



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**TQM and EMO Relation and Effects on Export Performance of Furniture Firms in Pakistan**

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**PAPER INFO**

**ABSTRACT**

**Received:**

September 14, 2019

**Accepted:**

December 25, 2019

**Online:**

December 31, 2019

**Keywords:**

Total quality management, Export market orientation, Export Performance, PLS-SEM Analysis, Furniture Industry

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The export of furniture industry is observed low in last few years. However, the manager / owner of furniture firms is looking for suitable strategies to increase the exports of the industry. However, the main objective of the study is to investigate the mediating role of export market orientation (EMO) between total quality management (TQM) and export performance (EP) of the small and medium furniture firms in Pakistan. The survey technique has used to collect the responses; the total one hundred nineteen (119) usable responses were received. The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that TQM and EMO influenced the SME export performance. Moreover, EMO plays a mediating role between TQM and SME export performance in furniture industry of Pakistan. The present study's results motivate owner/managers of SMEs for more effort and investment in TQM implementation. Future research is encouraged to validate current work in service industry.

**Introduction**

The South Asia share in global exports is only 2 percent, which means the gap between South Asia and rest of world is still substantiality large. More specifically, in respect of Pakistan, the situation is not different, SMEs of Pakistan executing low when contrasted with other developing nations, such as, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Taiwan and Indonesia (Dar, Ahmed, & Raziq, 2017). According to Rehman (2016), ninety (90) percent enterprises of Pakistan are SMEs, however, it only contributed 25 percent in country total exports, which is alarming for the sustainability of SMEs.

In fact, exporting is a challenging task for SMEs due to limited reserves (Brouthers, Nakos, & Dimitratos, 2015; Haddoud, Nowinski, Jones, & Newbery, 2018; Paul, Parthasarathy, & Gupta, 2017). To improve the understanding of this issue, a few analysts explored the asset factors improving SME export performance (Haddoud et al., 2018). The vast majority of these investigations have been directed in developed nations and found the very limited studies in developing economies (Paul et al., 2017). In regards to SMEs of Pakistan, the exact exploration of low SMEs exports are underline (Imran, Aziz, & Abdul Hamid, 2016).

To address these issues, the current study receives a detailed strategy to identifying the key resources, which can boost up the SME export performance. According to Beleska-Spasova, Glaister, and Stride (2012) as they claimed that resource factors can be used to overcome the deficiencies of SME export performance. Resource-based scholars stated that intangible assets are bound to create an upper hand than tangible assets, as they are frequently uncommon and socially unpredictable, in this manner making them hard to imitate (Hsu & Ziedonis, 2013). Therefore, strengthening the firm's resources and competencies are crucial for better export performance and the firm should wisely select the best factors that have a major impact on their export firm performance. Subsequently, in context of Pakistan, that reported the absence of TQM and EMO in exports empirically studies (İpek, 2017). In order to overcome the deficiencies in SME export performance, attempts to introduce the TQM and EMO strategic resources and capabilities for long-term SMEs export performance sustainability (Imran, Abdul Hamid, & Aziz, 2018). Since, TQM and EMO practices can lead the better SME export performance. However, such claims have not been exactly tested in the unique situation of Pakistan SMEs export performance.

## **Literature Review**

### **Export Performance of Furniture Industry in Pakistan**

Export performance is a degree wherein firm accomplished their vital and money related objectives (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). In respect of Pakistan, the furniture industry has a small portion in the \$250 billion world furniture trade. The country's furniture exports have declined from \$18 million in 2007 to \$6 million during 2016 (LCCI, 2017). Although, its contribution to the economy of Pakistan around \$160 million (PSDF, 2015) and provides more than 100,000 employments (Manzoor, 2016). The furniture industry as Compared with its rivals remains an essentially fragmented, traditional cottage operation (small workshops).

In fact, there are many challenges facing by Pakistan's furniture industry but some of these can be the main reasons for low exports performance for the industry. Such as lack of quality standard (TQM) and lack of market information (LCCI, 2017). Therefore, government, owner / managers and researcher sought to

consider these components during any decisions making towards industry exports performance.

### **Total Quality Management and SME Export Performance in Furniture Industry**

TQM is the process to improve the profitability and giving a competitive advantage (Pfau, 1989). The previous business related to the total quality management with respect to small and medium enterprises are developing (Rahman, 2001). Nonetheless, most of researchers suggested that the relationship of TQM with firm performance is cannot neglect (Corredor & Goñi, 2011). Moreover, the past studies announced that TQM has been implemented to improve the overall performance of firms (Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015); more specifically, operational performance (Ng & Jee, 2012); innovation performance (Yusr, 2016); competitive advantage (Munizu, 2013); organizational learning (Yazdani, Attafar, Shahin, & Kheradmandnia, 2016) and financial performance. On other hand, Bazazo et al (2017) expressed that the vast majority of the scientists found the profoundly effect of TQM on firm execution in assembling industry. Thusly, the current examination accepts that TQM can be the powerful benefactor in send out execution of furniture industry in Pakistan. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: TQM has a positive influence on SMEs export performance.

