

Effect of Total Quality Management on Organizational Performance in the South-East States, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices on organizational performance in the South-East states of Nigeria. Anchored on Deming's Quality Improvement Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study investigates how leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management influence organizational performance indicators, including operational efficiency, profitability, innovation capability, and customer satisfaction. A quantitative research design was adopted using a cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected from employees and managers of selected manufacturing and service-oriented organizations across Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that all TQM practices examined have a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance, with leadership commitment and process management emerging as the strongest predictors. The study concludes that effective and integrated implementation of TQM practices enhances organizational performance and competitiveness. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing economy and offers practical implications for managers and policymakers seeking to improve organizational performance through quality management systems.

Keywords: *Total Quality Management, Organizational Performance, Leadership Commitment, Employee Involvement, Customer Focus, Process Management, Nigeria.*

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I. Introduction

In today's highly competitive global business environment, the pursuit of quality has become a strategic priority for organizations seeking superior performance and long-term sustainability. Total Quality Management (TQM) has emerged as a widely adopted managerial philosophy for improving productivity, enhancing customer satisfaction, and strengthening organizational competitiveness. TQM emphasizes continuous improvement, employee involvement, process optimisation, and customer-focused practices, making it increasingly relevant as organizations confront rising customer expectations, rapid technological change, and intense market competition (Sadikoglu & Olcay, 2014; Sahoo & Yadav, 2017).

Across developed economies in Europe, Asia, and North America, TQM has been recognized as a key driver of organizational excellence. European organizations, in particular, have adopted quality frameworks such as ISO 9001, the EFQM Excellence Model, and Lean Six Sigma to enhance operational efficiency and global competitiveness (Bou-Llusar et al., 2009; Heras-Saizarbitoria & Boiral, 2013). However, despite strong empirical support for TQM globally, its adoption and effectiveness in developing economies—especially in sub-Saharan Africa—remain uneven and insufficiently explored.

In Nigeria, organizations are increasingly adopting TQM to improve service delivery, reduce operational waste, and enhance customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, many firms still face challenges such as weak quality culture, limited leadership commitment, employee resistance, outdated technology, and inconsistent process control systems (Oschman & Ngoepe, 2020; Irefin & Mechanic, 2021). These challenges are particularly evident in the South-East geopolitical zone, comprising Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi States. Despite being a major commercial and industrial hub, many organizations in the region struggle with quality-related deficiencies that undermine performance.

Performance challenges in the South-East often manifest as product defects, service inconsistencies, long customer wait times, low employee morale, weak innovation outcomes, and declining customer loyalty. Although previous Nigerian studies have examined TQM in various sectors, many are limited by narrow geographical coverage, fragmented analysis of TQM dimensions, or methodological weaknesses (Adebayo & Okolie, 2022; Nwakoby & Ifeancha, 2023). Moreover, limited attention has been given to integrating theoretical perspectives such as Deming's Quality Improvement Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV) to explain how TQM functions as a strategic internal capability (Barney, 1991; Oakland, 2014).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the effect of Total Quality Management on organizational performance in the South-East states of Nigeria, focusing on leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management, and their influence on operational efficiency, profitability, innovation capability, and customer satisfaction. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical, multi-state evidence and offers practical insights for managers and policymakers seeking to strengthen quality management systems and enhance organizational competitiveness in developing economies.

2.1.1 Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive and integrative management philosophy that seeks to improve the quality of products, services, and processes across all levels of an organization. It emphasizes a holistic approach whereby every employee, department, and functional unit participates in the continuous improvement of organizational activities to meet or exceed customer expectations. TQM is grounded in the principle that quality is not an isolated function of a single department but a collective responsibility driven by leadership, workforce engagement, and a commitment to excellence throughout the organization (Oakland, 2014).

TQM evolved from the pioneering works of quality theorists such as W. Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran, and Kaoru Ishikawa, who emphasized quality planning, standardization, process control, and employee empowerment. Over the years, TQM has become a global benchmark for assessing organizational excellence, and it has been widely adopted by firms in manufacturing, healthcare, education, finance, and public service sectors. Its implementation aligns with global quality frameworks such as the ISO 9001 Quality Management System (QMS) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model (Bou-Llusar et al., 2009; Heras-Saizarbitoria & Boiral, 2013).

