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Leadership, Employee Engagement, and Total Quality Management: A Structural Modeling Approach in Organizations Adopting TQM

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) and leadership factors (L) on employee involvement (EI), both directly and through the mediation of management commitment (MC), in three start-up companies in Makassar City. Online questionnaires were distributed to 180 employees. Structural modeling methods such as SEM-PLS were employed to evaluate the relationship between TQM and leadership factors on employee involvement and the impact of the mediating variable. Findings indicate that leadership factors significantly influence employee involvement, as does TQM, which exhibits a stronger positive effect on employee involvement compared to leadership factors (TQM ➔ EI). Additionally, leadership factors have a more significant impact on employee involvement compared to management commitment (L ➔ EI). However, the relationship between TQM and employee involvement lacks significance, as does the relationship with the mediating variable, Management Commitment, which hasn't been able to support TQM towards EI. The coefficient of determination, or R Square, is 0.784, indicating that the variables examined collectively explain 78.4% of Employee Involvement simultaneously.

INTRODUCTION

Today, companies have undergone a significant transformation in the way they run their operations (Theresa et al., 2020). The rapid development of technology has become a key element in this change. Not only has the work system changed, but the leadership patterns must also adjust to the current era's dynamics (Pavitra & Surajit, 2020). Various digital companies have implemented innovative concepts, ranging from big data to artificial intelligence (AI) (Theresa et al., 2020). This research is interested in the concept of work in one of the start-up companies in Makassar City, which is undoubtedly familiar with technology and is an interesting phenomenon for the millennial generation. The role of this start-up company is not only limited to meeting consumer needs but also becomes an integral part of various aspects of society, especially in the transportation industry, which has evolved a lot in utilizing technology.

The company has a unique working environment compared to other companies by implementing the concept of 3 pillars: speed, innovation, and social impact. The work culture formed from these pillars has a 'fun' feel, especially with the majority of employees being an average of 27 years old, where they are given freedom in terms of working hours and are allowed to work in various locations, not just confined to the office. Moreover, teamwork is favored over individualism, an approach known as freedom and flexibility. This approach aligns with Total Quality Management (TQM), where all employees are involved in continuous improvement; this company utilizes strategies such as big data and effective communication to integrate quality into company culture and activities.

However, in a corporate system, differences in the needs, attitudes, and goals of various stakeholders often lead to variations in the pattern of the implemented system. These differences can become obstacles to the smooth running of company processes. In Total Quality Management (TQM), Creech (1994) identified five main features: (1) product, (2) process, (3) organization; (4) leadership; and (5) commitment. Strategies to ensure quality products or services, such as TQM, Six Sigma, and business process reengineering, have become a significant focus for achieving excellence and quality improvement (Karia & Asaari, 2006). TQM has become a dominating and widely adopted strategy in various organizations (Beheshti & Lollar, 2003; Lee, 2002; Devadasan et al., 2003). According to (Talha, 2004), TQM is a broad management approach; its focus includes the entire organization and employees in providing products or services that satisfy customers. This approach utilizes tools and techniques to guarantee the achievement of outstanding quality.

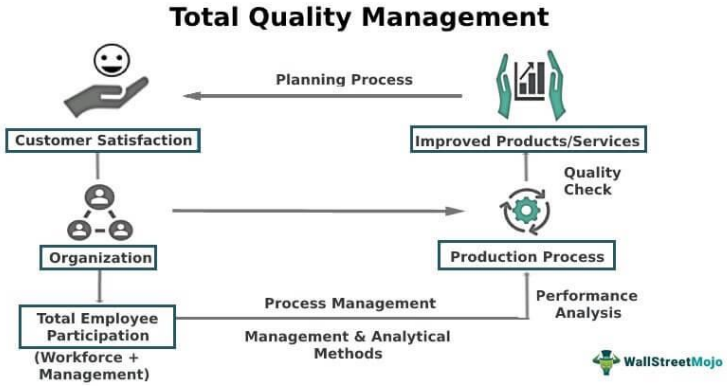

Figure 1 TQM by wallstreetmojo.com

Total quality management, or TQM, is a common management approach in which all employees in a company continuously assess its production processes in an effort to increase customer satisfaction and improve the manufacturing quality of goods and services. It entails giving management training and applying analytical techniques to find and eliminate trouble spots in company operations (https://www.wallstreetmojo.com/total-quality-management/). TQM is seen as a combination of philosophy and practice (Yeung & Armstrong, 2005), which requires a mindset and knowledge of data

