Transformational Leadership, Market-Oriented Culture, and Implementation of Total Quality Management Practices: Proposed Conceptual Model

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to consolidate the existing knowledge on leadership, market-oriented culture, and TQM by proposing a conceptual model providing a starting point for researchers and practitioners seeking to implement market-oriented culture and TQM in organizations and offering suggestions for future research. A systematic literature review was undertaken to review works published on transformational leadership, market-oriented culture, and TQM practices. The review's key findings show that transformational leadership is required for successful TQM implementation and market-oriented culture in organizations and is critical to sustaining their improvement. This research is based on a systematic literature review of works published on transformational leadership, market-oriented culture, and TQM practices. Transformational leadership is critical for both market-oriented culture and TQM implementation success. There is a need to develop a new model of transformational leadership that encompasses the leadership behavior needed for both market-oriented culture and TQM.

Keywords: Total Quality Management; Transformational Leadership; Market; Culture; Market-Oriented Culture

1. Introduction

In a competitive market, an organization's orientation to market and quality becomes crucial for staying competitive in an uncertain and competitive business environment. The philosophy of total quality management (TQM) and market-oriented culture (MOC) has been identified as the two most important strategies for small-to-medium size enterprises (SMEs), manufacturing and services firms and; has become a prerequisite for success in the global market (Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012; Kiessling, Isaksson, & Yasar, 2016; Pereira-Moliner, Pertusa-Ortega, Tarí, López-Gamero, & Molina-Azorin, 2016). TQM and market-oriented culture are essential tools for achieving competitive advantage and strengthening organizational competitiveness. TQM is an integrated approach that; consists of principles and practices, whose goal is to improve the quality of an organization's goods and services by continuously meeting and exceeding customer needs in the most competitive ways. It focuses on enhancing customer satisfaction (Alharbi, Yusoff, & Al-Matari, 2017; Simani, 2017). On the other hand, market-oriented culture has been an antecedent to creating superior customer value, increased competitive capacity, and enhanced financial performance (Narver & Slater, 1990; Kohli & Jaworski,1990). Therefore, TQM and a market-oriented culture can constitute a vital firm strategy and provide a competitive advantage in responding to a competitive business environment.

Since successful TQM implementation and market-oriented culture are highly dependent on the firm's employees and inter-functional coordination (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Narver & Slater, 1990; Reed, Lemark, & Mero, 2000), it is essential to comprehend the underlying culture of TQM practices and market-oriented culture. Leaders play a crucial role in establishing such quality (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Herold et al., 2008) and market-oriented culture (Pulendran, Speed, & Widing, 2000). Leadership commitment and leader's communication skills have been highlighted as critical managerial attributes for successful TQM and market-oriented culture implementation (Narver, Slater, & Tietje, 1998; Kohli &Jaworski,1990). In this sense, a leader's typical characteristics are charting compelling vision, collaboration, delegation, and the ability to motivate employees. Overall, Powell (1995); Harris and Ogbonna (2001)suggested that quality and market-oriented firms need to have transformational leaders at the top, who behave according to expected culture and disseminate the good quality and market-oriented principles.

Considering market-oriented culture and total quality management as an intangible resource, transformational leadership plays a fundamental role

in gaining a competitive advantage. From this perspective, transformational leadership focusing on participative decision-making is decisive. In response to the environment's changes, transformational leadership becomes more critical in playing a boundary-spanning role and flexible to achieve a competitive advantage around its central competencies (Pulendran et al., 2000; Yukl, 2012). In this sense, a market and superior customer value are related to transformational leadership focused on value creation.

2.1. Theoretical Underpinnings

The resource-based theory has acknowledged the role of the leader in managing organizational resources. Still, it has yet to specifically examine the transformational leadership style as an administrative resource capability (Barney, 1991). We extend resource-based theory by examining transformational leadership style as organizational resource capability influences the implementation success of TQM and market-oriented culture. Considering transformational leadership as a resource capability, we also developed propositions regarding transformational leadership links with TQM and market-oriented culture.