### **Export Market Orientation and SME Export Performance in Furniture Industry**

Market direction is fundamental for a firm since its catch the capacity to envision and address the market changes and exploit predominant execution (Styles, Gray, Kropp, Lindsay, & Shoham, 2006). Especially, if firms have a solid market direction in the residential market that not mean such firms have a further extent of market direction in foreign markets (Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay, 2000). According to Boso, Story, and Cadogan (2013) market activities in foreign markets termed is export market orientation. Similarly, Young (2005) stated that export market orientation conduct is not quite the same as local market orientation behaviour that the dynamics of foreign market is more confounded than local market and further, firms need more resources and investment for export market orientation activities. However, Singh and Mahmood (2013) examined the relationship of export market orientation and SME export performance in context of Malaysia and found the noteworthy positive connection between trade advertise direction and fare execution outcome namely, sales volume, profitability and market share. Equally, Alotaibi and Zhang (2016); Cadogan, Boso, Story, and Adeola (2016) researched the connection among EMO and SME trade performance in different contexts such as New Zealand, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and Turkey. They found the strong relationship between export market orientation and export performance of the firms in all contexts. Therefore, according to the above literature, it is postulated that there could be the positive and significant

relationship between these proposed constructs. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: EMO has a positive influence on SMEs export performance.

### **Total Quality Management and Export Market Orientation in Furniture Industry of Pakistan**

According to previous literature, researchers presented that TQM provide a platform for sustainable competitive advantage. TQM supportsto the development of market orientation culture in the firm. According to Bazazo, Alansari, Alquraan, Alzgaybh, and Masa'deh (2017)stated that both TQM and EMO emphasize on customer needs, wants and satisfaction, further required a good coordination with each other. Similarly both activities are important for firm value-adding activities and structural designing andmanaging the organizational change.

TQM activities are market focused(Corredor, & Goñi, 2011).where firms consistently align their internal processes to fit marketplace characteristics, thus assist firms in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Bazazo et al. (2017)examined the relationship between TQM and market orientation in the context of Malaysia and found the positive relationship between TQM and market orientation. In another study, Imran, Abdul Hamid and Aziz (2017)investigated the relationship between TQM, MO and firm performance and found the positive relationship between TQM practices and market orientation, and these TQM activities further improved the firm performance. Based on the literature, the current believe that TQM and EMO can be influence to each other in furniture industry of Pakistan. Hence,the following hypothesis proposed:

H3: TQM and EMO positively influence each other.

### **Mediating role of Export Market Orientation**

EMO is considered the main variable, on the base of market information, firm can go for any new business opportunity, innovation, quality and business networking with stockholders. The export market information is guidedto firms that should take a decision or introduced a new strategy, such as should go for product innovation to fulfill the customer needs, it will give us a competitive advantage, should improve the quality or product quality is able to get a competitive advantage and alternatively improve the firm export performance(Imran, Abdul Hamid, & Aziz, 2017). In current examination, send out market orientation is proposed to playing as an interceding variable between total quality management and SME trade execution (Imran et al., 2017). This proposition is based on the findings of several empirical research such as Aljanabi and Noor (2015), they have found export market orientation as being a mediator variable between two variables.

For instance, Wang, Hult, Ketchen Jr, and Ahmed (2009) found the mediating role of market orientation between knowledge management and firm financial performance. In another study, Joseph and Francis (2015) conducted the study in Kenya and investigate the mediating effect of market orientation on organizational culture and financial institution' performance. The study showed a strong relationship between organizational culture and financial institution' performance due to the mediating role of market orientation. Specifically, Lin et al. (2014) researched the interceding role of EMO between firm relationship and export performance of the firm and found the contemplation job of export market orientation. Between firm relationships it is stronger because of export market orientation, truth be told, send out market direction expanded the budgetary condition, vital execution, and upper hand of the firm in the worldwide market. In accordance with the discoveries of past examinations, the current investigation expected the intervening job of EMO among TQM and SME trade execution in furniture industry of Pakistan. As such, the following mediation hypothesis is proposed:

H4: EMO has a mediating role between TQM and SME export performance.