analysis techniques to increase competitive advantage (Dale & Oakland, 1991). The role of management is crucial to the success of TQM in an organization (Dale & Oakland, 1991; Saravanan & Rao, 2006) and significantly impacts organizational performance (Hung, 2004). Full involvement of management in TQM programs, as shown in the work of Boon et al. (2005), was shown to improve business performance. The results include cost efficiency, flexibility, improved quality, productivity, competitiveness, financial returns, employee motivation, and customer satisfaction (Beheshti & Lollar, 2003). All of this is inseparable from the role of leaders within the company, who respond positively to the success of the TQM program.

Effective leadership and efficient management are crucial in achieving corporate goals and providing the workforce necessary for economic growth and social development. Spanbauer (1989), Doherty (1994), and Clayton (1995) emphasize the importance of leadership in the successful implementation of TQM. Leadership significantly improves performance through continuous process improvement, as recognized by the EFQM and MBNQA models (Lloyds TSB, 2001; MBNQA, 2003). The literature shows several things: first, leadership that focuses on the individual, supported by management education or experience, and leadership behaviors tend to provide significant performance improvements for companies. Second, there needs to be more research on leadership effectiveness in determining the quality of performance needed for improvement and management efficiency in allocating resources to achieve quality improvement goals. Third, further research is needed to explore the strategic role of "Leadership" in successfully implementing TQM.

Then, researchers included management commitment as a moderating variable between TQM implementation and leadership on employee engagement. Organizational success often depends on management's commitment to implementing TQM (Everette, 2002; Buch & Rivers, 2002). Research shows that management commitment is an essential pillar for the success of quality strategies in companies (Ahire et al., 1996; Saraph et al., 1989; Beheshti & Lollar, 2003; Rao et al., 2004), encouraging the creation of an environment focused on quality excellence, competitiveness, and continuous improvement. Many quality improvement efforts fail due to a lack of support and commitment from top management (Talha, 2004). Management commitment requires allocating company resources (Karuppusami & Gandhinathan, 2006) and significant executive time (Jablonski, 1991) to improve process quality. Jablonski (1991) stated that the availability of time and investment from executives, especially those at the highest level, is critical to the success of TQM programs. A decrease in top management commitment can lead to management's reliance on workers or consultants to run the TQM program (Beer, 2003), reducing the emotional commitment essential for the program's success.

II. LITERATURE STUDY*Employee Engagement*

Engagement reflects how actively organizational members participate in the decision-making process. It also includes a sense of responsibility and attachment, which then drives (Denison, 2007). It involves developing individual capacity, ownership, and responsibility. The importance of this engagement is reflected in the achievement of a shared vision, unification of values, and achievement of common goals. Employee engagement is sometimes called participative management, which measures how employees share information, knowledge, rewards, and power across the organization (Vroom & Jago, 1988); (Ugwu et al., 2014). McShane and Von Glinow (2003) suggest that with engagement, employees gain a certain amount of authority in making decisions previously beyond their authority. They assert that employee engagement is not only related to control over resources for their work; it also includes the power to influence decisions in the work unit and throughout the organization.

Various forms of employee engagement can be found within the organizational environment; formal participation occurs within structures that have set formal expectations for this type of participation. On the other hand, informal participation occurs through unofficial activities that need to be documented according to management policies. Employee engagement can also be voluntary or legally bound. It is voluntary when

employees participate of their own free will without any legal pressure. However, it can also be legally binding when regulations or laws govern the activity (for example, different codetermination systems in different countries) (Strauss, 1998). Employee participation can be direct or indirect; direct participation occurs when employees directly influence the decision-making process, whereas indirect participation occurs when coworkers represent employees (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003). Selective consultation is the lowest level of involvement, where employees are asked to provide information or opinions on specific aspects of the decision. At this level, employees are not necessarily asked to provide a recommended solution, and they may need to learn the details of the issue for which they are being asked for information (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003).

