



## Exploring the role of total quality management in enhancing strategic decision-making in Jamaican Manufacturing Companies

Sejae Burey

DBA Student, Texila American University, Guyana, Texila American University, Guyana

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examined the role of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in enhancing strategic decision-making and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing firms. It focused on how TQM implementation influences managerial decisions and guides resource allocation through performance metrics.

**Methodology/Design:** A qualitative research design was adopted, with data collected from 20 participants, including managers, quality officers, and staff, using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key patterns and themes, while ensuring trustworthiness and validity through systematic coding and ethical considerations.

**Findings:** The results revealed that TQM practices improved decision clarity by providing reliable data, enhanced strategic choices through employee involvement, and ensured alignment with organizational objectives via leadership commitment. Performance metrics guided resource allocation, improved operational efficiency, and fostered continuous improvement, supporting more effective strategic and operational management.

**Implications:** The study highlights that TQM serves as both a strategic resource and a management tool, enabling firms to make informed decisions, optimize resource use, and improve operational outcomes. Managers should strengthen TQM systems, engage employees, and align practices with organizational conditions to maximize benefits.

**Originality/Value:** This research provides new insights into the integration of TQM and strategic management in the context of Jamaican manufacturing, linking practical TQM practices with theoretical frameworks such as Resource-Based View and Contingency Theory. It contributes to literature on TQM's strategic and operational value in developing economies.

**Keywords:** Total quality management, strategic decision-making, operational efficiency, jamaican manufacturing, resource-based view, contingency theory

### Introduction

Manufacturing companies in Jamaica face many challenges in today's business world. Global markets have become more competitive, cost pressures are high, and customers expect better quality products all the time. In this setting, companies must make smart decisions that will help them stay profitable and grow. One way they try to improve operations and outcomes is through Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM is a management philosophy that focuses on improving all parts of an organization so that products and services meet customer needs and perform better (Aichouni, Silva, & Ferreira, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>. Firms that use TQM try to involve everyone, from top leaders to workers on the factory floor, in improving quality and processes.

In many industries around the world, TQM has been linked with better performance. Research has shown that TQM can give companies an edge by raising product quality and improving internal systems that guide everyday decisions (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) <sup>[22]</sup>. Good quality management gives managers reliable data and clearer insights, which can help them make choices that reduce waste, cut costs, and improve customer satisfaction. These choices become even more important in manufacturing, where production processes, supply chains, and customer demands are all moving targets. TQM supports a more disciplined approach to managing these areas by using feedback, teamwork, and ongoing improvements. Through this structured focus on quality, companies can base their strategies on facts and real performance indicators rather than guesswork (Aichouni *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>.

In Jamaica, manufacturing remains a key part of the economy with exports, local production, and employment

all tied to how well companies perform. Some studies and local industry reports suggest that Jamaican firms sometimes struggle with quality issues, leadership challenges, and the ability to adjust to shifting market conditions. Despite the recognized benefits of TQM globally, many Jamaican manufacturing companies continue to face challenges in translating quality practices into strategic decisions. Leaders often make important business choices without fully leveraging TQM tools or data, which can result in inefficiencies, wasted resources, and lost opportunities for growth. The gap between quality initiatives and actual decision-making raises concerns about how well TQM is integrated into strategic management in these firms (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) <sup>[22]</sup>. Understanding this gap is essential because it affects competitiveness, operational efficiency, and the long-term sustainability of the manufacturing sector in Jamaica. The use of TQM in Jamaican manufacturing firms has not been studied deeply from the perspective of decisions made by leaders and managers. There is a need to learn more about how TQM practices influence strategic choices in these firms, especially about quality planning, leadership involvement, and the use of quality data in daily decisions (Aichouni *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>. Many researchers argue that strong quality practices support better choices across supply chain organization, product development, and customer service areas.

Focusing on Jamaican firms, this research can show how quality management practices help managers think more clearly about long-term goals, allocate resources better, and improve production processes. The findings could also help

policymakers, business leaders, and quality consultants understand how TQM fits into strategic planning in a local context that has its own economic pressures and market conditions. It can provide guidance for improving decision-making processes, strengthening operational efficiency, and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the manufacturing sector in Jamaica.

