# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE SUCCESS OF IMPLEMENTING TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) IN MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMEs) IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** The business competition experienced by MSMEs in Indonesia is getting tighter and requires MSMEs to maximize their potential. Facing the challenges faced by MSMEs, implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) is a strategy that can be implemented. This research aims to analyze the factors that influence the success of implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in MSMEs in Indonesia. The method used in this research is a qualitative approach, where the data obtained is based on literature review and previous research sourced from books, journals and websites. The results of the analysis show that there are several factors that influence the success of implementing TQM in MSMEs in Indonesia, namely focus on customers; continuous improvement; teamwork and engagement; top management commitment and recognition; training and development; quality systems and policies; leadership; communication within the company; supplier relationships and management; measurement and feedback; cultural changes in employee behavior and attitudes; and employee empowerment. By paying attention to all these factors, MSMEs in Indonesia can create an environment that supports TQM success, increase competitiveness or compete more globally, reduce dependence on imports, strengthen Indonesia's overall economic position, and achieve the desired sustainability.

**Keywords:** Total Quality Management (TQM), Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization and trade liberalization have become evidence of the creation of increasingly tight competition in the global market share. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a part that has an important role in advancing the national economy which is required to be able to compete internationally. In some developing countries, the term "micro-enterprise" refers to informal labor unions or partnerships without employees, "small businesses" include businesses with five to fifty employees, and "medium businesses" refer to businesses with up to 150 employees(Stiyoaji et al., 2024).

In addition, MSMEs have a role in poverty alleviation and income equality. However, this competitiveness is driven by several challenges, the most important of which is the quality of quality products and quality services as the determining factors. The inevitable changes in the modern business landscape require every businessman to implement continuous and sustainable quality improvements, in line with changes in consumer preferences.(Permata, nd). Therefore, UMKM needs a strategy that can gain quality and be able to compete with other competitors.

In a situation of tight competition, SMEs who are ambitious to achieve competitive advantage need to prioritize product quality.(Lestari et al., 2022). In addition, MSMEs also often experience obstacles, such as the ability to survive, grow and develop.(Hendratmoko, 2021). One of the reasons why MSMEs are unable to compete with their peers, even large companies, is the ability of human resources that are less adaptive to technology, maintaining

product quality, marketing and many other problems. Superior product quality inherently attracts new consumers while maintaining the loyalty of existing customers. The priority of high quality remains dominant in purchasing decisions, and often price is not an obstacle. However, increasing quality is usually directly proportional to price increases. Understanding the importance of quality is crucial for MSMEs, because this awareness will have a positive impact on performance, both in terms of financial and non-financial aspects.

Consumer satisfaction is the main priority in developing MSME products. The target is to create products that are not only competitive, but also superior in quality and quantity compared to large company products, so that they can expand market share. Superior products are characterized by long service life, ease of repair and use, easy maintenance, and sustainability (environmentally friendly). The selection of the best raw materials and in accordance with the type of product is also crucial. Competitive advantage can be achieved by offering high-quality products, which will ultimately reduce the burden of maintenance costs for consumers, and the company gets a good image compared to competitors with lower quality.(Azhar, 2010).

MSMEs need a continuous improvement process as a form of implementing part of efforts to improve product quality with the main focus being on customer satisfaction. (Chaerunisak & Aji, 2020). Facing the challenges faced by UMKM, the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) is one strategy that can be done. Total quality management or TQM is a management strategy aimed at enforcing quality awareness in every process in an organization or company. TQM is not only about producing high-quality products or services, but also about building a management system that is oriented towards customer satisfaction, high performance, and continuous improvement. (Rolandi & Susilawati, 2023). In relation to the definition put forward by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), total quality management is a management approach for organizations that focuses on quality, involves the participation of all members, and has the goal of achieving long-term success by prioritizing customer satisfaction and providing benefits to all members of the organization and society. (Y. Saputra & Hasibuan, 2020).

The first time, TQM theory was developed by W. Edwards Deming after World War II in Japan.(Anom Pancawati, 2022). This theory leads to a continuous approach to comparing and measuring products or even services, which is useful for achieving increased performance, profits and service quality.(Hendrian & Suparno, 2024). TQM is a management approach to improving all aspects of production, such as quality control, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. The implementation of TQM is very important to ensure that all stages of production, from raw material selection to distribution, comply with the specified quality standards.(Afifah, 2024). According to Demirbag (2006), TQM is a series of activities in an organization or company that seeks to improve company performance, where activities prioritize cooperation between all members, namely leaders and employees, periodic improvements, operational processes and focus on customer service, employee relations, training, distributor quality management, quality policies, process management and product layout design.(Hidayah & Indarti, 2016). The introduction of TQM as a whole in the 1980s marked the widespread adoption of this approach as one of the main management strategies across various industries.(Maknun et al., 2024).

