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## TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH OF AUTOMOBILE FIRMS IN SOUTHEAST, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** This study explored the relationship between total quality management and organisational growth of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. The study specifically ascertained the relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion, as well as determined the relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and data were collected from respondents with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 27). Hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion, with  $r = 0.882$   $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis two indicated that there is a positive significant relationship teamwork and employee engagement, with  $r = 0.701$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between total quality management and organisational growth of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. The study recommended that automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria need to prioritise and invest in continuous improvement strategies to drive business growth and expansion. Also, management of automobile firms need to foster teamwork initiatives within your automobile firm to boost employee engagement and productivity.

**Keyword:** Total Quality Management, Organisational Growth, Continuous Improvement, Business Expansion, Teamwork and Employee Engagement.

### Introduction

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a structured management approach that focuses on continuously improving the quality of products, services, and processes within an organisation (Permana, Purba & Rizkiyah, 2021). The philosophy of TQM is built upon the principle that every member of an organisation, from top management to

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frontline employees, plays a vital role in ensuring the delivery of high-quality products or services. It emphasises customer satisfaction, adherence to quality standards, and the integration of quality management practices across all levels and departments of an organisation (Shwede, Aldabbagh, Aburayya & Uppilappatta, 2023). TQM promotes a proactive attitude towards quality, encouraging businesses to prevent defects rather than merely inspecting and fixing them after the fact. By embedding quality in every process, organisations aim to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and achieve long-term success in their respective industries (Ofoegbu & Eromosele, 2024).

Organisational growth is the expansion and development of a company in terms of its market share, profitability, employee base, and overall business operations (Orishede, 2020). Growth can be observed through increased revenue, expansion into new markets, acquisition of new assets, or the introduction of new products and services (Rufus, Festus & Dada, 2022). For organisations, growth is not only a sign of success but also a necessary element for maintaining competitiveness and ensuring sustainability in a dynamic and evolving business environment (Sanusi & Babatunde, 2020). Factors that contribute to organisational growth include strategic planning, operational efficiency, market innovation, and the effective management of resources. It is crucial for organisations to align their growth strategies with market demands, customer expectations, and industry trends to remain relevant and competitive (Chatterjee, Rana & Dwivedi, 2024).

The automobile industry in Southeast Nigeria comprises various firms engaged in the assembly, distribution, sales, and maintenance of vehicles. These firms play a significant role in the region's economic development by providing employment opportunities and contributing to the overall growth of the local economy (Agunbiade & Siyan, 2020). Despite the industry's potential, automobile firms in this region often face numerous challenges such as limited access to quality resources, inadequate infrastructure, and fluctuating economic conditions (Odiboh, Nwosu, Ekanem & Oyedepo, 2022). The market is highly competitive, with both local and international firms striving to capture a significant share of the customer base. The automobile firms must therefore not only maintain quality standards but also adopt strategies that ensure their survival and growth amidst these challenges (Orji & Nduji, 2020).

Despite the vital role played by automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria, several issues have been observed, including inconsistent product quality, customer dissatisfaction, operational inefficiencies, and difficulty in maintaining competitive advantage. These problems highlight the need for a thorough investigation into how TQM practices can influence organisational growth in this industry. The study will focus on examining sub-variables such as continuous improvement and business expansion, which are essential for firms looking to scale operations effectively. It will also explore the impact of teamwork and employee engagement, as active involvement of employees is crucial for maintaining quality standards and driving growth. Furthermore, the study will assess customer focus and customer retention as automobile firms need to prioritise customer needs to maintain loyalty and increase market share. Lastly, the investigation will cover process optimisation and waste reduction, as efficient processes are vital for reducing costs and ensuring sustainable growth. By addressing these areas, the study aims to provide insights that can aid automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria in enhancing their operational practices and achieving growth.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria are currently facing significant challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability (Ekemam & Njoku, 2020). These firms struggle with inconsistent product quality, operational inefficiencies, and a lack of strategic direction in their business practices, which negatively impact their

