

# Quality Management and Sales Growth of Selected Manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Evidence has shown that SMEs unimpressive performance in Nigeria has been traced to dearth of continuous improvement practice, poor employee commitment and lack of customer focus truncating the sales growth and SMEs competitiveness. This study thus investigated the effect of quality management on sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. The study employed cross sectional survey research design where eight hundred and forty-four copies of the research instruments were administered to selected respondents who were top-level senior officers, supervisors and managers from selected indigenous SMEs manufacturing companies located in Port Harcourt, Rivers and Aba in Abia states, Nigeria. The result of multiple regression analysis revealed that quality management (continuous improvement, customer focus, employee commitment, and research and development) had significant effect on the sales growth (Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = 0.322; F(5,834) = 80.689, p<0.05) of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba. The study concluded that the combination of quality management dimensions affects sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that businesses especially those into manufacturing should implement quality management as it is a key that facilitate sale growth.

**KEYWORDS:** *Quality management, Continuous improvement, Customer focus, Leadership commitment, Employee commitment, Research and development, Sales growth*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sales growth is defined as the amount a company derived from sales compared to a previous corresponding period in which the later sales exceed the former. Fuf (2015) explained that recent cases of corporate failure in the 21st Century had prompted shareholders and other stakeholders to strictly monitor sales growth of their firms as improved sales are the primary aim of any business. Adeoye and Adebayo (2017) observed that sale growth as fundamental to manufacturing SMEs in Nigeria as it is a means through which SMEs performance is facilitated. Additionally, without an upsurge in sales growth, most manufacturing SMEs cannot compete favorably in the global market. Hence academic attention has been drawn to the sources of business growth as a subject to be considered. Brynjolfsson and Simester (2016) noticed the development of an organization is basically to expand, making the organization greater, extending its market and ultimately making the organization more gainful in the area of sales growth. However, Fuf (2015) hypothesizes that measuring sales growth is possible by looking at several pertinent statistics, such as overall sales, number of staff, market share and turnover.

Marugensan and Jayanth (2016) defined quality management (QM) as frameworks that take many forms and descriptions ranging from total quality management (TQM), business excellence models (BEMs) and self-assessment models. The most common framework adopted by most of the SMEs globally is the ISO 9008. In Nigeria, the Standard

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Organization of Nigeria SON is the only recognized framework in charge of quality management. They are vested with the responsibility to design and to demonstrate the capability of industry to control the processes that determine the acceptability of the products as a source of competitive advantage (Adebanjo, 2015). The implementation of QM generates improved products and services, reduced costs, more satisfied customers and employees, and improved firm bottom line. It has the potential to change a company from being inadequate with autocratic management and structural control to an environment of teamwork, focusing on the continuous improvement of its internal and external activities (Mac-Kingsley, 2019). Equally, failure to imbibe and implement the standard organization of Nigeria SON policy has negative consequence on SMEs competitive advantage, firm size, and sales growth (Ohikere, 2018). To buttress the QM effect, a report of the National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) (2018) showed that SMEs performance in Nigeria has deteriorated from 16% in 2017 to 15% in 2018 owing to dearth continuous improvement practice, poor employee commitment and lack of customer focus truncating the sales growth and SMEs competitiveness. Sequel to the foregoing discussion, the focus of this study is to investigate how quality management affect sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria.

## 2. Literature Review

Quality management is an embracing philosophy of management which aims at coordinating all functions of organizations that aligned to meet customer expectations and the organization's objectives (Jones, 2018). According to Zhang (2017), quality management has turned out to be a key source of maximizing firms' value in the long run. Adeoye (2015) view quality management as a system established to demonstrate an exact alignment with the organization's strategic plans by promoting quality enhancement cycles for all essential activities. Hence, quality management practitioner needs to control not only costs but also quality in the supply chain to be successful in their business activities (Ravishankar & Santosh, 2018). Hu (2016) perceived that QM provides a systematic approach towards quality improvement by merging service and product specification with customer performance to facilitate specifications with zero defects. The concept of QM played an essential role in terms of reducing client complaints.

### 2.1.1. Continuous Improvement

Maggie (2016) defined continuous improvement as the wheel of the organisational aim at driving improvement. Naney (2018) defined continuous improvement as a systematic effort to seek out and apply new ways of doing work actively and repeatedly making process and other business activities to improve. In essence, continuous improvement emphasizes on existing audit processes, management reviews of business performance, and sort to improve on the processes based on the identified results. Hsin (2018) noted that the continuous improvement cycle consists of establishing customer requirements, meeting the requirements, measuring success, and continuing to check customers' needs to find areas demanding improvements. According to Lean (2017), continuous improvement has some unique benefit to the organizations. Continuous improvement helps an organization in the assurance of quality, the satisfaction of customers, reducing cost, and increasing efficiency. Also, it promotes organizational competitiveness in the global market (Wanyoike, 2016).

