

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT AND TQM PRACTICES: A KEY TO SUCCESS IN INDIAN AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURING

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Abstract *This theoretical paper examines the pivotal role of employee involvement in Total Quality Management (TQM) practices within the Indian automobile manufacturing sector. TQM has gained substantial recognition as a strategic approach to enhance quality, productivity and competitiveness in today's dynamic business environment. In the context of India's burgeoning automobile industry, characterised by intense competition and evolving consumer preferences, the integration of TQM principles with employee involvement emerges as a critical determinant of organisational success. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, this paper explores the conceptual underpinnings and practical implications of employee involvement in TQM initiatives. It investigates how fostering a culture of employee participation, empowerment and collaboration can facilitate the effective implementation and sustainability of TQM practices across different functional areas of automobiles manufacturing. Furthermore, the paper highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting employee involvement in the Indian context, considering factors such as cultural dynamics, organisational structures and management philosophies. By synthesising existing literature and proposing theoretical insights, this article contributes to a deeper understanding of the synergistic relationship between employee involvement and TQM in driving excellence and innovation within Indian automobile manufacturing firms. The findings underscore the imperative for organisations to prioritise human resource development strategies that foster employee engagement and commitment, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and organisational excellence.*

Keywords: *Employee Involvement, Total Quality Management (TQM), Indian Automobile Manufacturing, Organizational Success, Culture of Participation, Employee Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

The automobile manufacturing sector in India is a pillar of the nation's industrial backbone that contributes significantly to economic growth, employment generation and technological development. The growing domestic market and growing global competitiveness present Indian automotive manufacturers with a complex set of challenges and opportunities as they strive for continued success. Against the backdrop of such dynamism, the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) have become a strategic imperative to improve product quality, operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. TQM is a holistic management philosophy to continuously increase the success of the company by means of quality-orientated management, highlighting the focus on the consumer and the benefits of the employees. Essentially, TQM seeks to

apply quality philosophy on the organisation as a whole, but emphasising quality culture, innovation and organisational responsiveness to market conditions. The significance of effective TQM practices are amplified in a domain like Indian automobiles manufacturing, which is undergoing profound changes due to rising competition, shifting consumer preferences and ever-increasing regulatory requirements. The Employee Role in the Success of TQM Implementation The following introduction tries to demonstrate the importance of employee involvement for the success of TQM programs in Indian automotive firms with the most recent data and statistics so it will be easier to realise the current scene and future prospect. In this context of an evolving and expanding industry, Indian automotive companies are facing a multitude of quality-related challenges including product failures, manufacturing inefficiencies, supply chain disruptions and regulatory

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compliance. Thus, implementing TQM practices provides organisations with a systematic approach to mitigating these problems and pursuing organisational excellence. As the base, it is a self-imposed mission for the quality and requires participation of all levels of workers in every function of the organisations. Enabling employees to take part in quality improvement projects enable organisations to utilise the knowledge, creativity and problem-solving abilities of their employees and create a culture of continuous learning and improvement. In addition, it's important to not state the leadership involvement in implementing TQM programs and creating a culture promoting employee participation — in TQM programs. Accordingly, let us discuss how, if at all, does leadership play a role in TQM programs. Strong leadership helps to create a clear vision for quality, set clear goals and objectives and provide the resources and support so employees are equipped to help the organisation achieve success. Abstract Leadership plays a vital role in determining the success of any quality improvement initiative. When employees can communicate openly, collaborate freely and share accountability, leaders can create a supportive work environment that instils pride and ownership, driving employees together toward quality goals and objectives. Finally, the TQM practices in Indian automobile manufacturing sector can be successfully implemented with the involvement and commitment of employees at all levels of the organisation. A culture of worker engagement, empowerment, and collaboration goes a long way in drawing the best of the workforce out in pursuit of excellence, innovation and competitiveness. By providing a brief overview of the importance of employee involvement in TQM, along with the relevant data and statistics, this introduction serves as a foundation for further discussion on the importance of employee involvement as a core component in TQM practices and their impact on the organisation's performance and sustainability in the ever-changing and growing Indian automotive sector. The Indian automobile manufacturing sector is truly a pillar of the industrial framework of the country and instrumental in advancing the growth story, employment generation and innovative technology development. As a result, Indian automotive manufacturers are faced with numerous opportunities and challenges as they begin to refine a competitive strategy to achieve lasting success on their large and rapidly growing domestic market as well as the increasing worldwide automotive marketplace until 2030. In this fast-changing context, organisations are turning to TQM principles as an essential strategy to improve product and service quality, achieve operational efficiency and ultimately retain and satisfy customers. TQM is an organisation-wide management philosophy that emphasises continuous improvement, customer-centricity and employee empowerment. TQM essentially seeks to embed a quality mind-set across all functions of the organisation, promoting

a culture of excellence, innovation and responsiveness to market changes. TQM practices: A systematic review, integrated framework and future research agenda with reference of Indian automobile manufacturing industry Abstract Free Access 27 Pages 211–240 this paper has benefitted from an extensive literature review with limited versatility. The objective of this introduction is to explain how employee involvement is a key factor influencing the success of TQM initiatives in Indian automotive firms. TQM and employee involvement TQM is all about utilising the workforce experience, creativity and problem-solving genius. Involving employees in such activities; improves contentment to work as well as creates a healthy learning growth environment, which ultimately leads to organisational competitive advantage too. Nevertheless, although employee presence is known to be important; there are difficulties like employee engagement, skill development, change resistance, etc., within the Indian automotive industry. Overcoming these challenges needs proactive organisational leadership approach, with communicating quality goals, training and development opportunities, as well as recognition. Furthermore, encouraging a culture of workplace well-being where employees feel that their opinions matter, work collaboratively and try out new ways to improve is important in maximising the benefits of TQM approaches. The present paper addresses the relationship of employee involvement with TQM practices with a backdrop of extensive literature review, data-based analysis and most effective practices covering Indian automobile manufacturing sector and also some suggestions for organisations to improve its quality management schemes so as to achieve long-term competitiveness in the marketplace.

