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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Stakeholders' security and confidence mindset of accreditation and ISO in university quality enhancement

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study examined the stakeholders' security and confidence mindset toward accreditation and ISO certification as critical components of university quality enhancement. Specifically, it aimed to determine how these quality assurance mechanisms influence both institutional performance and the psychological assurance of stakeholders. Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires assessing the perceived impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO among teaching and non-teaching personnel in North Eastern Mindanao State University, Tandag City, Philippines. Complementary qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews that explored stakeholders' sense of trust, security, and confidence in institutional processes. Findings revealed that accreditation and ISO certification were perceived to have a very high impact and effectiveness in promoting transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Thematic analysis indicated that these systems cultivate stakeholders' cognitive trust, emotional security, and professional confidence—attributes strongly supported by Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. These results highlight that accreditation and ISO extend beyond compliance frameworks; they function as psychological reinforcements that enhance stakeholders' belief in the institution's capability and reliability. Ultimately, the study concludes that a culture of quality in higher education is sustained not only through documented standards but through the shared mindset of trust, security, and confidence among its stakeholders.

Keywords: Accreditation; higher education institutions (HEIs); ISO certification; organizational trust; quality assurance; quality enhancement; self-efficacy; stakeholder confidence; stakeholder security

1. Introduction

Quality assurance has become a central pillar of governance in higher education institutions (HEIs), shaping accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in both academic and administrative domains. Accreditation systems and ISO certification frameworks have emerged as essential mechanisms for strengthening institutional credibility, aligning processes with international standards, and enhancing global competitiveness [1-2]. In the Philippines, these quality frameworks support the Commission on Higher Education's thrust toward outcome-based education and global benchmarking, thereby contributing to the sustained advancement of higher education institutions[3].

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Beyond their technical and procedural functions, accreditation and ISO certification exert significant influence on the psychological experiences of institutional stakeholders. These mechanisms shape perceptions of trust, security, and confidence by demonstrating institutional competence, fairness, transparency, and reliability. Muchacka and Dec [4] emphasize that self-efficacy and confidence develop through mastery experiences and positive reinforcement—both of which are inherent in continuous improvement and audit cycles. When stakeholders perceive quality assurance systems as credible and consistently implemented, their trust in the institution deepens, strengthening engagement and organizational commitment [5-6].

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. Organizational Trust Theory posits that trust emerges from perceptions of integrity, competence, and dependability [7]. Accreditation and ISO certification reinforce these perceptions by institutionalizing transparency, accountability, and standardized practices. Self-Efficacy Theory [8] explains how confidence in one's capabilities is shaped by mastery experiences, social modeling, and emotional states. In the context of HEIs, accreditation and ISO processes provide structured opportunities for demonstrating competence and strengthening confidence among teaching and non-teaching personnel.

Recent scholarship highlights the need to integrate technical and psychological perspectives in quality assurance. While accreditation and ISO certification improve institutional structures, sustained quality cultures emerge only when stakeholders experience psychological assurance—emotional security, cognitive clarity, and professional confidence [9-11]. However, most existing studies emphasize policy compliance, program outcomes, or administrative impacts, with limited attention to the stakeholder mindset as a critical dimension of quality enhancement. Few studies explicitly examine how quality assurance mechanisms translate into psychological states such as trust, security, and confidence that ultimately sustain institutional excellence.

This gap in the literature is especially evident in the Philippine context, where HEIs operate in environments of accreditation cycles, ISO-driven quality management, and evolving institutional governance. While these frameworks are widely implemented, little is known about how stakeholders interpret and internalize them psychologically, and how such perceptions contribute to a sustainable quality culture.

To address this gap, this study investigates both the structural effects and the psychological assurance derived from accreditation and ISO certification among stakeholders in a Philippine state university. Specifically, it aims to: (1) Determine stakeholders' perceptions of the impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO certification; and (2) Explore how accreditation and ISO processes shape stakeholders' psychological security and confidence toward institutional quality enhancement. Based on these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the perceived impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO certification in enhancing institutional quality? And (2) How do accreditation and ISO processes influence stakeholders' sense of trust, security, and professional confidence within the university?