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competitive position in the market. Many of these issues stem from inadequate implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, such as continuous improvement, which is essential for business expansion. Without a focus on optimising processes, firms experience wasteful practices and resource mismanagement, leading to increased costs and reduced profitability (Ike & Onuoha, 2021). Additionally, the lack of emphasis on teamwork and employee engagement results in a disengaged workforce, affecting productivity and quality standards. Customer dissatisfaction is also prevalent due to insufficient customer focus, leading to poor customer retention rates (Ofoegbu & Eromosele, 2024). The observed problems highlight a gap in the effective adoption of quality management practices that, if unaddressed, will continue to hinder these firms' growth and ability to compete in the rapidly evolving automobile industry.

This knowledge gap in how TQM practices can drive growth in these firms necessitates this investigation. If these challenges remain unresolved, consequences may include further declines in product quality, customer loyalty, and market performance, potentially leading to job losses and economic stagnation in the region. This study is therefore crucial as it explores key sub-variables such as continuous improvement, teamwork, customer focus, and process optimisation. By examining these areas, the research aims to provide insights that can help automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria reduce waste, engage employees, retain customers, and expand operations, thereby supporting their growth and sustainability.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to explore the relationship between total quality management and organisational growth of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.
2. Determine the relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Total Quality Management**

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive and integrated management approach that emphasizes the attainment of excellence in organizational performance through continuous improvement, employee empowerment, and customer satisfaction (Abdullahi, Shehu, Usman & Gumawa, 2020). It is a holistic philosophy that encompasses all aspects of an organization's operations, from strategic planning to daily activities, with the

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primary goal of delivering high-quality products or services that meet or exceed customer expectations (Chatterjee, Rana & Dwivedi, 2024). TQM recognizes that quality is not solely the responsibility of the quality control department, but rather a collective responsibility of all employees, from top management to frontline staff. This approach fosters a culture of collaboration, innovation, and learning, where employees are encouraged to identify and solve problems, and where continuous improvement is ingrained in the organization's DNA (Ekemam & Njoku, 2020). By adopting TQM, organizations strive to create a seamless and efficient system that adds value to customers, stakeholders, and the organization itself, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness (Kura, Abubakar & Salleh, 2020).

Total quality management is a management approach driven by data that emphasizes the systematic identification, measurement, analysis, and enhancement of organizational processes to achieve significant results. This definition underscores the importance of utilizing statistical tools, benchmarking, and other analytical methods to comprehend and optimize intricate processes, eliminate waste, reduce variability, and improve organizational capabilities (Ofoegbu & Eromosele, 2024). The process-focused nature of TQM acknowledges that organizational performance is predominantly influenced by the effectiveness and efficiency of its underlying processes, and through enhancing these processes, organizations can attain substantial improvements in productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction (Orishede, 2020). By applying TQM principles, organizations can streamline their operations, reduce cycle times, improve supply chain management, and enhance overall organizational agility, thereby positioning themselves for success in today's fast-paced and competitive business environment. This definition emphasizes the critical role of data-driven decision-making, employee involvement, and continuous learning in driving organizational excellence (Permana, Purba & Rizkiyah, 2021).

Total Quality Management can also be viewed as a values-based leadership approach that emphasizes the creation of a culture of excellence, driven by shared values, vision, and purpose. This view recognizes that TQM is not just a set of tools or techniques, but a fundamental mindset shift that requires leaders to adopt a long-term perspective, prioritize employee development, and foster an environment of trust, openness, and collaboration (Shwedeh, Aldabbagh, Aburayya & Uppilappatta, 2023). TQM leaders recognize that organizational success is inextricably linked to the well-being and engagement of their employees, and that by empowering employees to take ownership of quality and improvement initiatives, organizations can unlock the full potential of their human capital (Ughamadu, Ezeaku & Nwogbo, 2024). By embracing TQM, organizations commit to creating a workplace culture characterized by mutual respect, continuous learning, and a relentless pursuit of excellence, thereby ensuring that quality becomes an integral part of the organization's fabric, rather than a separate initiative or programme (Udofia, Adejare, Olaore & Udofia, 2021).