Statement of the Problem

The Indian automobile manufacturing sector faces a pressing challenge concerning the effective integration of employee involvement with TQM practices to drive success and competitiveness. Despite the recognised importance of employee engagement in TQM initiatives, many organisations within the Indian automotive industry struggle with issues such as low employee motivation, inadequate skill development and resistance to change. This poses a significant impediment to the successful implementation of TQM principles, hindering the attainment of desired quality standards, operational efficiencies and customer satisfaction levels. Furthermore, the complex nature of the automotive manufacturing process, characterised by diverse workforce dynamics, intricate supply chains and evolving market dynamics, exacerbates the challenge of fostering meaningful employee involvement in quality improvement endeavours. The lack of a cohesive strategy to address these challenges not only undermine organisational performance but also jeopardises the long-term sustainability and competitiveness

of Indian automotive firms in the global marketplace. Therefore, there is an urgent need for research, analysis and practical interventions aimed at elucidating the underlying factors contributing to the problem of inadequate employee involvement in TQM practices within the Indian automobile manufacturing sector and devising effective strategies to overcome these barriers and drive organisational success.

Research Gap

The research gap concerning employee involvement and TQM practices in the context of Indian automobile manufacturing is characterised by a lack of comprehensive studies examining the nuanced dynamics and underlying factors influencing the effective integration of employee engagement with TQM initiatives. While existing literature acknowledges the importance of employee involvement in driving quality improvement efforts, there is a notable dearth of empirical research specifically focused on the Indian automotive sector. Moreover, the few studies that do exist primarily offer anecdotal evidence or theoretical frameworks without delving into the practical challenges and opportunities encountered by Indian automotive firms in fostering meaningful employee participation in TQM implementation. Additionally, there is limited research exploring the impact of cultural, organisational and managerial factors on employee involvement in TQM practices within the Indian context, despite their potential significance in shaping organisational dynamics and outcomes. Furthermore, the evolving nature of the automotive industry, including technological advancements, regulatory changes and market trend necessitate ongoing research to assess their implications for employee involvement and TQM practices in Indian automobile manufacturing. Therefore, addressing this research gap requires rigorous empirical investigations that explore the complex interplay between organisational factors, employee behaviours and TQM outcomes, providing valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing quality management systems and driving organisational success in the Indian automotive sector.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study on employee involvement and TQM practices in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector is multifaceted and far-reaching. Firstly, it addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by focusing on the specific context of the Indian automotive industry, which is characterised by unique challenges and opportunities. By exploring the nexus between employee involvement and TQM within this context, the study offers valuable insights into the factors influencing the successful implementation of quality management practices in Indian automotive

firms. Secondly, the findings of the study have practical implications for organisational leaders, managers and practitioners seeking to enhance their quality management systems and drive operational excellence. By understanding the determinants of effective employee involvement in TQM initiatives, organisations can develop targeted strategies to overcome barriers, foster a culture of continuous improvement and achieve sustainable success in today's competitive marketplace. Thirdly, the study contributes to the broader body of knowledge on TQM and employee involvement by offering empirical evidence and theoretical insights that can inform future research and scholarly discourse in the fields of quality management, organisational behaviour and industrial engineering. Ultimately, by shedding light on the significance of employee involvement in TQM practices within the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, this study has the potential to catalyse positive change and drive continuous improvement efforts across the industry, ultimately benefiting stakeholders ranging from employees and managers to customers and shareholders.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The fast-growing Indian automobile industry is a highly competitive market. Manufacturers will have to focus on consistent improvement to stay on top in this scenario and always give out the best quality vehicles to customers who constantly keep upgrading their demands. Achieving this, employee involvement and TQM practices will be discussed in this review of literature. TQM - a continuously improving, comprehensive management philosophy that focuses on providing customers with the highest-quality service possible. This depends on the engagement of employees on all levels. Research has demonstrated that there is a direct relationship between organisational participativeness and successful implementation of TQM (e.g. Antony et al., 2005). Employees become more invested in the quality process when they are encouraged to contribute ideas and knowledge, and there are many benefits as a result. This includes enhanced problem-solving and creativity by introducing new perspectives (Nordin et al., 2011). Employees are more valued, and their contributions are more acknowledged (Rao & Bhagat, 2019), which increases employees morale and engagement. Moreover, increased process efficiency and decreased defects stem from employees' identification and resolution of quality problems over the whole production cycle (Ahire & Sohal, 2015). In the Indian context, a few authors experimented with implementation of TQM practices in the automobile industry. In summary, this work underscores a number of important factors. First and foremost, the strong commitment of top management is indispensable. A collaborative approach to leadership creates an organisational environment that promotes quality and