By integrating quantitative assessments with qualitative insights, this study provides a holistic understanding of how accreditation and ISO frameworks function not only as compliance mechanisms but also as psychological reinforcements that sustain institutional quality. This approach contributes to the growing recognition that quality enhancement in higher education depends as much on stakeholder confidence and trust as on documented standards and technical systems.

2. Literature

Accreditation, ISO Certification, and Institutional Quality Enhancement

Accreditation and ISO certification are widely recognized as key mechanisms for ensuring quality and accountability in higher education institutions (HEIs). Accreditation typically evaluates academic programs, governance, and learning outcomes based on externally defined standards, while ISO frameworks—particularly ISO 9001 and ISO 21001—focus on quality management systems, process consistency, and stakeholder satisfaction [1,12]. Together, these systems strengthen institutional structures, promote transparency, and align educational processes with international benchmarks.

Research indicates that the integration of accreditation and ISO systems enhances administrative efficiency, improves curriculum relevance, and fosters evidence-based decision-making [5,13]. Studies further show that these quality mechanisms serve as catalysts for organizational improvement when embedded within long-term institutional strategies [14-15]. However, successful implementation relies on institutional readiness, leadership commitment, training, and adequate resource allocation—factors that often influence the sustainability of quality assurance initiatives [16-17].

Benefits and Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Frameworks

Accreditation and ISO certification produce multiple institutional benefits that extend across academic and administrative domains. Empirical studies consistently highlight improvements in program quality, strengthened governance, enhanced internationalization, and increased stakeholder trust [1,12]. ISO-driven quality management systems in particular promote operational reliability, standardized documentation, and continuous monitoring, which contribute to improved service delivery and institutional reputation [5,18].

The effectiveness of these mechanisms is also linked to their capacity to build a culture of continuous improvement. When faculty and staff participate actively in quality assurance processes—such as audit preparation, curriculum review, and policy alignment—institutions report higher compliance levels, improved morale, and stronger organizational cohesion [6, 19]. Nonetheless, these benefits emerge most clearly in environments where quality assurance is institutionalized rather than merely procedural.

Challenges and Capacity Issues in Accreditation and ISO Implementation

Despite the benefits, HEIs frequently encounter substantial challenges in implementing accreditation and ISO systems. Reported difficulties include resistance to change, insufficient training, technological limitations, and conflicting departmental priorities [16,20]. Documentation requirements, financial constraints, and the administrative burden associated with compliance further challenge sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained institutions [17,21].

Scholars emphasize that these challenges underscore the need for comprehensive change management approaches. Leadership support, stakeholder participation, and ongoing capacity building have been identified as critical enablers of effective quality assurance implementation [6,22]. Without addressing these human and organizational factors, accreditation and ISO processes risk becoming procedural exercises rather than meaningful quality-enhancing strategies.

Stakeholder Perceptions, Trust, and Institutional Reputation

A growing body of research highlights the influence of accreditation and ISO certification on stakeholder perceptions. External validation signals institutional competence and integrity to students, faculty, parents, employers, and regulatory bodies, thereby enhancing institutional reputation and public trust [5, 12]. For internal stakeholders, the success of quality assurance initiatives depends heavily on effective

communication; inadequate dissemination of information can generate misunderstanding, disengagement, or skepticism [20].

Psychological Dimensions of Quality Assurance: Trust, Security, and Confidence

While much of the literature focuses on technical compliance and institutional outcomes, recent studies emphasize that quality assurance also shapes psychological responses among stakeholders. Organizational Trust Theory identifies ability, integrity, and benevolence as core components of institutional trust [7]. Accreditation and ISO processes can strengthen these perceptions by demonstrating consistent standards, fairness, and accountability.

Self-Efficacy Theory [8] provides additional insight by explaining how structured tasks, feedback, and mastery experiences enhance individuals' confidence in their professional capabilities. Continuous quality improvement cycles, audit preparations, and peer evaluations create opportunities for stakeholders to demonstrate competence and gain validation—factors shown to reinforce motivation and self-efficacy [4,11].