### Research Framework

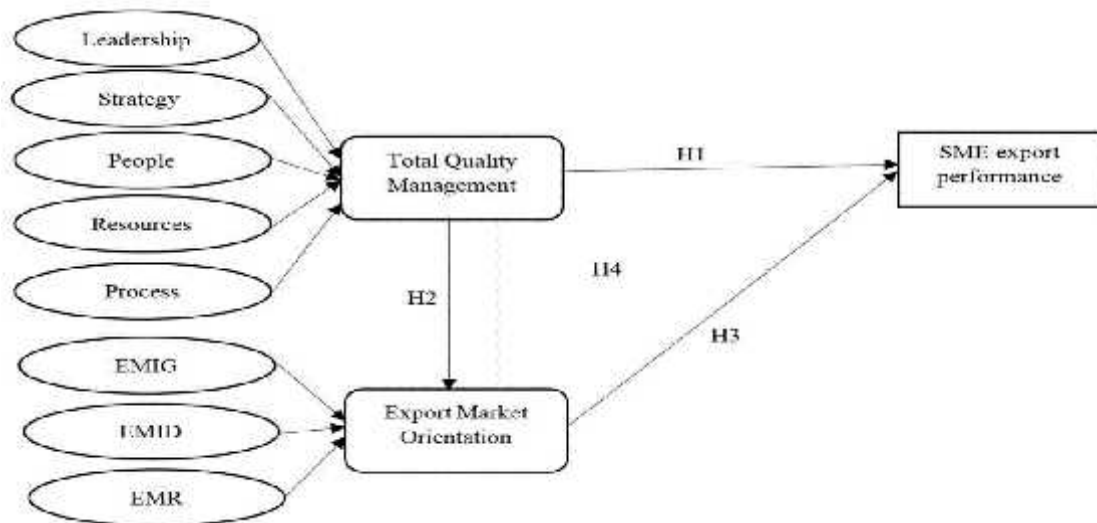


Figure 1 Research framework

## **Material and Methods**

This investigation directed with regards to furniture fabricating organizations of Pakistan. The Pakistan furniture manufacturing export-oriented companies were taken for this current study. The Pakistan exporter's directory was taken as a sampling frame for current study. The total three hundred twenty-one (321) furniture exporting companies were identified as a study sampling frame.

Furthermore, this study adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) technique to quantify the sample size. Refereeing to Morgan table, one hundred seventy-five (175) companies were selected as a sample size for the study. Furthermore, random sampling technique has been adopted for respondent selection. The random selection was made through Microsoft excel 2016 (RAND) function (Saunders & Lewis, 2015).

Export managers of the companies were selected for study respondent (Calantone, Tamer Cavusgil, Schmidt, & Shin, 2004; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). The post mail and face to face methods were used to distribute the questionnaire. A total of 119 valid questionnaires were collected.

## **Measures of Variables**

Measures of the variable adapted from past literature and scale of the study containing seven-point Likert scale (Choi & Eboch, 1998). This study has adopted five dimensions of TQM considerably the importance of leadership, long and short-term strategy, people, resources and process enclosed 6,6,6,5 and 7 correspondingly referred from (Munizu, 2013). Similarly, the orientation of export market has been adopted from study conducted by Cadogan, Paul, Salminen, Puumalainen, and Sundqvist (2001) which was based on three dimensions considerably export market intelligence generation (5 items), export market intelligence dissemination (5 items) and export market responsiveness (3 items). Moreover, export performance adapted from the study of Shoham, Brencic, Virant, and Ruvio (2008).

## **Results and Discussion**

The structure equation modeling (SEM) analysis has been performed using Smartpls-3. The second-order reflective-formative model has been used.

## **Measurement Model Validation**

Smart-PLS 3.2.7 has been used for the appraisal of measurement model which perform precise evaluation of construct (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). In order to eliminate the discernment validity, reliability and convergent validity of construct the measurement model has been critically monitored and inspected. The reliability of items was also inspected individually while loading and considered at least 0.7 loadings. However, Cronbach alpha has been used to

measure constructs reliability along with composite reliability (CR) and avg. variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1 illustrates values of Cronbach alpha CR and Avg. Variance expected (AVE). All of the values are higher than threshold that is (0.7) in case of Cronbach alpha, (0.7) for CR and (0.5) for AVE respectively (Hair Jr et al., 2016).