Although the potential benefits of TQM have been widely recognized, its implementation often encounters various obstacles. The success of TQM implementation varies widely among organizations, and many struggle to apply TQM principles to everyday practice. Barriers such as resistance to change, lack of management support, and difficulty in measuring and sustaining quality improvements over time are often the causes of TQM implementation failure. (Wulogening & Timan, 2020).

This study focuses on the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in MSMEs in Indonesia. By describing the factors in detail, this study seeks to provide relevant and contextual insights for MSME actors, policy makers, and researchers in the field of quality management. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the development of quality management theories and practices that are more adaptive to the characteristics of MSMEs in Indonesia, as well as providing practical guidance in facing global competition.

## **METHOD**

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach that adopts library research. This approach focuses on the analysis of several previous research results that are related to the topic discussed. The object of the research is related to the factors that influence the success of the implementation of total quality management in MSMEs in Indonesia. The primary data used were obtained from various sources such as journal articles, websites and books. While secondary data were obtained from various sources of information that can support primary data. The qualitative method is a descriptive explanation accompanied by an approach to the results of the research. Data analysis is carried out in several steps, namely data collection, data classification, interpretation of data content with the content analysis method and conclusions as a result of the research.

#### DISCUSSION

Various previous studies have been conducted to determine the process of implementing TQM and analyze several factors that influence its success. In general, the study concluded that the implementation of TQM factors contributes to the long-term success of an organization. The following are the factors that influence the success of implementing Total Quality Management (TQM):

### 1. Customer Focus

Every MSME depends on customers, so it is important to understand what customers need now and in the future.(Latuconsina & Tupamahu, 2020). In TQM, both internal and external customers play an important role as drivers. External customers evaluate the quality of the product or service they receive, while internal customers contribute significantly to the quality of human resources, processes, and the environment associated with the product or service, with the ultimate goal of achieving customer satisfaction.(Kurniawati, 2016). TQM aims to ensure customer satisfaction by providing high quality products or services. By understanding customer needs and expectations, companies or organizations can align processes, improve quality, and create sustainable value. Furthermore, MSMEs can increase competitiveness, build customer loyalty, and expand market share.

# 2. Continuous improvement

One of the important elements in TQM is continuous improvement, which in Japanese is often called Kaizen. (Putra & Hidayati, 2021). The core of this strategy is being able to understand that management must strive to meet customer needs and satisfaction in order to survive and make a profit. Improvements in quality, cost efficiency, and scheduling (to meet the needs of volume of goods and production results) are very important. The first step to making improvements is to realize that there is a problem, because without awareness of the problem, the need to make improvements will certainly not arise. A sense of satisfaction with the achievements that have been achieved is the main obstacle in this improvement process. Implementation that occurs in MSMEs such as: MSMEs

that are categorized as snack producers routinely collect customer feedback on the taste, packaging, and durability of the product. Based on this input, they continue to improve recipes, use better quality raw materials, and update packaging designs to attract more customers. In addition, MSMEs in the handicraft sector can also improve the production process by adopting simple tools to speed up product manufacturing without reducing quality, for example using automatic cutting tools for raw materials. In this digital era, it can also be seen from the fashion sector which has started using social media or online platforms to receive orders and improve customer response systems by providing live chat to answer questions in real time. Based on the above explanation, the implementation of continuous improvement includes: determining the problem and possible solutions; selecting and implementing the most effective and efficient solutions; re-evaluating, standardizing, and repeating the process.(Latuconsina & Tupamahu, 2020). By making continuous improvements, SMEs not only improve the quality of products and services but also maintain customer loyalty.

# 3. Teamwork and Engagement

In the context of conventional management, competition between organizational units is often seen as a mechanism to increase competitiveness. In contrast, the TQM paradigm emphasizes synergy, collaboration, and fostering constructive relationships with various parties, both internally and externally (including suppliers, government agencies and the community)(Kurniawati, 2016). Another important element in TQM is teamwork and employee involvement, which requires the entire team to participate in the improvement process.(Afifah, 2024). Employee engagement drives productivity and innovation, two important pillars for a company's progress. Employee engagement provides two main benefits: better decisions and plans because of the perspective of those directly involved, and an increased sense of ownership and responsibility for implementing decisions. Empowerment is not just about involving employees, but also giving them the opportunity to have a positive impact.(Kurniawati, 2016). With increased productivity and innovation, companies can offer better or more efficient products, thereby increasing their competitiveness.(Maknun et al., 2024).