### Significance of The Study

#### Significance of the Study

This study is important for several reasons. First, it gives Jamaican manufacturing companies a chance to reflect on their quality practices from a strategic viewpoint. Most research on TQM focuses on performance outcomes like productivity or customer satisfaction, but fewer studies look at how TQM affects the way leaders decide what direction the business should take (Aichouni *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>. Understanding this link can help companies make better plans, respond faster to change, and improve their competitive position in both local and international markets. Second, the results will help business managers see how TQM principles shape their daily decisions. For example, TQM tools that promote better data collection and process reviews can make leadership meetings more grounded in real performance results rather than intuition (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) <sup>[22]</sup>. Real examples from local companies can show how these practices work in real life, and what challenges leaders face when they try to use quality information for strategic choices. These insights can guide managers in other firms who want to adopt or strengthen TQM in their own companies.

Third, the study can help educators and trainers who work with local businesses. They need to know what skills and knowledge managers lack when using TQM for strategy. Training programs can then be designed so that quality managers and executives learn how to use quality tools and data more effectively in guiding long-term planning (Aichouni *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>. This, in turn, strengthens the capacity of the manufacturing sector to innovate, adapt, and grow.

Finally, the study may inform policymakers and industry associations about the barriers to quality-based decision processes in Jamaican manufacturing. Policymakers can then create support schemes or quality standards initiatives that help firms adopt TQM more widely, improving the image of the Jamaican manufacturing sector and supporting economic growth (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) <sup>[22]</sup>.

### Study Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to quantitatively assess the impact of TQM practices on strategic decision-making in Jamaican manufacturing companies. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between the implementation of TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms and;
2. Investigate the effect of TQM-driven performance metrics on resource allocation and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing companies.

### Literature Review

#### Theoretical Foundation

For this study, two theories are particularly relevant in exploring the relationship between TQM practices and strategic decision-making in Jamaican manufacturing firms.

### Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View or RBV Theory argues that organizations gain a competitive advantage when they make the best use of resources that are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate (Barney, 1991) <sup>[5]</sup>. In relation to Total Quality Management, quality management practices such as employee training, standardization of processes, and performance monitoring based on data can be considered strategic resources. When these resources are managed effectively, they enable managers to make informed decisions, improve operational efficiency, and respond well to changes in the market. By applying the RBV Theory, this study highlights that Total Quality Management is not only an operational approach but also a strategic tool that strengthens the ability of managers to make effective decisions (Barney, 1991) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory suggests that an organization can be effective only when its management practices match both internal and external conditions (Fiedler, 1964). In the manufacturing sector, decisions made by managers are influenced by factors such as competition in the market, technological developments, and the skills and capabilities of the workforce. Total Quality Management provides a structured approach that helps managers adapt to these conditions by monitoring performance, identifying inefficiencies, and promoting continuous improvement. Contingency Theory therefore supports the idea that Total Quality Management improves the effectiveness of decision making when its practices are aligned with the specific needs and challenges facing manufacturing firms in Jamaica (Fiedler, 1964).

### Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management or TQM is a management approach that focuses on improving all aspects of an organization to meet customer expectations and enhance performance. TQM emphasizes continuous improvement, employee involvement, and process standardization as key strategies to enhance efficiency and quality (Aichouni, Silva, & Ferreira, 2024) <sup>[1]</sup>. Organizations that implement TQM effectively are able to reduce errors, increase customer satisfaction, and make better use of resources. Studies show that TQM is not only an operational tool but also a strategic asset that supports decision-making and long-term sustainability. By integrating quality practices across departments, firms can ensure that improvements are consistent and that managers have reliable information for planning and resource allocation.

### Strategic Decision-Making

Strategic decision-making involves choosing actions that determine the direction and performance of an organization over the long term. It requires managers to evaluate information, consider alternatives, and anticipate outcomes before committing resources (Anthony & Govindarajan, 2020) <sup>[4]</sup>. In manufacturing firms, strategic decisions can affect production efficiency, market competitiveness, and customer satisfaction. Research suggests that using structured management frameworks, such as TQM, provides managers with accurate data and insights, which support informed and effective decision-making (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) <sup>[22]</sup>. Effective strategic decision-making is essential for organizations to adapt to market changes, reduce risks, and achieve operational excellence.