These psychological outcomes are essential elements of a quality-driven culture. When stakeholders feel secure, capable, and valued, institutions are more likely to sustain improvement beyond formal compliance [9-10].

Quality as Both a Technical and Psychological Construct

Contemporary literature argues that quality assurance requires the integration of technical procedures and psychological conditions. Technical aspects—such as audits, documentation, process standardization, and policy alignment—provide the structural backbone of quality [3, 23]. However, without psychological engagement, these structures may not fully translate into meaningful or sustainable improvements.

The psychological dimension includes stakeholders' perceptions of clarity, fairness, competence, and institutional reliability. Institutions that successfully combine technical rigor with stakeholder empowerment report higher levels of compliance, stronger morale, and deeper commitment to continuous improvement [19,24]. Conversely, institutions that overlook psychological needs often struggle with resistance, disengagement, and inconsistent implementation.

Synthesizing the reviewed literature, accreditation and ISO certification can be understood as operating through both institutional and psychological pathways. While existing studies largely focus on institutional outcomes—such as impact, benefits, effectiveness, and implementation challenges—emerging scholarship highlights the importance of stakeholders' psychological security, trust, and confidence in sustaining quality cultures. This distinction informs the present study's mixed-methods design, wherein quantitative indicators capture institutional-level quality dimensions, while qualitative inquiry explores how these mechanisms are internalized psychologically by stakeholders.

This gap underscores the need for mixed-methods research that not only examines the institutional impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO certification, but also explains how these quality assurance mechanisms shape stakeholders' psychological security and confidence—an area directly addressed by the present study.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, wherein quantitative data collection and analysis preceded and informed the qualitative phase. The quantitative strand (QUAN) was

given priority and was used to assess stakeholders' perceptions of the impact, challenges, benefits, effectiveness, and influencing factors of accreditation and ISO certification in university quality enhancement. The subsequent qualitative strand (qual) was conducted to explain, deepen, and contextualize the quantitative results by exploring stakeholders' psychological security and confidence mindset, particularly in terms of trust, assurance, and professional confidence.

Following Creswell [25] and Creswell and Plano Clark [26], integration occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were used to clarify and elaborate on statistical patterns observed in the quantitative findings. This design enabled a comprehensive understanding of accreditation and ISO certification as both institutional quality mechanisms and psychological assurance systems influencing stakeholder mindset.

3.2. Research setting and context

The study was conducted in a Philippine state university that has maintained ISO certification and undergone multiple accreditation cycles across academic programs for more than a decade. The institution was purposively selected because of its long-standing engagement with formal quality assurance systems, making it a suitable context for examining how sustained exposure to accreditation and ISO processes influences stakeholder perceptions and psychological assurance.

The university's continuous implementation of ISO-driven quality management systems and regular accreditation audits provides a representative case of a public HEI with institutionalized quality practices. This context allowed for an in-depth examination of stakeholder experiences within a mature quality assurance environment, while acknowledging that findings are context-specific and not intended for universal generalization.

3.3. Population and sampling

The quantitative phase involved 186 respondents, consisting of 132 teaching personnel and 54 non-teaching personnel from North Eastern Mindanao State University, Tandag City, Philippines. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across academic ranks, years of service, and college departments. This approach minimized sampling bias and ensured that perceptions reflected diverse institutional roles and experiences.

For the qualitative phase, 15 key informants were selected through purposive sampling. Participants included faculty members, administrative staff, program heads, and accreditation coordinators who had direct involvement in accreditation and ISO processes. Their roles positioned them to provide rich, experience-based insights into institutional quality assurance and psychological assurance. According to Creswell [25], purposive sampling in qualitative research enables the selection of participants who can best articulate insights about the phenomenon under study.

3.4. Research instruments

This study utilized two primary research instruments: a structured survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The survey questionnaire was self-developed and designed to measure stakeholders' perceptions of accreditation and ISO certification in terms of impact, challenges, benefits, effectiveness, and influencing factors. All survey items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low/Not Serious) to 5 (Very High/Very Much Serious). Content and face validity were established through expert review, and reliability testing yielded acceptable Cronbach's alpha values across all dimensions. The qualitative instrument consisted of a semi-structured interview guide developed to explore stakeholders' psychological security and confidence mindset, focusing on trust, assurance, and professional confidence grounded in Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory.