## **Continuous Improvement**

Continuous improvement (CI) is a philosophy and methodology that emphasizes ongoing effort to improve products, services, and processes. It involves a proactive and incremental approach to identifying and solving problems, eliminating waste, and optimizing workflows (Lameijer, Boer, Antony & Does, 2023). CI recognizes that organizations are dynamic systems, and that constant adaptation and learning are necessary to remain competitive. This approach fosters a culture of innovation, experimentation, and learning, where employees are empowered to identify opportunities for improvement and implement changes (Odiboh, Nwosu, Ekanem & Oyedepo, 2022). By embracing CI, organizations strive to create a seamless and efficient system that adds value to customers, stakeholders, and the organization itself (Rufus, Festus & Dada, 2022).

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Benchmarking, best practices, and analytical tools are some of the data-driven tactics used in continuous improvement, which promotes both small-scale and significant advances (Ayodeji, Emmanuel & Olajiire, 2021). Planning, execution, assessment, and refinement are all part of the cyclical process of continuous improvement (CI), which is commonly modelled using Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control (DMAIC) or Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) (Monday, Argozie, Bello & Unam, 2022). Given that chances for improvement exist beyond organisational borders, this strategy recognises and promotes collaboration, communication, and cross-functional teamwork. Businesses may foster a culture of continuous improvement by incorporating CI into day-to-day operations. This helps them maintain their competitive edge, satisfy customers, and engage employees in a dynamic business environment (Hilman, Ali & Gorondutse, 2020).

### **Team Work**

Teamwork is a collaborative and coordinated effort among individuals with diverse skills, expertise, and perspectives to achieve a common goal or objective. It involves sharing responsibilities, communicating effectively, and leveraging each other's strengths to produce outcomes that surpass individual capabilities (Ayodeji, Emmanuel & Olajiire, 2021). Teamwork fosters an environment of mutual respect, trust, and open communication, where team members feel valued, empowered, and motivated to contribute their best (Shwedeh, Aldabbagh, Aburayya & Uppilappatta, 2023). Enhancing teamwork, organizations encourage active listening, constructive feedback, and collective problem-solving, leading to enhanced creativity, innovation, and decision-making. Effective teamwork facilitates knowledge sharing, skill development, and cross-functional learning, enabling team members to grow professionally and personally (Sanusi & Babatunde, 2020).

Teamwork is a synergistic process that amplifies individual contributions, builds on collective strengths, and mitigates individual weaknesses. It covers a shared commitment to achieving shared objectives, demonstrating flexibility, adaptability, and resilience in the face of challenges or obstacles (Permana, Purba & Rizkiyah, 2021). Teamwork encourages active participation, fosters accountability, and promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility among team members. Improving teamwork, organizations cultivate a culture of collaboration, cooperation, and interdependence, enabling them to respond effectively to changing circumstances, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and overcome complex challenges (Simanjuntak, Putri, Yuliati & Sabri, 2020). Teamwork drives organizational performance, enhances employee engagement and job satisfaction, and fosters a positive and productive work environment that benefits all stakeholders (Ofoegbu & Eromosele, 2024).

### **Organizational Growth**

Organizational growth refers to the strategic and systematic expansion of an organization's capabilities, resources, and market presence to achieve long-term sustainability and competitiveness. It is a fostering culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and learning, where employees are empowered to develop new skills, explore novel solutions, and drive business development (Verma & Sharma, 2024). Organizational growth encompasses various dimensions, including revenue expansion, market share increase, product/service diversification, geographical expansion, and enhancement of organizational capabilities (Shwedeh, Aldabbagh, Aburayya & Uppilappatta, 2023). Effective growth strategies prioritize alignment with the organization's mission, vision, and values, ensuring that expansion is balanced, sustainable, and beneficial to all stakeholders. By embracing Organizational growth, companies can enhance their industry position, increase brand recognition, and improve profitability (Sanusi & Babatunde, 2020).



