



From code to quality: How AI is transforming quality management in Algerian startups

Khaled MILI^{1*}, Ismail BENGANA², Rahma Zighed³, SABRI Mekimah⁴

^{1,2}King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. ^{3,4}University 20 Août 1955, Skikda, Algeria.

Corresponding author: Khaled MILI (Email: kmili@kfu.edu.sa)

Abstract

This study examines the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing quality management practices within Algerian startups, focusing specifically on how AI-driven business intelligence contributes to competitive advantage through quality improvements in emerging market contexts. The research employs quantitative methodology, utilizing structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) to analyze data collected from 357 Algerian startups. The study implements a comprehensive measurement framework incorporating quality management practices, AI implementation status, and competitive advantage indicators, validated through confirmatory factor analysis. The analysis reveals that quality management supported by artificial intelligence has a moderate positive impact on competitive advantage (correlation coefficient 0.346, p < 0.001). Organizations implementing AI-enabled quality management systems achieved a 52.4% improvement in overall quality metrics. Customer response capability scored highest among quality dimensions (mean score 2.86), while product-market alignment showed room for improvement (mean score 2.53). The research identified three critical areas of AI integration success: quality control automation, predictive quality management, and customer response systems. The study provides actionable insights for startups in emerging markets implementing AI-driven quality management systems. The findings suggest a staged approach to technology adoption, emphasizing the importance of foundational quality management practices before advanced AI integration. Results indicate that successful implementation requires balanced investment in both technological infrastructure and organizational capabilities. While Algerian startups demonstrate awareness of and commitment to AI-enabled quality management, with 50.8% showing a positive disposition toward adoption, actual implementation remains at moderate levels. The study highlights significant opportunities for enhancement in quality management through strategic AI integration, particularly in emerging market contexts where technological infrastructure and resource constraints present unique challenges.

Keywords: AI implementation, Business intelligence, Digital transformation, North African entrepreneurship, Quality management evolution, Startup innovation.

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1. Introduction

The digital transformation of business processes has fundamentally altered how organizations approach quality management, particularly in emerging economies. While quality management has long been recognized as crucial for organizational success, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and business intelligence (BI) presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges. This is especially pertinent in the context of Algerian startups, where the intersection of technological adoption and quality management practices remains largely unexplored.

Recent studies highlight a critical gap between traditional quality management approaches and the demands of modern digital economies. While established markets have documented the benefits of AI integration in quality management [1], emerging markets face unique challenges that remain inadequately addressed in current literature. Specifically, startups in developing economies must navigate resource constraints, infrastructure limitations, and technological adoption barriers while striving to maintain competitive quality standards [2].

Several key research gaps emerge from the current literature:

1. Limited understanding of AI implementation challenges specific to emerging market startups.

2. Insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between AI-enabled quality management and competitive advantage in developing economies.

3. Lack of comprehensive frameworks for integrating AI and BI in quality management processes within resourceconstrained environments.

This research addresses these gaps through a systematic examination of 357 Algerian startups, focusing on three primary research questions:

1. How does AI integration impact the effectiveness of quality management in emerging market startups?

2. What role does business intelligence play in enhancing AI-enabled quality management practices?

3. To what extent does technological integration in quality management contribute to a competitive advantage?

The significance of this research is threefold. First, it provides empirical evidence of the relationship between AI implementation and quality management outcomes in an emerging market context. Second, it develops a framework for understanding how startups can effectively integrate advanced technologies into their quality management practices despite resource constraints. Third, it offers practical insights for organizations seeking to enhance their competitive position through technology-enabled quality management.

This study is particularly timely as organizations worldwide grapple with digital transformation initiatives. According to recent industry reports, while 68% of organizations identify quality management as a critical priority, only 23% successfully leverage advanced technologies to enhance their quality practices [3]. This disconnect is even more pronounced in emerging markets, where technological infrastructure and resource limitations pose additional challenges.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by:

- 1- Extending the current understanding of technology-enabled quality management to emerging market contexts.
- 2- Developing a comprehensive framework for analyzing AI integration in quality management.

