



# The Influence Of Total Quality Management (TQM) On Operational Performance Mediated By Innovation; Study On Msms Under The Guidance Of The MSME Incubator In Makassar City

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**Abstract:** Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Makassar City face various challenges that hinder their competitiveness both locally and globally. The main obstacles include low understanding of digital technology, limited access to capital, inadequate financial literacy, and weak managerial capabilities. In addition, inconsistent product quality and a lack of innovation make MSMEs vulnerable to market pressures, especially from imported products marketed through socio-commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop. To address these challenges, MSMEs need to adopt a comprehensive total quality management approach and enhance innovation as efforts to strengthen their operational performance. This study employs a quantitative method with an associative approach. The sample consists of 130 respondents from MSMEs under the guidance of the Makassar City MSME Incubator; selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires designed with a Likert scale. The data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Square (PLS), which includes the evaluation of the outer model, inner model, and goodness of fit to test the relationships among variables. The results show that Total Quality Management (TQM) has a positive and significant effect on innovation and operational performance. Innovation also positively influences the operational performance of MSMEs. Furthermore, innovation is proven to play a significant partial mediating role in the relationship between TQM and operational performance. These findings emphasize that the effective implementation of TQM, along with strong support for innovation, can enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in Makassar City.

**Keywords:** Total Quality Management, Innovation, Operational Performance

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization requires business actors to compete rapidly while being able to innovate and develop competitive advantages. MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) are faced with high uncertainty due to changes in the business environment and increasing customer demands. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, many MSMEs have gone bankrupt as they struggle to compete with imported products, particularly those marketed through socio-commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop. They are required to consistently produce high-quality products and services, supported by competitive prices, in order to outperform their competitors.



In Makassar City, MSMEs face various challenges, such as limited access to capital and low understanding of digital technology, which has resulted in many MSMEs being unable to innovate and lacking competitiveness in the global market. In addition, other challenges include low financial literacy and weak managerial skills, which have become obstacles for MSMEs in maintaining product quality (Karadag, 2015). At the local level, digitalization is seen as a key factor in the transformation of MSMEs in Makassar. Research has shown that information technology-based training and integration with e-commerce platforms can improve operational efficiency and expand market reach for MSMEs (Hasbi & Yulianti, 2020).

The MSMEs participating in the Makassar City MSME Incubator Program constitute the primary research population in this study. The incubator provides comprehensive support, starting from business legality assistance through the issuance of Business Identification Numbers (NIB), Home Industry Production Certificates (PIRT), Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and halal certification. In addition, the department also assists MSMEs in designing product packaging and labelling to make them more attractive and professional, in line with market needs and each MSME's brand identity.

The effective implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) needs to be emphasized to achieve optimal results through operational performance. The primary goal of quality management is to enhance the performance of both people and machines, improve or upgrade existing product quality, increase productivity and output, and simultaneously foster a sense of pride among employees in their work (Anantama, 2017). Success in executing strategic plans and achieving quality objectives largely depends on strong leadership, which is fostered through the application of Total Quality Management (TQM). Therefore, innovation becomes increasingly important not only to ensure business continuity but also to outperform competitors.

Based on the literature review above, it can be concluded that the success of MSME development in Makassar greatly depends on the combination of technology adoption, government policy support, and human resource capacity enhancement. By considering these factors, MSMEs can contribute more significantly to both regional and national economic development (Yusuf & Suryadi, 2022).



Several studies have examined the relationship between Total Quality Management (TQM), innovation, and operational performance. Researchers have highlighted some differences in their findings. For instance, a study conducted by (García-Fernández et al., 2022) stated that there is a positive relationship between quality management, product and process innovation (incremental and radical), and operational and financial performance, and direct and indirect relationships. These findings conclude that both Total Quality Management and innovation strategies have a significant effect on operational performance. Based on these results, a set of direct and indirect relationships between these variables is proposed.

Meanwhile, another study conducted by (Pinho, 2008) positioned innovation as a mediating variable, revealing that the effect of quality management on SME performance is mediated by innovation capability. These studies highlight the crucial role of quality management and innovation in improving the performance of MSMEs.

