:2015 standard, but can also be used independently of it. Its content is helpful in the correct interpretation of the requirements contained in ISO 9001:2015, e.g. by including explanations or examples of actions required to meet these requirements (Rogala, 2020, p. 115). It contains tips on improving and expanding quality management systems already implemented in organisations, in accordance with the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard (Hoyle, 2018). It is recommended for organisations undertaking improvement activities that want to go beyond the guidelines contained in ISO 9001. It comprises a set of tips for improving the organisation, and guidelines for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. It is also used to identify opportunities to make

improvements and innovations, as well as achieve long-term, sustainable success by ensuring the satisfaction of stakeholders and other interested parties (Asif, 2020).

It is said that while ISO 9001:2015 focuses on providing confidence regarding the manufacturing of products and/or the delivery of services, ISO 9004:2018 concentrates on providing confidence related to the organisation's ability to achieve sustained success (Łańcucki, 2019).

The nature of the standard has changed over the years. Currently, after the update, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring sustained success (Bravi, Murmura, 2021), meaning success that endures continuously in a complex, competitive and constantly changing environment, and is related to the seven quality management principles described in ISO 9000:2015. The updated standard from 2018 ensures compliance with the concepts and terminology of ISO 9000:2015 and ISO 9001:2015. It places a strong focus on the concepts of "organisational quality" and "organisational identity" (Łańcucki, 2019).

The standard provides guidelines that enable organisations to enhance their capability to achieve sustained success in a demanding, complex and ever-changing environment by relying on the organisation's ability to meet the needs and expectations of customers and other interested parties. These guidelines align with the principles of quality management outlined in ISO 9001:2015. Sustained success for an organisation can be achieved through effective organisational management, awareness of environmental needs, continuous learning, proper implementation of improvements, and the introduction of innovations (Soare et al., 2019). According to the standard, a mature organisation achieves sustained success by:

- understanding and meeting the needs and expectations of customers and other interested parties,
- monitoring changes in the organisation's environment,
- identifying potential areas for improvement, learning and innovation,
- defining and implementing strategies and objectives,
- managing processes and resources,
- building trust among employees, which should lead to greater engagement,
- establishing favourable relationships with suppliers and other organisations in the environment.

The guidelines contained in the standard can be used by any organisation, regardless of its size, type and type of business. However, unlike ISO 9001, the standard is not an inseparable set of guidelines; the guidelines contained therein can be used depending on the needs and capabilities of the organisation. The standard is also not intended for certification or to be referred to in relations with other entities, e.g. when concluding contracts, selecting suppliers, etc. (Rogala, 2020).

It can be observed that the standard influences both the tangible and intangible aspects of the organisation. It pertains not only to products and processes but also to the organisational structure, management system, human capital, cultural aspects, infrastructure, environment and relationships with stakeholders (Castka, Corbett, 2015). According to its content, it would be desirable for continuous improvement to become an integral part of the organisational culture and for all employees to be actively involved in the quality improvement process. However, quality improvement that leads to sustained success requires investing in training, building trust in top management, and creating incentives for participation in improvement and suggesting ideas for changes. In this regard, ISO 9004:2018 recognizes learning as the foundation for an effective and efficient improvement process and the introduction of innovative solutions (Jarvis, Palmy, 2018).

The standard pertains to systematic ways of continuously improving the overall performance of organisations operating in a dynamic environment. It also proposes a self-assessment tool. Its crucial sections are chapters 4 to 11. These chapters present guidelines for achieving sustained success for the organisation, which can be treated as criteria for business excellence. These guidelines are comprehensive in nature, meaning they encompass all relevant aspects related to the functioning of the organisation (Hoyle, 2018). The structure of ISO 9004:2018, is depicted in Figure 1, which highlights the key elements and the relationships between them.

Since the year 2000, a consistent element of the ISO 9004 standard has been the self-assessment questionnaire for organisations. In the 2018 version of the standard, this questionnaire is included in Annex A. It provides a comprehensive and detailed discussion of self-assessment tools, allowing organisations to assess the maturity level of their quality management system and to identify and prioritize potential areas for improvement (ISO 9004:2018). The systematic process of improving the overall performance of the organisation involves activities related to planning, implementation, analysis, evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management system.