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Organizational growth is a transformative process that enables companies to adapt, evolve, and thrive in dynamic environments. It is continuous assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats, and strategic positioning to capitalize on emerging trends and technologies. This process fosters organizational agility, resilience, and responsiveness, allowing companies to pivot quickly in response to changing market conditions (Rufus, Festus & Dada, 2022). Organizational growth encourages leaders to adopt a forward-thinking perspective, invest in research and development, and cultivate partnerships that drive innovation and expansion. By prioritizing growth, organizations can attract and retain top talent, foster a culture of excellence, and establish a strong reputation as industry leaders (Oranefo, 2022).

Organizational growth can be viewed as a holistic and multifaceted concept that encompasses not only financial metrics but also social, environmental, and human dimensions. Sustainable growth is inextricably linked to the well-being of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community. This perspective emphasizes the importance of responsible business practices, ethical decision-making, and environmental stewardship (Permana, Purba & Rizkiyah, 2021). Organizational growth strategies focus on creating long-term value, promoting social impact, and ensuring that expansion is environmentally sustainable. In adopting this integrated approach, organizations can ensure that growth is balanced, equitable, and conducive to creating a better future for all stakeholders, while also contributing to the greater good (Shuaib & He, 2023).

### **Business Expansion**

Business expansion can be viewed as the strategic enlargement of a company's operations, market presence, and revenue streams through various growth initiatives. It covers extending product or service offerings, entering new geographic markets, increasing production capacity, or enhancing existing infrastructure to boost competitiveness and profitability (Oluwafemi & Okon, 2018). Business expansion can occur through organic means, such as internal development or innovation, or through inorganic means, like mergers, acquisitions, or strategic partnerships. Effective expansion strategies prioritize market research, competitive analysis, and risk assessment to ensure alignment with the company's mission, vision, and values (Kura, Abubakar & Salleh, 2020).

Business expansion is a dynamic and adaptive process that enables companies to capitalize on emerging opportunities, respond to shifting market trends, and stay ahead of competitors. It is continuous innovation, investment in research and development, and cultivation of strategic relationships to drive growth (Lameijer, Boer, Antony & Does, 2023). Business expansion fosters organizational agility, resilience, and responsiveness, allowing companies to navigate complex environments and pivot quickly in response to changing circumstances. Through focusing on business expansion, companies can enhance their industry position, increase brand recognition, improve profitability, and create sustainable long-term value for stakeholders. This growth-oriented mindset encourages entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and calculated risk-taking (Ekemam & Njoku, 2020).

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement represents the pinnacle of organizational aspiration, where individuals are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally invested in their work, fostering a culture of unbridled enthusiasm, unwavering motivation, and unrelenting dedication. This holistic state of being fully involved and committed is characterized by a profound sense of purpose, passion, and energy, driving individuals to excel, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to the organization's success (Ayodeji, Emmanuel & Olajiire, 2021). Employee engagement encompasses various dimensions, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being, all of which are intricately intertwined to create a rich tapestry of workplace experience. Effective

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engagement strategies prioritize open communication, recognition, empowerment, and opportunities for growth and development, ensuring that employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive. By cultivating Employee Engagement, organizations unlock the full potential of their human capital, unleashing a virtuous cycle of creativity, innovation, and productivity (Ali, Hilman & Gorondutse, 2020).

Employee engagement is a strategic organizational imperative that leverages human capital to drive performance, productivity, and competitiveness in an increasingly complex and dynamic business landscape. It creates work environment that supports autonomy, creativity, and collaboration, recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance, and providing opportunities for continuous learning and professional advancement (Abubakar, 2022). Employee engagement promotes a culture of trust, respect, and inclusivity, encouraging open feedback, constructive criticism, and active participation in decision-making processes. Investing in employee engagement, can enhance retention, reduce turnover, improve customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable business success. Moreover, engaged employees become ambassadors of the organization, championing its values, mission, and vision, and driving reputation and growth through their enthusiasm and commitment. As a result, employee engagement emerges as a critical differentiator, setting organizations apart from their competitors and positioning them for long-term success (Ayandele & Akpan, 2022).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Contingency Theory by Fred Fiedler (1993). Contingency theory is a management approach that recognizes the influence of situational variables on effective management. It emphasizes that good management practices can vary depending on factors such as leadership style, job design, decision-making participation, and organizational structure (Villoria, 2023). A contingency theory is an organizational theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Contingent leaders are flexible in choosing and adapting to succinct strategies to suit change in situation at a particular period in time in the running of the organization (Safari & Saleh, 2020).