**Table 1**  
**Finding of the measurement model (First Order, Reflective)**

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Leadership	0.75	0.84	0.56
Strategy	0.75	0.84	0.56
People	0.87	0.90	0.61
Resources	0.70	0.82	0.53
Process	0.87	0.90	0.56
Export market information generation (EMIG)	0.78	0.86	0.60
Export market information dissemination (EMID)	0.85	0.89	0.63
Export market responsiveness (EMR)	0.70	0.87	0.77
SME export performance	0.91	0.93	0.62

CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

Likewise, discriminant validity was inspected to validate the model outside consistency, based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) that AVE of the constructs sought to be higher than the squared correlations between the constructs. In this manner affirming the discriminant validity and the result can be seen in the table (2).

**Table 2**  
**Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

	EMID	EMIG	EMR	Leadership	People	Process	Resources	SME ep	Strategy
EMID	0.79								
EMIG	0.01	0.78							
EMR	0.02	0.33	0.88						
Leadership	-0.05	0.45	0.36	0.75					
People	-0.01	0.35	0.33	0.61	0.78				
Process	-0.16	0.41	0.16	0.44	0.48	0.75			
Resources	0.22	0.27	0.26	0.51	0.45	0.33	0.73		
SME ep	0.06	0.31	0.40	0.47	0.44	0.36	0.40	0.78	
Strategy	-0.03	0.40	0.26	0.62	0.67	0.52	0.51	0.47	0.72

EMIG = export market information generation; EMID = export market information dissemination; EMR; export market responsiveness; EP = export performance

### Formative Constructs Treatment in Measurement Models

The assessment of formative measurement model has been carried out using multicollinearity among items and their respective loads (Hair Jr et al., 2016). The value of max.variance inflation factor (VIF) was closely observed and recommended under limit for formative indicators. The second consideration was given to respective weights using resembling method (Bootstrapping with 5000 re-samples). It helps in identifying numerous non-significant formative indicators. However, in this study the researcher has decided to contain these items, because it has been proven that when the indicator weight was not significant, but the respective item loading in comparatively high for example (greater then equal to 0.50), or the value is statistically significant the indicator should consider for evaluation (Hair Jr et al., 2016). The related results are illustrated in table (3).

**Table 3**  
**Findings of Measurement Model for Formative constructs**

Constructs	Indicator	Outer loading	OL T-Value	Outer Weights	OW T-Value	VIF
Export Market Orientation	EMIG	0.85	7.43**	0.66	4.23**	1.12
	EMID	0.02	0.90 ns	-0.03	0.01 ns	1.10
	EMR	0.78	6.54**	0.56	3.44***	1.12
Total Quality Management	Leadershi	0.90	15.68**	0.48	3.24**	1.95
	Strategy	0.81	8.53**	0.19	1.24 ns	2.29
	People	0.80	9.39**	0.20	1.43 ns	2.11
	Resources	0.67	4.33**	0.17	1.09 ns	1.48
	Process	0.67	5.47**	0.21	1.57 ns	1.45

Note: OL= outer loading, OW= outer wrights, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05, ns= nonsignificant

### Structural Model Assessment

Once the measurement model has been evaluated the next step is to calculate the structural model. In this research pathcoefficient is used to validate the structured model.

### Direct (total effect) Relationship Assessment (Path Coefficient)

To evaluate the beta-values and T-statistics values, bootstrapping method was used (with approximately 5000 sub-samples for 119 responses). Nonetheless, in recent research three (03) direct relationships were evaluated and foundsupportedall three-direct relationship hypothesis. All direct relationship results are shown in table 4. Considering the T-values i.e. higher than the threshold value of 1.96, the hypothesis has been accepted.



**Table 4**  
**Findings of structural model (Direct effect results)**

Hypothesis	Beta	SD	T Value	P Values	Decision
H1: TQM -> EP	0.55	0.08	5.43**	0.00	Supported
H2: EMO -> EP	0.19	0.08	2.37**	0.02	Supported
H3: TQM -> EMO	0.53	0.07	7.38**	0.02	Supported

Note: \*\* $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ns= nonsignificant ( $p > .05$ ) (Two Tail)