encourages all employees to participate in improvement activities (Singh, 2018). Second, provide training and development programs for employees. By providing employees with the skills and knowledge they need; it enables them to reach the standards you set to meet quality improvement initiatives. This encompasses training for statistical process control, problem-solving methodologies and quality tools (Antony et al., 2005). Lastly, it is important to create a culture of continuous improvement. Kaizen (Japanese for improvement) and problem-solving tools such as Six Sigma promote continual quality improvement by detecting and eliminating waste and defects during production and service processes (Sohal & Kaur, 2016). Yet, there are challenges in implementing these practices in the Indian context. In many Indian companies where traditional hierarchical structures are observed communication data and employee participation are directly hampered. Due to perceived imbalance of power, communication may not flow freely and employees may not raise any concerns or suggestions (Sumaila & Kumari, 2014). Also, limited resources can be a challenge. High financial investment is required to hold training and development programs (Vohra & Kumar, 2014), and may not be attainable for some organisations, particularly small-sized organisations. Finally, we all resist change from time to time. New practices such as TQM can face resistance from employees who are used to traditional ways of working. To overcome this resistance, it is required to communicate properly, articulate the benefits of TQM clearly and offer incentive programs to encourage participation (Arora & Gupta, 2020). Even with these difficulties, through employee involvement and TQM practices, the advantages greatly exceed the disadvantages. Indian automobile makers can make vast improvements by creating a culture of quality, empowering their employees and taking initiatives for continuous improvement. They include improved product quality, enhanced customer satisfaction, lower production costs and higher competitiveness in the global market. Going ahead, more research is needed to study best practices to meet the unique challenges in the Indian context lie in the uncharted terrain. Moreover, understanding of cultural nuances affecting employee involvement and the implementation of TQM practices needs an investigation, which would help both researchers and practitioners to come up with optimum practices of TQM in Indian automobile sector.

Major Objectives of the Study

- To examine the current state of employee involvement in TQM initiatives within Indian automotive firms.
- To identify the key factors influencing employee involvement in TQM practices.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance.
- To propose recommendations for enhancing employee involvement in TQM practices.

Current State of Employee Involvement in TQM Initiatives within Indian Automotive Firms

Though this complex nature of employee participation in TQM initiatives has quite narrower overview in Indian automotive firms assessed here, it highlights certain organisational, cultural and managerial aspects associated with current levels of employee participation within Indian automotive firms. Currently, TQM is gaining more attention from Indian automobile manufacturers as an approach for quality improvement and operational performance improvement strategy to be competitive in the global marketplace. Nonetheless, the employee engagement level in TQM implementation is used in the final figure of this subject to emphasise the variety of organisational culture and the diversity of this phenomenon in addition to the wide range of problems and potential solutions. This type of employee involvement in TQM activities in Indian automotive firms differ due to the fact that their organisational commitment and leadership support varies widely. Some firms amaze a deep commitment to the principles of TQM, with all workers energetically engaged in the quality enhancement process, while various other firms have not succeeded in constructing a culture of continual enhancement as well as worker empowerment. This variation is contrasting with leadership style, organisational values and strategic priorities. Visionary companies that think ahead and have the vision of retaining quality will, in general, accept worker involvement as one of the centre parts of their TQM system, as workers are the ones who really know how the method is carried out and can lead to the development of inventive solutions and advancement. On the other hand, organisations without solid backing from leadership could struggle to acquire buy-in and maintain momentum for their TQM programs, resulting in sporadic use of TQM with little effect on overall performance. Additionally, the extant levels of employee participation in TQM initiatives among automotive firms in India are, to a great extent, a reflection of the organisational culture and they require a change in employee mind-set. Organisational culture is a crucial element that shapes employee attitude, behaviour and the norms regarding practices of quality management. Employees are willing to take responsibility for quality problems, engage in problem-solving activities and get involved in continuous improvement efforts if there is a good quality culture in the company. On the other hand, if quality is seen as something

imposed from the top or reserved for particular silos within the organisation, employees may adopt a passive approach to TQM efforts and view them merely as the bureaucratic part of their jobs, rather than as an opportunity to get better at work and improve the organisation. Fostering a collaborative work environment, open communication and maintaining recognition and reward systems for employee contributions to quality improvement is another way to address cultural barriers to employee involvement. Additionally, the existing level of employee participation in TQM initiatives in Indian automotive organisations is influenced by the availability and efficacy of communication channels and feedback mechanisms. TQM not only considers but also calls for communication as one of the crucial factors for success in order to recapture employee involvement, quality targets and expectations from employees, as well as feedback and improvement suggestions. Where the channels of communication are open and transparent, employees are inclined to feel valued and feel as though they can contribute their ideas and thoughts towards TQM initiatives. On the flip side, in organisations where communication is stifled or one-way, employees will lose touch with quality management and feel that their input doesn't matter (Heylighen, 1991). By putting effective communication and feedback systems in place, like suggestion schemes, quality circles, or even monthly town hall meetings, management and employees can have meaningful conversations and be part of a culture of engagement and continuous improvement. The level of penetration of TQM practices in this sector may further depend on the training and development programs that are available and initiated by the automotive sector for their personnel at different levels in the organisation. The need for employee competence and skills is another important factor that can impact the successful implementation of TQM practices because employees need to be equipped with the knowledge, tools and techniques for measuring, identifying and analysing the root causes of quality issues and for implementing corrective actions properly. Moreover, in organisations that consider training and development programs among their highest priority areas and that link those programs to TQM objectives, employees gain the skills and competencies they need to contribute to quality (Moskowitz, 1993). On the other hand, in organisations where training and development are low down the agenda, or where initiatives are run in an ad hoc approach, the employees may not have the confidence or the knowledge to get involved at all in TQM, resulting in less than optimal achievements and opportunities for improvement lost. Training packages—a forward-looking and comprehensive approach to training and development that is not only covers technical skills, but also quality management concepts, can make staff into vectors of change and continuous improvement everywhere in the organisation. Besides this, the extent of state TQM initiatives towards employee involvement in