In the current version of the standard, this annex consists of four parts: general provisions, maturity model, self-assessment of specific elements, and the application of self-assessment tools. By conducting a self-assessment using ISO 9004:2018, a general overview of the organisation's effectiveness can be gained, as well as the maturity level of its management system. The description and predefined criteria can be applied in the overall diagnosis of the organisation, and the results obtained in this way can serve as a basis for decision-making regarding organisational improvement (Rogala, 2020). Self-assessment can help identify areas requiring improvement and/or innovation, as well as determine priorities for subsequent actions. It aids in determining the organisation's maturity level, and if repeated, the progress achieved (its results) can contribute valuable insights to management reviews. Self-assessment also has potential as a learning tool, providing better outcomes for the organisation, promoting stakeholder engagement, and supporting the overall planning efforts of the organisation (Soare et al., 2019).

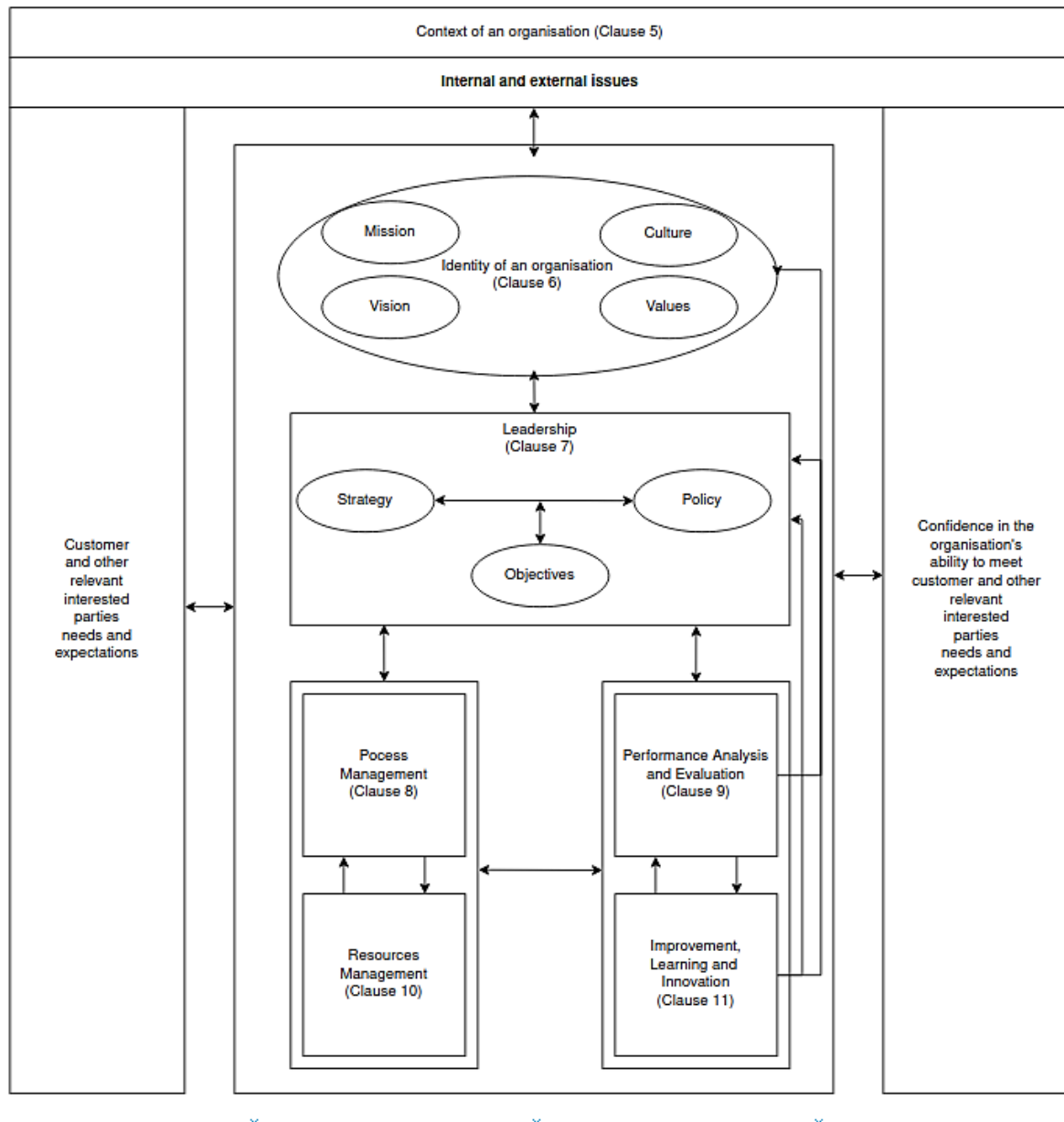


Figure 1. Model of guidelines and relationships included in the ISO 9004:2018 standard.