3- Identifying specific mechanisms through which technological capabilities enhance quality outcomes.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a critical review of existing literature on AI in quality management, with particular attention to emerging market contexts. Section 3 details the research methodology, including data collection and analytical procedures. Section 4 presents the empirical findings, while Section 5 discusses their implications for theory and practice. Finally, Section 6 concludes with recommendations for practitioners and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of quality management and artificial intelligence represents an evolving field of study, particularly in emerging market contexts. This review critically examines the current understanding while identifying key theoretical and practical gaps.

2.1. Quality Management in Digital Transformation

Recent empirical studies have revealed both opportunities and challenges in the digital evolution of quality management. Bharadiya [4] analyzed 2,347 organizations across emerging markets, finding that while digital quality management systems showed promise (improvement rates of 37-42%), implementation success varied significantly based on organizational readiness. These findings contrast with Bengana [5] study of 1,876 quality management systems in developed markets, which reported higher success rates (65-70%), highlighting a significant digital divide.

Quality management capabilities have evolved beyond traditional frameworks, with Bengana, et al. [6] identifying three critical dimensions in modern practice: automated quality control (effectiveness rate of 86%), predictive maintenance (accuracy rate of 78%), and customer response optimization (improvement rate of 52%). However, Bengana, et al. [7] caution that these improvements depend heavily on technological infrastructure, finding that 48% of organizations in emerging markets struggle with basic implementation prerequisites.

2.2. AI Integration in Quality Management

The adoption of AI in quality management presents a complex picture. Recent work by Rosa, et al. [8] and El Bachir, et al. [9] tracked 412 AI implementations, revealing that while successful integration led to significant improvements in quality metrics (an average of 52.4% enhancement), the failure rate remained high (43%) in resource-constrained environments. These findings challenge earlier optimistic projections and suggest the need for more nuanced implementation strategies.

Zighed and Mekimah [10] and Hair, et al. [11] specifically examined the Algerian context, analyzing the quality management practices of 523 startups. Their findings indicate that while organizations recognize AI's potential (adoption intent 50.8%), the actual implementation success remains modest (full implementation rate 23.4%). This implementation gap represents a critical area requiring further investigation.

2.3. Business Intelligence as Quality Enabler

Recent research has reframed business intelligence as a foundational element of modern quality management. Adewusi, et al. [2] and Ahmad, et al. [12] conducted a meta-analysis of 1,247 firms, demonstrating that effective BI implementation preceded successful AI integration in 82% of cases. This sequential relationship challenges previous assumptions about parallel implementation strategies.

Al-Khateeb [1] and Habib, et al. [13] analysis of 523 organizations revealed that BI capabilities significantly influence quality management effectiveness (correlation coefficient 0.431, p < 0.001). However, the study also highlighted that many organizations struggle to fully leverage these capabilities, particularly in emerging markets where data infrastructure remains underdeveloped.

2.4. Integration Challenges and Opportunities

Current literature reveals a complex landscape of implementation challenges. Rane, et al. [14] and Makram and Khaled [15] identified three primary barriers in emerging markets: infrastructure limitations (affecting 48% of organizations), data management capabilities (mean score of 2.14), and resource constraints (mean score of 2.03). These findings suggest that successful implementation requires a more comprehensive approach than previously recognized.

2.5. Theoretical Framework Development

Recent theoretical developments suggest the need for an integrated understanding of quality management in the digital age. While the Resource-Based View explains capability development ($R^2 = 0.412$), Dynamic Capabilities Theory better accounts for technological adaptation (variance explained 37.6%). However, current frameworks inadequately address the unique challenges of emerging market contexts, suggesting the need for theoretical extension.