### **Relevance of the Theory to the Present Study**

This theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational structures, processes, and leadership styles with environmental contingencies, such as technological advancements, market competition, and cultural factors. In the context of TQM, contingency theory suggests that automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria need to adapt their quality management practices to the specific demands of their environment, such as customer needs, supplier relationships, and regulatory requirements. By considering contingency factors, firms can design effective TQM strategies that enhance organizational growth, improve product quality, and increase competitiveness. Additionally, contingency theory can help the researcher understand how factors such as firm size, technology, and leadership style influence the implementation and success of TQM initiatives in the automobile industry in Southeast, Nigeria.

### **Empirical Review**

Ughamadu, Ezeaku and Nwogbo (2024) explored total quality management practices as predictors of teachers' organizational behaviour in public secondary schools in Anambra state, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The sample for this study consisted of 660 respondents made up of 132 principals and 528 teachers drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Two sets of instruments namely: "Total Quality Management Practices Questionnaire (TQMPQ) and "Teachers' Organizational Behaviour Scale

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(TOBS)’’ were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts. Simple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that incentive and teamwork practices are significant predictors of teachers’ organizational behaviour in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Shuaib and He (2023) explored the mediating effect of organisational learning and moderating role of organisational culture on the relationship between total quality management and innovation in Nigeria. The study applied a survey instrument of 459 manufacturing companies in Lagos, Ogun, and Osun states, Nigeria. The Partial Least Squares (PLS3) path modelling approach was applied to test the conceptual model. The result showed that soft and hard TQM practices are positively and significantly associated with innovation among Nigeria's manufacturing companies. Similarly, organisational learning mediated the relationship between soft and hard TQM practices and organisational innovation. Finally, the results indicated that organisational culture has a negative and insignificant moderating effect on the relationship between soft quality management practices and innovation.

Awolusi (2023) examined the effects of total quality management on customer service management in the Nigerian banking industry: An empirical analysis. The empirical study was conducted through a survey on six, out of the 22 banks that have implemented TQM due to the 2004 consolidation exercise of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). Using the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) 2001 award framework, factors manifesting customer service management were regressed on the key factors manifesting successful TQM. The results posit that, for TQM to be successfully implemented, workers must be allowed to set goals and performance monitoring, effective communication, commitment and support from the top management, careful alignment of corporate strategy with TQM strategy, clear and compelling TQM vision, constant review of TQM implementations to align with plans and budgets, effective process review and controls, quality improvement measurement systems and IT infrastructures.

Abubakar (2022) explored entrepreneurial orientation, total quality management, organisational learning and performance of SMEs in Nigeria: The moderating role of competitive intensity. Using a stratified random sampling, 714 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to owner-managers of SMEs operating in Kano and Kaduna in the north-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A number of 714 questionnaires were distributed. The hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Results supported the hypothesised main effects of entrepreneurial orientation, total quality management, and organisational learning on SME performance. Also, the competitive intensity was found to moderate the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation and SME performance.

Monday, Argozie, Bello and Unam (2022) investigated sustainable development of small and medium-scale enterprises through total quality management: Evidence from Nigeria. Data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaire to 50 purposively selected ISO-9000 certified SMEs in the oil and gas industry. Six tools of TQM (top management commitment, strategic planning, customer focus, employees’ involvement and empowerment, process management, and partnerships) were identified and their impact was measured on performance of the SMEs. Hierarchical regression analysis was used. The results showed that with the exception of employees’ involvement and empowerment, all other tools of TQM had significant impact on the performance of the SMEs.



