ABSTRACT

TQM can be defined as managing the entire organization so that it excels on all dimensions of products and services that are important to the customer. Total implies complete (100%), all areas, functions, activities, employees, all time and always. Quality implies product and services that totally satisfy the customers’ needs and expectations in every respect on a continuous basis. Management implies quality does not happen on its own, it requires be planning and managing. It is every body’s responsibility throughout the organization. The absence of previous studies on the development of TQM self-assessment instrument and empirical assessment of the effects of TQM practices on key business performance for ISO large manufacturing firms in Kerala have necessitated this study. The primary aim of this research work is to design, develop and validate a TQM self-assessment instrument-TotQual, to explore the effects of practices of TQM principles on Key Business Performance Indicators and develop a TQM model based on it and to examine the contributing factors of TQM practices and Key Business Performance Indicators in ISO certified large-scale manufacturing firms in Kerala. Besides this, the study was also measured the mediating role of HRM based TQM factors in the relationship between organizational culture and employee satisfaction. The research has used a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches (by in-depth interview method) to explore and identify the TQM principles and TQM practices in ISO certified large-scale manufacturing firms in Kerala from the perspective of top level managers.

ISO certified large-scale manufacturing firms in Kerala (unit of analysis) are the population of this study and top level managers (unit of observation) of these firms are the informant of the questionnaire. Stratified and simple random sampling method was adopted for selecting samples. Questionnaire survey was conducted for collecting samples. The study developed a TQM self-assessment instrument namely, TotQual, for the top level managers of the ISO certified large-scale manufacturing firms in Kerala for measuring TQM efforts in their firms. The instrument was evaluated through various content validation and psychometric test construction procedures such as comprehensive literature review, qualitative research, expert rating for content validity, content validity index assessment, pilot study, operationalization of constructs, reliability analysis, item analysis, unidimensionality testing, testing of construct and
criterion validities (convergent validity, discriminant validity, nomological validity, concurrent validity), assessment of common method variance, testing of measurement invariance, fixation of qualitative norms, final instrument and guidelines for administering the instrument, preparation of user manual for the instrument etc. All these procedures were found that TotQual is psychometrically robust.

To explore the effects of TQM on key business performance indicators, 23 hypotheses were proposed based on previous empirical studies. These hypotheses were tested using covariance based structural equation modelling techniques. Out of these 23 hypotheses, 19 hypotheses were supported and 4 of them were not supported. Customer focus was the most influencing factor of TQM practices. Based on these hypotheses, the researcher developed a TQM model and evaluated its fitness indices and found that the model is good fit. This study reveals that practices of TQM principles have positive and significant effects on various key business performance indicators. The research identified that organisational-wide communication is a strong contributor to TQM practices. By mediation testing, team work and co-operation and organizational-wide communication show partial mediation between organizational culture and employee satisfaction. Whereas, recognition and reward shows full mediation and employee participation and empowerment shows no mediation in the relationship between organizational culture and employee satisfaction. The study also shows that organizational culture plays major role for creating employee satisfaction and recognition and reward has vital role for determining employee satisfaction than organizational culture. The study has lot of implications on theory, managerial practice, research methodology, policy matters, and future researches. The study provides many contributions to the academic theory and research. The study suggests to the managers to practice the benchmarking and quality circle activates in their organizations as it is a vital components of TQM practices. A number of recommendations for managers and further research areas were made by this study.