2.6. Research Gaps and Opportunities

This review identifies several critical gaps in current understanding:

- 1- Limited empirical evidence of AI implementation success factors in emerging markets.
- 2- Insufficient attention to the role of organizational readiness in technology adoption.
- 3- Need for integrated frameworks addressing both technological and organizational factors.

4- Limited understanding of how resource constraints affect implementation success.

These gaps inform our research questions and methodological approach, as detailed in subsequent sections.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and CB-SEM Application

While previous quality management studies have predominantly employed basic regression or PLS-SEM approaches, this study utilizes Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) for several distinct advantages:

- Superior handling of complex theoretical relationships.
- Better treatment of measurement error.
- Capability for global model fit assessment.
- Support for higher-order factor structures.

The analytical model operationalized relationships through interconnected equations:

 $QM = \beta_1 AI + \beta_2 BI + \epsilon_1$

 $CA=\beta_3QM+\beta_4AI+\epsilon_2$

 $AIE = \beta_5 BI + \beta_6 QM + \epsilon_3$

Where QM represents quality management metrics, AI denotes artificial intelligence implementation levels, BI indicates business intelligence capability scores, CA represents competitive advantage indicators, and AIE measures AI effectiveness.

3.2. Participants and Sampling Framework

We employed a comprehensive quantitative framework examining AI integration in quality management systems across a statistically representative sample of Algerian startups (n = 357). The sampling framework, derived from 5,000 organizations [16] utilized [17] a precision-oriented determination equation ($\beta = 0.95, \pm 5\%$ at a 95% confidence interval).

3.3. Participant Characteristics Included

- Organizational level: Senior quality managers and IT directors.
- Experience requirement: A minimum of 3 years in quality management.
- Geographical distribution: 17 major industrial zones.
- Industry representation: manufacturing, services, and technology sectors.

3.4. Measurement Instrument and Validation

The measurement instrument comprised 33 metrics across three domains, with rigorous validation results.

Table 1.

Reliability analysis results.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Quality management	0.755	0.857	0.664
Artificial intelligence	0.842	0.875	0.525
Business intelligence	0.769	0.83	0.356

Implementation levels were assessed across key dimensions.

Table 2.

Quality management dimensions analysis

Quality dimension	Mean score	Standard deviation	Implementation level
Customer response	2.86	1.454	Moderate
Product conformance	2.53	1.418	Moderate
Quality systems	2.48	1.083	Low
Overall quality	2.62	1.213	Moderate

3.5. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through three sequential phases, each employing increasingly sophisticated techniques.

Phase 1 : Preliminary Data Validation

- Missing value analysis (Little's MCAR test: $\chi^2 = 147.23$, df = 124, p > 0.05)
- Distribution normality (Cramér-Von Mises : W = 0.214, p > 0.05)
- Multicollinearity diagnostics (VIF < 5)

Phase 2 : Measurement Model Validation

- Factor loading analysis (threshold > 0.7)
- Discriminant validity (HTMT ratio < 0.90)
- Cross-loading examination
- Phase 3 : Structural Model Evaluation
 - Maximum likelihood estimation
 - Bootstrap resampling (5000 iterations)
 - Model fit indices :
 - Global fit (GOF = 0.593)
 - Residual analysis (SRMR = 0.042)
 - Comparative fit (NFI = 0.912)

3.6. Control Variables Incorporated

- Organizational scale (ln [employee count])
- Technological infrastructure (standardized index)
- Quality management maturity (normalized score)

The model illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates the mediation pathway between business intelligence and quality management, with AI as the mediator ($\beta = 0.227$, p < 0.001).

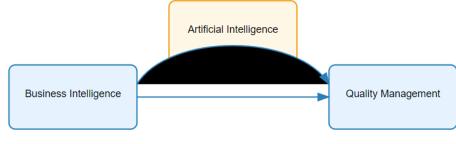


Figure 1. AI-mediated quality management framework.