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Abubakar and Mahmood (2022) examined firm resource advantage, total quality management, SME performance: Empirical evidence from Nigerian manufacturing firms. The current study examined whether the relationship between total quality management and SME performance depends upon firm resource advantage. Based on survey data collected from 212 SMEs, located in Kano metropolis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. Findings revealed that total quality management was significantly associated with SME performance. The results also indicated that the relationship between total quality management and SME performance was moderated by firm resource advantage.

Oluwafemi and Okon (2022) examined the nexus between total quality management, job satisfaction and employee work engagement in the food and beverage multinational company in Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design, quota, proportionate and simple random sampling were used to draw 300 participants from the study population, out of which 190 responded. Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to analyse the study data. Significant positive relationship was found between dimensions of TQM practices (leadership and management support, employee participation, training, reward and recognition, and customer focus), job satisfaction and employee work engagement.

Shodeine, Kusa, Odumu and Ijepe (2022) examined the impact of teamwork on employee engagement in primary and secondary schools: The Nigerian experience. To analyze the relationship among the variables, the study adopted the descriptive and explanatory research design, and a cross-sectional survey method using a survey questionnaire containing 29 items, with a 5-point Likert scale. The sample of 274 employees (both academic and non-academic) were selected using a simple random probability sampling technique. Multiple Regression was used to analyze data with the aid of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 23.0). Result showed that Communication, Leadership, and Situation Monitoring have a positive and significant relationship on Employee Engagement, while Team Structure and Mutual Support showed a negative direction but still maintained a significant relationship.

## **Gap in Literature**

Several studies have been carried out on total quality management and organizational growth but none of these reviewed studies ascertained the nexus between total quality management and organizational growth of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, through the following variables: continuous improvement, teamwork, customer focus, process optimization, business expansion, employee engagement, customer retention, and waste reduction. This study sought to conduct in-depth study on these variables and their relationships so as to provide valuable insights for organizations, employees and employers in effectively managing resources and achieving good performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. This involved questionnaires that were administered to the sizable segment of the population under study. This study chose this design because it provides first-hand primary data that were collated, and analyzed. Primary source was used. Primary data were obtained from the respondents of the chosen population through questionnaires.

## **Table 1: Population of the Study**

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S/N	Automobile Firms	Location	Staff Strength
1	Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM)	Anambra State	381
2	Anambra Motor Manufacturing Limited (ANAMMCO)	Enugu State	153
<b>Total</b>			<b>534</b>

Source: National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC), 2024.

The study adopted convenience non-probability sampling technique.

Taro Yamane technique was used to determine the sample size. The formula and workings are as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where N = population

n = Sample Size

e = error limit (0.05)

$$n = \frac{534}{1+534(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{534}{1+534(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{534}{1+1.335}$$

$$n = \frac{534}{2.335}$$

$$n = 229$$

Bowley's Proportional allocation formula was used for allocation of questionnaire. Formula and working are thus:

$$n_h = \frac{nN_h}{N}$$

Where n = total sample size.

N<sub>h</sub> = No. of items in each stratum in the population.

N = population size.

Application of the formula:

$$\text{Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM)} = \frac{381 \times 229}{534} = 163$$

$$\text{Anambra Motor Manufacturing Limited (ANAMMCO)} = \frac{153 \times 229}{534} = 66$$

Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to test the reliability of the instrument and the overall value showed 0.894. This showed that the instrument is reliable. Data were collected and presented in mathematical table based on frequency percentage. The data were analyzed using

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descriptive statistics and the hypotheses were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) at 5% level of significance.

**Decision Rule:** Accept the alternate hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) if calculated P-value is less than 0.05 ( $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ); otherwise accept the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total number of 229 questionnaires were distributed but 203 questionnaires were filled and retrieved.