Central to TQM are several core components considered critical for achieving superior quality outcomes and enhanced organizational performance:

1. Leadership Commitment

Leadership plays a fundamental role in setting quality priorities, allocating resources, and establishing a culture of continuous improvement. Effective TQM requires leaders to demonstrate strong commitment through strategic visioning, communication of quality goals, and active participation in quality initiatives. Leadership commitment signals to employees that quality is integral to the organization's mission and long-term success (Al-Dhaafri et al., 2016).

2. Employee Involvement

TQM emphasizes the involvement of employees at every level of organizational operations. When employees are empowered to contribute ideas, identify inefficiencies, and participate in decision-making processes, they become active agents of improvement. Employee involvement fosters ownership, teamwork, motivation, and creativity—key elements necessary for problem-solving and innovation (Ooi et al., 2007).

3. Customer Focus

A customer-centric approach is at the heart of TQM philosophy. Organizations must continually assess customer needs, preferences, and satisfaction levels to ensure their products and services deliver superior value. Customer focus shifts attention from internal processes alone to the delivery of superior customer experiences, thus enhancing loyalty and competitiveness (Sila, 2007).

4. Process Management

TQM emphasizes that operational efficiency and quality outcomes depend on effective process design, monitoring, and control. Organizations must standardize procedures, eliminate variations, and streamline workflow processes to reduce waste, minimize errors, and improve productivity. Process management ensures that quality is built into every stage of production and service delivery rather than assessed retrospectively (Flynn et al., 1995).

5. Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement—often expressed through the Japanese concept of *Kaizen*—requires organizations to consistently review their practices, identify areas of inefficiency, and implement incremental improvements. This fosters a proactive culture where innovation, learning, and adaptation become routine, ensuring organizational agility and competitiveness in dynamic business environments (Imai, 1986).

Collectively, these TQM components create a system where quality becomes a strategic driver of performance, guiding how organizations operate, make decisions, and deliver value to stakeholders. Effective implementation has been associated with improved operational efficiency, enhanced customer satisfaction,

reduced costs, higher profitability, stronger innovation capability, and long-term organizational sustainability (Sadikoglu & Olcay, 2014; Sahoo & Yadav, 2017).

2.1.2 Organizational Performance

Organizational performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its strategic objectives and delivers value to its stakeholders. It encompasses both financial and non-financial outcomes that reflect operational effectiveness, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. Scholars generally view organizational performance as a multidimensional construct that integrates efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability within the internal and external environments of an organization (Richard et al., 2009).

In contemporary management research, organizational performance extends beyond traditional financial metrics such as profitability and revenue to include broader indicators such as customer satisfaction, innovation capability, employee productivity, and market competitiveness. These dimensions provide a more holistic understanding of how well an organization is functioning in relation to its goals, competitors, and environmental conditions (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986). This multidimensional view is particularly relevant for service-oriented and developing economies where intangible assets, quality outcomes, and stakeholder perceptions significantly influence performance.

Key indicators commonly used to assess organizational performance include:

1. Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency reflects an organization's ability to optimize resources, minimize waste, reduce process variability, and enhance productivity. Firms with high operational efficiency can deliver products and services more effectively and at lower cost, thereby improving quality and customer experience. Within the TQM framework, operational efficiency is often achieved through improved process management, standardization, and continuous improvement initiatives (Flynn et al., 1995; Sahoo & Yadav, 2017).

2. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction represents the degree to which products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. It is a critical determinant of customer loyalty, repeat patronage, and long-term competitiveness. TQM places significant emphasis on customer-oriented strategies, recognizing that satisfied customers enhance brand reputation and contribute to sustained organizational performance (Sila, 2007; Sadikoglu & Olcay, 2014).

3. Profitability

Profitability serves as a key financial metric reflecting an organization's ability to generate returns on investment. Profitability outcomes—such as net profit margin, return on assets, and return on equity—are influenced by the efficiency of operations, cost control, quality improvements, and customer retention. Effective TQM practices often lead to increased profitability by reducing defects, rework, and operational costs (Kaynak, 2003; Adebayo & Okolie, 2022).