2.2. Total Quality Management (TQM)

According to Dale (2003),"TQM is the mutual cooperation of everyone in an organization and associated business processes to produce products and services which meet and hopefully exceed the needs and expectations of customers"(p.26), while Oakland (2003)defined it as "A comprehensive approach for improving competitiveness and flexibility through planning, organizing and understanding each activity, and involving everyone at each level. This suggests that TQM provides quality the highest priority and monitors the production process while maintaining the well-being of the human aspect of the organization. Different TQM frameworks were developed empirically (e.g., Pradhan, 2017; Zhang, Waszink, & Wijngaard, 2000; Samson & Terziovski, 1999). A wide range of antecedents and outcomes of TQM were examined using the different TQM frameworks. Studies on antecedents of TQM include information systems (Siam, Alkhateeb, & Al-Waqqad, 2012), organizational strategy (Prajogo & Sohal, 2010), and culture (Rad, 2006). Similarly, studies on the outcome of TQM include organizational innovation (Kim, Kumar, & Kumar, 2012), operational performance (Samson & Terziovski, 1999), organizational design, and competitive advantage (Pereira-Moliner *et al*., 2016; Powell, 1995).

The literature above demonstrates more of a common consensus regarding the components of TQM though there are differences among them. For this work, we consider the following five TQM practices such as (1) strategic planning, (2) people management, (3) customer focus, (4) process

management, and (5) information and analysis (Samson & Terziovski, 1999). This TQM model was developed based on the most universal and a pervasive method known as MBNQA (Samson & Terziovski, 1999).

Strategic Planning: The strategic planning process allow organizations to recognize customer requirements, enables employees to be fully aware of, and is involved in achieving organizational quality goals (Lakhe, 1994; Mosadeghrad, 2012; Samson & Terziovski, 1999).

People Management: People management addresses the extent of employee competency, commitment, involvement, and empowerment in TQM (Mosadeghrad, 2012) and thereby contributes to attaining the organizational objectives and recognizing their attainments. According to Samson and Terziovski (1999), people management addresses "how well the human resource practices tie into and are aligned with the organization's strategic directions" (p. 396). This implies how well-integrated employee health, safety, training, development, involvement, and empowerment are all addressed within the concept of people management in TQM.

Customer Focus: Mosadeghrad (2012) also stressed that customer focus examines how the organization determines customers' expectations and requirements, builds relationships, measures satisfaction, and utilizes their feedback in enhancing the quality of products. The first aspect of customer focus is determining customers' needs, preferences, and expectations (Mosadeghrad, 2012; Zhang et al., 2000). The second aspect of customer focus addresses the issue of how organizations create relationships with customers (Lakhe & Mohanty, 1994; Zhang et al., 2000; Gallear & Ghobadian, 2004).The third aspect of customer focus is measuring customer level of satisfaction or complaints (Mosadeghrad, 2012).

*Process Management***:** Process management refers to key processes designed, executed, controlled, and enhanced to support the company's strategic direction and action plans, abundantly please customers, and attain superior performance (Mosadeghrad, 2012; Samson & Terziovski, 1999). As part of process management, an organization's operating procedures should be documented and standardized to ensure the reliability of the outcome (Mosadeghrad, 2012).

Information and Analysis: Organizations manage the process well by using reliable information to achieve performance and quality goals (Tummala, 1996 & Al-Damen, 2017). Information and analysis from the TQM context address the degree of benchmarking undertaken in the organization on all possible areas influencing competitiveness (Samson & Terziovski, 1999).

2.3. *Market-Oriented Culture*

The marketing literature is full of market orientation perspectives and definitions, yet customer orientation is significant at the core of this concept.

Accordingly, market-oriented organizations focus on customers' desires, needs, and particular conditions (e.g., lifestyles must be the primary emphasis of the market-oriented organization). It is fundamental as it creates a common objective in which all organizational departments and efforts work in unity to satisfy customer needs through innovation and continuous process improvement (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). Market orientation is conceptualized in different ways in marketing literature by other authors. For instance, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) conceptualized market orientation in three sets of activities (e.g., organizational-wide generation of market intelligence focusing on current and future customer requirements, disseminating the intelligence across departments, and organizational-wide responsiveness to it). This viewpoint believes that market-oriented firms embrace a collection of behaviors that place the main focus on customers (Zhang, Bruning, & Sivaramakrishnan, 2007). This definition implies that market orientation encourages the generation of intelligence and its dissemination (i.e., the use of data about customers and competitors) and integrated cross-functional processes and the execution of a strategic organizational response to market opportunities.

On the other hand, it is argued that a firm's ability to respond to the market effectively depends on the degree of the firm's knowledge of its customers and competitors. In line with this argument, Narver and Slater (1990)conceptualized market-oriented culture in terms of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination from an organizational culture perspective that creates necessary behavior to create superior value for customers. Supporting the conceptualization of market orientation as organizational culture, Zhang, Bruning, and Sivaramakrishnan (2007) mentioned what a market-oriented firm needs to be by saying, "A market-oriented firm needs to have both a customer and competitor-oriented organizational culture that encourages and facilitates all of the activities involved in acquiring information about the customers and competitors in the target market and disseminating the information throughout the business" (p.135).