Total Quality Management (TQM)

The emergence of TQM was initially strongly associated with the manufacturing environment. Previously, many definitions and practices of quality were based on the manufacturing industry and object-based economy (Hough, 2004). As TQM concepts and ideas began to emerge, various efforts were made to respond to increasingly fierce global competition and provide quality products or services to customers. Dale et al. (1994) summarized this evolution from inspection, quality control, and quality assurance to TQM as a quality movement. This development is in line with the dynamic changes in the business environment. TQM is considered an inclusive, dynamic process to continuously drive improvements in effectiveness and efficiency in all aspects of the business (Kulkarni, 2005). The concept integrates organizational functions and processes to improve the quality of goods and services continuously. The role of TQM has changed the traditional paradigm of placing the responsibility for quality on specific departments to an approach where quality becomes an enterprise-wide responsibility (Benowitz, 2001). TQM extends the responsibility for quality to the entire organization, incorporating aspects of quality not only in products or services but also in delivery, administration, customer service, and all company activities (Tan, 2002). According to Talha (2004), TQM combines product quality, process control, quality assurance, and quality improvement, making it a robust and holistic quality management system. However, by analyzing Deming's 14 principles, (Anderson et al., 1994) created the theoretical framework for quality management practice. By applying the Delphi technique, they were able to cut the number of factors from 37 to 7. These factors are: visionary leadership; learning; process management; continuous improvement; employee fulfillment; and customer happiness (Demirbag et al., 2006).

Jablonski (1991) emphasized that the TQM philosophy allows organizations to optimize the unique potential of each individual within them. In TQM, recognition of the role of each individual in the organization is considered necessary. Unlike traditional QM, TQM promotes pluralism over individualism, underlining the importance of teamwork as the key to success. There are three core components underlying TQM, often described as basic principles, techniques, and tools (Ciampa, 1992); core values, techniques, and tools (Hellsten & Klefsjo, 2000); and principles, procedures, and tools (Shea & Gobeli, 1995). According to Ciampa (1992), the basic principle of TQM is the overall orientation of the organization to meet customer needs and create value for all stakeholders, including customers, employees, shareholders, and communities. Jablonski (1991) and Martins and Toledo (2000) identified six elements of TQM principles: customer focus, focus on processes and results, problem prevention, utilization of expertise, fact-based decision-making, and feedback. Meanwhile, according to Wille (1992), tools in TQM refer to the methodologies and techniques used in the process, such as reliability, engineering, statistical process control, and Taguchi methodology. The results of implementing TQM, as outlined by Beheshti and Lollar (2003), include improved quality, growth in market share, and increased productivity.

H1: *Total Quality Management can increase Employee Engagement at one of the transportation startup companies in Makassar City*

Leadership

(Lakshman, 2006) contribution to the leadership literature lies in recognizing the explicit value of the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy and its potential in developing the field of leadership. This research (Lakshman, 2006) formulates propositions that integrate elements of quality into the theory being developed. On the TQM literature side, its contribution focuses on developing a framework that explicitly involves leaders' role in TQM initiatives and identifying leader measures that support TQM implementation in organizations. In addition to its theoretical benefits, this approach has several potential managerial implications for practice in the field. (Anderson et al., 1994) describe leadership as the top-level ability to establish, implement, and enforce the company's long-term vision. It is rooted in adaptation to changing customer demands, as opposed to internal management control functions.

Wille (1992) states leadership goes beyond improving operational performance and quality. It is not just about identifying failures but eliminating the root causes of them, helping employees improve their performance with less effort. The literature describes leadership as clarity of vision, long-term orientation, constructive management patterns, participation in change, employee empowerment, planning and implementation of organizational change, support from top management, continuous learning of top management, and commitment to employee development and quality (Anderson et al., 1994; Zhang, 2000). As a pioneer and driver in implementing TQM, Calvo-Mora et al. (2006) asserted that quality leadership must be visible, consistent, and radiate at all levels of the organization. Strong leadership builds the foundation for a solid organization, so being a good leader reflects actions that align with the vision and mission written in the organization's statement.

H2: Leadership can increase Employee Engagement at one of the transportation startup companies in Makassar City.

Management Commitment

The success of an organization lies in management's commitment to implementing TQM (Everette, 2002; Buch & Rivers, 2002). Research confirms that management commitment is one of the critical factors in the success of corporate quality strategy (Ahire et al., 1996; Saraph et al., 1989; Beheshti & Lollar, 2003; Rao et al., 2004). This commitment creates an environment that promotes quality excellence, competitiveness, and continuous improvement. (Talha, 2004) notes that many quality initiatives fail because they need top management's driving force and commitment. This management commitment involves allocating company resources and executive time to improve process quality (Karuppusami & Gandhinathan, 2006; Jablonski, 1991). Jablonski emphasized that adequate allocation of time and funds from top management, especially from the chief executive, is critical to the success of TQM programs.