4. Innovation Capability

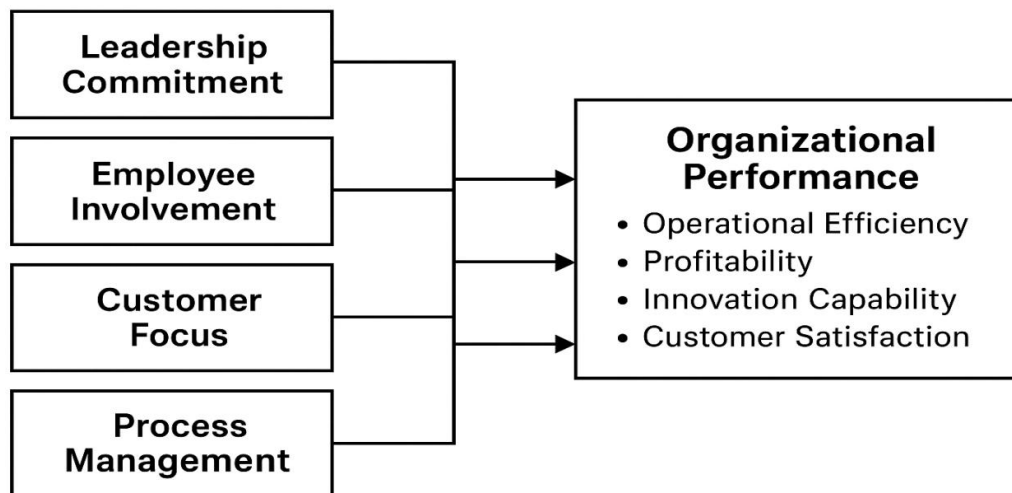
Innovation capability refers to an organization's ability to generate, develop, and implement new ideas, products, services, or processes. It is vital for adaptation in dynamic markets and contributes to sustained competitive advantage. TQM promotes innovation by encouraging employee involvement, teamwork, and a culture of continuous learning and improvement (Prajogo & Sohal, 2003).

5. Market Competitiveness

Market competitiveness reflects the organization's ability to achieve and maintain a favorable position relative to competitors. This includes market share growth, brand image, product quality superiority, and responsiveness to customer needs. Organizations that effectively implement TQM principles are better positioned to differentiate themselves in the market and maintain competitive advantage (Rahman & Bullock, 2005; Escrig-Tena, 2004).

Overall, organizational performance is a comprehensive measure of how effectively an organization utilizes its internal capabilities and external opportunities to achieve strategic goals. By linking TQM practices to performance indicators across multiple dimensions, firms can better understand how quality management contributes to improved outcomes, particularly within the context of emerging economies such as the South-East states of Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL



Total Quality Management and Organizational Performance in South-East Nigeria

The conceptual model shows the relationship between **Total Quality Management (TQM) practices** and **Organizational Performance** in organizations in South-East Nigeria. The model identifies **leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management** as key TQM practices influencing performance. Arrows indicate that these practices directly affect organizational performance, which is measured through **operational efficiency, profitability, innovation capability, and customer satisfaction**. The model highlights that effective implementation of TQM practices enhances overall organizational performance and competitive advantage.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two fundamental theories: **Deming's Quality Improvement Theory** and the **Resource-Based View (RBV)**. These theories provide conceptual clarity on how Total Quality Management (TQM) influences organizational performance and explain the mechanisms through which quality practices create sustainable competitive advantage.

2.2.1 Deming's Quality Improvement Theory

Deming's Quality Improvement Theory, developed by W. Edwards Deming, is one of the most influential frameworks underlying modern Total Quality Management. The theory emphasizes that quality improvement is a continuous process driven by management commitment, employee involvement, and systematic process control. Deming proposed fourteen principles that guide organizations toward achieving high-quality outcomes, with particular emphasis on leadership responsibility, elimination of variations, worker training, and long-term thinking.

Central to Deming's theory is the **Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle**, which provides a structured approach to continuous improvement. The theory argues that quality is not merely a technical function but a strategic organizational initiative that must be embedded into all processes and cultural values.

Key propositions of Deming's theory relevant to this study include:

- **Continuous Improvement:** Organizations must continually refine their processes, systems, and procedures to reduce inefficiencies and enhance performance. This aligns directly with TQM's focus on ongoing enhancement rather than one-time interventions.
- **Leadership Responsibility:** Deming stressed that management is primarily responsible for 85% of quality-related problems. Leaders must therefore set clear quality objectives, provide resources, and foster a supportive culture.
- **Employee Training and Involvement:** Proper training and empowerment of employees are essential for achieving consistent quality and innovation.
- **System Thinking:** Quality is dependent on well-designed processes, and organizations must manage interdependent systems holistically.