## 4. Top Management Commitment and Recognition

The implementation of TQM has a strong correlation with the level of employee commitment. Commitment is generally manifested in cooperative behavior and proactive actions to maintain previously established relationships.(Pamungkur, 2012). Organizational commitment theory explains that employees who are highly committed to the organization tend to have a stronger drive to perform optimally and engage in change programs.(Reitandi et al., 2024). A high level of commitment to human resources contributes to increased productivity, which in turn results in competitive advantage for business entities.(Abimbola et al., 2020). TQM greatly influences the level of top management commitment.(Taroreh et al., 2022). In SMEs, where leadership is often centered on the owner or a few managers, the support and active involvement of top management is crucial for the success of TQM implementation. Without a strong commitment from top management, TQM implementation in SMEs is at risk of being half-hearted and difficult to achieve optimal results.

# 5. Training and Development

Training can be considered as a form of investment, so every organization that wants to progress needs to pay great attention to training for its employees.(Putra & Hidayati,

2021). Qualified and competent human resources are an important foundation for the implementation of TQM. In order to achieve this, regular education and training play a vital role in ensuring that employees master the principles and tools of TQM; improve technical capabilities and soft skills; prepare human resources to face technological evolution and market dynamics; encourage effective analytical and problem-solving capabilities; and build a tradition of regular learning in the organization. (Maknun et al., 2024). TQM emphasizes the importance of training and development to improve the competence of human resources, which are the main assets in the sustainability of MSMEs. By providing training, MSMEs can ensure that employees have the appropriate skills to meet product or service quality standards. Targeted training also encourages innovation and efficiency in work processes, which supports continuous improvement. MSMEs can also partner with educators such as lecturers who have Community Service activities. So that MSMEs gain a lot of new knowledge in developing competence.

# 6. Quality Systems and Policies

A quality system is a set of procedures, processes, and resources used to manage and ensure the quality of a product or service, including documentation of procedures, quality control, internal audits, and management. Meanwhile, a quality policy is a formal statement from top management that defines the organization's commitment to quality, providing direction and a framework for all quality-related activities. In short, a quality system is how quality is managed, while a quality policy is what the organization's commitment to quality is. As an integral part of the quality system and policies implemented, MSMEs focus on improving quality by minimizing customer complaints until the warranty period ends. Improvement efforts are focused on the work area to reduce operational time inefficiencies, by adopting the Kaizen methodology and 5S tools (Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke)(Faritsy & Suseno, 2014). 5S, which has its roots in Japan, is a systematic approach to organizing and managing the work environment. Seiri (simplicity) refers to sorting out needed items and discarding unnecessary items.(Qodariswati et al., 2024). Seiton (Neatness) focuses on arranging needed items so that they are easy to access and use.(Anasrul, 2022). Seiso (Resik) emphasizes thorough cleaning of the work area(Ahyadi et al., 2023). Seiketsu (Maintenance) aims to maintain the ideal condition that has been achieved through the previous 3S.(Agung & Mulyanti, 2023). Lastly, Shitsuke (Diligent) emphasizes the formation of habits and discipline to adhere to established standards(Kurniasari et al., 2023). Through the implementation of 5S, MSMEs strive to create a more efficient work environment, reduce waste, and support continuous quality improvement, in line with applicable quality systems and policies. These systems and policies document standard procedures and set quality targets to be achieved. This ensures that quality improvement efforts are directed and measurable.

## 7. Leadership

Leadership is a relationship between those who seek leadership and those who choose to follow. The success of leadership depends on how effectively both parties work together and interact. (Simorangkir & Ardiantono, 2023). There are three leadership styles (Lalitadevi et al., 2020) namely transformational (focusing on organizational change to improve performance), transactional (emphasizing reciprocal relationships between leaders and employees, where good performance will be compensated), and passive-avoidant (characterized by leaders who avoid responsibility and are less proactive in solving problems. Leadership plays an important role in the context of TQM, namely the

ability to motivate other individuals to be willing and fully responsible for efforts to achieve organizational goals.(Izar & Yahya, 2022). The characteristics of MSMEs, which are generally characterized by a lean organizational structure and personal closeness between leaders and staff, make an adaptive and communicative leadership style very important for the success of TQM implementation. The family leadership style applied by several MSMEs builds close relationships through informal communication and personal approaches. The owner actively provides direction, motivation, support, and shares profits and financial assistance to employees. This creates a positive and productive work atmosphere that supports employee development holistically. This leadership style is effective in increasing employee loyalty and independence. MSMEs generally adopt transformational and transactional styles.