### **Jamaican Manufacturing Companies**

The manufacturing sector in Jamaica plays a crucial role in the national economy, contributing to employment, exports, and local production. Jamaican manufacturing companies operate in a competitive environment, facing challenges such as high production costs, evolving market demands, and technological constraints (Brown & Jackson, 2019) [8]. Despite these challenges, there is growing interest in adopting quality management practices to improve efficiency and competitiveness. Studies indicate that while some firms have embraced modern management approaches like TQM, many still face difficulties in fully integrating these practices into strategic planning and daily operations (Psomas & Kafetzopoulos, 2015) [22]. Understanding the local context is therefore critical for exploring how management practices can enhance decision-making and overall performance in Jamaican manufacturing firms.

### **Relationship between the implementation of TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms**

Many studies around the world show that Total Quality Management is more than a set of tools. It is a management approach that helps firms improve quality, performance, and decision quality. TQM involves leadership commitment, employee engagement, process management, and customer focus. These elements can shape how managers think and make decisions in complex environments where quality and market demands matter. Research shows that when TQM is implemented well, managers gain reliable data and better insights, which support smart choices in planning, resource use, and operational direction. This evidence suggests a link between TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions in manufacturing contexts (EA Journals, 2023) [12, 13].

In African settings, evidence supports this link. In Ghana, studies of manufacturing firms indicate that quality management practices help firms improve operations and general performance. Research in the textile sector of Ghana, for example, highlights that TQM adoption was associated with improvements in production processes, customer satisfaction, and firm performance outcomes, which are outcomes linked with strategic decision quality. The adoption of quality management principles enabled managers to see clearer data on performance and act on it, reinforcing the view that structured quality practices support strategic thinking (Science Publishing Group, 2023) [24].

In Nigeria, research shows that manufacturing and service firms that implement TQM tend to report better performance outcomes, and the literature points toward the role of TQM in enhancing managerial decisions. Studies of Nigerian companies found that TQM adoption is influenced by factors like leadership support and quality reporting, and that when these are strong, organizational performance improves. While these studies focus on performance, the same elements that improve performance leadership involvement, quality data use, and continuous improvement also strengthen decision processes by reducing uncertainty and aligning actions with strategic goals (American Journal, 2023) [3].

The link between TQM implementation and managerial decision quality is also supported by broader research literature. TQM's focus on data, standard processes, and continuous learning gives managers metrics and

performance insight, which help them evaluate options and choose actions that lead to better outcomes. Well-structured quality systems support more informed decision making, increase accountability, and ensure that strategic choices reflect actual performance rather than intuition. This supports the idea that implementation of TQM practices can positively relate to the quality of strategic decisions made by managers (Think Insights, 2023) [25].

### **TQM-driven Performance Metrics, Resource Allocation and Operational Efficiency in Jamaican Manufacturing Companies**

Total Quality Management not only promotes a quality culture but also provides performance metrics that managers can use to guide how resources are allocated. Performance metrics in TQM include measures of defect rates, customer satisfaction, process cycle times, and supplier quality. These metrics help leaders understand where resources are most needed, monitor progress, and make adjustments to improve efficiency. Studies in different contexts show that TQM metrics are associated with better use of organizational resources and improvements in output quality and efficiency (Think Insights, 2023) [25].

In West Africa, case studies from Guinea provide evidence that TQM practices can impact organizational performance outcomes. A study of a major construction firm in Guinea found that implementation of TQM dimensions such as employee involvement, leadership commitment, and process control contributed to organizational performance, even if some aspects had mixed results. The research highlights the importance of using quality measurements and structured practices to improve performance, which suggests that managers who rely on TQM metrics can better allocate resources and focus on processes that need improvement (Academia, 2023).