Deming's theory forms the philosophical foundation of TQM, making it relevant to organizations in the South-East states of Nigeria, where leadership style, process management, and employee development are critical for improving service delivery, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

2.2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV), popularized by Barney (1991), posits that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by developing and leveraging internal resources and capabilities that are **valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN)**. These strategic resources enable firms to outperform competitors in both financial and non-financial dimensions.

According to RBV, organizational performance is not solely determined by external environmental factors but also by the unique internal assets possessed by the firm. In the context of TQM, such internal resources include:

- **Organizational Culture:** A culture that supports teamwork, communication, and quality consciousness enhances TQM effectiveness.
- **Quality Improvement Capabilities:** Standardized processes, quality control systems, and continuous improvement mechanisms provide the technical foundation for improved performance.
- **Human Capital Competence:** Skilled, committed, and empowered employees are essential for sustaining high-quality outcomes.
- **Leadership Capability:** Leaders who champion quality improvements create an enabling environment for innovative and efficient operations.

The RBV framework is particularly relevant in examining TQM within Nigerian organizations because it explains why some firms outperform others despite operating within similar regulatory, economic, and technological environments. Differences in leadership quality, employee skills, process structures, and organizational culture determine how effectively TQM practices translate into performance outcomes.

By integrating RBV, this study recognizes that TQM practices are not merely operational tools but constitute strategic internal capabilities that can enhance operational efficiency, innovation capability, profitability, customer satisfaction, and overall competitiveness in the South-East region.

2.3 Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical literature has examined the relationship between Total Quality Management (TQM) practices and organizational performance across various sectors and regions.

Aminu and Musa (2018) investigated the effect of leadership involvement on TQM outcomes in Kano industrial clusters. Using a descriptive survey of 198 manufacturing workers, results showed that leadership involvement had a significant positive influence on process improvement and employee motivation. They concluded that leadership remains a major determinant of TQM success.

Chakraborty and Kayode (2019) studied manufacturing firms in India and Nigeria to compare TQM implementation across emerging economies. Through cross-country comparative analysis of 350 firms, they found that Nigerian firms lagged behind Indian firms in process standardization and continuous improvement. They concluded that Nigerian firms must strengthen internal quality capabilities to compete internationally.

Chukwuemeka (2019) assessed TQM adoption in the Nigerian public sector using a mixed-method approach involving interviews and surveys from 210 respondents in government ministries. Findings revealed low leadership commitment and inadequate training as major constraints affecting quality improvement efforts. The study concluded that public institutions should institutionalize TQM principles to enhance service delivery.

Ibrahim and Mohammed (2019) investigated TQM and performance in Northern Nigerian textile firms using survey methodology. Findings showed that poor leadership support and low employee involvement hindered effective TQM adoption. They concluded that managerial commitment and worker engagement are essential for successful TQM.

Oladipo and Afolabi (2020) examined TQM and performance among Nigerian banks using data from 280 employees. They found that customer focus and process improvement exerted strong impacts on customer satisfaction and service quality. The study concluded that TQM strengthens customer retention and organizational profitability.

Huq and Stolen (2020) examined TQM in Scandinavian service firms using SEM analysis on 458 respondents. Their findings showed that employee involvement mediated the relationship between leadership commitment and service quality. They concluded that firms must align leadership and employee roles to maximize TQM benefits.

Mensah and Adams (2020) studied Ghanaian manufacturing firms to identify how TQM practices influence operational outcomes. Their survey of 305 employees showed that continuous improvement, supplier quality management, and process control significantly enhanced productivity. They concluded that TQM is central to operational excellence in African industries.

Adebayo and Ojo (2020) investigated the influence of TQM on the competitiveness of manufacturing firms in Lagos, Nigeria. Using a survey design and data collected from 312 employees, they found that leadership commitment, employee training, and continuous improvement significantly enhanced organizational competitiveness and customer satisfaction. The study concluded that firms that institutionalize TQM practices achieve superior performance levels.

Singh and Sharma (2020) examined TQM implementation in Indian automobile firms using SEM on 390 employees. Findings indicated that continuous improvement significantly enhanced innovation capability and new product development. The authors concluded that TQM enables firms to sustain technological competitiveness.

Zehir et al. (2021) conducted a study in Turkey to explore the link between TQM practices and organizational performance among 413 manufacturing firms. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), they found that TQM significantly enhanced innovation capability and operational efficiency. The authors concluded that quality-driven cultures improve sustainable competitiveness.

