ABSTRACT

Introduction: ISO 9000 is a series of international standards developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) for quality management and assurance. ISO 9000 standards assess quality of management. These standards do not have any specific itinerary of action and expertise. Their trauma is in the areas where firms must have quality standards and make organizations conscientious for providing the standards. The standards only provide details of the crucial fundamentals of a ceremonial quality assurance system. The most important intend of this research to assess the factors thought-provoking and study the brunt of hard and soft criteria of Total Quality Service (TQS) in ISO 9001 certified SME’s in TamilNadu, India.

Research objectives: The major aim of this research study is to investigate the general profile of the respondents and outline of Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SME’s), characteristics of hard and soft TQS elements in SME’s in TamilNadu. Further aim is to assess the factors stimulating the hard and soft criteria of TQS and find out the impact of hard and soft TQS elements on quality management aspects of SME’s in TamilNadu, India.

Research methodology: The research design used for this research is descriptive in nature. This research deals with identification of factors on hard and soft criteria for Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation in SMEs and also focuses on dimensions or impact on hard and soft criteria for TQM implementation in SMEs. This specific research involves the use of both secondary data and primary data. The secondary data is collected from Certified SMEs in TamilNadu (Certified years 2007- 2013). The secondary
sources of data are related to Certified SMEs in TamilNadu (Certified years 2007-2013) which are recorded in the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Guindy, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The primary data was collected related to the factors on organizational management, human resource management, technology applications and customer relationship. The questionnaire included collecting information on various hard and soft criteria for TQS as identified after literature review. Information obtained was used for further statistical analysis using SPSS 21.0, Mini tab 17.0, Smart PLS 3.0, AHP software, G Power and Amos 21.0. Formulated hypotheses were tested by using relevant statistical tools and methods. Findings, suggestions and conclusions were made by keeping an eye on the objectives.

**Implications:** Generally, the applying of the critical factors and fundamental concepts of the TQS cannot be carried out separately. These are related between each other and produce synergies that reflect the global character of the TQS’s initiatives in ISO 9001 certified SME’s. This holistic character also spreads to the foreseeable results. That is to say, when defining the TQS’s practices in ISO 9001 certified SME’s, it must be taken into account what the aims and needs of the different stakeholders.

**Limitations:** Although this study attempts to reasonably infer the causal relationship from the treatment to dependent variable, the ambiguity about the direction of causal influences are still regarded as potential threat to internal validity. External validity, which represents the ability to generalize particular findings across different measures, settings and populations, is another limitation. The data collection has been restricted to one geographical area in India, i.e., TamilNadu only, in view of operational constraints.
Results: Effective TQS initiatives in ISO 9001 certified SME’s is indispensable to have a culture, human resources and management (soft factors) involved with and committed to quality. Yet for the effects on the business’ key results to be significant, the soft factors must be integrated in a management system that includes resources, tools and management techniques (hard factors). The most influential factors are specifically strategy and processes.