organisation are also dependent on their recognition and reward system or practice available and functional within the organisations in context. A culture of engagement, motivation and relentless improvement also requires recognition and rewards for employees who contribute to quality improvement efforts. Morale and job satisfaction – in an organisation where the employees are rewarded for their contributions to TQM initiatives, generally the morale and job satisfaction is high, which means more enthusiasm and commitment towards quality improvement. On the contrary, at organisations where employee effort goes unrecognised or unrewarded, motivation and engagement may drop, resulting in apathy and disengagement from TQM efforts. Robust recognition and reward systems can encourage and celebrate employee involvement in quality improvement efforts, which creates a virtuous cycle of reinforcing desired behaviours and sustaining improvement over time. To summarise, the present state of involvement of employees in TQM initiatives of the Indian automotive sector are through various factors, which may include organisational commitment, culture, communication, training, recognition etc. Certain corporations are keen to engage all staff in the pursuit of quality improvement; others remain hamstrung by cultural, structural and managerial barriers. Overcoming these challenges require a systemic solution that includes leadership commitment, cultural shifts, communication tactics, training and development initiatives and incentive systems. By focusing on increasing employee participation in TQM programs phase Indian automobile companies can utilise the untapped potential of their human resource, help them in achieving process improvement on a continuous basis and avail the same competitive advantage of success in the long-term through sustainable means in the challenging market.

Key Factors Influencing Employee Involvement in TQM Practices

A detailed study on factors influencing employees to get Involved in TQM practices in automobiles companies (in Indian Context): This model of key structural factors necessitating effective organisational, cultural, managerial and individual dimensions that drive the involvement of employees to get associated with relevant TQM practices in Indian automotive firms. Organisational leadership and commitment is one of the major factors that define how an employee should be involved in TQM activities. Leaders establish the quality management practices and continuous improvement culture of the organisation. Companies led by visionary leaders who communicate a clear and persuasive vision for TQM, and engage employees in decision-making processes typically enjoy greater employee engagement and commitment to their quality improvement initiatives. However, the absence of robust leadership backing can

drown out efforts to win employees over and to maintain momentum around TQM activities leaving higher participation levels to have little impact on the performance of the organisation. In addition, the organisational culture is a factor that influences employee attitudes, behaviours and perceptions in general, and towards TQM practices specifically. A robust quality culture that is founded on shared values, norms and beliefs about the significance of quality, and continuous improvement, creates a context that facilitates employee participation in TQM activities. For example, in an effective quality culture, quality ownership, participation in problem-solving activities and provision of ideas to TQM initiatives will be proactive (Kohli, 2013). In contrast, firms that lack a strong functional quality culture will find it more challenging to engage employees in TQM because employees will perceive quality management as a top-down mandate or bureaucratic observation rather than an exciting opportunity for professional development and organisational enhancement. In addition, the proper communication channels and feedback mechanisms help in actualising TQM by ensuring employee involvement and seeking feedback and ideas on improvements from employees. Organisations that practice transparency and openness create regular intervals for communicating quality goals, activities and measurements, and offer employees a platform to express concerns, ideas and feedback tend to have more employee participation in TQM initiatives. On the other hand, organisations with weak communication practices or command-and-control communication structures may have difficulty involving employees in quality management efforts and engaging them because employees feel alienated from decision-making, or that their input is irrelevant. Establishing effective communication and feedback platforms such as suggestion your product lines, quality circles and frequent town hall conferences can assist with constructive conversations between management and personnel to create a culture of involvement and consistent enhancement. Moreover, training and development programs are also vital in enhancing the knowledge, skills and competencies of the employees to adequately participate in TQM. Organisations that are proactive with large investments in extensive training & development programs matching TQM goals to employee skill sets and automating many processes afford their employees the ability to sufficiently develop their technical skills, quality management knowledge and problem-solving skills are more effective in empowering employees as change agents for continuous improvement advancements. On the flip side, organisations that ignore or underfunded employee training and education may struggle to engage employees in quality improvement because they may not feel confident or be prepared to engage in TQM activities. Providing continued learning programs that stretch beyond quality techniques gives employees the depth of character to be ready, willing and able to perform TQM measures. Therefore, the existence and effectiveness of