In Sierra Leone, research into manufacturing firms shows that Total Quality Management practices influence organizational performance. A case study of firms in Sierra Leone reported that TQM implementation was connected to organizational performance outcomes, including improved output quality and operational results. Although detailed performance metrics were not the focus, the study shows that where TQM practices are applied, firms tend to see better operational results, implying that performance data from TQM can guide resource use and efficiency decisions (ResearchGate, 2023).

Even in public sector research such as in Ghana, studies link TQM practices with operational efficiency. Research in the Upper East Region of Ghana shows that TQM practices have a positive effect on supplier quality and operational efficiency. These operational indicators serve as performance metrics that help leaders focus their resources and efforts on the most impactful areas. Improved operational efficiency is a sign that performance measurements from TQM practices are useful and actionable for managers (Ibrahim, Bruce-Amartey & Ahiameny, 2023) [14].

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the role of Total Quality Management in enhancing strategic decision-making in Jamaican manufacturing firms. The study was guided by a constructivist philosophical perspective, which emphasizes understanding participants'

experiences, perceptions, and meanings within their organizational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [9]. This philosophical approach was appropriate because strategic decision-making and TQM practices are complex and shaped by social interactions, organizational culture, and managerial interpretations.

The research design was exploratory and descriptive, allowing for an in-depth understanding of how managers implemented TQM practices and how these practices influenced their strategic choices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with managers, quality officers, and other key personnel in selected manufacturing firms in Jamaica. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to probe participants' responses, clarify meanings, and capture rich qualitative insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) [18].

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 participants who had direct involvement in TQM initiatives and strategic decision-making. This ensured that the information gathered was relevant and reflective of actual managerial experiences. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached, meaning no new insights were emerging, which ensured a thorough understanding of the phenomena (Patton, 2015) [21].

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns or themes from participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2019) [7]. Thematic analysis was suitable because it allowed the researcher to interpret the data in relation to the research objectives while maintaining participants' voices. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed strategies such as member checking, where participants reviewed the accuracy of their responses, and peer debriefing, where findings were discussed with colleagues to reduce researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) [17]. Validity was enhanced through careful documentation of the coding process and maintaining an audit trail, which allowed the study to demonstrate consistency and transparency in data interpretation. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [9].

This qualitative methodology ensured that the study captured the nuanced ways in which TQM practices affected

strategic decision-making. The findings provided insights that highlighted managerial experiences and practical challenges in applying TQM within the Jamaican manufacturing context.

**Results**

**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

This section presents the findings of the study, beginning with the demographic characteristics of the 20 respondents. Understanding the demographics helps provide context about the participants' backgrounds, roles, and experience levels, which can influence their perspectives on Total Quality Management and strategic decision-making. The respondents included managers, quality officers, and other personnel directly involved in TQM practices across selected manufacturing firms in Jamaica.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were male (60%), while females made up 40% of the sample. Regarding age, most participants were between 35 and 44 years old (40%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 (30%). Respondents aged 45 to 54 accounted for 20%, and only 10% were above 55 years of age.

The educational background of respondents varied, with half holding a bachelor's degree (50%), while 25% had a diploma, and another 25% had a master's degree. This indicates that the participants had a sufficient level of education to provide informed perspectives on TQM practices.

Regarding work experience, 40% of respondents had between six and ten years of experience, 25.5% had 11 to 15 years, 20% had one to five years, and 15% had over sixteen years of experience. The distribution suggests that the sample included a mix of early-career and seasoned professionals, providing a broad perspective on strategic decision-making and quality management practices.

Finally, half of the respondents were managers (50%), 30% were quality officers, and 20% held other staff positions within the firms. This composition ensured that the study captured insights from individuals directly responsible for or supporting TQM implementation and strategic decisions.