**Table 2: Research Question 1: What is the relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?**

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Remark
1	I actively seek ways to improve the processes in my department.	203	3.58	Accepted
2	My suggestions for enhancing productivity are not implemented effectively.	203	2.34	Rejected
3	I receive the necessary training to improve my skills and performance continuously.	203	4.02	Accepted
4	My achievements in improving processes are recognized and rewarded.	203	3.60	Accepted
5	My department has a system for tracking and measuring progress on improvement initiatives.	203	1.98	Rejected
6	I am encouraged to contribute ideas for the growth of the organization.	203	4.27	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In table 2, all the items were addressing the first research question which is "What is the relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?" From the data analysis, items 1, 3, 4, and 6 obtained a mean rating above the criterion mean of 3.0 and items 2 and 5 obtained a mean rating below the criterion mean of 3.0. The result of the analysis indicated that majority of the respondents supported that continuous improvement relates with business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

**Table 3: Research Question 2: What is the relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?**

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Remark
7	My team members and I support each other to achieve common goals.	203	2.22	Accepted
8	I find it difficult to communicate openly with my teammates.	203	1.28	Rejected
9	I am disengaged and uncommitted when working on team projects.	203	3.27	Accepted
10	I am motivated to participate in team projects and initiatives.	203	3.42	Accepted
11	I am involved in decision-making processes that affect my team.	203	1.92	Rejected
12	My team celebrates successes and acknowledges individual contributions.	203	4.11	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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In table 3 all the items were addressing the second research question which is "What is the relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria?" From the data analysis, items 7, 9, 10 and 12 obtained a mean rating above the criterion mean of 3.0 and items 8 and 11 obtained a mean rating below the criterion mean of 3.0. The result of the analysis indicated that majority of the respondents supported that teamwork relates with employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

### Hypotheses Testing

**Decision Rule:** Accept the null hypothesis if P-value < 0.05; otherwise accept the alternate hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

**Table 4:** Relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

		Continuous Improvement	Business Expansion
Continuous Improvement	Pearson correlation	1	.882**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	203	203
Business Expansion	Pearson correlation	.882**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	203	203

**Source: SPSS version 27 Outputs.**

#### Result Summary

Table 4 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.882$   $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of 0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the study accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. This implies that the more automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria prioritize continuous improvement (example, innovating, enhancing processes, and upgrading skills), the more likely they are to experience business growth and expansion.

#### Hypothesis Two

Ho: There is no significant relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

Table 5: Relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

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		Teamwork	Employee Engagement
Teamwork	Pearson correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	203	203
Employee Engagement	Pearson correlation	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	203	203

**Source: SPSS version 27 Outputs.**

### Result Summary

Table 5 shows that there is a positive significant relationship between teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.701$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the study accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a positive significant relationship teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. The implication of this is that effective teamwork in automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria directly contributes to increased employee engagement, leading to improved productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance.

### Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.882$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the study accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. This finding agrees with the result of Ike and Onuoha (2021) in their study on continuous improvement and business performance of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two indicated that there is a positive significant relationship teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.701$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the study accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a positive significant relationship teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. This finding is in congruent with the result of Shodeine, Kusa, Odumu and Ijepe (2022) in their study on impact of teamwork on employee engagement in primary and secondary schools: The Nigerian experience.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Findings

1. Hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and business expansion of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.882$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).
2. Hypothesis two indicated that there is a positive significant relationship teamwork and employee engagement in automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria, with  $r = 0.701$ ,  $n = 203$  and  $p$  value of  $0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).



## **Original Article**

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between total quality management and organisational growth of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria. This study's findings suggest that implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria leads to significant organizational growth, implying that adopting TQM can enhance productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness, ultimately driving business success and expansion in the region.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that:

1. Automobile firms in Southeast Nigeria need to prioritize and invest in continuous improvement strategies to drive business growth and expansion.
2. Management of automobile firms need to foster teamwork initiatives within your automobile firm to boost employee engagement and productivity.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between Total Quality Management (TQM) practices and organisational growth in the automobile industry in Southeast, Nigeria. Specifically, the findings reveal that continuous improvement, teamwork, customer focus, and process optimisation are significant predictors of business expansion, employee engagement, customer retention, and waste reduction, respectively. The study's results underscore the importance of adopting TQM practices in enhancing organisational growth and performance in the region's automobile sector, thereby filling a geographical gap in the literature. The findings have implications for policymakers, managers, and practitioners seeking to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of automobile firms in Southeast, Nigeria.

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