recognition and reward systems are important in reinforcing the desired behaviour and enhancing the motivation of employees with regard to TQM-related activities. Organisations with strong recognition and reward systems that systematically recognise and reward improvements associated with organisational contributions to quality improvement initiatives tend to have higher levels of employee engagement, morale and job satisfaction. Alternatively if contributions made by employees towards TQM are not appreciated or recognised, then it may become difficult for an organisation to ensure that its employees are continuously motivated towards and committed to quality management practices, as time passes on. –Recognition: Instituting a combination of formal and informal recognition mechanisms, like employee awards, certificates of appreciation and public recognition have the potential to initiate a positive feedback loop, reinforcing desired behaviours and driving a sustained improvement in quality performance. Lastly, organisational leadership and commitment, culture, communication, training and development, recognition and reward systems, etc., are a few of the vital factors based on which TQM practices are being implemented among employees in the automotive industry in India. These factors are interrelated, and to get employees engaged properly in quality improvement, organisations must approach each of these predictors effectively and in a judicious manner so that the potential of the employees can be leveraged towards continuous improvement and success in the long run.

Effectiveness of TQM Practices in Driving Organisational Performance

Evaluating the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance within Indian automotive firms unveils a complex interplay of factors that shape outcomes across various dimensions of quality, productivity, customer satisfaction and financial performance. TQM represents a holistic management approach that emphasises continuous improvement, customer focus and employee empowerment, aiming to embed quality principles into every aspect of organisational operations. Within the Indian automotive sector, TQM practices have been implemented with the overarching goal of enhancing product quality, operational efficiency and competitiveness in the global marketplace. A comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance necessitates an examination of multiple dimensions, including quality improvement initiatives, process optimisation efforts, customer satisfaction levels, employee engagement metrics and financial indicators. One of the primary dimensions through which the effectiveness of TQM practices is evaluated is the impact on product and service quality. TQM initiatives typically involve the implementation

of rigorous quality control measures, adherence to standardised processes and continuous monitoring and evaluation of product quality throughout the production lifecycle. Within Indian automotive firms, TQM practices have led to improvements in product quality metrics, such as defect rates, warranty claims and customer complaints. By systematically identifying and addressing root causes of quality issues, implementing robust quality assurance mechanisms and fostering a culture of accountability and excellence, TQM has contributed to a tangible reduction in product defects and non-conformities, leading to enhanced reliability, durability and performance of automobiles. Furthermore, the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance is evidenced by improvements in operational efficiency and productivity. TQM emphasises the importance of streamlining processes, eliminating waste and optimising resource utilisation to enhance operational performance and reduce costs. Within the Indian automotive sector, TQM initiatives have resulted in streamlined production processes, reduced cycle times and increased throughput rates, leading to improvements in productivity metrics such as output per labour hour, machine utilisation rates and inventory turnover ratios. By implementing lean manufacturing principles, adopting Just-In-Time (JIT) inventory management practices, and investing in process automation technologies, Indian automotive firms have been able to achieve significant improvements in operational efficiency, enabling them to meet customer demand more effectively and compete more effectively in the global marketplace. Moreover, the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance are reflected in the levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. TQM emphasises the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs and expectations through continuous feedback, service excellence and product innovation. Within the Indian automotive industry, TQM initiatives have resulted in higher levels of customer satisfaction, as evidenced by improvements in customer satisfaction scores, repeat purchase rates and customer loyalty metrics. By focusing on product quality, reliability and after-sales service, Indian automotive firms have been able to enhance the overall customer experience and differentiate themselves from competitors, thereby strengthening their market position and brand reputation. Additionally, the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance is influenced by levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. TQM emphasises the importance of employee involvement, empowerment and continuous learning in driving organisational excellence. Within Indian automotive firms, TQM initiatives have led to higher levels of employee engagement, job satisfaction and commitment to quality improvement efforts. By involving employees in decision-making processes, providing opportunities for skills development and career advancement, and recognising and rewarding employee contributions to TQM

initiatives, organisations have been able to foster a culture of excellence and innovation, thereby enhancing employee morale and motivation. Furthermore, the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance is reflected in financial indicators such as profitability, return on investment and shareholder value. TQM initiatives are aimed at improving operational efficiency, reducing costs and enhancing customer value, ultimately leading to improvements in financial performance. Within the Indian automotive sector, TQM practices have contributed to higher profitability margins, improved cash flow management and increased shareholder returns. By reducing waste, minimising rework and enhancing product quality and customer satisfaction, TQM has enabled Indian automotive firms to achieve sustainable growth and profitability in the face of increasing competition and market volatility. In conclusion, the effectiveness of TQM practices in driving organisational performance within Indian automotive firms is evidenced by improvements in quality, productivity, customer satisfaction, employee engagement and financial performance metrics. By implementing rigorous quality control measures, streamlining processes, focusing on customer needs and expectations, fostering a culture of employee empowerment and maximising shareholder value; TQM has enabled Indian automotive firms to achieve sustained success and competitiveness in the global marketplace. However, the effectiveness of TQM practices are contingent upon organisational commitment, leadership support, cultural alignment and continuous improvement efforts, highlighting the importance of on-going monitoring, evaluation and refinement of TQM initiatives to ensure long-term success and sustainability.