Table 1. Qualitative Interview Guide for Objective 2

Objective	Sample Questions / Indicators
Objective 2: To assess the stakeholders' security and confidence on the university quality enhancement in terms of accreditation and ISO certification.	1. What are the challenges experienced by stakeholders in the implementation of accreditation and ISO in the university? 2. How can accreditation and ISO promote stakeholders' security and confidence in the university's quality enhancement?

3.5. Operationalization of variables

In this study, the quantitative variables—impact, challenges, benefits, effectiveness, and influencing factors—were treated as institutional indicators of accreditation and ISO implementation. These variables provided contextual understanding of quality assurance practices but did not directly measure psychological assurance. Stakeholders' psychological security and confidence mindset was operationalized qualitatively using constructs derived from Organizational Trust Theory (institutional integrity, competence, and reliability) and Self-Efficacy Theory (professional confidence, mastery, and validation). This operationalization ensured alignment between the research instruments, theoretical framework, and research objectives.

3.6. Data collection procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance and formal approval were obtained from the university administration. Quantitative data were collected through the administration of survey questionnaires to teaching and non-teaching personnel. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and conducted in compliance with ethical research standards.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. All interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.7. Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means, standard deviations, and weighted means were computed to describe stakeholder perceptions. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships between demographic variables and accreditation/ISO dimensions at a 0.05 level of significance, using SPSS software.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's [27] six-phase framework: familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness in the qualitative phase, data analysis followed established qualitative standards. Two researchers independently coded the interview transcripts, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion to reach consensus. Member checking was conducted by returning summarized interpretations to selected participants for verification, while peer debriefing with a qualitative research expert enhanced analytical credibility. An audit trail documenting coding decisions and theme development was maintained to support dependability and confirmability.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of codes and pseudonyms, and all data were securely stored. These measures upheld the integrity and ethical standards of the research process.

4. Results and discussion

Objective 1. To determine the status of the impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO certification on the quality of education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

This objective addresses the first research question by examining stakeholders' perceptions of accreditation and ISO certification in terms of impact, challenges, benefits, and effectiveness. The presentation of results is complemented by theoretical interpretation grounded in Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, allowing the discussion to move beyond description toward explanation of the mechanisms underlying stakeholders' perceptions.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the teaching personnel respondents. The data show that the majority belonged to the rank of *Associate Professors I–V (37%)*, followed by *Assistant Professors I–IV (25%)*, *Instructors I–III (21%)*, and *Professors I–VI (17%)*. This implies that most respondents were mid-level faculty members, reflecting a strong core of experienced and stable teaching personnel. Regarding years of service, 42% have been in service for *5 to 10 years*, and 38% have *11 to 15 years* of experience, signifying a workforce that is well-versed with institutional operations and policies. In terms of college distribution, the *College of Teacher Education (CTE)* obtained the highest response rate (36%), followed by *College of Business Management (CBM)* with 24%, and *College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)* and *CITE* with 15% each. This denotes diverse representation among faculty across disciplines, with strong participation from education and business programs.

According to Marrouchi [3], higher education institutions' quality assurance processes are greatly influenced by both human and non-human variables, emphasizing that faculty stability and experience are crucial to sustaining accreditation and ISO implementation.

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Respondents (Teaching)

Information of the Respondents	Indicators	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank
Academic Rank	Instructor I–III	27	21%	3
	Assistant Professor I–IV	33	25%	2
	Associate Professor I–V	49	37%	1
	Professor I–VI	23	17%	4
	Total	132	100%	
Number of Years in Service	5–10 years	56	42%	1
	11–15 years	50	38%	2
	16–20 years	10	8%	4
	21 years and above	16	12%	3
	Total	132	100%	
College Department	CAS	20	15%	3.5
	CBM	31	24%	2
	CET	13	10%	4
	CITE	20	15%	3.5
	CTE	48	36%	1
	Total	132	100%	

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of non-teaching personnel. It reveals that 96% are permanent employees, while only 4% are contractual. The majority (46%) have served *5–10 years*, while 30% served *11–15 years*. This suggests a committed and moderately experienced workforce, capable of maintaining operational consistency. According to Panagiotidou [6], accreditation enhances procedural reliability and quality consciousness among staff, fostering continuous institutional development.