In a study (Serang et al., 2023), it is stated that there is a positive and significant influence of Total Quality Management (TQM) on a company's operational performance. Previous studies have found that TQM procedures such as employee empowerment, continuous quality improvement, and fact-based management lead to significant improvements in productivity, quality, cost efficiency, delivery, and flexibility (Sabil et al., 2023). Furthermore, published research (Bytyçi & Qerimi, 2023) also revealed that the relationship between TQM and operational performance is positive. Thus, the better the implementation of TQM, the better the company's operational performance will be.

However, most previous studies have primarily focused on large companies, while research on MSMEs remains limited. In particular, there has been little to no research examining MSMEs under the guidance of the MSME Incubator Program in Makassar City. Moreover, the use of innovation as a mediating variable in studies involving MSMEs is still relatively rare. This creates an opportunity to fill the research gap by exploring how Total Quality Management (TQM) influences operational performance through innovation within the context of MSMEs nurtured by the Makassar MSME Incubator Program.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining both the direct and indirect effects of Total Quality Management (TQM)



implementation on operational performance, with innovation serving as a mediating variable among MSMEs in Makassar City. Although numerous studies have explored the positive influence of TQM and innovation individually on operational performance, there remains a lack of research that positions innovation as a mediating factor in the relationship between TQM implementation and operational performance. Therefore, the researcher has chosen the study titled “The Influence of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Operational Performance Mediated by Innovation: A Study on MSMEs Guided by the MSME Incubator Program in Makassar City.” Hence, some of the problem formulations raised in this study are as follows:

1. Does TQM have an effect on the innovation of MSMEs in the MSME Incubator Guidance of Makassar City?
2. Does TQM affect the operational performance of MSMEs in the Makassar City MSME Incubator Guidance?
3. Does innovation have a significant effect on the operational performance of MSMEs Guidance MSME Incubator Guidance in Makassar City?
4. Does TQM affect operational performance through innovation as a mediation in MSMEs Guidance of MSME Incubator in Makassar City?

## **METHOD**

### **Type and Research Approach**

This study employs an associative/correlational research design, which is based on measurable data to produce accurate quantitative calculations. The approach used in this research is quantitative research. According to a book (Sugiyono, 2019), quantitative research is a method grounded in the philosophy of positivism, which is used to examine a specific population or sample. Data collection is carried out using research instruments, and the data analysis employed is statistical or quantitative in nature, aiming to test predetermined hypotheses.

### **Population and Sample**

Based on a book (Sekaran, 2009), a population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that a researcher intends to investigate. In this study, the population consists



of 531 MSME actors who have successfully entered the incubation stage at the MSME Incubator Program in Makassar City.

The sample in this study was determined from the total population using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on specific criteria or considerations (Sugiyono, 2019). According to (Hair et al., 2019), the sample size should ideally be 100 or more. As a general rule, the minimum number of samples should be at least five times the number of questionnaire items to be analysed, and the sample size is considered more acceptable if it has a 10:1 ratio.

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= (5 \text{ to } 10) \times \text{number of indicators} \\
 &= 10 \times 13 \\
 &= 130 \text{ respondents}
 \end{aligned}$$

Based on this calculation, the total sample used in this study is 130 respondents.

### Data Collection Technique

This study uses a quantitative approach using an associative/correlational research type. The number of samples used was 130 respondents from MSMEs under the guidance of the Makassar City MSME Incubator who were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The data collection technique was carried out through questionnaires, with instruments designed using the Likert scale (see Table 1). Data analysis was carried out using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Square (PLS), which included the evaluation of the outer model, inner model and goodness of fit to test the relationship between variables.

Symbol	Alternative Answer	Value
SA	Strongly Agree	5
A	Agree	4
N	Neutral	3
D	Disagree	2
SD	Strongly Disagree	1

**Table 1.** Likert Scale  
Source : (Likert, 1932)

### Research Variables and Indicators

No	Variable	Indicators
1	Total Quality Management (TQM) (X)	Teamwork Scientific approach Education and training Goal alignment Freedom in control (Davis, 2019)




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2	Operational (Y)	Performance	Safety (work accidents) Service level Quality Productivity (Tortorella et al., 2020)
3	Innovation (Z)		Product innovation Process innovation Strategy innovation Service innovation (Antunes, 2017)

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**Table 2.** Research Instruments

Source: See Citation

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study employed the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). Model evaluation in PLS was carried out in three stages: (1) Outer Model, to test validity and reliability using loading factor, Fornell-Larcker, Cronbach’s Alpha, and Composite Reliability; (2) Inner Model, to assess the relationships among latent variables through R-Square and Effect Size; and (3) Goodness of Fit, to evaluate the overall model adequacy using the Average Communalities Index and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

### Outer Model

#### Outer Loading

Based on the table 3 below, it can be seen that the value of Loading Factor of all statement items is above 0.70. Hence, it is concluded that all the items of the valid statement are convergent.