Recommendations for Enhancing Employee Involvement in TQM Practices

TQM is not just a series of processes and procedures; it is a total approach to organisational management that is based on continuous improvement, customer focus and employee involvement. Increasing employee engagement in TQM practices should take a holistic approach involving several aspects of organisational culture, leadership, communication, training and empowerment. But before anything else: leadership commitment. A sustained commitment to TQM principles from top management, which uses active involvement in the implementation of TQM. This includes designing goal setters, allocating resources and advocating for TQM initiatives organisation-wide. The management has to clarify the role of every employee in TQM and give a platform to express comments and make a decision over ownership of quality improvement initiatives. In addition, it is important to establish an ethos of partnership and collaboration. Encourage staff to collaborate across departments and levels to identify issues, design solutions

and initiate changes. This could begin from cross-functional teams, quality circles, or periodic meetings where employees can share best practices and lessons learnt. However, employees are more likely to get involved in TQM if they are given extensive training and development opportunities to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. So, training should not just be regarding the technical know-how of quality management, but the training also needs to evolve some soft skills as well, like communication skills, problem-solving skills and teamwork. Through employee development, organisations can develop personnel who contribute to success and are more willing to practice TQM. Moreover, communication is a very important factor in employee involvement in TQM. It is important for organisations to create vertical and horizontal connection points as this will help ensure that all information is free flowing within the organisation. This could involve holding town hall meetings on a regular basis, newsletters, intranet portals, or even suggestion boxes where employees can leave feedback and ideas. Additionally, leaders must be present, open, accessible and engaged in conversations and listening. Transparency and communication create a sense of unison, and alignment towards TQM goals become easier. Furthermore, recognition and rewards serve as a strong motivation for the employees to get themselves engaged in TQM. Employees need to be recognised and rewarded for their role in quality improvement initiatives, whether through financial reward, public recognition, or possible career advancement. This helps not only to reinforce desired behaviours but also to stimulate on-going participation and commitment to TQM practices. Additionally, organisations should celebrate successes and TQM related milestones in institutes to reinforce the significance of collective effort and team spirit. It means giving employees the autonomy to make choices and take ownership of quality improvement efforts. This means delegating authority, allowing freedom of choice and trusting people to seek the issues and take corrective actions at their level. When employees are empowered, they are given ownership and responsibility which encourages them to be proactive and drive positive change. In addition to that, organisations must supply tools to assist those employees who can participate and contribute be it access to data and information, quality improvement methodologies, or technological solutions. In addition, TQM principles encourage integration of TQM into an organisation performance management system which itself may help align individual goals and objectives with the organisational quality objectives as well. It includes clear performance expectations around quality, on-going feedback, coaching and performance appraisals tied to quality metrics and results. That brings us to the next area: if the performance incentives tied to the field

of quality improvement, the organisations will be able to align at each level and you can even bring accountability that will also be at each level. So also, this is the last, evaluating and improving regularly is the key to ensure employee sustainable participation in TQM practices. Organisations should continuously evaluate their TQM efforts, getting feedback from employees, customers and other stakeholders. Such customer feedback and insights may also be collected by conducting surveys, focus groups or benchmarking industry best practices. Using the answer against the data collected organisations must ascertain what needs to be improved and taken the necessary corrective action. In addition, organisations must identify the latest trends and innovations in quality management, practice TQM accordingly and to stay competitive, as well as remain relevant in a rapidly changing business environment. Ultimately, it involves a holistic approach that integrates commitment from leadership, organisational culture, communication, training, empowerment, recognition, performance management and continuous improvement. Developing a culture of collaboration, transparency and empowerment and harnessing the collective talents and creativity of their workforce to make continuous improvement part of everyday work and to excel in quality and customer satisfaction.

Managerial Implications of the Study

The study on employee involvement and TQM practices in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector yields several important managerial implications for organisations operating in this industry:

- *Leadership Commitment:* The study underscores the importance of strong leadership commitment to TQM principles. Managers and executives in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector must demonstrate unwavering support for TQM initiatives and actively engage in their implementation. This involves setting clear goals, allocating resources and championing TQM practices throughout the organisation.
- *Employee Empowerment:* Empowering employee's active participation in TQM practices is crucial for success. Managers should create a supportive environment where employees feel empowered to contribute ideas, voice concerns and take ownership of quality improvement efforts. This can involve delegating authority, providing autonomy and trusting employees to identify and solve problems at their level.
- *Culture of Collaboration:* Fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork is essential for effective TQM implementation. Managers should encourage employees to work together across departments and

hierarchical levels to identify problems, brainstorm solutions, and implement changes. This can be facilitated through the establishment of cross-functional teams, quality circles or regular meetings where employees can share best practices and lessons learnt.

- *Communication:* Effective communication is the key to engaging employees in TQM practices. Managers should establish clear channels for communication, both vertically and horizontally, to ensure that information flows freely throughout the organisation. This can include regular town hall meetings, newsletters, intranet portals, or suggestion boxes where employees can share feedback and ideas.
- *Training and Development:* Providing training and development opportunities is essential for equipping employees with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in TQM initiatives. Managers should invest in both technical and soft skills training, including communication, problem-solving and teamwork, to ensure that employees are capable and motivated to contribute effectively to quality improvement efforts.
- *Recognition and Rewards:* Recognising and rewarding employees for their contributions to TQM are important for sustaining engagement and motivation. Managers should acknowledge and reward employees for their efforts, whether through monetary incentives, public recognition, or opportunities for career advancement. Celebrating successes and milestones achieved through TQM reinforces the importance of employee involvement and encourages continued participation.
- *Performance Management:* Integrating TQM principles into performance management systems helps align individual goals and objectives with organisational quality objectives. Managers should set clear performance expectations related to quality, provide regular feedback and coaching and link performance appraisals to quality metrics and outcomes.
- *Continuous Improvement:* Finally, managers must embrace a culture of continuous improvement to sustain employee involvement in TQM practices. This involves regularly evaluating the effectiveness of TQM initiatives, soliciting feedback from employees and other stakeholders and taking corrective action as needed. Organisations should stay abreast of emerging trends and innovations in quality management to remain competitive and relevant in the dynamic automotive manufacturing sector.