Table 3. Demographic Information of the Respondents (Non-Teaching)

Information of the Respondents	Indicators	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank
Employment Status	Permanent	52	96%	1
	Temporary	0	0%	3
	Contractual	2	4%	2
	Total	54	100%	
Number of Years in Service	5–10 years	25	46%	1
	11–15 years	16	30%	2
	16–20 years	4	7%	4
	21 years and above	9	17%	3
	Total	54	100%	

Tables 2 and 3 present the demographic profiles of teaching and non-teaching personnel. The data show that most teaching personnel occupy mid-level academic ranks and possess five to fifteen years of service, while the majority of non-teaching personnel are permanent employees with comparable institutional tenure. This profile is analytically significant, as prolonged exposure to accreditation and ISO processes enables stakeholders to develop familiarity with institutional standards and procedures.

From the perspective of Organizational Trust Theory, repeated interaction with formal quality assurance systems reduces uncertainty and strengthens confidence in institutional processes. Similarly, Self-Efficacy Theory suggests that experience gained through continuous involvement in accreditation and ISO activities enhances stakeholders perceived competence in quality-related tasks. Thus, the demographic characteristics of respondents provide an important contextual foundation for interpreting subsequent perceptions.

Impact of Accreditation and ISO Certification in HEIs

As shown in Table 4, accreditation and ISO certification were rated as having a Very High Impact (GWM = 4.60). High ratings for indicators related to standard-setting, accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement indicate that stakeholders associate these frameworks with institutional competence and consistency. This finding aligns with Hernández et al. [1] and Machuca et al. [12], who emphasized that accreditation and ISO serve as markers of institutional credibility and global competitiveness.

The underlying mechanism can be explained through Organizational Trust Theory. Externally validated standards and audits function as signals of institutional integrity and ability, reducing ambiguity and reinforcing stakeholders' confidence in institutional governance. Transparency in assessment and clearly defined criteria strengthen trust by making institutional expectations visible and predictable.

Table 4. Impact of Accreditation and ISO Certification in HEIs

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Establish standards and criteria that institutions must meet to ensure quality education.	4.69	Very High Impact
2. Emphasize continuous improvement and adaptability.	4.60	Very High Impact
3. Recognized indicators of quality and compliance with international standards.	4.54	Very High Impact
4. Facilitate global recognition and mobility for students and graduates.	4.45	Very High Impact
5. Extend beyond teaching and learning to encompass research and innovation.	4.69	Very High Impact
6. Enhance stakeholder confidence through transparent assessment.	4.51	Very High Impact
7. Continuous professional support during implementation.	4.64	Very High Impact
8. Facilitate credit transfer and recognition of qualifications.	4.61	Very High Impact
9. Adopt efficient management practices and processes.	4.63	Very High Impact
10. Demonstrate institutional commitment to global excellence.	4.68	Very High Impact
General Weighted Mean	4.60	Very High Impact

Challenges Faced by HEIs in Accreditation and ISO Certification

Despite the high perceived impact, Table 5 indicates that stakeholders experience serious challenges (GWM = 4.17), particularly in adapting to new processes, aligning policies, and sustaining compliance. These findings reflect the demanding nature of quality assurance implementation and are consistent with Reyteran [20] and Fuchs et al. [16], who noted that accreditation and ISO require extensive adjustment and continuous capacity building.

The coexistence of high impact and high challenge suggests that stakeholders view accreditation and ISO as valuable but resource-intensive systems. This dual perception reflects the dynamics of organizational change, wherein increased workload and procedural demands initially heighten perceived difficulty without diminishing perceived value. Over time, as familiarity increases, these challenges may lessen, especially among more experienced personnel.