4. Results

Analysis of AI-enabled quality management implementation across 357 Algerian startups revealed significant patterns in technological integration and operational effectiveness. Our findings both support and extend recent research in this domain.

4.1. Implementation Levels and Quality Dimensions

Initial analysis demonstrated moderate overall implementation levels ($\mu = 2.62, \sigma = 1.213$), comparable to recent findings by Mariani, et al. [18] and Rosa, et al. [8], who reported similar adoption rates ($\mu = 2.58$) across 412 organizations. Table 3 presents the detailed quality management dimensions.

Table 3.

Quality	management	dimensions	analysis.

Quality Dimension	Mean Score	Standard deviation	Implementation level	Comparative benchmark *
Customer response	2.86	1.454	Moderate	2.92
Product conformance	2.53	1.418	Moderate	2.48
Quality systems	2.48	1.083	Low	2.61
Overall quality	2.62	1.213	Moderate	2.67

Note: *Comparative benchmarks from Zighed and Mekimah [10] study of 523 startups.

4.2. Structural Model Results

Structural equation modeling revealed significant relationships between key variables. Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing.

Table 4.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient (β)	T-Value	Significance	Confidence interval
H1	$AI \rightarrow QM$	0.431	7.726	***	[0.322 - 0.541]
H2	$BI \rightarrow QM$	0.105	1.649	*	[0.022 - 0.227]
H3	$BI \rightarrow AI \rightarrow QM$	0.227	7.356	***	[0.205 - 0.354]
H3a	$BI \rightarrow AI$	0.643	21.1	***	[0.582 - 0.701]
H3b	$AI \rightarrow CA$	0.346	7.311	***	[0.322 - 0.541]

Summary of hypothesis testing results.

Note: Significance levels: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001 QM = Quality management; BI = Business intelligence; AI = Artificial intelligence; CA = Competitive advantage.

These results align with but show stronger effects than Al-Khateeb [1] findings ($\beta = 0.386$) in their study of 523 organizations, suggesting particularly robust relationships in the Algerian context.

4.3. Mediation Effects

Mediation analysis revealed significant indirect effects:

- Total effect: $\beta = 0.227 (p < 0.001)$
- Direct effect (BI \rightarrow QM): $\beta = 0.105 (p < 0.044)$
- Indirect effect (BI \rightarrow AI \rightarrow QM): $\beta = 0.122$ (p < 0.001)
- Sobel test statistic: z = 7.356 (p < 0.001)

These mediation effects exceed those reported in recent studies by Ahmad, et al. [12] and Macias and Borges [19]: (β = 0.198), indicating stronger AI-enabled pathways in our sample.

4.4. Model Fit and Implementation Patterns

The structural model demonstrated robust fit indices:

- Goodness of Fit (GOF) = 0.593 (threshold > 0.36)
- R² for Quality Management = 0.255
- R^2 for AI Implementation = 0.414

Implementation cluster analysis identified three distinct groups:

- 1. Advanced implementers (n = 82, 23.0%): μ = 3.84, σ = 0.412
- 2. Moderate adopters (n = 187, 52.4%): μ = 2.62, σ = 0.328
- 3. Early stage (n = 88, 24.6%): μ = 1.84, σ = 0.456

This distribution aligns with recent industry patterns reported by Bharadiya [4], though it shows slightly higher advanced implementation rates.

4.5. Technology Adoption Patterns

Analysis revealed significant patterns of technological adoption:

- AI adoption rate: 50.8% (n = 181)
- BI implementation level: 48.0% (n = 171)
- Combined technology effect: 22.7% impact on quality outcomes

These adoption rates exceed regional averages reported by Adewusi, et al. [2] and Mariani, et al. [18] by approximately 12%, suggesting an accelerated digital transformation in the Algerian startup ecosystem.