When top management commitment diminishes, management may rely too much on workers or consultants, making leadership at all levels passive in TQM practices (Beer, 2003). Harrington (1987) asserts that top management initiates and facilitates the improvement process, but losing their interest can stop it. Active participation of top management enables the integration of quality into corporate strategy, while lack of commitment may hinder the changes required in TQM programs (Lee, 2004). Keogh (1994) emphasized that the commitment of top management must be absolute for the success of a TQM program because of their role as drivers of initiatives in the organization. This commitment is evident from mere talk and the provision of resources and facilities that support the TQM program (Dale, 1991, in Lascelles and Dale, 1994), including funding training programs, establishing special teams, and reward systems. This suggests that the outcome of TQM is generally influenced by management actions within the organization rather than internal or external factors (Deming, 1986).

H3: Management Commitment Moderates Total Quality Management to increase Employee Involvement

H4: Management Commitment Moderates Leadership to increase Employee Involvement

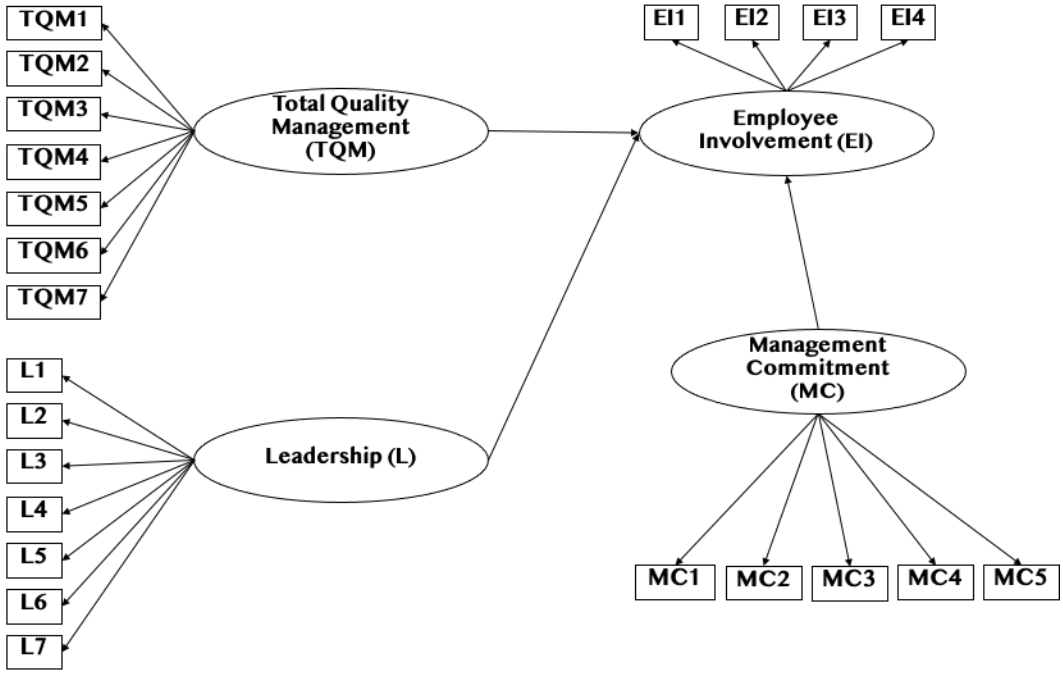

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The population under study comprises employees of three start-up companies operating in the transportation sector with branch offices in Makassar City. The purposive sampling technique referred to (Sarstedt et al., 2011). Two hundred online questionnaires were distributed to the office staff of companies that had implemented the 8 principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) (https://www.impactfirst.co/id/c/total-quality-management-tqm). As a result, 180 questionnaires were fully processed and used as the research sample. The sample consisted of 98 males and 82 females. Among the respondents, there were 68 individuals aged 20-30 years, 56 individuals aged 31-40 years, and 56 individuals aged over 41 years. Additionally, 68.3% of the respondents in this sample were married individuals. The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondent

Gender	n	%
Female	82	45.5%
Male	98	54.4%
Age (Years)	N	%
20-30	68	37.78%
31-40	56	31.11%
>41	56	31.11%
Status	n	%
Married	123	68.3%
Unmarried	57	31.7%

This study utilized the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique (Albright & Park, 2009) to empirically examine the relationship between TQM and Leadership on employee engagement, with the moderation of the management commitment variable, to explore its indirect effects (Hair et al., 2019). Utilizing PLS software (Sarstedt et al., 2011), this study estimated Cronbach's alpha (CA), total item correlations, as well as confirmatory factor analysis to test reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for each construct in the conceptual framework (Jöreskog, 2005). A five-point Likert scale was

used in this study, asking respondents to rate the level of TQM usage. The scale ranges from (1) Not Used, (2) Rarely Used, (3) Slightly Used, (4) Moderately Used, to (5) Frequently Used.

Referring to previous studies on TQM, this research focuses on Seven items regarding (Demirbag et al., 2006) TQM: Top management conveys the company's philosophy to employees; Top management actively develops an integrated quality plan to meet business objectives; Top management strongly encourages employee involvement in quality management and improvement activities; Top management provides adequate resources for employee education and training; Our company has a clear, long-term vision statement encouraging employee commitment to quality improvement; Our company has a clear short-term business plan; Our company has an effective quality improvement plan.

This study applied the leadership variable with seven measurement items by (Schriesheim & Cogliser, 2009) as follows: Do you typically feel like you know where you stand? Is it common for you to know how satisfied your immediate manager is with the work you have done? How well do you think your immediate supervisor understands your requirements and problems? To what extent does your current manager see your potential? How likely is it that your immediate manager, regardless of the authority vested in him or her, will personally incline power to help you solve problems at work? Once more, even with your immediate supervisor's formal authority, how much can you rely on him or her to "bail you out" on their own dime when needed?; How would you describe the working relationship with your immediate manager? Do you have enough faith in my immediate supervisor to defend and justify actions made in their absence?.

In addition, we used five measurement items (Dubey et al., 2018) that addressed different facets of management commitment as a moderating variable. Fist, management takes an active interest in quality management initiatives. Second, management actively promotes staff participation in quality control initiatives. Additionally, management is very conscious about producing high-quality outcomes. Furthermore, management takes staff suggestions into consideration. Moreover, management is committed to ongoing development at all levels through strategy and implementation. The last variables of this research is Employee engagement (Ugwu et al., 2014), where we use four measurement items as follows: Our company has a cross-functional team or quality circle; Employees are actively involved in quality-related activities; Our company implements extensive advisory activities; and Employees are highly committed to the success of our company.

IV. RESULT and DISCUSSION

Based on Table 2 below, the results of descriptive analysis of TQM variables, leaders, management commitment, and employee engagement are classified in the Good category. Item TQM6, which reads, "Our company has a clear short-term business plan," has the highest mean value. 82.6 percent of respondents agreed that employees at branch offices in Makassar City have implemented their business plans. Item L6, "Empowering others to do their best," received the highest mean score on the leadership variable, indicating that employees of this startup agree that their leaders can help team members reach their full potential.

Items MC1 and MC3, which indicate that "Management actively participates in quality management activities" and "Management cares a lot about quality results," have the highest mean scores for the Management Commitment variable. Finally, on the Employee Engagement variable, the highest mean value is found in item EI1, which explains that "Our company has cross-functional teams or quality circles." This shows that in branch companies in Makassar City, cross-functional teams support each other to improve quality between teams.