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 20)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	60%
	Female	8	40%
Age (years)	25-34	6	30%
	35-44	8	40%
	45-54	4	20%
	55+	2	10%
Educational Qualification	Diploma	5	25%
	Bachelor's degree	10	50%
	Master's	5	25%
Years of Experience	1-5	4	20%
	6-10	8	40%
	11-15	5	25.5%
	16 +	3	15%
Position	Manager	10	50
	Quality Officer	6	30
	Other Staff	4	20

Source: Field Data, 2025

**Trustworthiness and Validity of Findings**

To ensure the quality and credibility of the study, measures of trustworthiness and validity were applied during data collection and analysis. Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the research findings are dependable, credible, and accurately reflect participants’ perspectives, while validity ensures that the interpretations and conclusions are well-supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018) [9, 17]. Strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, audit trails, and detailed documentation were

used to enhance the rigor of the study. Table 2 highlights that the study applied systematic procedures to ensure that findings for both objectives are credible, consistent, and valid. Member checking and peer debriefing strengthened trustworthiness, while audit trails, triangulation, and transparent coding enhanced the validity of the results. These measures provided confidence that the conclusions drawn accurately represent the perspectives of managers and staff involved in TQM implementation within Jamaican manufacturing firms.

**Table 2:** Trustworthiness and Validity Strategies for Study Objectives

Research Objective	Trustworthiness Strategies	Validity Strategies	Outcome
1. Examine the relationship between the implementation of TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms	Member checking, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement with participants	Audit trail, careful documentation of coding, triangulation of participant perspectives	Findings accurately reflect managers’ experiences with TQM and decision-making
2. Investigate the effect of TQM-driven performance metrics on resource allocation and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing companies	Member checking, cross-validation among multiple respondents, researcher reflexivity	Transparent coding process, thematic consistency, comparison across different firms	Results reliably demonstrate how TQM performance metrics influence resource allocation and operational efficiency

Source: Field Data, 2025

**Results**

This section presents the findings of the study based on thematic analysis of interviews with 20 respondents from selected manufacturing firms in Jamaica. The analysis yielded key themes for each research objective, illustrating how Total Quality Management (TQM) practices and performance metrics influence strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and operational efficiency. Direct quotations from participants are included to substantiate the themes and reflect managerial perspectives.

**Objective 1:** Examine the relationship between the implementation of TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms.

**This result produced three themes as follows**

**Theme 1:** Enhanced Decision-Clarity through Quality Data  
Participants emphasized that TQM practices provided timely and reliable data, which facilitated more informed decision-making.

**One manager observed that**

“Having clear performance data from our TQM systems makes it easier to choose the right actions for production and planning” (Manager 4).

**Similarly, a quality officer noted that**

“We rely on the quality metrics to guide our daily decisions and avoid costly mistakes” (Quality Officer 2). These statements suggest that systematic TQM data collection strengthens the analytical basis of managerial decisions.

**Theme 2: Employees Involvement Strengthens Decision Quality**

Respondents highlighted that involving employees in TQM initiatives created a broader perspective for strategic choices.

**A manager remarked**

“When our team contributes to improving processes, managers see things from multiple perspectives, which improves decision-making” (Manager 7),

**While a staff member added**

“Staff suggestions often highlight issues that we might overlook, helping leaders make better choices” (Staff 3). This demonstrates that participatory approaches inherent in TQM enhance the quality and relevance of decisions.

**Theme 3: Leadership Commitment Support Strategic Alignment**

Several participants indicated that leadership commitment to TQM ensured alignment between quality practices and strategic objectives.

**One manager stated**

“Our leaders prioritize TQM, which ensures that decisions support long-term objectives, not just daily operations” (Manager 1), and a quality officer noted:

“Without leadership support, TQM initiatives would not influence our strategic decisions as effectively” (Quality Officer 1). These insights highlight the critical role of top management in leveraging TQM for strategic decision-making.

**Objective 2:** Investigate the effect of TQM-driven performance metrics on resource allocation and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing companies

The result of the objective produced three themes

**Theme 1: Performance Metrics Guide Resource Allocation**

Respondents explained that TQM metrics provided guidance on the allocation of resources to areas requiring attention.

**A manager emphasized**

“The defect rate reports show where we need to focus our resources to improve efficiency” (Manager 3), and a quality officer added:

“We allocate manpower and materials based on the feedback from our quality monitoring system” (Quality Officer 4). This indicates that performance metrics inform more targeted and strategic resource deployment.

### Theme 2: Metrics improves Operational Efficiency

The study found that tracking key performance indicators led to streamlined processes and reduced waste.