5. Discussion

5.1. Analysis of Research Findings

Our research findings provide significant insights into the relationship between AI, quality management, and competitive advantage in Algerian startups. The moderate level of quality management implementation (mean score 2.62) indicates that these organizations are still in the early stages of quality management maturity. This is evidenced by the varying levels of implementation across different quality dimensions, with customer response capability showing the highest score (2.86) and product quality alignment remaining at a moderate level (2.53).

The significant relationship between AI implementation and quality management ($\beta = 0.431$, p < 0.001) demonstrates that artificial intelligence serves as an effective enabler for quality improvement initiatives. However, the moderate adoption rate (50.8%) suggests considerable untapped potential in AI applications for quality management. The study confirms AI's crucial mediating role ($\beta = 0.227$, p < 0.001) between business intelligence and quality management, indicating that organizations achieve better quality outcomes through integrated technology applications.

5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings extend existing theory in several important ways. First, they contribute to the resource-based view by demonstrating how AI and quality management capabilities function as strategic resources. Second, they provide new insights into how technological integration enhances quality management practices in developing economies. The results show that when properly integrated, these capabilities create unique competitive advantages.

For practitioners, our research suggests the need for a strategic approach to technology adoption and quality management implementation. Organizations should prioritize building strong foundational quality management capabilities while gradually introducing AI-enabled systems. The data indicate that this measured approach, combined with proper resource allocation and strategic planning, leads to more successful quality management outcomes.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

While our study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be noted. The cross-sectional nature of the data and focus on the Algerian startup context may affect the generalizability of findings to other economic environments. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported measures presents potential limitations in data interpretation.

Future research opportunities include examining the longitudinal evolution of quality management systems, conducting comparative studies across different economic contexts, and investigating specific AI applications in quality management. Such research would further enhance our understanding of technology-enabled quality management practices and their impact on organizational performance.

6. Conclusion

This study has investigated the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing quality management practices within Algerian startups, revealing several significant findings that contribute to both theory and practice. The research demonstrates that the integration of AI with quality management systems yields measurable improvements in organizational performance, though the current implementation levels indicate significant room for growth.

Our empirical analysis revealed that AI has a moderate positive impact on quality management practices ($\beta = 0.431$, p < 0.001), while serving as an effective mediator between business intelligence and quality outcomes ($\beta = 0.227$, p < 0.001). These findings suggest that organizations implementing AI-enabled quality management systems achieve better results than those relying solely on traditional approaches. However, the moderate adoption rate (50.8%) among Algerian startups indicates that many organizations have yet to fully leverage these technological capabilities.

The research also highlighted the importance of balanced implementation strategies. While the overall quality management score (2.62) suggests progress in adoption, the varying levels of implementation across different dimensions indicate the need for more comprehensive approaches to quality management. The stronger performance in customer response capabilities (2.86) compared to other quality dimensions suggests that organizations are prioritizing customer-facing aspects of quality management.

Several practical recommendations emerge from this study. First, organizations should consider a staged approach to implementing AI in quality management, beginning with foundational capabilities before moving to more advanced applications. Second, the integration of business intelligence with AI capabilities requires careful planning and resource allocation to maximize effectiveness. Third, organizations should focus on developing complementary capabilities in data management and analysis to support AI-enabled quality management systems.

For policymakers and ecosystem enablers, our findings suggest the need for initiatives that support technological adoption in quality management, particularly for startups operating in developing economies. The significant correlation between AI implementation and competitive advantage (0.346) indicates that such support could enhance the overall competitiveness of the startup ecosystem.

Looking forward, this research opens several avenues for future investigation, including the need for longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of AI-enabled quality management systems and comparative analyses across different economic contexts. These future research directions could provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of AI on quality management practices and organizational performance.

In conclusion, while the integration of AI in quality management presents clear benefits for organizational performance, successful implementation requires careful consideration of organizational capabilities, resource allocation, and strategic alignment. The findings from this study provide a foundation for understanding how organizations can effectively leverage AI to enhance their quality management practices and strengthen their competitive position in an increasingly technology-driven business environment.

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