

ABSTRACT

Substantial research exists on Quality Management (QM) practices in large organizations' in manufacturing sector while exiguously addressing the service sector, particularly in Indian context; specifically focusing on IT enabled service Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). QM is considered as a strategic tool to improve organisational performance and is characterized by principles, practices and techniques. In this study QM practices are referred to as critical success factors that can help organisation attain business and performance excellence. Thus, proper implementation of QM practices in service SMEs is extremely vital in achieving higher organizational performance/productivity level with optimal investment in infrastructure, resource acquisition in constrained environment and provides directions to enterprises in decision making with right strategy mix along with intensification of organizational culture to become more entrepreneurial. Therefore, present study attempts to address QM issues in Indian IT enabled service SMEs through in-depth exploratory study, identifying critical QM practices influencing firm Performance; their present level of adoption and prioritization; linkages among QM practices; and to examine the effect of QM practices along with identified contextual factors such as IT, Entrepreneurial Culture (EC) on Performance. The study is based on primary data and mixed method approach with appropriate statistical techniques to analyse the proposed conceptual models. Present study identifies and ranks critical QM practices; reveals new QM practices and develops new improvement approach. QM practices that SMEs give importance are Customer focus and Management leadership while Strategic planning, HRM and Process management needs to be focused. A fuzzy based framework is also developed by prioritizing the identified QM practices based on experts' opinion, which broadly agrees with some deviation in the ranking. QM practices are interconnected and influence firm performance directly or indirectly. The impact of contextual factors, IT and EC has no direct significant influence on performance while demonstrating low to moderate mediation effect of QM and IT on Performance and EC. Major contribution of this study is addition in literature by recording new findings. Another contribution is in terms of model building towards designing "linkage model". Present study also fills an important gap by integrating contextual factors in QM-Performance relationship. Overall, the study provides direction for SMEs on how to align QM practices for enhancing performance and 'isochronous' improvement may be targeted for quality improvement while sustaining scarcity of resources.

Keywords: Quality management; Indian service SMEs; IT; Entrepreneurial culture; Performance; Spasmodic and Isochronous improvement