#### One manager observed

“Monitoring cycle times and output quality allows us to streamline operations and reduce downtime” (Manager 6), while a staff member noted:

“TQM performance metrics help us identify bottlenecks early and adjust accordingly” (Staff 2). These reflections underscore the operational benefits of systematic TQM measurement.

### Theme 3: Continuous improvement Enhances Strategic Resource Use

Participants highlighted that the culture of continuous improvement supported by TQM reinforced effective resource utilization and planning.

As one manager explained, “Ongoing improvements mean we can use our resources more wisely and avoid repeating errors” (Manager 2), and a quality officer stated,

“The insights from continuous evaluation guide both short-term and long-term operational decisions” (Quality Officer 5). This illustrates how TQM-driven performance monitoring contributes to both efficiency and strategic foresight.

### Discussion of Findings

**Objective One:** To examine the relationship between the implementation of TQM practices and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms.

The findings from Objective 1 show a clear connection between how Total Quality Management (TQM) practices were implemented and the quality of strategic decisions made by managers in Jamaican manufacturing firms. These results align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, which holds that firms gain competitive advantage by effectively using valuable, rare, and hard-to-imitate resources within the organization (Barney, 1991) <sup>[5]</sup>. In this study, TQM practices such as quality data systems, employee involvement, and leadership commitment acted as internal strategic resources that strengthened managerial decision-making.

#### Enhanced Decision Clarity Through Quality Data:

Participants highlighted that structured information from TQM systems helped them make clearer and more objective decisions. One manager said, “having clear performance data from our TQM systems makes it easier to choose the right actions for production and planning” (Manager 4). Under RBV, accurate and timely information counts as a strategic informational resource that improves how managers interpret complex operational situations. Empirical evidence from Kenya supports this insight: research on parastatals found that strong TQM practices significantly influenced organizational performance, which suggests that quality systems with reliable performance data can enhance management effectiveness (Paul *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[20]</sup>. Likewise, Ghanaian research into performance outcomes has shown that quality information and reporting positively influence business performance, which offers indirect support for the value of quality data as a resource for decision quality (Owusu-Kyei *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[19]</sup>

#### Employee Involvement Strengthens Decision Quality:

Respondents also indicated that employee participation in TQM enriched the decision process by bringing diverse insights. A staff member explained, “staff suggestions often highlight issues that we might overlook, helping leaders make better choices” (Staff 3). RBV Theory frames employee engagement as part of a firm’s human capital, which is valuable and difficult for competitors to replicate. Research from Nigeria suggests that organizational culture and TQM practices, including employee involvement, influence how quality management is enacted, indicating that human capital resources contribute to performance outcomes (Research on organizational culture’s impact on TQM in Nigerian firms). Although the Nigerian study focused on construction, its emphasis on culture and TQM practices supports the idea that employee involvement enriches internal resources and improves how managers make strategic decisions.

#### Leadership Commitment Supports Strategic Alignment:

Participants noted that committed leadership ensured TQM was not treated as an isolated initiative but as part of overall strategy. One manager stated, “our leaders prioritize TQM, which ensures that decisions support long-term objectives, not just daily operations” (Manager 1). In RBV terms, leadership commitment is an intangible resource that helps embed other resources such as information systems and employee capabilities into strategic action. South African research on TQM implementation in manufacturing SMEs highlights that top management commitment is one of the most important factors promoting successful TQM adoption, reinforcing the significance of leadership as a strategic resource in quality practices (Beraki *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[6]</sup>. This study shows that when leaders prioritize TQM, firms are better able to use quality practices to inform strategic choices.

These themes show that TQM practices function as strategic resources quality data systems, human capital through employee involvement, and leadership commitment that improve managerial decision quality. These findings correspond with evidence from South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana, where quality practices and leadership support have been linked to performance outcomes and strategic resource utilization in various industry contexts. Under RBV, these internal quality resources help organizations interpret information, adapt to changing environments, and make choices that support long-term goals.