Eze and Okafor (2021) examined employee involvement and process management as drivers of SME performance in Anambra State, Nigeria. Adopting a quantitative survey of 150 SME operators, the authors found that employee participation in decision-making and standardized process management significantly contributed to improved productivity and innovation. They concluded that SMEs must prioritize employee empowerment for effective TQM implementation.

Onyema and Ume (2021) investigated TQM and performance of hotels in Imo State, Nigeria. Using a correlation design with 140 hotel managers, they found that customer focus and process management significantly improved service quality and repeat patronage. The study concluded that hotels that embrace TQM outperform competitors.

Rahman and Bullock (2021) assessed TQM implementation in UK SMEs using regression analysis on 265 respondents. Results indicated that employee training and leadership commitment were strong predictors of profitability and customer satisfaction. They concluded that SMEs must invest in human capital development to sustain TQM.

Okeke and Eneh (2022) focused on TQM and service delivery among hospitals in Enugu State. Using sample data from 120 healthcare workers, findings revealed that continuous improvement and employee involvement significantly improved patient satisfaction and reduced service errors. The study concluded that TQM is vital for healthcare service effectiveness.

Nwankwo and Chidi (2022) evaluated process management and organizational performance in selected service firms in Abia State. Using 185 respondents, they found that process efficiency significantly influenced cost reduction and service accuracy. They concluded that firms must streamline operations to optimize performance.

Collectively, the reviewed studies show consistent evidence that TQM positively influences organizational performance across sectors and countries. However, variations exist in the extent of implementation, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria. Few studies have provided a comprehensive multi-state analysis of TQM within the South-East region; hence, this study fills that contextual gap by examining how TQM practices influence performance across Enugu, Anambra, Abia, Imo, and Ebonyi States.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a **quantitative research approach** using a **cross-sectional survey design** to examine the effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices on organizational performance in the South-East states of Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a large population and facilitates statistical analysis of relationships among variables.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised employees and managers of selected **manufacturing and service-oriented organizations** operating in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, namely **Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States**. These organizations were chosen due to their significant economic activities and relevance to quality management practices.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A representative sample was drawn from the population using a **stratified random sampling technique**, which ensured adequate representation across states and organizational sectors. The sample size was determined using a standard sample size determination formula to ensure statistical adequacy and reliability of results. Respondents included senior managers, middle-level managers, and operational staff involved in quality-related activities.

Sources and Method of Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed in line with established TQM and organizational performance measurement scales. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering

respondents' demographic characteristics, TQM practices (leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management), and organizational performance indicators (operational efficiency, profitability, innovation capability, and customer satisfaction). Responses were measured using a **five-point Likert scale** ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content and construct validity of the research instrument were ensured through expert review and alignment with existing literature. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha**, with coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating internal consistency of the measurement items.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using **descriptive and inferential statistical techniques**. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and variable distributions. Inferential analysis involved **multiple regression analysis** to examine the effect of TQM practices on organizational performance. Statistical significance was tested at the **5% level of significance**.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

This section presents respondents' perceptions of **Total Quality Management (TQM) practices and Organizational Performance** using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation values. The analysis is organized in line with the study objectives. A mean value of **3.00 and above** indicates agreement with the statement.

Leadership Commitment

Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev.	Decision
Top management demonstrates strong commitment to quality improvement initiatives.	4.31	0.67	Agree
Management allocates adequate resources for quality-related activities.	4.24	0.71	Agree
Organizational leaders clearly communicate quality goals to employees.	4.18	0.74	Agree
Management actively participates in quality improvement programmes.	4.26	0.69	Agree

Analysis:

The high mean values indicate that respondents generally agree that leadership commitment to quality is strong across organizations in South-East Nigeria. This suggests that management support plays a critical role in driving TQM implementation.

Employee Involvement

Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev.	Decision
Employees are encouraged to participate in quality improvement initiatives.	4.09	0.73	Agree
Teamwork is promoted to solve quality-related problems.	4.15	0.70	Agree
Employees are involved in decision-making processes.	3.98	0.78	Agree
Staff receive training to enhance quality performance.	4.05	0.75	Agree

Analysis:

The results show moderate to high employee involvement in organizational activities. This indicates increasing acceptance of participatory management practices, which supports effective TQM implementation.