## 8. Communication

Effective communication between management and employees is an important aspect, but not the only determinant of business success. In other words, successful company performance is influenced by various factors, not just communication. To effectively communicate a commitment to quality improvement to all employees, organizations need to implement various communication strategies.(Fatchurochman & Yamit, 2022). Interactive communication has also been shown to impact performance. Research findings(Dinata & Purnawati, 2021)underlined that several factors contribute to improving company performance, including: strengthening teamwork through internal collaboration, coordination between divisions, individual accountability, effective communication, and establishing close relationships between co-workers. Good communication between employees is very important in carrying out their work duties.(Hondro et al., 2021). Good communication can also ensure that information flows smoothly, and that all parties involved understand their roles and responsibilities in the quality improvement process.(Hutasoit et al., 2024). Open and transparent delivery of information regarding organizational goals, changes that occur, and applicable policies to all employees will increase their work effectiveness and efficiency.(Zahrah & Nugraha, 2022). In the context of MSMEs, the characteristics of organizations that are often informal and based on personal relationships require a contextual and adaptive communication approach in socializing TQM principles and building a shared understanding of the importance of quality.

# 9. Supplier Relationships and Management

Supply Quality Managementin TQM focuses on strengthening the supplier foundation through various levels of interaction. Starting from managing basic relationships, increasing the level of collaboration, developing strategic partnerships, forming alliances, to involving suppliers early in the product development process to adopt their capabilities and expertise.(Izar & Yahya, 2022). Maintaining harmonious relationships with suppliers is essential to ensure the quality of raw materials meets standards. This kind of collaboration allows MSMEs to respond to market dynamics more quickly and encourages the development of innovative products.(Afifah, 2024). It can be exemplified in UMKM in the woven craft sector, routinely communicating with rattan suppliers, discussing material availability, quality, and market trends, building trust through informal discussions.

### 10. Measurement and Feedback

MSMEs strive to improve customer satisfaction by collecting direct feedback to understand consumer preferences. This data is then processed to make improvements, such as what culinary MSMEs do in responding to input related to taste variations. Based on the Kaizen principle, continuous improvement is the main focus, where each improvement contributes to the total quality of products and services. Customer feedback plays a central role in this improvement process.(Afifah, 2024).

### 11. Cultural Transformation

TQM is not just the application of procedures and tools, but also a philosophy that demands fundamental changes in the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the organization. In traditional cultures, SMEs often focus on the quantity of production so that cultural transformation is needed to instill an understanding that quality is the main priority.(I.G.W. Saputra, 2018). TQM encourages active participation and empowerment of employees, in contrast to traditional cultures where decision-making is centralized. Its application, such as SMEs in the food sector (cassava chips) who want to implement TQM, need to change their work culture, where initially production focused on quantity with little attention to consistent quality. With TQM, they began to implement clear quality standards (for example, size, taste, and crispiness of chips), provide training to employees that previously did not exist, and record production and sales data to identify areas that needed improvement. The culture that previously tended to be individualistic and less concerned with quality slowly changed into a collaborative, quality-oriented, and power-based culture, so that the implementation of TQM can run effectively and improve product quality and customer satisfaction.

## 12. Employee Empowerment

The idea of employee empowerment can be defined as meaningful (substantial) employee participation. (Simorangkir & Ardiantono, 2023). Employees have an important role in the company because their existence contributes to the continued growth of the organization or company. (Putra & Hidayati, 2021). Employee empowerment aims to create a safe and comfortable working environment so that they can provide maximum contribution to the UMKM being run. This step is expected to be able to increase work enthusiasm and quality which ultimately has a positive impact on individual performance and the quality of the products produced. Three crucial aspects that determine the effectiveness of employee empowerment are management's attitude towards staff, the availability of information for employees, and employee involvement in the decision-making process that is in accordance with their competence. (Zulkarnain et al., 2019).

# **CONCLUSION**

The success of implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in MSMEs in Indonesia is influenced by a number of interrelated factors. The factors are customer focus; continuous improvement; teamwork and involvement; top management commitment and recognition; training and development; quality systems and policies; leadership; communication within the company; supplier relationships and management; measurement and feedback; cultural change in employee behavior and attitudes; and employee empowerment. By considering all these factors, MSMEs in Indonesia can create an environment that supports the success of TQM, increase competitiveness or be more competitive globally, reduce dependence on imports, strengthen Indonesia's overall economic position, and achieve the expected sustainability.

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