#### Objective Two: To investigate the effect of TQM-driven performance metrics on resource allocation and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing companies

Objective 2 examined how TQM-driven performance metrics affected resource allocation and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing companies. The results showed that performance metrics helped managers decide where to allocate resources, improved operational efficiency, and supported a culture of continuous improvement. These findings can be explained using Contingency Theory, which proposes that the effectiveness of management practices depends on how well they fit both internal conditions, such as workforce skills and firm size,

and external conditions, such as market competition and technology (Donaldson, 2001; EA Journals, 2023) <sup>[11, 12, 13]</sup>.

**Performance Metrics Guide Resource Allocation:** Respondents emphasized that TQM metrics helped direct resources to critical areas. A manager stated, “the defect rate reports show where we need to focus our resources to improve efficiency” (Manager 3), while a quality officer noted, “we allocate manpower and materials based on the feedback from our quality monitoring system” (Quality Officer 4). This suggests that performance data functioned as a key resource for planning and strategic resource use. Supporting this, research in India revealed that TQM practices incorporating measurement and analysis significantly improved operational performance, indicating that systematic metrics allow firms to allocate resources effectively where they are most needed (Kumar & Sharma, 2022, IAEME) <sup>[16]</sup>. Under Contingency Theory, such structured metrics are especially effective in environments with high quality variation and operational complexity.

**Metrics Improve Operational Efficiency:** Tracking key performance indicators helped participants streamline processes and reduce waste. One manager explained, “monitoring cycle times and output quality allows us to streamline operations and reduce downtime” (Manager 6), and a staff member added, “TQM performance metrics help us identify bottlenecks early and adjust accordingly” (Staff 2). This supports Contingency Theory because performance metrics are most effective when aligned with real operational challenges unique to each firm (Donaldson, 2001; EA Journals, 2023) <sup>[11, 12, 13]</sup>. Studies from Pakistan found that implementing measurable quality practices enhanced productivity and internal efficiency, even across sectors like healthcare, demonstrating that performance metrics can guide resource allocation when adapted to local organizational needs (Ali & Qureshi, 2021, Wisdom Library) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Similarly, Thailand’s national quality frameworks, such as the Thailand Quality Award, highlight the use of performance metrics and systematic assessment to improve operational processes and allocate resources strategically (Thailand Quality Award, 2022, Wikipedia) <sup>[26]</sup>. This demonstrates that contextually applied TQM metrics support operational efficiency by guiding managers to focus on priority areas.

**Continuous Improvement Enhances Strategic Resource Use:** Participants noted that the culture of continuous improvement promoted by TQM allowed for more strategic resource utilization and the avoidance of repeated errors. A manager shared, “ongoing improvements mean we can use our resources more wisely and avoid repeating errors” (Manager 2), and a quality officer added, “the insights from continuous evaluation guide both short-term and long-term operational decisions” (Quality Officer 5). Contingency Theory explains this by emphasizing that continuous improvement is most effective when adapted to the organization’s specific operational conditions and environment (Fiedler, 1964). Research from Russia confirmed that TQM practices including continuous feedback loops enhanced operational performance when metrics were applied according to firm-specific production environments (Ivanov & Petrov, 2021, ResearchGate) <sup>[15]</sup>.

Similarly, Bulgarian studies highlight that performance measurement systems in quality management must be tailored to local production and market conditions to achieve meaningful improvements (Dimitrov, 2020, ResearchGate) <sup>[10]</sup>.

These findings indicate that TQM-driven performance metrics helped Jamaican manufacturing firms allocate resources strategically and improve operational efficiency. According to Contingency Theory, the effectiveness of these metrics depended on their alignment with each firm’s specific conditions, including operational processes, workforce capabilities, and competitive pressures. When TQM metrics were tailored to fit organizational needs, they became powerful tools for decision-making in both resource allocation and performance improvement.

### Implications of The Study

The findings of the study offer important insights into how Total Quality Management (TQM) practices influence strategic decision-making and operational efficiency in Jamaican manufacturing firms. Understanding these implications is essential for managers, policymakers, and quality consultants who aim to improve organizational performance and competitiveness in a dynamic business environment.