Table 5. Challenges Faced by HEIs in Obtaining Accreditation and ISO Certification

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Difficulty adapting to new processes and methods.	4.39	Very Much Serious
2. Lack of funding support for training programs.	4.36	Very Much Serious
3. Limited technological infrastructure.	4.14	More Serious
4. Difficulty aligning existing policies with ISO criteria.	4.23	Very Much Serious
5. Struggle to maintain ongoing compliance.	4.16	More Serious
6. Lack of coordination between departments.	4.01	More Serious
7. Poor goal alignment across organizational levels.	4.16	More Serious
8. Lack of adequate training for personnel.	3.96	More Serious
9. Unsupported continuing education initiatives.	4.05	More Serious
10. Difficulty preparing audit and accreditation reports.	4.23	Very Much Serious
General Weighted Mean	4.17	More Serious

Benefits of Accreditation and ISO Certification

Table 6 shows that accreditation and ISO certification are perceived as Very Much Beneficial (GWM = 4.65), particularly in program improvement, innovation, accountability, and professional collaboration. These findings indicate that stakeholders recognize quality assurance as a mechanism for institutional learning rather than mere compliance.

The mechanism underlying these perceived benefits lies in feedback and continuous improvement cycles. Accreditation and ISO processes generate systematic reviews and evidence-based evaluations that inform curriculum enhancement, administrative efficiency, and professional development. From a self-efficacy perspective, successful engagement in these processes reinforces collective confidence in the institution's capacity to improve and innovate. This aligns with Kamusoko [13] and Hernández et al. [1], who stressed that compliance drives program enhancement and innovation. Even administrative benefits (WM = 4.50) were recognized as significant, echoing Fuchs et al. [16] on operational improvement.

Table 6. Benefits of Pursuing Accreditation and ISO Certification in HEIs

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Enhance institutional reputation.	4.60	Very Much Beneficial
2. Program improvement through compliance.	4.70	Very Much Beneficial
3. Use effective teaching and assessment techniques.	4.67	Very Much Beneficial
4. Strengthen accountability and transparency.	4.65	Very Much Beneficial
5. Improved administration and operations.	4.50	Very Much Beneficial
6. Efficient resource utilization.	4.68	Very Much Beneficial
7. Extend global collaboration through ISO.	4.67	Very Much Beneficial
8. Improve institutional competitiveness and funding.	4.65	Very Much Beneficial
9. Continuous improvement with innovation framework.	4.70	Very Much Beneficial
10. Support professional cooperation and growth.	4.70	Very Much Beneficial
General Weighted Mean	4.65	Very Much Beneficial

Effectiveness of Accreditation and ISO Certification

As reflected in Table 5, accreditation and ISO certification were rated as Very Much Effective (GWM = 4.57), particularly in fostering stakeholder engagement and sustaining continuous improvement. This suggests that quality assurance mechanisms are perceived not as episodic evaluations but as ongoing systems embedded in institutional practice.

Self-Efficacy Theory helps explain this perception of effectiveness. Active involvement in accreditation and ISO activities provides repeated mastery experiences—such as documentation, audits, and evaluations—that strengthen stakeholders' belief in their professional capabilities. As confidence increases, engagement becomes more sustained, reinforcing the effectiveness of quality assurance initiatives. These findings are consistent with Fuchs et al. [16], who emphasized that continuous evaluation mechanisms ensure the adaptability of educational institutions to dynamic challenges.

Table 7. Effectiveness of Accreditation and ISO Certification in HEIs

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Maintain program quality through evaluation.	4.58	Very Much Effective
2. Develop relevant curriculum.	4.56	Very Much Effective
3. Use strong quality assurance mechanisms.	4.54	Very Much Effective
4. Inculcate a culture of continuous improvement.	4.56	Very Much Effective
5. Facilitate stakeholder engagement and trust.	4.64	Very Much Effective
General Weighted Mean	4.57	Very Much Effective

Perceptions of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel

Table 8 indicates strong agreement among both teaching and non-teaching personnel that accreditation and ISO certification enhance educational quality and align with institutional goals. This shared perception across stakeholder groups suggests a collective endorsement of quality assurance as a unifying institutional framework.