Source: International Standard ISO 9004:2018, Quality management - Quality of an organization- Guidance to achieve sustained success, <https://cdn.standards.iteh.ai/samples/70397/d62feac7c8b741a0927de13b1a76ead7/ISO-9004-2018.pdf>, 2.02.2024.

ISO 9004:2018 can be applied in various contexts (Horvat, Filipovic, 2018; Kuo, Tsai, 2019). It takes into account all internal and external resources, enhances customer focus, and is oriented towards meeting the needs of various stakeholders. Considering the diverse interests of different stakeholders, it recommends identifying the needs of individual parties and then attempting to reach a compromise in meeting those needs through risk analysis. For this reason, there is reference to ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management - Principles and Guidelines, which is considered a related standard to ISO 9004:2018 (Żuchowski, Łagowski, 2019). ISO 9004:2018 provides detailed instructions for organisational development, focusing on improving efficiency (Krajcsák, 2019). It is strongly oriented towards the goals of the

organisation and its environment, as well as the sustainable development of the organisation, as it is associated with sustained success. Sustained success is closely related to a qualitative orientation based on continuous improvement of processes and, consequently, products. It can be considered a tool for supporting the concept of continuous improvement, emphasizing a process-oriented approach. Its broad and flexible perspective on organisational strategy supports processes in creating a coherent system in economic, environmental and social spheres.

3. Methodology

The aim of the article is to indicate the current state of knowledge regarding the effects of implementing the ISO 9004:2018 standard, with a particular focus on identifying the potential benefits and limitations of its adoption. The article conducts an analysis of available publications, combining it with scholarly reflection. In attempting to identify what has been written on the subject, a narrative literature review methodology was applied. A narrative literature review summarizes previously published research on a given topic, focusing on concepts and theories, research methods and research findings. It mainly involves the collection and synthesis of existing literature, providing a comprehensive report on the current state of knowledge in the researched area. A narrative literature review is a significant part of the research process and helps establish theoretical frameworks as well as the direction or context for future research (Pautasso, 2019).

The subjective and selective choice of publications presenting the current state of knowledge (Paré et al., 2015) can have significant implications for analysing a specific issue. Its results can also justify the need for broader research. Its application requires maintaining proper research rigor and clarity of communication (Ferrari, 2015). Taking these requirements into account, the literature review adopted the following selection criteria:

- the complexity of the addressed subject matter, which led to the search for publications that comprehensively presented issues related to the application of the ISO 9004:2018 standard,
- the significance of the publication, measured by the number of citations, as well as its position among influential journals in the field of quality management and organisational improvement,
- accessing publications that integrate the topics of applying the ISO 9004:2018 standard, implementing the excellence model outlined in the ISO 9004:2018 standard, the achieved effects, and the identified limitations.

The literature searches, both in Polish and English, were carried out in the Scopus, EBSCO and WoS scientific databases. A search on August 28, 2023 for the phrase *ISO 9004:2018 model of excellence* did not yield any studies. Therefore, a query was built using the elements "ISO 9004:2018" AND "model of excellence". In this way, a total of 29 references were found.

Due to the fact that research results were sought on the application of the ISO 9004 standard amended in 2018, the results were verified and only publications issued in 2018-2023 were accepted for further analysis. When analysing the abstracts and then the full texts, the focus was mainly on those publications that not only described the ISO 9004:2018 standard, but above all contained research results relating to the effects of its application.

The second stage of literature selection was based on supplementing the database using the "snowballing" method, which involves incorporating articles from the literature references in the first layer of literature (Czakon, 2011).

By employing the described stages, a database of 39 publications was obtained, which was then subjected to verification through review of the abstracts. In this way, the texts were categorized into those directly related to the researched topic, those partially related, and those weakly associated with the research topic. Only the layer directly related to the researched topic underwent a detailed text analysis.

Ultimately, in-depth analysis was conducted on 21 publications, identified based on the examination of abstracts that aligned with the researched topic. The limited number of publications meeting the search criteria indicates that the researched topic is not widely discussed in the literature. These publications cover the period from 2018 onwards. Analysing their content allowed for identification of the benefits and limitations arising from the application of the ISO 9004:2018 standard.