### 2.1.2. Customer Focus

Sani and Mukhtar (2013) defined customer focus as a strategy to attain competitive advantages. It is seen as a better way to improve quality through different methods in growing and monitoring products and to provide services. Abbas (2018) defines customer focus as economic assets that play a central role in quality management practices though they are not captured in the balance sheet record, their importance cannot be overemphasis as management count on satisfying their needs because seeking the customer-driven quality is considered by many organizations and writers as a major contribution to the organizational bottom line (Akhahome, 2017).

The success of the company in the longer term depends on how effectively it focuses on its customers on a constant and regular basis. Equally, customer focus help to promote improved quality of the product, which is said to positively increase firm performance (Mokhtar, 2013). The effect of QM processes will produce a positive impact on employee satisfaction, commitment, and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, a QM company focused not just on the quality of the product, but also on the quality of its customers in order to maintain an effective management objective (Mohammed & Bhuiyan, 2014).

### 2.1.3. Leadership Commitment

Nascimento (2016) defined leadership commitment as the capabilities to motivate and inspire individuals or group of individual to make a willing and voluntary obligation for the purposes of fulfilling or surpassing the organizational goals. Ivan and Munja (2014) defined leadership commitment as Top management practical, goal-oriented act that focuses on creating and implementing an original vision. Jonathan (2017) defined Leadership commitment as the degree to which the leaders feel devoted to their organization. Javed (2015) refer to leadership commitment as the most important factors that facilitate the successful implementation of quality management principle. Kumar (2016) advance that leadership commitment generates a trustworthy environment that influences employees to operate beyond formal power and bring about intense changes. Also, leadership commitment permits managers and owners to evaluate and compare employees in ways that are relevant to the business objectives. Coordinated leaders offer room for investors to patronize the business.

### 2.1.4. Employee Commitment to Quality

Dixit and Bhati (2012) defined employee commitment to quality as employees who faithfully labor with his total emotional attachment to the organization by performing their jobs independently. Danica (2016) defined employees' commitment to quality as the degree to which the employee feels devoted to organizational sustainability. He further stressed that commitment to quality will be heightened when workers are consulted and allow to participate in decision making. In such situations the level of commitment to quality and productivity will amplified Becker-Blease, Kaen, Etebari and Baumann (2018) expressed that the achievement of organization competitiveness is determined by the organization ability to create an atmosphere of commitment and cooperation for its employees through a policy that facilitates employee satisfaction. Bhupindina (2018) agreed to this view by positing that employees who are highly committed to product superiority contribute their time and energy to the pursuit of organizational goals and objectives. More also, employees who share a commitment to the organization and their collective wellbeing are more suitable to generate the social capital that facilitates organizational learning.

### 2.1.5. Research and Development

Zhenji, Yue and Jian (2018) defined research and development (R&D) as the process by which an organization work to obtain new knowledge designed to create new technology, product and services to enhance the organizational bottom line. To succeed in this competitive and tough business environment, organizations are striving to increase the demand for research and development as they are indices that drive quality product and business performance. Erdal and Ferdi (2015) view research and development as creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge of people and to devise a way of solving problem utilizing the new knowledge. This definition is a shift from the human cognition; culture and society.

Beld (2014) perceived that research and development (R&D) add value and knowledge to existing products, creation of new products and innovation of the production processes of companies, thereby improving firm levels of competitiveness. In small businesses, R&D tends to focus more on product improvement, which will lead to increase

productivity because of budget and cost limitations. Moreso, larger businesses may be able to dedicate more time and resources to R&D to introduce new products as well as improve existing ones (Shamimul, Azim, Abdulahi, Hassan & Gorendatse, 2017).

**2.1.6. Sales Growth**

Sales growth relates to an additional income that the company generates (Rosario, Francesca, Valck & Bijmolt (2016). Ansoff and Suvillan (2017) define sales growth as the amount a company develops from sales equated to a previous, corresponding period of time in which the latter sales. Stremersch and Lemmens (2019) pinpointed that sales growth is an essential stage of development for all profit-making organizations. Hence academic attention has been drawn to the sources of business growth as a subject to be considered. OrKun and Adnan (2013) belief that sales growth as a measure of firm performance is based on the understanding that sales are an antecedent to the attainment of sustainable competitive advantage as the sales growth rate is used to capture firm performance because QM adoption is resting essentially on sales growth orientation (Ansoff & Suvillan, 2017). Sales growth promotes the organization level of competitiveness in the global market. Also, it allows firms that implement quality management to enjoy economies of scale.