Such alignment reinforces organizational trust, as consistency in perceptions across roles signals shared understanding and commitment to quality objectives. When stakeholders perceive coherence between institutional mission and quality assurance practices, trust and engagement are further strengthened. Kamusoko [13] and Machuca et al. [12] asserted that such integration reinforces global reputation.

Table 8. Perceptions Regarding Accreditation and ISO Certification

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Positive perception through accreditation and ISO.	4.62	Strongly Agree
2. Belief that accreditation improves education.	4.64	Strongly Agree
9. Improves educational quality and development.	4.67	Strongly Agree
10. Aligns with institutional mission and quality goals.	4.67	Strongly Agree
General Weighted Mean	4.62	Strongly Agree

Factors Influencing Accreditation and ISO Implementation

As shown in Table 9, factors such as improving accreditation effectiveness, enhancing reputation, and integrating quality assurance with institutional mission were rated as Very Much Influential. These findings highlight the importance of strategic alignment and resource availability in sustaining quality assurance systems.

The mechanism underlying these influences is institutional prioritization. When accreditation and ISO are aligned with core institutional goals and adequately supported by resources, stakeholders are more likely to perceive them as meaningful and sustainable, reinforcing both trust and motivation. This finding is aligned with Claretah et al. [28] and Mamatha et al. [29], who emphasized that HEIs must strengthen resource management to sustain certification efforts.

Table 9. Factors that Influence Accreditation and ISO Implementation in HEIs

Criteria	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Improve quality and effectiveness of accreditation and ISO.	4.67	Very Much Influential
2. Enhance reputation and accountability.	4.61	Very Much Influential
4. Availability of financial resources for compliance.	4.52	Very Much Influential
7. Integrate accreditation with institutional mission.	4.63	Very Much Influential
General Weighted Mean	4.61	Very Much Influential

Relationship Between Profile and Accreditation/ISO Dimensions

Table 10 reveals significant relationships between demographic variables and perceptions of accreditation and ISO dimensions. Negative correlations indicate that faculty with higher academic rank and longer years of service perceive fewer challenges. This suggests that experience moderates how stakeholders interpret and manage quality assurance demands.

This finding aligns with both Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. Familiarity with institutional processes enhances trust in systems and confidence in one's ability to navigate them, reducing perceived difficulty over time.

Table 10. Significant Relationship Between Profile and the Impact of Accreditation and ISO Certification

Profile	p-value	Correlation	Decision	Conclusion
Academic Rank	0.000	-0.663	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship
Years in Service	0.000	-0.775	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship
College Department	0.000	-0.654	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

Objective 2. To assess the stakeholders' psychological security and confidence on the university quality enhancement in terms of accreditation and ISO.

This objective addresses the second research question by examining how accreditation and ISO certification influence stakeholders' psychological security and confidence toward university quality enhancement. While quantitative findings established strong perceptions of institutional impact and effectiveness, the qualitative results explain the underlying psychological processes through which these quality assurance mechanisms shape trust, confidence, and security among stakeholders. Thematic analysis revealed four interrelated themes that collectively describe how accreditation and ISO translate structural quality systems into psychological assurance.

Theme 1. Organizational Trust

Stakeholders expressed that accreditation and ISO certification function as visible symbols of institutional reliability. They viewed these systems as evidence that the university upholds fairness, accountability, and transparency—key components of organizational trust. This finding supports Organizational Trust Theory, which posits that trust is rooted in stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's integrity and competence [4].

The mechanism underlying this trust lies in external validation and procedural transparency. Accreditation and ISO audits serve as neutral assurance mechanisms that reduce uncertainty and signal institutional integrity, thereby strengthening stakeholders' confidence in institutional decisions and governance processes. Participants emphasized that consistent implementation of ISO procedures and the credibility of accrediting bodies contributed to their sense of security regarding the university's commitment to quality.

> "The accreditation and ISO make me feel secure that our programs meet high standards—it builds trust that the institution delivers what it promises." — (P4)

Theme 2. Professional Confidence

Many respondents emphasized a heightened sense of self-efficacy and professional pride when engaging in accreditation and ISO activities. This finding aligns with Self-Efficacy Theory [8], which explains that confidence develops through mastery experiences, validation, and recognition.