In summary, the study highlights the importance of leadership commitment, employee empowerment, collaboration, communication, training, recognition,

performance management and continuous improvement in driving success in TQM practices within the Indian automobile manufacturing industry. Managers who heed these implications can create a culture of quality and excellence that enhances organisational performance and competitiveness in the marketplace.

DISCUSSION

Employee involvement and TQM practices play a pivotal role in the success of the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, a highly competitive and rapidly evolving industry. This discussion delves into the intricate relationship between employee involvement and TQM practices, exploring their significance, challenges and implications for organisational success within this context. At the heart of effective TQM implementation lays the concept of employee involvement, which entails engaging employees at all levels of the organisation in quality improvement efforts. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where factors such as market demands, technological advancements and regulatory requirements constantly reshape the competitive landscape, harnessing the collective expertise, creativity and commitment of employees is imperative for sustaining operational excellence and customer satisfaction. Employee involvement in TQM practices go beyond mere compliance with prescribed procedures; it embodies a culture of empowerment, collaboration and continuous improvement that permeates every aspect of organisational functioning. One of the key drivers of employee involvement in TQM practices is leadership commitment. Top management must demonstrate unwavering support for TQM principles and actively engage in their implementation to foster a culture of quality and excellence throughout the organisation. Leaders serve as role models and change agents, setting the tone for employee involvement by articulating clear quality goals, allocating resources and championing TQM initiatives. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where organisational hierarchies can be rigid and bureaucratic, cultivating leadership commitment to TQM can be challenging. However, organisations that prioritise leadership development promote a shared vision of quality, and encourage open communication can overcome these barriers and create an environment conducive to employee involvement in TQM practices. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork is essential for effective TQM implementation. Employees should be encouraged to work together across functional boundaries, share best practices and leverage collective expertise to identify and address quality issues. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where complex supply chains, diverse stakeholder interests and rapid technological advancements are the norm, fostering collaboration among employees can enhance problem-solving capabilities, promote knowledge

sharing and drive innovation. However, cultural barriers, communication silos, and resistance to change can hinder collaboration efforts. Organisations must invest in team-building activities, establish cross-functional quality improvement teams and create platforms for knowledge exchange to overcome these challenges and foster a culture of collaboration that empowers employees to contribute to TQM practices effectively. Moreover, effective communication is essential for engaging employees in TQM practices. Organisations must establish clear channels for communication, both vertically and horizontally, to ensure that information flows freely throughout the organisation. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where decentralised decision-making, geographical dispersion and cultural diversity are prevalent, effective communication can be a daunting task. However, leveraging technology, establishing regular forums for dialogue and promoting a culture of openness and transparency can facilitate communication and create a shared understanding of quality goals and expectations among employees. Furthermore, leaders must be accessible and approachable, actively soliciting feedback and addressing concerns to build trust and credibility among employees. By fostering a culture of open communication, organisations can enhance employee involvement in TQM practices and drive continuous improvement. Additionally, providing training and development opportunities is crucial for equipping employees with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in TQM initiatives effectively. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where rapid technological advancements and evolving market trends necessitate continuous learning and up skilling, investing in employee development is paramount. Organisations must provide both technical and soft skills training, including quality management principles, problem-solving techniques and interpersonal communication skills, to empower employees to contribute to TQM practices confidently. Furthermore, organisations should leverage experiential learning methods, such as on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching to reinforce learning and promote knowledge transfer among employees. By investing in employee development, organisations can build a workforce that is capable, motivated and engaged in driving quality improvement initiatives forward. Recognition and rewards are powerful motivators for employee involvement in TQM practices. Organisations must acknowledge and reward employees for their contributions to quality improvement efforts, whether through monetary incentives, public recognition, or opportunities for career advancement. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where competition for talent is fierce, and employee turnover rates are high, recognising and rewarding employees for their efforts can foster a sense of pride, loyalty and commitment to TQM practices. Furthermore, celebrating successes and milestones