**2.2. Empirical Review**

Evaluation of the linkage between quality management and sales growth reveals that different results have been obtained by scholars (Odaló, Njuguna & Achoki, 2016; Gimenez & Kaynak, 2018; Stremersch & Lemmens, 2019; Moreno & Casillas, 2016). OrKun and Adnan (2013) conducted a study and utilized continuous improvement and employee commitment as a dimension of quality management and found a significant positive effect of quality management on sales growth (Bhupindina, 2018). Nascimento (2016) conducted a study using customer focus, employee commitment as quality management dimensions and found a significant positive effect of quality management on sales growth. Brynjolfsson and Simester (2016) utilized customer focus and continuous improvement as dimensions of quality management effect on sales growth. They found a significant positive effect of quality management dimensions

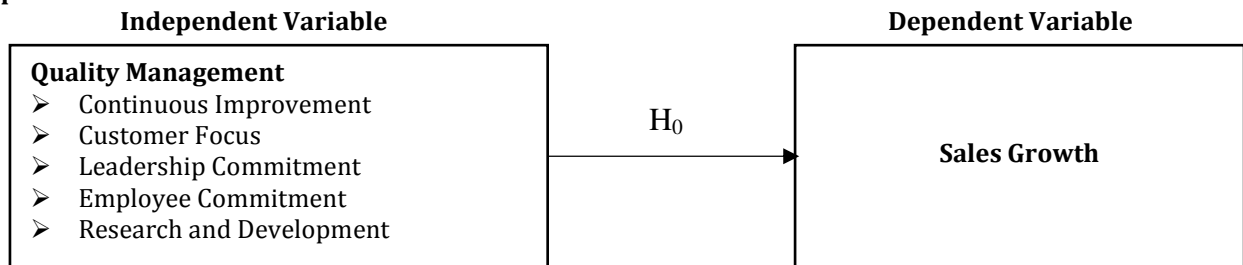
on sales growth. The significant positive effect of quality management on sales growth was identified in the studies of (Fonseca, Pinto & Brito, 2017). Stremersch and Lemmens (2019) found that sales growth can only be affected by quality management based on the implementation of the 14 approaches of Crosby (1979) which includes the commitment of top and intermediate management, measurement of quality indicators, evaluation of quality costs, taking corrective action, training, philosophy of zero-defects, the setting of clear objectives setting and a scheme for employee recognition. However, some studies were conducted with variation in finding on the effect of quality management dimensions on sales growth (Fut 2015; Odalo, Njuguna & Achoki, 2016) Conversely, some authors found a negative effect of quality management on sales growth (Gilles, 2015; Stephane, 2015). Given the foregoing, this study proposed that:

*H<sub>0</sub>: Quality management dimensions have no significant effect on sales growth of selected Manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria.*

**2.3. Theoretical Review**

A number of studies have been done to evaluate existing theories and to improve the understanding of quality management and sales growth. However, this study draws on one perspective; the Quality Control Trilogy Theory, to substantiate the effect of quality management on sales growth of selected Manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. The theory was propounded by Joseph Juran in 1920. The interrelationship of the theory to the study holds that product quality management is the responsibility of the leader's commitment to facilitate organizational performance. More also, the quality practice of organizations is a function of adequate control of the resources. Lending support to Quality Control Trilogy Theory, Jorge, et al. (2014) pointed out that Juran's trilogy is a system for managing not just quality, but also for managing innovation, and provides hands-on operational information about how to organize and to implement a quality management program within an organization. Moreover, Jayanth (2016) believe that trilogy theory is the most simple, complete, and pure representation of managing for quality.

**Conceptual Model**



**Figure 1: Quality Management and Sales Growth**

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model based upon the review of literature and it shows the effect of quality management(Continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment, and research and development) on sales growth.

**3. Methodology**

The study adopted cross sectional survey research design and 844 employees from 24 selected indigenous manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt Rivers State and Aba in Abia State, Nigeria was utilized using total enumeration method. The utilization of the total enumeration method is on the foundation that scholar such as Mokhtar (2013) used it in a similar study while investigating total quality management practices and organizational Performance at Intravenous Infusions Limited Koforidua. A validated questionnaire of 6-point Likert scale structured from very high to very low. A total of 795 copies were returned,

which represents 92.7% response rate. The study employed a multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis formulated. SPSS version 26 was used to analyse the descriptive and inferential statistics.