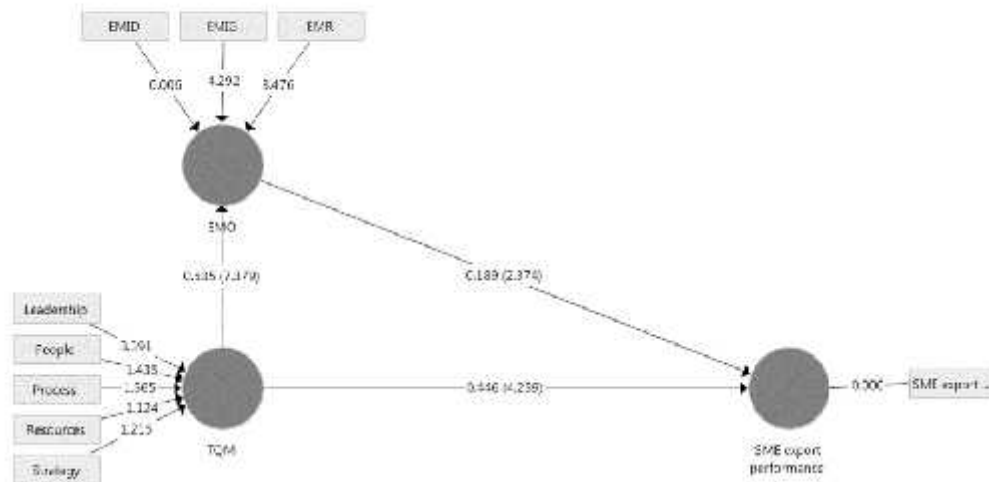


Figure 2

PLS-SEM Bootstrapping

**Mediation Model**

Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014) stated that, PLS (SEM) bootstrapping technique for mediation examination is viewed as proper. In this manner, this examination has analyzed the mediating role of EMO with the help of bootstrapping method at 5000 subsamples to conclude the t-value. Nonetheless, table 5 illustrates the results which prove the mediating role of EMO between TQM and SME export performance.

**Table 5**  
**Findings of structural model (Indirect effect results)**

Hypothesis	Beta	SD	T-Value	P Value	2.5%	97%	Results
H4: TQM -> EMO -> SME ep	0.10	0.05	2.25	0.02	0.02	0.19	Mediation

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ns= nonsignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Two Tail)

Once the significance of mediation has been identified the researcher can further analyze the types of mediation. Nitzl, Roldan, and Cepeda (2016) have identified the novel criteria for mediation types. According to this rule, used the picture (2) to accurate the mediation type, it helps in identifying complementary mediation between Total quality management (TQM) and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) export performance.

### Results and Discussion

The significances of study indicated that total quality management and export market orientation explained 33% variance of the export performance in small and medium firms of furniture industry. The total quality management found the positive and significant relationship with firm performance specifically in export context. Furthermore, the finding of this study between relationship of TQM and performance is consistent with past studies (Imran et al., 2018; Lages, Silva, & Styles, 2009). Anyway, this finding shows the contributing role of TQM in furniture firm performance. In addition, the findings of the study shown the positive and significant relationship between EMO and performance of the firms in furniture industry of Pakistan, besides, this study also found the intervening role of EMO among TQM and firm performance. These results consistent with Amin, Thurasamy, Aldakhil, and Kaswuri (2016); Pascucci, Bartoloni, and Gregori (2016) study, which argued that export market orientation influences the firm ability to enhance the firm export performance. Therefore, current study presented that EMO observed as a contributory variable in SME exports setting. In fact, EMO playing the dynamic role to reconfiguring the TQM practices according to international market requirement and validated the dynamic capability view theory.

### Conclusion

As per study findings, this study found the positive and significant relationship between TQM, EMO and firm performance along with mediating role of EMO between TQM and firm export performance. In other words, this study concluded that the strategies such TQM, EMO are useful for the improvement or enhancement in firm performance in respect of export setting. These findings are clear path for firm manager / owner to implement the TQM, EMO strategies to overcome the export low performance issue. Furthermore, this finding is providing the information regarding international market to take the maximum orders or also tackle the issue in international market. Hence, this is useful study for manager

/ owner of furniture firms reconfigure the current strategies according to international market requirement this kind of approach would help to managers / owner to improve the export performance. Furthermore, this study validated the RBV and DCV theory to cover the tested research framework. Moreover, this is also contributing in term of methodologically, this study is adapted the two-stage approach to examine the formative second order construct, this study is among of the few studies those adopted this approach for data analysis and draw the results. Besides, current study findings are recommended to Government of Pakistan to consider the TQM, EMO, which highly important for the improvement of SMEs. Above and beyond, considering the findings of this study, it has been observed that TQM is very important for furniture firms. Consequently, SME managers/owner need to recognize the significance of TQM in upgrading firm exports. Notwithstanding, it is likewise imperative to give full fixation on TQM, which will be beneficial for EMO activity, and in turn, EMO will could help firms to understand the dynamics of international market, alternatively would improve the firm's exports.

### **Recommendations**

Current study research framework would validate in another country setting, in different industry setting such textile, surgical, leather and in-service industry such information technology, freelancing services. Secondly, this is a cross-sectional study, should validate this study in longitudinal methodology. Lastly, export market orientation can use as a moderator between the relationship of total quality management and SME export performance.

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