Table 2 Statistics Results

Variable	Item	Mean	Std.eror	Std. Deviation	Item Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	VIF
Total Quality Management	TQM1	0.752	0.043	0.043	0.751	0.883	0.840	0.558	0.6714
	TQM2	0.765	0.046	0.047	0.766				
	TQM3	0.845	0.028	0.029	0.845				
	TQM4	0.731	0.049	0.050	0.737				
	TQM5	0.734	0.047	0.048	0.734				
	TQM6	0.826	0.034	0.035	0.826				
	TQM7	0,806	0.044	0.031	0,762				
Leadership	L1	0.707	0.0606	0.0606	0.7136	0.905	0.877	0.581	0.9501
	L2	0.740	0.0458	0.0458	0.7379				
	L3	0.854	0.0258	0.0258	0.8559				
	L4	0.718	0.0536	0.0536	0.7254				
	L5	0.873	0.0279	0.0279	0.8736				
	L6	0.895	0.0263	0.0263	0.893				
	L7	0,871	0.0312	0.0234	0.869				
Management Commitment	MC1	0.869	0.0201	0.0201	0.8681	0.899	0.857	0.645	7.1882
	MC2	0.740	0.0494	0.0494	0.7383				
	MC3	0.869	0.0201	0.0201	0.8681				
	MC4	0.781	0.0428	0.0428	0.7809				
	MC5	0.781	0.0556	0.0556	0.7563				
Employee Involvement	EI1	0.869	0.0236	0.0236	0.8698	0.844	0.755	0.576	5.326
	EI2	0.793	0.0439	0.0439	0.7874				
	EI3	0.711	0.0625	0.0625	0.7139				
	EI4	0.717	0.0484	0.0484	0.7247				

Variable	R^2	
Employee Involvement	0.784	
Variable	p-value	Description
TQM > EI	0.9501	Not Supported
L > EI	5.326	Supported
TQM > MC > EI	0.6714	Not Supported
L > MC > EI	2.709	Supported

The reliability value can be strengthened by the Cronbach alpha value which shows> 0.7; From table above, it can be seen that each variable has a Composite Reliablity and Cronbach Alpha value> 0.7 So it can be said that each variable used in this study is reliable. The data shows that the average number of respondents answered Strongly Agree to each question.

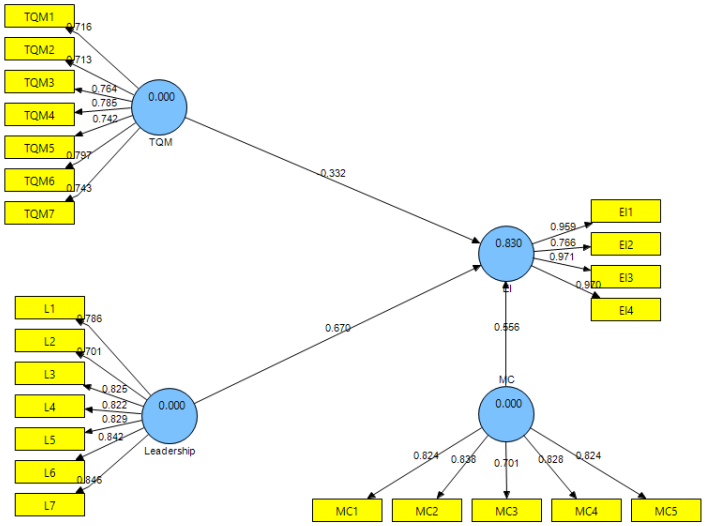

FIGURE 2 CONVERGENT VALIDITY, DISCRIMINANT, & DISCRIMINANT RELIABILITY TESTING

Evaluation of construct validity is done by calculating convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is known through the loading factor. An instrument is said to fulfill convergent validity testing if it has a loading factor above 0.7; Testing with discriminant validity is seen using cross-loading with the criterion that if the loading value of an item/indicator in a corresponding variable is greater than the loading value of an item on another variable, the item is declared valid in measuring the corresponding variable. Calculations that can be used to test construct reliability are composite reliability and Cronbach alpha. The test criteria state that the construct is declared reliable if the composite reliability is more significant than 0.7 and can be strengthened by the Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.7;

This test is conducted to determine the strength of the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, both directly and indirectly. The direct effect in this study is as presented in the following table;

Table 3 Hypothesis Test

Variables	p-value	Desc.
TQM > EI	0.9501	Not Supported
L > EI	5.326	Supported
TQM > MC > EI	0.6714	Not Supported
L > MC > EI	2.709	Supported

Based on the table above, the statistical p-value of each variable can be seen. This value reflects the significance value where two statements are significant or support the hypothesis and two statements do not support the proposed research hypothesis. It is concluded that Leadership affects Employee Involvement, and Leadership can support Employee Involvement through Management Commitment. However, it is found that Total Quality Management (TQM) has no effect on Employee Involvement, and TQM has no effect on Employee Involvement through Management Commitment. The R Square value shows the following results:

Table 4 R square

Variable	R^2
Employee Involvement	0.784

Based on the table above, we know that the coefficient of determination, or R Square, is 0.784, and the magnitude of the coefficient of determination is 0.784, or 78.4%. This means that all of the variables studied can explain Employee Involvement by 78.4% at the same time (together). The remaining 100% - 78.4% = 21.6% was affected by other variables that are not included in this regression equation.