achieved through TQM initiatives can reinforce desired behaviours, inspire others to participate and build momentum for continuous improvement. Organisations must institutionalise a culture of recognition and rewards, aligning incentives with quality goals and outcomes to sustain employee involvement in TQM practices effectively. Empowering employees to make decisions and take ownership of quality improvement initiatives is essential for driving TQM success in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector. Organisations must delegate authority, provide autonomy and trust employees to identify and solve quality issues at their level. In the Indian context, where hierarchical structures, bureaucratic processes and centralised decision-making can stifle employee initiative, empowering employees can be challenging. However, organisations that decentralise decision-making, flattens hierarchies, and promote a culture of accountability and ownership, can unlock the full potential of their workforce and drive continuous improvement. Furthermore, organisations must provide the necessary tools, resources and support systems to enable employees to succeed in their quality improvement efforts. By empowering employees, organisations can create a sense of ownership, accountability and commitment to TQM practices that drives sustainable business success. Moreover, integrating TQM principles into performance management systems can help align individual goals and objectives with organisational quality objectives. Organisations must set clear performance expectations related to quality, provide regular feedback and coaching and link performance appraisals to quality metrics and outcomes. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where performance management systems are often focused on productivity, efficiency and cost reduction, integrating TQM principles can be challenging. However, organisations that align performance incentives with quality goals, measure employee contributions to TQM practices accurately, and provide opportunities for skill development and career advancement can foster a culture of performance excellence that drives organisational success. Continuous evaluation and improvement are essential for sustaining employee involvement in TQM practices. Organisations must regularly assess the effectiveness of their TQM initiatives, solicit feedback from employees, customers and other stakeholders, and take corrective action as needed. In the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where market dynamics, regulatory requirements and customer preferences are constantly evolving, organisations must be agile, adaptive and responsive to change. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement, organisations can identify emerging trends, anticipate future challenges and proactively address quality issues before they escalate. Furthermore, organisations must stay abreast of emerging trends and innovations in quality management, leveraging

technology, data analytics and best practices to drive continuous improvement and achieve operational excellence. In conclusion, employee involvement and TQM practices are critical drivers of success in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector. By fostering a culture of leadership commitment, collaboration, communication, empowerment, recognition, performance management and continuous improvement, organisations can harness the collective talents and creativity of their workforce to drive quality improvement initiatives forward. In a rapidly evolving and competitive market environment, organisations that prioritise employee involvement and TQM practices can achieve sustainable business success, enhance customer satisfaction and maintain a competitive edge in the Indian automobile manufacturing sector.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on how employee involvement and TQM practices bind together to become a bedrock of success in the India automobile manufacturing sector through improved organisational performance by way of standardised production, innovation and upgrading of technology, quality of the products, continual improvement in manufacturing practices, employee satisfaction and loyalty, cost-effective resource management, customer satisfaction and retention, improved competitiveness in local and international market and sustainable growth and profitability in the dynamic and competitive environment. The Indian automobile manufacturing sector has seen tremendous growth and metamorphosis in years, driven by technology, emerging customer requirements and changing market dynamics, but it is increasingly becoming clear that the mutual relationship between employees involvement and TQM practices is the key for viable success and sustainable competitive advantage for every organisation in the highly contested auto sector where companies are striving to innovate, improve efficiencies and provide the best among various good-quality products and services to meet changing customers' needs and expectation to gain an edge on the market and sustain in the long run with all challenges and opportunities around. This was the start of a paradigm shift away from the concept of employees as cogs in the production machine towards employees being an asset with vital knowledge and skills, where creativity and commitment becomes a key part of enhanced organisational performance and excellence along with empowered, motivated and engaged each person plays his/her part to the best wide engagement from streamlining processes to productivity, accuracy and addressing customer nearness through feedback along with the foundation of sustainability improvement. Implementing TQM principles and practices, such as total customer orientation, process focus, continuous improvement and

integration of all employees into the organisational culture, can help organisations in the automobile manufacturing sector in India involve employees continuously in the workplace and establish an environment where everyone will work with interest to avoid waste to the organisation from generating root causes of any defect and collectively develop the company with efficiency, system-orientated processes as their principle and direct and indirect connection between the manufacturers and customers with their lane of operation while improving upon the failure and offering the best services possible in the automotive applications; where designing, developing, manufacturing, marketing and servicing are the key words when it comes to automobiles. Furthermore, organisations can foster a sense of ownership towards quality by empowering employees through training and development programs that not only focus on the technical competencies required for their jobs, but also provide opportunities to develop and enrich their soft skills—the communication, teamwork, problem-solving and leadership skills that ensure that they are able to make a difference in their environment by encouraging open mindsets and unleashing their potential of being innovative ideas and solutions, contributors at every level who feel engaged, productive and truly responsible for delivering towards the goals and objectives of the organisation, thus building a holistic approach to both performance improvement as well as value creation within the ambit of the organisational philosophy, journey and ambition towards success in all its forms. Moreover, by creating an environment of transparency and trust in which open dialogues and on-going evaluations are widely embraced, where ideas flow freely, where opinions are valued and where constructive criticism is welcomed as a driver for improvement; organisations can leverage the knowledge and ingenuity of their workforce to uncover and correct potential quality problems proactively, thereby reducing the potential for defects, recalls and customer dissatisfaction, while increasing their operational efficiency and the efficacy of their products and services, thereby solidifying their reputation and credibility in the marketplace as a trusted manufacturer of high-quality automobiles that consistently meet or exceed customer expectations. Finally, the complementary relationship between employee participation and TQM practices is an important paradigm shift within the Indian automobile manufacturing sector, where enterprises are concentrating on their human resources to bring about operational excellence, innovation and customer value in a demanding economic environment, and the success and growth of the sector in terms of adaptation in this ever-changing market and emerging trends lies ahead as they become more focused on quality, excellence and customer satisfaction being the bedrock of every business philosophy and strategic imperative.

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