

**The Mediating Role of Soft and Hard Total Quality Management on
the Relationship between the Critical Factors of Iso 9000 and the
Overall Manufacturing Performance**

Theoretical Framework and Propositions

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ABSTRACT

Quality and quality related issues have been a topic of research interest in the business field for some time. Quality management practices are seen as a competitive advantage. A tool for organizational change, the road to continuous improvement and face challenges in the business environment. The conventional wisdom is that better quality leads to higher revenues, decreases costs, and increased profits. The level of quality management implementation seems to reflect the desire of a firm to improve its performance. Because of the strategic advantages that quality improvement might bring, many firms have embraced the principles of quality management in their operation. Empirical archival of ISO 9000 and TQM studies concerning the link between them and the manufacturing performance have been difficult because the area of quality management practices suffers from multiple definitions, varying degrees of implementation, vague descriptions of TQM and lack of specific implementation dates. These difficulties limit researchers' ability to examine the relationships between the Quality Management System (ISO 9000), Total Quality Management sides; "soft" and "hard" TQM, and the manufacturing performance. This paper sets out to explore the quality programs and attempts to overcome some of the research difficulties and gaps by focusing on firms that become ISO 9000 certified. ISO 9000 is a quality standard that provides guidelines that are generic and can be applied to any type of organizations. TQM is a general philosophy that consists of both the management and the technical systems. *Specifically, the effect of ISO 9000 critical factors on total quality management dimensions "soft" and "hard" and the performance in the manufacturing industries in Malaysia will be investigated.*

Key words: ISO 9000, Soft TQM, Hard TQM, manufacturing performance, Malaysia.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the first one of a recent empirical cross sectional study that investigated the interrelatedness between ISO 9000, total quality management dimensions *Soft* and *Hard* and their association to the performance in the developing economy of Malaysian Manufacturing certified industries to the ISO 9000 standard. In other words, this research proposes a mediating effect of two total quality management sides, namely, soft TQM and hard TQM on the relationship between ISO 9000 and the manufacturing performance. It is unable to find research that examines the impact the ISO 9000 have as precursors to the two dimensions of TQM and the manufacturing performance. This paper attempts to fill that void. This paper attempted to explore other forms of relationships between: Soft and Hard TQM, Soft and Hard TQM and the performance, ISO 9000 and companies performance, ISO 9000 and Soft and hard TQM, the complete association of ISO 9000, Soft and Hard TQM and the manufacturing performance. Furthermore it is devoted to show how the profile of certified company's affects the previous associations.

Using empirical data collected from Malaysian firms, this study attempts to achieve two primary objectives. First, it seeks to resolve the inconsistencies which have appeared in the literature concerning the relationships among ISO 9000, Soft TQM, Hard TQM, and