Item	IN (Z)	OP (Y)	TQM (X)
IN1	0.758		
IN2	0.854		
IN3	0.777		
IN4	0.945		
OP1		0.953	
OP2		0.87	
OP3		0.862	
OP4		0.767	
TQM1			0.981



TQM2	0.977
TQM3	0.736
TQM4	0.858
TQM5	0.966

**Table 3. Outer Loading**

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<i>Total Quality Management (TQM)</i>	0.825
Operational Performance	0.749
Innovation	0.700

**Table 4. Average Variance Extracted**

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

An indicator is considered to have high convergent validity if the outer loading value exceeds 0.70 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the results, all item loadings are above 0.70. and each construct's AVE value exceeds 0.50. Therefore, all constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity.

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Innovation	Operational Performance	<i>Total Quality Management (TQM)</i>
IN	0.837		
OP	0.552	0.865	
TQM	0.040	0.529	0.909

**Table 5. Fornell – Larcker**

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

Table 5 indicates that the square root of each construct's AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs indicating that all variables demonstrate adequate discriminant validity.

Composite Reliability

	<i>Cron bach's Alpha</i>	Composite Realibility (rho_c)
Innovation	0.854	0.903
Operational Performance	0.886	0.922
<i>Total Quality Management (TQM)</i>	0.944	0.959

**Table 6. Reliability Testing**



Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

All constructs show Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.70, confirming that all variables are reliable.

**Inner Model Analysis**

**R Square (R2)**

	R Square	R Square adjusted
Innovation	0.163	0.156
Operational Performance	0.417	0.407

**Table 7. R Square (R2)**

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

The R-Square value for the Innovation variable is 0.163, indicating that TQM explains 16.3% of the variance in Innovation. This value falls within the weak to moderate category (Chin, 1998).

Meanwhile, the R-Square value for Operational Performance is 0.417, suggesting that TQM and Innovation together explains 41.7% of the variance in Operational Performance, which is considered moderate, indicating a fairly good predictive capability.

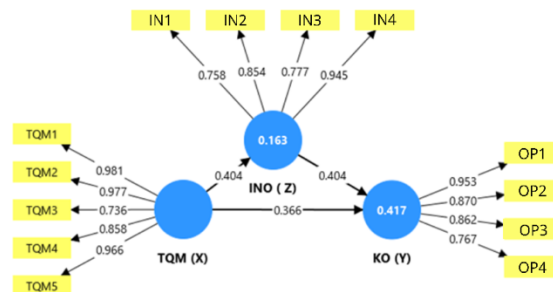


Figure 2: The figure shows that TQM (X) positively affects Innovation (Z) and Operational Performance (Y)

**Effect Size**

The *Effect Size* value is used to measure the magnitude of the influence of an independent construct on the dependent construct in a structural model presented in Table 8. The Effect Size ( $f^2$ ) is evaluated following thresholds of 0.35 (strong), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.02 (weak) (Likert, 1932).



	Innovation	Operational Performance
Total Quality Management (TQM)	0.195	0.103
Innovation		0.302

**Table 8.** Effect Size

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

The results of the effect size measurements as presented in Table 8 are as follows:

- The effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Innovation is 0.195, so it is stated that the effect is considered Moderate
- The effect of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Operational Performance is 0.103, so it is stated that the effect is considered Weak
- The effect of Innovation on Operational Performance is 0.302, so it is stated that the effect is considered Moderate

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Bootstrapping procedure. A hypothesis is accepted when the t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05, and rejected otherwise (Fisher, 1992).