Accordingly, market orientation refers to the kind of organizational culture. It is not merely a set of activities and procedures separate from the organizational culture where the organization emphasis on customers, competitors, and various functional departments within the firm to take coordinated, responsive actions and where all employees are committed to the ongoing creation of superior customer (Narver et al., 1998). Narver et al.(1998)further argue that the behavior and customer value commitment will not last long unless it emanates from an organization's culture. A body of opinion shows that market orientation is a multi-dimensional concept, where each of the three sub-constructs of market orientation promotes different

cultures. Their combination focuses on internal coordination and external adaptation. On the other hand, Narver and Slater (1990)affirmed that market-oriented dimensions are conceptually related strongly to each other and; subsumed under one broader construct i.e., market-oriented culture. In this study, we adopt an aspect of market orientation as an organizational culture, where attention is given to the values, beliefs, and attitudes collectively held by an organization's members. In the organizational context, it is believed that a focus on current and potential customers must get priority over the other dimensions of market-oriented culture. In our understanding, market-oriented culture is a set of beliefs that puts customers' interests first. At the same time, it focuses on the organization's knowledge of the need to acquire information about competitors and create cross-functional activities to satisfy customers' needs.

Customer Orientation: Customer orientation requires firms to find out the current needs of the customer through market information focusing on current customer needs, preferences, and satisfaction (Slater & Narver, 2015; Olavarrieta & Friedmann, 1999). It creates knowledge about current and potential customers through the information acquisition process and then disseminates this information within the organization (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Zhang et al., 2007).

Competitor Orientation: A culture of competitor orientation refers to a value of an accurate and timely understanding of the firm's current and future competitors (Narver & Slater, 1990; Adidam, Banerjee, & Shukla, 2012). It focuses on analyzing the firm's direct and indirect competitors by collecting information including their actions, intentions, and changing behavior, comparative market information of services, advertising, price, market trends, market opportunities, and trends about the existing and potential competitors' business creating knowledge about current and potential competitors through an information acquisition process and disseminate it within the organization (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi, & Rangone, 2021).

Moreover; competitor-oriented firms identify their strengths and weaknesses by directly comparing themselves against principal competitors and creating maximum customer value superior to other competitors(Ozsashin, Zehir, Acar, & Sudak, 2013; Zhang et al., 2007; Cavallo et al., 2021).

Inter-functional coordination: It is widely accepted that anyone in the organization has the responsibility to create value for customers because value creation is not the responsibility of the specific unit (Narver & Slater, 1990; Ozsashin et al., 2013; Kumar, Subramanian, & Yauger, 1998). Inter-functional coordination is based on the competitor and customer information. It comprises the value and activities of the organization's coordinated efforts,

typically involving more than the marketing department for sharing strategic information and other resources along with collaboration and integration of different functional units to create superior value for the buyers (Narver & Slater, 1990; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Ozsashin et al., 2013). In this sense, inter-functional coordination has strong relationships with the other components of market orientation; and customer and competitor orientations.

2.4.   *Transformational leadership and market-oriented culture*

Narver et al.(1998)contended that leadership is crucial to achieve and maintain a cultural transformation in an organization with particular reference to market-oriented culture and its dimensions. Similarly, Kohli and Jaworski(1990)theorize the importance of senior management leadership in developing market-oriented culture. Pulendran et al.(2000) also empirically support the senior managers' willingness to take risks and commitment to market intelligence ongoing generation and use.

Leadership can take steps to support employees to see their colleagues as customers, enable information interchange, and encourage empathy among employees (Gonzalez & Guillen, 2002). Particularly, transformational leadership, through one of its dimension, intellectual stimulation encourages employees to suggest and initiate new products in response to changes in customer needs and market trends and encourage employees to view the change in customer needs and trends in a competitive environment as an opportunity (Jansen, Vera, & Crossan, 2009). Employees also support a transformational leader's goal of adaptation to change in customer needs (Jansen et al., 2009)and market trends by questioning existing products and facilitating the development and practice of market-oriented culture and its dimensions.

Proposition 1: Transformational leadership will significantly positively influence Market-oriented culture.

2.5.   *Transformational Leadership and TQM Practices*

Transformational leadership offers a clear, well-projected vision that would assist organize resources and focusing on the objective to accomplish the results; centers on how organizations can optimally meet the requirements of internal and external customers; promote quality improvement goals, strategies, and, projects, and notify the organization what it should aspire for in quality matters (Lakhe & Mohanty, 1994; Kotter, 1995a). Furthermore, they create total quality culture by designing organizational structure; promoting policies, processes, and; procedures that reflect quality; creating awareness among employees regardless of levels and responsibilities about quality developing customer-based measures of performance; promoting

strong communication lines; and customer-oriented values and beliefs (Lakhe & Mohanty, 1994; Rougan, 2015).

Transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and emotional appeal to motivate and move employees beyond self-interest to vigorously pursue an organization's vision (Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008). They also communicate an inspiring and compelling picture of what the future will look like if a goal of the organization is achieved. Furthermore, they can help create an environment that supports multilevel collaboration across functional teams and, open communication through vision, motivation, and moral clarity (Zuraik & Kelly, 2018). Numerous TQM studies considered leadership a fundamental enabler behind the practical implementation of other TQM dimensions (e.g., Kumar & Sharma, 2018). Many writers also agree that transformational leadership behavior, such as creating vision and promoting change, is generally closer to TQM leadership (e.g., Dale, 2003; Oakland, 2003).

Transformational leaders may be the minimum requirement to adopt and maintain TQM (Kumar & Sharma, 2018). They establish quality goals and strategies, establish a learning environment, motivate, communicate and empower employees to properly implement TQM (Kumar & Sharma, 2018). Transformational leadership creates customer focus values by enhancing organizational members' awareness of fulfilling customer needs and clarifying task requirements to minimize role ambiguity (Liaw, Chi, & Chuang, 2010). They also outline quality goals for customer satisfaction and long-term relationships with suppliers (Kumar & Sharma, 2018), enabling organizational members to consider different perspectives to fulfill customer needs. Specifically, there are many ways in which transformational leaders facilitate the implementation of TQM. For example, it focuses on envisioning, advocating change, inspirational motivation, risk-taking, collaboration, innovation, and individual empowerment through individual consideration (Herold et al., 2008; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). TQM emphasizes human resource management, strategic planning, customer focus, supplier relationship and; continuous process improvement (e.g., Fotopoulos & Psomas, 2009). From the above discussion, a closer look at transformational leadership and; TQM share many similarities. Hence, the transformational leader's role in developing an organization's vision and its clear articulation foster the implementation of TQM initiatives (Omar, 2017). Moreover, according to (Özsahin, Zehir, & Acar, 2011), leadership facilitates learning by role modeling their behavior, charting a vision in which employees engage themselves, showing considerate care for employees, and communicating change; and other organizational issues to their employees and rewarding positive contributions.

Intellectual stimulation is an exceptionally fundamental capability of change leaders involving the ability to take risks in the process of decision making and; make immediate decisions. Transformational leaders are prepared to take risks, consider mistakes as an opportunity to learn, and encourage organizational members to take risks by allowing them to experiment and make mistakes. In this way, they foster the implementation of changes by developing the change capabilities of their own and organizational members. They facilitate learning and knowledge exchange among organizational members to create and sustain continuous process improvement. They make a work climate where organizational members feel empowered to find improvement approaches to accomplish their job by encouraging their participation by emphasizing the crucial role of cooperation in accomplishing collective tasks and offering them a chance to learn from shared experience (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). Through one of its components (e.g., intellectual stimulation), transformational leaders encourage innovation and facilitate learning which enhances the implementation of TQM practices (Omar, 2017). When a transformational leader stimulates organizational members' effort to create and innovate new things by questioning the existing assumptions; and approaching existing problems in new ways, innovative approaches are getting deep-rooted (Jung et al., 2003). Such behavior tends to enhance employee initiatives and implement new programs and ideas such as TQM to increase the efficiency of their organization (Rad, 2006). It also helps to influence teamwork through collective learning, information sharing, advocating change, envisioning change, and encouraging innovation (Yukl, 2012) to implement TQM successfully.

Through one of the other components of transformational leadership (e.g., individual consideration), they understand the abilities, skills and, knowledge of the followers; and respond by providing quality training, performance feedback, reward and, empowering followers at all organizational levels (Bass, 2000a; King, 2017). This encourages the involvement of followers in decision-making processes regarding continuous improvement and customer satisfaction goals by adapting learning requirements to the potential of each employee (Mikkelsen & Olsen, 2018) and thereby inspiring the implementation of TQM.