Customer Focus

Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev.	Decision
Customer needs and expectations are regularly assessed.	4.12	0.72	Agree
Customer complaints are promptly addressed.	3.94	0.80	Agree
Customer feedback is used to improve products and services.	4.06	0.74	Agree
The organization prioritizes customer satisfaction.	4.21	0.68	Agree

Analysis:

The findings indicate that organizations place strong emphasis on customer focus, although variations in responsiveness and service consistency exist across sectors.

Process Management

Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev.	Decision
Work processes are well documented and standardized.	4.03	0.77	Agree
Quality control procedures are effectively implemented.	4.14	0.71	Agree
Continuous monitoring of processes is carried out.	3.89	0.81	Agree
Process improvement initiatives reduce operational errors.	4.17	0.69	Agree

Analysis:

The mean scores suggest that most organizations have adopted standardized processes and quality controls. However, slightly lower values for monitoring indicate gaps in consistent documentation and follow-up.

Organizational Performance

Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev.	Decision
TQM practices have improved operational efficiency.	4.28	0.66	Agree
Customer satisfaction has increased in recent years.	4.34	0.64	Agree
The organization has become more competitive in the market.	4.19	0.71	Agree
Profitability has improved due to quality initiatives.	3.87	0.83	Agree
Innovation capability has improved over time.	3.91	0.79	Agree

Analysis:

Respondents rated **operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness** highly, while **profitability and innovation capability** recorded moderate mean values. This indicates that while TQM strongly improves operational and customer-related outcomes, financial and innovation benefits may emerge more gradually.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the results of the **Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)** analysis conducted to examine the relationship between **Total Quality Management (TQM) practices** and **Organizational Performance** in organizations in the South-East states of Nigeria. The analysis was performed at the **5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$)**.

Correlation between TQM Practices and Organizational Performance

Variables	Organizational Performance	Leadership Commitment	Employee Involvement	Customer Focus	Process Management
Organizational Performance	1.000				
Leadership Commitment	0.721**	1.000			
Employee Involvement	0.684**	0.659**	1.000		
Customer Focus	0.641**	0.612**	0.633**	1.000	
Process Management	0.703**	0.687**	0.671**	0.654**	1.000

Note: Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation of Correlation Results

The correlation results indicate a **strong and positive relationship** between TQM practices and organizational performance.

- **Leadership Commitment** shows a strong positive correlation with organizational performance ($r = 0.721$), indicating that organizations with strong managerial commitment to quality tend to record higher performance outcomes.
 - **Process Management** also exhibits a strong positive relationship with organizational performance ($r = 0.703$), highlighting the importance of standardized and well-controlled processes.
 - **Employee Involvement** has a positive and significant correlation with organizational performance ($r = 0.684$), suggesting that employee participation enhances productivity and effectiveness.
 - **Customer Focus** demonstrates a moderate positive relationship with organizational performance ($r = 0.641$), indicating that customer-oriented strategies contribute meaningfully to performance improvement.
- The significant positive intercorrelations among the independent variables further suggest that TQM practices are complementary and jointly reinforce organizational performance.

Implication of Findings

The correlation analysis confirms that improvements in **leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management** are associated with enhanced organizational performance. This result provides preliminary empirical support for the hypotheses of the study and justifies further regression analysis to determine the predictive strength of each TQM dimension.

5. Discussion of Findings

This study examined the effect of **Total Quality Management (TQM) practices on organizational performance** in the South-East states of Nigeria. The discussion of findings is presented in line with the study objectives, empirical results, and underlying theoretical frameworks.

The findings revealed that **leadership commitment** has a strong and significant relationship with organizational performance. Organizations where top management actively supports quality initiatives, allocates resources, and communicates quality objectives tend to record higher levels of operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness. This finding supports **Deming's Quality Improvement Theory**, which emphasizes leadership responsibility as a critical driver of quality outcomes. It also aligns with prior empirical studies that identify management commitment as the foundation for successful TQM implementation.

The study further found that **employee involvement** is positively and significantly related to organizational performance. Employees who participate in decision-making, teamwork, and quality improvement activities contribute to enhanced productivity, innovation, and service quality. This result is consistent with the principles of TQM, which emphasize employee empowerment and collective responsibility for quality. The finding also supports the **Resource-Based View (RBV)**, as skilled and engaged employees represent valuable internal resources that enhance organizational performance.