Hypotesis	Path Koefisien	T Statistik	P Values
Total Quality Managemet (TQM) → Innovation	0.404	4.590	0.000
Total Quality Managemet (TQM) → Operational Performance	0.366	4.559	0.000
Innovation → Operational Performance	0.404	6.766	0.000
Total Quality Managemet (TQM) → Innovation → Operational Performance	0.163	4.047	0.000

**Table 9.** Hypothesis Testing

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

Table 9 concludes that all hypotheses in this study are supported by empirical data, including the partial mediating influence of Innovation in the relationship between TQM and Operational Performance. The explanation of the hypothesis test results is as follows:

- H1 is accepted. Total Quality Management (TQM) has a positive and significant effect on Innovation.

The test results showed that TQM had a positive and significant effect on innovation, with a path coefficient value of 0.404, t-statistic of 4.590. and a P-value of 0.000. This means that the higher the application of TQM principles in the operational of an organization, the greater the encouragement for the creation of innovation in the operational process. This shows that the culture



of quality built through TQM, such as continuous improvement and employee participation, is able to create an environment that supports the birth of innovative ideas.

- b. H2 is accepted. Total Quality Management (TQM) has a positive and significant effect on Operational Performance.

TQM was also proven to have a positive and significant effect on operational performance, with a coefficient value of 0.366, t-statistic of 4.559, and P-value of 0.000. These results show that the implementation of TQM contributes directly to improving operational performance, through practices such as quality control, systematic process management, and leadership involvement in decision-making. In other words, TQM is one of the important foundations in creating efficient and productive operations.

- c. H3 accepted. Innovation has a positive and significant effect on Operational Performance.

Innovation has a positive and significant influence on operational performance, as shown by the path coefficient of 0.404, t-statistic of 6.766, and P-value of 0.000. This shows that an organization's ability to continuously innovate in products, processes, and technology plays an important role in driving increased operational efficiency, quality, and competitiveness. Consistent innovation allows organizations to adapt to market changes and create a competitive advantage.

- d. H4 accepted. Innovation significantly mediates the influence of Total Quality Management (TQM) on Operational Performance.

The results of the analysis show that innovation mediates partially, this is because without innovation as a mediator, TQM still has a positive relationship with operational performance (Baron, et al, 1986), with a coefficient value of 0.163, t-statistic 4.047, and P-value 0.000. This means that in addition to having a direct influence, TQM also has an indirect impact on operational performance through increased innovation. This shows that the quality culture formed by TQM can foster innovation, which in turn will strengthen the organization's overall operational performance.

#### Goodness of Fit (GoF)

The Goodness of Fit (GoF) index measures the overall fit of the model, calculated as the square root of the Average Communalities Index multiplied by the average AVE value. The GoF thresholds are 0.10 (small), 0.25 (medium), and 0.36 (large) (Wetzels et al., 2009).



	AVE	R - Square
TQM	0.825	
IN	0.700	0.163
OP	0.749	0.417
Rata-Rata	0.758	0.290
Nilai GOF		0.469

**Table 10.** Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Source: Data Analysis using SmartPLS, 2025

Based on the calculation results, a GOF value of 0.469 was obtained, which indicates that the combined performance of the outer model and inner model in this study can be classified into large GOF.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that (1) Total Quality Management (TQM) has a positive and significant effect on Innovation among MSMEs mentored by the MSMEs Incubator of Makassar City. Furthermore, (2) TQM also has a positive and significant effect on Operational Performance, indicating that the implementation of quality management practices enhances business efficiency. In addition, (3) Innovation positively and significantly influences Operational Performance, emphasizing its role in improving business outcomes. Finally, (4) Innovation partially mediates the relationship between TQM and Operational Performance, suggesting that TQM improves performance both directly and indirectly through Innovation.

The primary novel contribution of this study lies in its contextual focus, which cannot be directly compared to most general studies. Most prior research examines TQM and Innovation in general MSMEs populations or larger manufacturing firms. By focusing on MSMEs guided by an incubator program in Makassar, our study provides unique evidence on how structured support programs in a specific Indonesian region might influence the interplay of TQM and Innovation. Previous localized studies in Makassar often used Competitive Advantage as the mediator instead of Innovation, or focused on a broader concept of Corporate Performance. Our explicit focus on Operational Performance and the Innovation mediator in this specific segment of Indonesian MSMEs makes the findings valuable for local policymakers and development programs.

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