In addition to theoretical propositions, the majority of the few empirical shreds of evidence were consistent with the theoretical literature on the relationship between transformational leadership and; the implementation of TQM practices. For instance, Chan, Tiwari, Ramlan, and Ahmad (2016), Barbosa, Gambi, and Gerolamo (2017), and Alharbi and Yusoff (2012) found that transformational leadership was positively related to TQM practices. Argia and Ismail, (2013); Chan and Ng (2012)also stated that transformational leadership dimensions had a significant positive relationship with TQM

practices. Kumar and Sharma (2018)analyzed sample data from Indian firms and found that transformational leadership was positively linked to the two-dimension of TQM which were continuous process improvement and innovation. Questioning the universal applicability of TQM, a comparative study was conducted between two nations in which transformational leadership was positively related to the implementation of TQM practices for America-based firms. In contrast, in the same study negative relationship was found between transformational leadership and TQM practices for China-based firms (Cho & Jong, 2014).

Proposition 2: Transformational leadership will have a significant positive influence on implementing TQM Practices.

The conceptual model depicting the relationships among the concepts of this work is presented in figure 1.
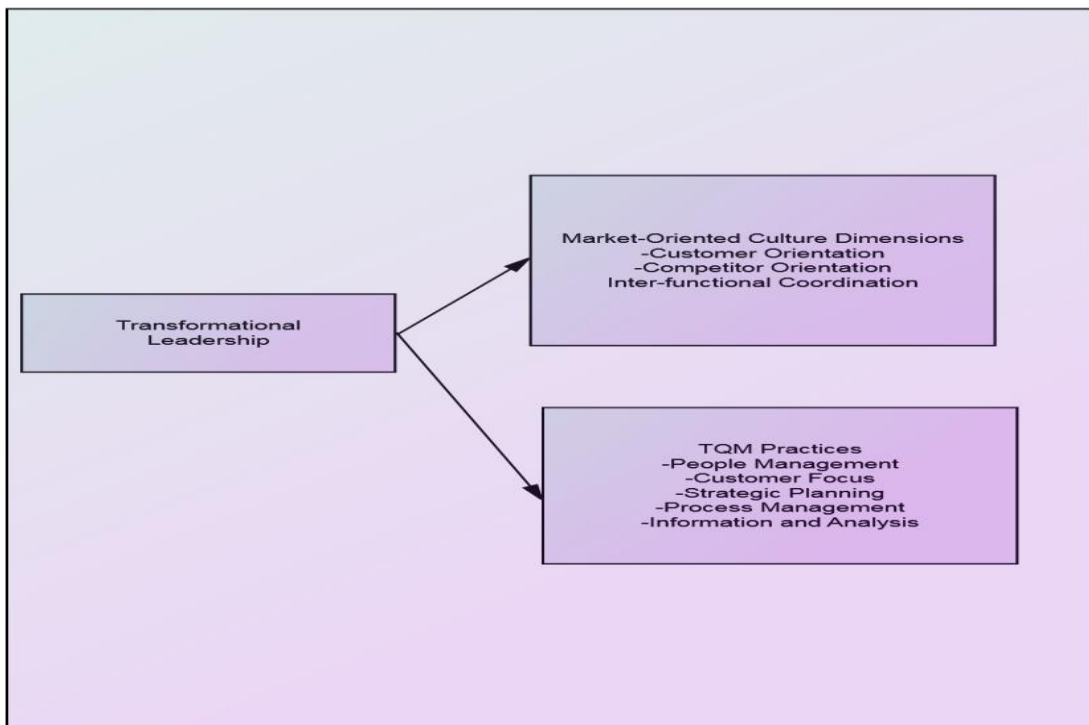

Fig. 1 Proposed Conceptual Model

2.6.   *Discussion and Conclusion*

For an organization to progress toward implementing market-oriented culture and TQM, it is important to understand the factors that influence its implementation. The literature on TQM and market-oriented culture commonly claims the need for managerial leadership and commitment to effectively execute both market-oriented culture and TQM management philosophy. However, it is challenging to find strong arguments to

demonstrate whether managerial leadership is desirable for implementing a market-oriented culture and TQM. This paper discusses theoretical arguments that substantiate the requirement of managerial leadership for both a market-oriented culture and TQM efforts to be successfully implemented.

This study focused on transformational leadership as a critical driver of both market-oriented culture and the implementation of TQM practices. The literature reveals that transformational leadership is a critical determinant of the success of TQM practices and market-oriented culture. Transformational leaders intend to appeal to followers' fundamental values and requirements and inspire them to surpass their self-interest and pursue collective goals (Kark, Chen, & Shamir, 2003). They tend to display a higher level of ethical behavior and moral development (Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner, 2002). Given these behaviors and competence to invoke a more substantial commitment from followers (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999), transformational leaders may be particularly well equipped to persuade organizational members of their strong commitment to both market-oriented culture and the implementation of TQM practices.

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