In addition, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between **customer focus** and organizational performance. Organizations that regularly assess customer needs, respond to feedback, and prioritize satisfaction tend to experience improved customer loyalty and market competitiveness. This finding underscores the central role of customer-oriented strategies in achieving sustained performance, particularly in competitive and service-driven environments such as those in South-East Nigeria.

The study also revealed that **process management** significantly influences organizational performance. Standardized procedures, effective quality control systems, and continuous monitoring of operations were found to enhance efficiency, reduce errors, and improve service consistency. This finding reinforces Deming's emphasis on process control and continuous improvement as essential mechanisms for achieving quality excellence.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that **TQM practices jointly and individually contribute to improved organizational performance**. The strong interrelationships among the TQM dimensions suggest that quality management should be implemented as an integrated system rather than isolated practices. In the context of South-East Nigeria, where organizations operate in highly competitive and resource-constrained environments, the effective adoption of TQM provides a strategic pathway for improving operational outcomes, innovation capability, and long-term sustainability.

These findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing economy and by reinforcing the applicability of global quality management theories within the Nigerian organizational context.

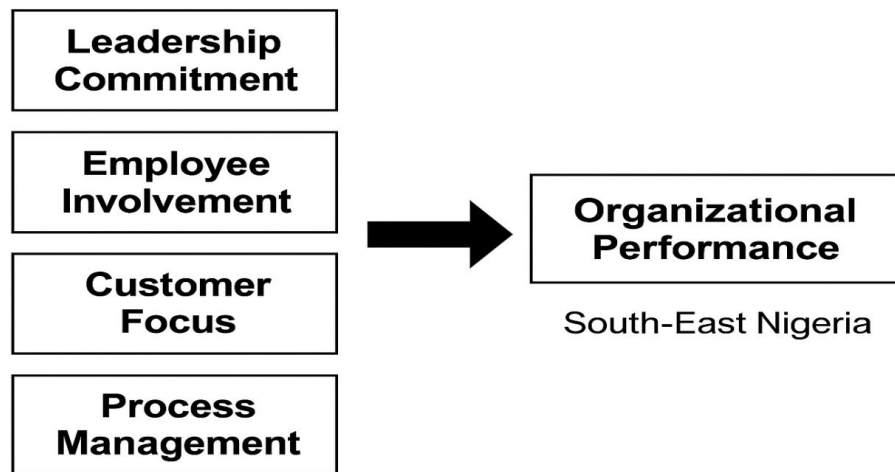
Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthen Leadership Commitment:** Top management should demonstrate sustained commitment to quality by providing clear quality vision, adequate resources, and active involvement in TQM initiatives.
2. **Enhance Employee Involvement:** Organizations should empower employees through continuous training, teamwork, and participatory decision-making to improve quality performance and innovation.
3. **Deepen Customer Focus:** Firms should establish effective customer feedback systems and use customer insights to continuously improve products and services.
4. **Improve Process Management:** Organizations should standardize and regularly monitor operational processes to reduce inefficiencies, errors, and waste.
5. **Adopt Integrated TQM Systems:** TQM practices should be implemented holistically rather than in isolation to achieve sustained improvements in organizational performance.

These recommendations will help organizations in South-East Nigeria enhance performance, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability through effective quality management.

Figure 4.1 The Conceptual Model of the Study



The conceptual model illustrates the relationship between **Total Quality Management (TQM) practices** and **Organizational Performance** in organizations operating in South-East Nigeria. The model identifies **leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and process management** as key independent variables. These practices are shown to directly influence organizational performance, which reflects how effectively organizations achieve efficiency, competitiveness, and overall success. The diagram emphasizes that effective implementation of TQM practices leads to improved organizational performance outcomes.

Conclusion

This study concludes that **Total Quality Management (TQM) is a critical driver of organizational performance** among organizations in South-East Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that leadership commitment, employee involvement, customer focus, and effective process management have a positive and meaningful influence on key performance outcomes, including operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, profitability, innovation capability, and market competitiveness. Organizations that exhibit strong managerial support for quality, actively engage employees, prioritize customer needs, and standardize operational processes tend to achieve superior performance compared to those with weak quality management systems. The study further affirms that TQM practices operate more effectively when implemented as an integrated management philosophy rather than in isolation. By embedding quality principles into organizational culture and daily operations, firms can reduce inefficiencies, enhance service delivery, and strengthen their competitive position. Overall, the study provides empirical support for the relevance of TQM as a strategic tool for achieving sustainable organizational performance in emerging economies such as Nigeria.

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