4. Research results. Benefits from applying the ISO 9004:2018 standard

Having analysed the results of the research conducted by the authors, it can be concluded that one of the values of the ISO 9004:2018 standard is that its guidelines correspond with the requirements of ISO 9001. Both these standards are mutually complementary, ISO 9001:2015 emphasising performance measurement and ISO 9004:2018 focusing on improvement aspects.

The excellence model proposed in ISO 9004:2018 provides organisations with a multitude of opportunities and – if properly applied – can yield numerous benefits. The model is described as a set of guidelines for achieving sustained success in a volatile and challenging business environment. In a long-term perspective, the model implementation makes organisations capable of meeting the needs and expectations of customers and other stakeholders (Anttila, Jussila, 2021). It serves to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation as well as to pursue long-lasting and sustained success by striving for satisfaction of numerous stakeholders

(Asif, 2020; Kuo, Tsai, 2019). Another major advantage of the ISO 9004:2018 excellence model is being universal and comprehensive in nature.

ISO 9004:2018 can be applied in all kinds of organisations, irrespective of their size, type, industry, or environmental conditions (Anttila, Jussila, 2021). The guidelines defined in the standard refer to a variety of elements such as products, processes, organisational structure, management system, human aspects, cultural aspects, infrastructure, environment, and stakeholder relations. As such, the standard does not focus on product or service quality exclusively, but takes the comprehensive organisation context into account. Therefore, it is emphasised that the standard can help organisations to pursue success by way of an integrated process approach, considering diverse managerial needs.

Organisations typically follow customised quality management system implementation strategies, which they develop having analysed their competition, experience to date, and business practices in place. According to ISO 9004:2018, an organisation's identity and distinctive competitive advantages provide grounds for both the quality it offers and its sustained success. The standard's guidelines are universal enough to leave the organisation free to choose the solutions and tools it finds adequate given the specificity of its operations. The foregoing implies that the standard is in fact flexible in nature, encouraging effective implementation of the quality principles in a manner tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the organisation.

It is fairly evident that the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 standard is complementary towards the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach. Following the premises of ISO 9004:2018 makes it significantly easier to implement the TQM principles, linking deployment of innovation with the TQM culture. While TQM requires high commitment from leaders, the key to the success of ISO 9004:2018 is to acquire and sustain effective and normative employee engagement and customer loyalty (Krajcsák, 2019). An attempt to introduce the TQM culture entails major organisational changes and making all employees committed to the concept of quality management, but it also requires support from top management. On the one hand, the ISO 9004:2018 standard enables a holistic view of quality, and on the other hand, it leaves much freedom of action and space for flexibility. It helps in maintaining stability and continuity of operations in various situations as well as in adapting to volatile business conditions.

The standard's guidelines, aimed at sustained success, can be applied to examine the maturity of Industry 4.0, of which Quality 4.0 is an integral part. One can use the ISO 9004 excellence model to assess Quality 4.0, but it may also serve as a baseline for drawing up a *roadmap* for Quality 4.0 (Glogovac et al., 2022).

According to some researchers, there is also a connection between ISO 9004 and striving for sustainable development of Q4.0 (Glogovac et al., 2022). The implementation of processes in an organisation aiming at sustainable success draws its strength from the organisation's own identity, as described in Chapter 6 of the standard, which comprises the mission, vision, values,

and culture (Żuchowski, Łagowski, 2019). The standard encompasses aspects such as the environment, corporate social responsibility, occupational health and safety, as well as innovation. All these elements can be combined in a number of process-oriented ways, while their interactions, as the ISO 9004:2018 standard suggests, can exert a synergistic effect on the pursuit of sustainable development goals. Chapter 7.2 of the standard advises the managers responsible for improvement actions to consider aspects such as quality, environment, energy, employment, as well as occupational health and safety, implying that they should pursue green governance (Żuchowski, Łagowski, 2021). Section 7.3 recommends that, when attempting to define and maintain goals, the senior management should consider and determine, based on their policy and strategy, the extent to which the organisation wants stakeholders to recognise it as a leader with a positive economic, environmental, and social impact.