DISCUSSION

In an attempt to address the formulation of research problems, the decisions that come from hypothesis testing are the main topic of this discussion. The outcomes of the statistical data processing analysis using the SmartPLS 3 technique are presented in the following.

Impact of TQM on Employee Involvement concerns several essential aspects, such as the right attitude, exemplary leadership, measurable processes, appropriate raw materials, a supportive environment, and the right skills. These aim to prevent defects and ensure the products or services provided reach high-quality standards. What is more, effectively managing an organization is not only about work but also involves management. Strong collaboration between workers and management is critical to guaranteeing quality results. Although TQM is the responsibility of the entire company, the role of management is crucial in ensuring the success of this initiative. However, from the results of this study, although TQM has been implemented at the Branch Office in Makassar City, Employee Involvement has not been fully realized. This reflects that although TQM exists, it must fully present employee involvement in the office environment.

The influence of Leadership on Employee Involvement is closely related to the concept of leadership that goes beyond simply improving performance, efficiency, and quality. Instead, leadership focuses on eliminating root causes and helping employees achieve the best results with minimal effort. The literature describes leadership as guiding a clear vision, providing long-term direction, participating in change-makers, and supporting employee empowerment. Research shows that visible, consistent, and pervasive leadership at all levels of the organization plays an essential role in driving Employee Involvement, especially at Branch Offices in Makassar City. Employee engagement can be increased by applying leadership principles that include interpersonal, informational, and decision-making roles. Efforts to increase job satisfaction can also be improved by applying the principle of continuous improvement, which includes the development of quality indicators, performance appraisal, acceptance of suggestions and criticism, and training and education.

The effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Employee Involvement, moderated by Management Commitment, is strongly linked to the manufacturing landscape. Prior to the emergence of the TQM concept, many quality efforts were centered on the manufacturing industry and object-focused economic models (Hough, 2004). The quality movement before TQM included inspection, control, and quality assurance, as it evolved into the concept of TQM as described by Dale et al. (1994). This development is in line with the dynamic changes in the business environment, where TQM is considered an inclusive process that aims to continuously improve effectiveness and efficiency in all aspects of business (Kulkarni, 2005). However, in this study, despite the moderation of Management Commitment, TQM has not fully supported the increase of Employee Involvement. Nonetheless, some researchers (Everette, 2002; Buch and Rivers, 2002) assert that organizational success is closely related to management commitment in TQM implementation.

The effect of Leadership on Employee Involvement moderated by Management Commitment has shown the relevance of the importance of management commitment to the success of quality strategies in companies (Ahire et al., 1996; Saraph et al., 1989; Beheshti and Lollar, 2003; Rao et al., 2004). This commitment is a key driver in creating an environment of quality excellence, enhancing competitiveness and driving continuous improvement. The failure of most quality initiatives, as expressed by (Talha, 2004), is due to the lack of top management drive and commitment. According to the test results, Leadership is proven to be able to increase Employee Involvement with the moderation of Management Commitment. This reflects an increase in key aspects of the Leadership variable, such as the ability to articulate a clear vision, values and strategy, drive strategic change, achieve results, influence cultural change, demonstrate a strong customer orientation, empower individuals to perform at their best, and communicate effectively on a daily basis. This success has seen increased employee participation, leading the company towards achieving its desired goals.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In summary, the implementation of leadership across the three researched start-up companies has demonstrated a significant impact on enhancing employee participation, both directly and through intervening factors such as the company management's commitment. This should be sustained to foster the development of a collaborative work environment among current teams and to achieve the company's future goals. However, the research indicates that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) has yet to fully support employee involvement, either directly or indirectly. Survey results indicate that employees consistently provide negative responses regarding TQM variables, suggesting that TQM has not yet had a significant impact, either directly or indirectly. This underscores the importance of deeper consideration and examination for company managers, especially for start-ups with relatively short lifespans, to ensure future sustainability. Strengthening the management team's commitment to implementing TQM is crucial, as it will ultimately help increase employee participation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interest to declare.

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