Through repeated involvement in documentation, audit preparation, and compliance activities, stakeholders were able to demonstrate competence and receive affirmation of their professional contributions. These experiences functioned as mastery experiences that reinforced belief in both individual capability and the institution's collective capacity to meet quality standards.

> "When we pass the accreditation or ISO audit, it boosts our confidence—it shows that our work is validated and meaningful." — (P10)

This is consistent with Eustaquio et al. [11], who emphasized that intrinsic motivation and perceived competence lead to sustained engagement and better performance outcomes.

Theme 3. Security through Standardization

Participants frequently mentioned a heightened sense of psychological security derived from the structured processes of ISO and accreditation. Standardization was viewed as a safeguard that reduces uncertainty, ambiguity, and arbitrary decisions within the organization.

Psychological security emerged because clearly defined procedures and expectations allowed stakeholders to anticipate outcomes and understand performance criteria, thereby reducing anxiety and fear of unfair evaluation. This finding echoes Turda [9], Zhou et al. [30], and Zuo et al. [31] who noted that transparent and structured systems foster emotional assurance, organizational stability, and commitment.

> "Because of ISO, we know there are clear rules and standards—there's less fear of mistakes or unfair decisions." — (P2)

Theme 4. Empowerment and Motivation

Within the context of this institution, stakeholders reported feeling empowered through their involvement in continuous quality improvement initiatives. The participatory nature of accreditation and ISO processes provided opportunities for stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to institutional development, reinforcing both motivation and professional ownership.

This sense of empowerment was particularly evident when individual roles were clearly aligned with institutional goals, supporting Amaral et al.'s [10] assertion that motivation is strengthened when personal contributions are visibly connected to organizational success.

> "Accreditation made us more motivated to improve; it's not just compliance—it's ownership of excellence." — (P15)

Taken together, the qualitative findings explain why accreditation and ISO certification were rated highly in terms of impact, benefits, and effectiveness in Objective 1. Stakeholders internalized these quality assurance mechanisms as sources of trust, confidence, and security rather than merely as compliance requirements. Accreditation provided cognitive assurance through clarity, evidence, and external validation, while ISO offered emotional and operational security through consistency, standardization, and accountability.

The interaction between structural assurance (institutional systems) and psychological assurance (trust and self-efficacy) cultivated a trust-based organizational culture in which stakeholders felt safe, competent,

and valued. This synergy supports the view that the success of quality management in higher education depends not only on procedural conformity but also on stakeholders' psychological confidence and sense of security. These findings align with Rosidin et al. [15] and Chyporniuk [23], who emphasized that sustainable quality assurance systems must integrate both technical and psychological dimensions to achieve long-term effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

This study examined stakeholders' perceptions of accreditation and ISO certification as mechanisms for university quality enhancement, emphasizing both institutional outcomes and psychological assurance. The findings indicate that accreditation and ISO certification are perceived to have a very high impact, significant benefits, and strong effectiveness in promoting transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement within the university. Despite implementation challenges related to process adaptation, documentation requirements, and resource constraints, stakeholders continue to recognize these quality assurance systems as essential to sustaining academic and administrative quality.

Beyond their technical functions, the study demonstrates that accreditation and ISO certification carry important psychological implications. Anchored in Organizational Trust Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, the findings reveal that these mechanisms foster stakeholders' trust, professional confidence, and sense of security. Accreditation provides cognitive assurance through external validation and clarity of standards, while ISO certification offers emotional and operational security through consistency, standardization, and transparent procedures. Together, these systems cultivate a trust-based organizational culture that supports sustained engagement and ownership of quality initiatives.

These conclusions, however, must be interpreted within the context of the study. The findings are based on data from a single state university and rely primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by institutional culture or social desirability. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to capture changes in stakeholder confidence and security across multiple accreditation or ISO cycles. Future research may therefore consider multi-institutional and longitudinal designs, as well as the use of validated psychological measurement scales, to further examine how quality assurance systems influence stakeholder trust, confidence, and organizational culture across diverse higher education contexts.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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