An important advantage of the standard is that it provides guidelines for systematic and continuous performance improvement, and by that means, for improving the organization's profitability, regardless of the type, magnitude or specific nature of its operations (Tsai et al., 2017). A tool that may come in handy when attempting to measure the existing maturity level of the organisation's Quality Management System (QMS) is a self-assessment questionnaire, which allows managers to accurately determine strengths and weaknesses, and to identify priority areas for improvement (Wolniak, 2019). The self-assessment results provide a prompt to deploy improvement measures.

The content of the standard emphasises continuous learning and improvement, both at the level of an individual person and the organisation in its entirety. It supports a creative approach to problem solving and encourages innovation, which can help organisations to attain better outcomes and improve efficiency. What also contributes to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations is the implementation of risk management, which creates an opportunity to respond quickly to unforeseen situations and to find solutions making it possible to attain the business goals previously set. The standard also emphasises the relevance of collaboration, teamwork, and communication, both within the organisation and with external stakeholders. It states that exchange of information, experience, and resources can contribute to a more effective pursuit of the organisation's goals.

Organisations that know and apply the ISO 9004:2018 guidelines derive measurable benefits from such efforts. These benefits may be perceived differently depending on the organisation's size, operational specifics, or industry. Some Italian businesses subject to a survey (Bravi, Murmura, 2021) declared that, having followed the ISO 9004:2018 guidelines, they had managed to improve their self-assessment activities, streamlined their organisational structure, and raised the awareness of corporate sustainability. Furthermore, the findings of the survey in question imply such effects as improved quality, increased competitiveness, and transition to the Total Quality Management (TQM) system. The aforementioned research has demonstrated slightly different benefits derived from implementing ISO 9004:2018,

depending on the business size. In large enterprises, those participating in the survey mainly mentioned streamlining the organisational structure and achieving sustained business success, while micro-enterprises observed varying benefits, such as a self-assessment opportunity and – similarly to large enterprises – attaining sustained business success.

A study conducted in Serbia (Glogovac et al., 2022), on the other hand, has indicated that the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 maturity model can lead an organisation to success in various areas of operations, such as leadership, process management, resource management, as well as performance analysis and evaluation. The researchers have concluded that the ISO 9004:2018 guidelines can provide grounds for assessing the level of quality maturity under Industry 4.0. Some other benefits they have observed include identification of the opportunities for improvement and innovation, achieving sustained success, and improved satisfaction of various stakeholders.

5. Limits to the application of the ISO 9004:2018 standard

Research results also imply that there are certain limits to the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 recommendations and guidelines. It is rather evident that the ISO 9004:2018 standard is both applied in practice and analysed in academic studies much less frequently than ISO 9001:2015 (Rogala, 2020). The lesser awareness of the ISO 9004 standard can be attributed to the fact that ISO 9004 is not subject to certification. The study by Jarvis and Palmes (2018) indicates that many organisations find the certificate award itself to be their primary goal, while the matters of quality culture building and continuous improvement are considered secondary. What may hinder the application of the standard's guidelines under Polish conditions is also the fact that there is still no Polish translation of the standard.

ISO 9004:2018 is also characterised by being relatively least constant in the specific function which it performs compared to the other ISO standards of the 9000 series. It has changed in nature over the years. Although it can be implemented independently of ISO 9001, its high utility value is observed primarily when both are applied in combination. However, the structures of these documents are not organised enough. They do not indicate explicitly which guidelines are duplicated, which extend one another, and which address additional matters not specifically addressed in ISO 9001. And even though the current version of the standard is clearly oriented towards achieving sustained success over the long term, the guidelines it contains are formulated very much like the ISO 9001 requirements pertaining to the quality management system. What also proves important is that these standards were updated in different years. Consequently, not until 2018 had it been possible to implement them in a complementary manner. Between 2015 and 2018, there were two different views of quality management in place (Rogala, 2020). Another limitation is that ISO 9004:2018 highlights what

an organisation should attain, but it does not explain how to accomplish that and is not specific as to what tools to employ in which situations. This ambiguity in the relationship between the standards as well as the overly generic nature of their recommendations can now be perceived as a serious limitation to the application of ISO 9004:2018.