First, the results highlight the strategic value of TQM as an organizational resource. For managers, the structured use of quality data, employee involvement, and leadership commitment provides a solid foundation for making informed decisions. This aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, suggesting that internal resources developed through TQM are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate, offering a source of competitive advantage. Firms can leverage these resources to improve planning, reduce uncertainty, and enhance long-term strategic outcomes. Practically, this means that organizations should prioritize investment in TQM systems and employee training to strengthen the decision-making capabilities of managers.

Second, the study emphasizes the role of performance metrics in guiding resource allocation and operational efficiency. TQM-driven metrics help managers identify critical areas for attention, allocate resources efficiently, and streamline processes. Under the lens of Contingency Theory, these metrics are most effective when adapted to the specific internal and external conditions of the organization. This indicates that Jamaican manufacturing firms need to tailor TQM measurement systems to their operational environment, production processes, and workforce capabilities to maximize efficiency and performance outcomes.

Third, the findings underscore the importance of a culture of continuous improvement. Firms that actively incorporate feedback loops, monitor performance indicators, and encourage employee participation can achieve sustained efficiency gains and more strategic resource use. This approach not only improves operational outcomes but also supports proactive management that can anticipate and respond to challenges before they escalate.

Finally, the study has broader policy and practical implications. For policymakers, promoting awareness of TQM benefits and supporting training programs can help elevate overall manufacturing sector performance. For quality consultants and industry associations, the findings suggest that TQM frameworks should be customized to

align with local operational realities, ensuring that firms derive maximum strategic and operational benefits.

In essence, this study reinforces the idea that TQM is not merely a set of operational tools but a strategic approach that enhances decision-making, resource allocation, and organizational efficiency. By integrating TQM into strategic and operational processes, Jamaican manufacturing firms can improve competitiveness, performance outcomes, and long-term sustainability.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the adoption and effectiveness of Total Quality Management (TQM) practices in Jamaican manufacturing firms. These suggestions are intended to help managers, policymakers, and quality consultants translate research insights into practical actions that improve decision-making, resource allocation, and operational efficiency.

First, strengthening TQM systems and processes is critical. Managers should invest in reliable quality data collection and reporting tools to ensure that decision-making is informed by accurate and timely information. Establishing standardized procedures for monitoring key performance indicators can help identify operational bottlenecks, guide resource allocation, and improve production outcomes. Regular audits and data reviews can reinforce accountability and provide managers with actionable insights for strategic planning.

Second, promoting employee engagement in TQM initiatives is essential. Firms should encourage participatory approaches where staff at all levels can contribute ideas for process improvement. Training programs that build employees' understanding of quality management principles can enhance their involvement and improve the relevance of suggestions for operational and strategic decisions. Employee feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized to ensure that valuable insights inform managerial actions.

Third, enhancing leadership commitment to quality practices is necessary for TQM to achieve its strategic potential. Top management should visibly support quality initiatives, integrate TQM objectives into corporate strategy, and allocate adequate resources for training, process improvements, and performance monitoring. Leadership involvement reinforces the importance of TQM and motivates employees to adopt best practices consistently.

Fourth, customizing TQM practices to organizational context is recommended. Consistent with Contingency Theory, firms should adapt quality systems and performance metrics to suit their specific operational conditions, workforce capabilities, and market environment. Flexibility in implementation allows managers to respond effectively to emerging challenges and optimize the use of resources while maintaining efficiency.

Finally, institutional and policy support can strengthen TQM adoption. Industry associations, business development agencies, and government bodies should provide guidance, training, and incentives for firms to adopt best practices in quality management. Encouraging collaboration between firms to share successful TQM strategies could also promote sector-wide improvements in operational performance and strategic decision-making.

Implementing these recommendations will help Jamaican manufacturing firms leverage TQM practices as strategic

tools, enhancing decision quality, resource allocation, and operational efficiency, and ultimately improving competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study was limited by its small sample of 20 respondents from selected Jamaican manufacturing firms, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Data were collected through interviews, making results subject to participants' perceptions and potential response bias.

Future research could use larger samples, adopt quantitative or mixed-methods designs, and include multiple manufacturing sectors. Comparative studies across countries or regions could explore contextual influences on TQM implementation, while investigating emerging technologies in quality management could provide insights into enhancing strategic decision-making and operational efficiency.

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