**4. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion**

Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse and test the hypothesis. The results of the analysis and parameter estimates obtained are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Summary Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of Sales Growth on Quality Management Dimensions of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria**

Variables	B	T	Sig.	F(5,834)	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F(Sig)
(Constant)	6.539	3.775	.000	80.869	0.327	0.322	0.000
Continuous Improvement	.079	2.048	.041				
Customer Focus	.220	6.351	.000				
Leadership Commitment	-.051	-.926	.355				
Employees Commitment	.472	11.890	.000				
Research and Development	.110	2.631	.009				

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Continuous Improvement, Customer Focus, Leadership Commitment, Employee Commitment, Research and Development

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2021

Table 4.1 presents the multiple regression results for the effect of quality management dimensions (continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development) on sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. The results revealed that continuous improvement ( $\beta = 0.079$ ,  $t = 2.048$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ), customer focus ( $\beta = 0.220$ ,  $t = 6.351$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.472$ ,  $t = 11.890$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and research and development ( $\beta = 0.110$ ,  $t = 2.631$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) have positive and significant effects on sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. On the other hand, leadership commitment ( $\beta = -0.051$ ,  $t = -0.926$ ,  $p = 0.355$ ) has a negative and insignificant effect on sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. This implies that continuous improvement, customer focus, employee commitment and research and development are significant predictors of sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria.

The results reveal that quality management dimensions (continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development) explained 32.2% of the variation in sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs ( $Adj. R^2 = 0.322$ ). However, the model did explain 67.8% of the variation in sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria, implying that there are other factors associated with sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba were not captured in the model. The result indicated that the set of independent variables were important factors that need to be enhanced to sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba in the study area. Furthermore, the result shows that the overall model was significant in predicting the sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba ( $F_{(5,834)} = 80.689$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The multiple regression model from the results is thus expressed as:

$$SG = 6.539 + 0.079CI + 0.220CF + 0.472EC + 0.110RD \dots\dots\dots \text{Eq. (i)}$$

Where:

- SG = Sales Growth
- CI = Continuous Improvement
- CF = Customer Focus
- EC = Employee Commitment
- RD = Research and Development

From the above regression equation, it was revealed that holding continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development constant (at zero), sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba will be 6.539. This implies that if continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development take on the values of zero (do not exist), there would be 6.639 times level of repetition of the sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. The model shows that a unit change in continuous improvement, customer focus, employee commitment and research and development respectively will lead to 0.079, 0.220, 0.472, and 0.110 unit changes in sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs. The results reveal that employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.472$ ,  $t = 11.890$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was the most significant predictor (among quality management dimensions) of sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs while customer focus was the next most significant predictor of sales growth of the selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria ( $\beta = 0.220$ ,  $t = 6.351$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that quality management dimensions (continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development) have no significant effect on sales growth at selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria was rejected.

**Discussion**

The results of the regression analysis showed that quality management dimensions (continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership commitment, employee commitment and research and development) have

significant effect on sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria. The result of this study is in consonance with the findings of various empirical studies on the effect of Quality management dimensions on sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs. Sime,

Shawriez and Cornelia (2018) found significant effect of quality management on sales growth. They reiterated that the level of success among organizations that have implemented QM practice is high because thirty-two out of thirty-five organizations that have implemented quality management practice were prosperous. In another study, Odalo, Njuguna and Achoki (2016) found a significant effect of quality management on sales growth. Other scholars who conducted a similar study and found a positive effect of quality management on sales growth is (Gimenez & Kaynak, 2018). Adusa-poku (2015) discovered firms that strategically focus on customer expectations experience a high level of performance and advanced sales growth in their operational activities. Fuf (2015) found a positive effect of quality management on sales growth. The findings of this study provided support for quality control trilogy theory by Juran 1920 and quality improvement theory by Deming 1940s. QM is significant to control the process and enhance quality systems and product design. Additionally, quality management emphasizes on prevention of product defects, rather than post-factum inspection.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study evaluated the effect of quality management on sales growth of selected manufacturing SMEs. The study employed cross sectional survey research with the use of questionnaires to purposively selected employees comprise of top-level senior officers, supervisors and managers from selected indigenous SMEs manufacturing companies that are in charge of quality control. The results of the data analyzed through multiple regression revealed that there was positive significant effect of quality management (continuous improvement, customer focus, employee commitment, and research and development) on sales growth indicating that the combination of quality management sub-variables was statistically significant in explaining changes in sales growth. Further, the result also revealed that attractive quality management was an important strategy to enhance performance of SMEs through sales growth. The outcome of this study also revealed that selected manufacturing SMEs in Port Harcourt and Aba, Nigeria use different quality management approaches to improve their sales performance. The study recommended that businesses especially those into manufacturing should implement quality management as it is a key that facilitate sale growth.

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