With reference to a practical use case of the standard, the surveys conducted among the Italian companies imply a low level of familiarity with the ISO 9004 standard among managers (Bravi, Murmura, 2021). Surprisingly, only 11.2% of the businesses surveyed claimed that they were familiar with the standard, while 17.2% were only partially familiar with it, and 71.6% knew nothing about it. Among the knowledgeable respondents, only 11.8% complied with the standard, while 37.7% did so partially, and 50.4% did not follow the principles of the standard in question. Further results of the same survey indicate that the requirements of ISO 9004:2018 were primarily of interest to medium-sized companies. It was also observed that the degree of familiarity with the standard's guidelines depended on how much time had elapsed since the award of the ISO 9001 QMS certificate. A higher level of familiarity with the requirements of ISO 9004 was characteristic of businesses with more experience using a certified quality management system. That seems to be completely reasonable because, as organisations mature, they seek to improve the system they have implemented and look for new opportunities.

What also matters is the organisation size (Bravi, Murmura, 2021), since larger companies tend to have a more mature quality management system in place. In large businesses, one can observe continuous improvement to be introduced once the implementation of the quality management system is complete. Small enterprises pursuing QMS certification are driven by different rationale. Their efforts are primarily determined by an intent to achieve a better position, for instance, when applying for funding of their operations from external sources. For this reason, the recommendations provided in ISO 9004:2018 are implemented less frequently in small businesses. Large enterprises can be claimed to display more motivation to implement and improve their QMS, and therefore, these organisations may be particularly interested in following the requirements of the ISO 9004:2018 standard. Large businesses are also more capable in terms of human resources, technology, and financing. Furthermore, their managers are often more aware of the need to improve the organisation and strive for higher levels of process and product quality.

Even though the standard is considerably universal, it can also be considered somewhat inflexible (Glogovac et al., 2022) and lacking the capacity to adapt to certain organisation-specific circumstances, which applies, for instance, to SMEs and start-ups, where the pursuit of excellence is not the primary goal. Using a self-assessment questionnaire is only reasonable in those organisations which truly care about reaching a high maturity level. However, maturity itself is not a business goal which ensures sustained success, irrespective of the organisation type. Businesses representing the SME sector, and small companies as well as start-ups in particular, may be uninterested in pursuing maturity in quality terms. In operation, they tend to rely more on developing agility than on striving for maturity and continuous revitalisation

(Anttila, Jussila, 2021). Another limitation mentioned in the literature on the subject (Bravi, Murmura, 2021) is the implementation process perceived as complex compared to the requirements of ISO 9001:2015.

6. Conclusions

This article represents an overall body of research on quality management system improvement and addresses the pursuit of sustained market success. The study results upon which it comments can function as a reference for practitioners and researchers interested in the aforementioned subject. The ISO 9004:2018 standard at large and the excellence model it contains in particular offer many opportunities to organisations. The potential benefits they may acquire are quite numerous and diverse, and some of them are as follows:

1. Orientation towards sustainable development considering various aspects of the organisation's sustainability;
2. Improved satisfaction of customers and other stakeholders, attributable to a holistic view of quality, continuous collaboration, and development of communication focused on exploring and meeting the needs and requirements of all the organisation's stakeholders;
3. Increased operational efficiency and effectiveness, attained through continuous improvement, innovation deployment, and focus on processes, which enables organizations to be more effective pursuing their business objectives and striving for better results;
4. Flexible quality management that allows organisations to respond adequately to changing internal and external conditions as well as to stakeholder needs and expectations;
5. Focus on risk management, which helps organisations to recognise areas of uncertainty and to respond effectively to them.

Despite the vast array of benefits, as identified above, the degree of uptake of the standard appears to be relatively low. The analysis referred to in the article has also revealed other limitations accompanying the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 recommendations. These include:

1. Low level of awareness of the standard's guidelines among organisations;
2. Complicated implementation process compared to ISO 9001:2015;
3. Ambiguous relationship between ISO 9004:2018 and ISO 9001:2015;
4. Rigidity and lack of capacity to adapt to specific conditions of a given organisation;
5. Lack of interest in pursuing quality maturity by some organisations;
6. Lack of a Polish translation of the standard, relevant under the domestic conditions.

Although the research completed to date has contributed to further development of knowledge by delivering practical information, it has also been encumbered with some limitations, which, however, can be eliminated in future research. They are mainly attributable to the research method applied as well as the nature of the study, being a review. The benefits of and limits to the implementation of the ISO 9004:2018 standard, as observed, do not take a number of aspects into account, such as the specifics of organisations, their size, type of business, industry, or maturity of quality management systems. Neither the specific needs nor the context of organisations are insignificant. Given the research results obtained, a prospect worth considering is exploratory qualitative research using in-depth interviews with managers. What also seems as an interesting option is a comparative analysis concerning organisations at different levels of quality maturity.

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