

# Towards Equitable Employment: Role of Total Quality Management in Enhancing Women's Work Conditions in MSMEs

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## Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in India's employment market, especially for women in semi-urban and rural areas. Yet many women in this sector still work under informal contracts, face pay gaps, unsafe conditions and have little real access to legal protections. Even though, India has an extensive set of labour laws, enforcement on the ground particularly in non-exporting MSMEs remains lenient. Total Quality Management (TQM) is well-known for boosting productivity and streamlining processes, but its ability to also build gender equity into everyday operations has been largely overlooked. This study uses a qualitative, literature-based review of both Indian and international case studies to explore how TQM practices like standardising processes, clarifying roles, involving employees and pursuing continuous improvement can naturally lead to fairer treatment. The evidence shows that when TQM is aligned with government programmes such as ZED, CGTMSE, and Skill India, MSMEs can turn fair pay, safer workplaces, and lower staff turnover into built-in business outcomes rather than box-ticking exercises. In doing so, TQM becomes not only a driver of competitiveness but also a practical route to more inclusive and sustainable work environments for women in MSMEs.

**Keywords:** Total Quality Management, MSME, Women Workers, Gender Wage Gap, Labour Equity, Quality Management Systems, India

## 1. Introduction:

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are very important to India's economy story and job growth. The MSME sector significantly contributes to around 30% of the country's Gross Domestic Product and it employ more than 110 million people in different industries (Ministry of Micro, 2023)<sup>1</sup>. Women make up a large percentage of the workforce in this group, especially in rural and semi-urban areas where they often do informal or home-based employment such stitching clothes, processing food, packaging and making handicrafts (International Labour Organization, 2021)<sup>2</sup>. However, their labour is typically characterized by irregular salaries, lack of social protection, dangerous conditions, and limited decision-making ability (Self Employed Women's Association, 2019)<sup>3</sup>. India has a lot of labour laws that are meant to make sure that everyone is treated equitably and that the working conditions are safe.

<sup>1</sup> (Ministry of Micro, 2023)

<sup>2</sup> (International Labour Organization, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> (Self Employed Women's Association, 2019)

However, the implementation of this regulatory framework is still weak, especially in MSMEs that do not export or that work outside of official clusters.

Women's involvement in India's MSME economy is characterized by limited representation and extreme income inequality, where women account for just 24% of the labor force, they receiving only 18% of labor income almost half the international average while enduring the nation's highest gender pay gap. An important proportion of these women work in informal, unregistered, and home-based employment, leaving them extremely exposed to market and climate shocks, while at the same time pushing them outside the scope of official statistics and government-run protection schemes. Their labour tends to be clustered in low-skilled, gender-stereotyped occupations in textiles, garments, handicrafts, food processing, and service industries such as care work and beauty services where male employers are often unwilling to hire female labour. Aside from their economic functions, women bear "triple responsibilities" which include production, unpaid domestic work, and community responsibilities, heavily restricting their time and capacity to participate in the labor force. In addition, they are also confronted with systemic issues such as limited access to capability building, resources, and technical knowledge, along with high illiteracy rates (59%) and declining health trends such as the increase in anemia prevalence to 66.4% in 2019 from 46.1% in 2016, all of which further limit their development in the MSME environment. (Chakraborty, Hingne, Gupta, & Olickal, 2022)<sup>4</sup>

Most MSMEs in India do not completely adhere to labor regulations unless prompted by legal thresholds or outside enforcement. The most common method is lack of awareness which is most frequently quoted in the context of the Minimum Wages Act 1948 and EPF Act 1952, especially in Maharashtra where 53% of MSMEs lacked knowledge of wage necessities. Another technique is "avoidance by choice," where a company's reports that laws are "not enforced," "unnecessarily complicated," or "not legally required." In a few of the instances, companies use the "staying below threshold" approach to escape and avoid legal compliances like EPF and gratuity contributions. Worker silence also contributes; companies rationalize non-compliance by claiming that employees "have not demanded" benefits, a reason cited by more than 60% of companies across states for non-provision of EPF or gratuity. Adverse litigation focus to argue that retaining voluntary separation is a reason for not paying retrenchment benefits was found. Low awareness of penalties lessens the fear of non-compliance. Complexity and cost were also given as reasons by firms, with "too costly" and "unnecessarily complicated" being commonly used. Interestingly, informal payments is a most common strategy employed by MSEs to circumvent legal compliance with labour and business requirements like minimum wages, income tax, and VAT. The phenomenon indicates an active and intentional preference by certain firms to bend the law, as a result of a belief that evasion is less costly and more convenient than following the law. (Kannan, 2014)<sup>5</sup>

Implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) tools like quality circles, systematic feedback and project teams encourages merit-based pay by increasing role clarity, peer assessment and transparency factors that have been proven to minimize gender wage disparities (Gupta & Eriksson, 2006)<sup>6</sup>. Lean Six Sigma in an EU service company minimized voluntary turnover due to better HR procedures allowing retention, skill development, and wage steadiness (Laureani & Antony, 2010)<sup>7</sup>. Likewise, a Romanian auto-parts company implementing 5S techniques observed better order, safety, and spirit, promoting

<sup>4</sup> (Chakraborty, Hingne, Gupta, & Olickal, 2022)

<sup>5</sup> (Kannan, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> (Gupta & Eriksson, 2006)

<sup>7</sup> (Laureani & Antony, 2010)

regularity in output and compensation (Mazur, et al., 2024)<sup>8</sup>. In Japan, electronic production firms adopting TQM-driven cell production systems with ongoing training and team-member accountability saw lower absenteeism and greater productivity, validating the worth of valuing employees as assets (Sakikawa, 2005)<sup>9</sup>. Another research on Japanese SMEs found high-quality HRM practices to be associated with reduced turnover (Gamage, 2025)<sup>10</sup>. For Indian MSMEs who use informal or daily-wage female workers, such strategies build fairness in, narrow compliance gaps, and enhance retention reducing re-hiring expense while building productivity and reputation through secure, skilled, and fairly treated teams.

In reality, most MSMEs don't pay much attention to workplace improvements unless there's a clear impact on profits or a legal requirement they cannot ignore. New systems or practices are usually put into practice only to avoid losing customers, prevent losses or bypass risks. TQM doesn't necessarily push MSMEs to act out of moral responsibility toward closing gender pay gaps or improving conditions for women workers. But what it does offer is a practical structure a way of working that streamlines operations, where fairness and better treatment of employees start becoming part of the system itself. With defined roles, consistent processes and transparent performance tracking, TQM quietly builds a culture where equity is no longer an exception it just happens. This study looks at how, even in cost-conscious and compliance-driven MSMEs, TQM can become a subtle yet strong step towards more equitable employment for women.

## 2. Literature Review:

### 2.1 Status of Women in MSMEs

In the MSME sector, women are majorly confined to unorganized, informal, less-paid or home-based employment, especially in sectors which are traditionally aligned with household domestic roles. Many a times, socio-cultural expectations and the burden of unpaid domestic responsibilities further hinder their sustainable economic participation. The substandard work environment, irregularity of job opportunities, lack of job security discourage long-term female engagement in the workforce and all these systemic challenges call for the urgent adoption of frameworks like Total Quality Management (TQM), which can internally institutionalize fairness, inclusion, and accountability within MSME operations. (Kapsos, Bourmpoula, & Silberman, 2014)<sup>11</sup> The Government of India has incorporated number of changes to make it easier for women to work and keep them safe and secure. For example, they have extended paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, made it compulsory for businesses with more than 50 employees to have crèche facilities and made sure that wages are equal through the Code on Wages (2019). But in the MSME sector, where most jobs are informal, seasonal, or done from home, these protections typically don't work. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019–20, the national female labour force participation rate stood at under 30% for women aged 15 and above, with states like Bihar as low as 9.5%. These numbers show how women are often pushed to the edges of the workforce. There is a clear gap between what the law mentions and what happens on the ground level. (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2021)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> (Mazur, et al., 2024)

<sup>9</sup> (Sakikawa, 2005)

<sup>10</sup> (Gamage, 2025)

<sup>11</sup> (Kapsos, Bourmpoula, & Silberman, 2014)

<sup>12</sup> (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2021)

## 2.2 Wage Gap and Gender Issues

Women in MSMEs often face day to day challenges that go beyond the workplace. Social prejudice and traditional gender roles make it harder for them to grow in their careers while managing family responsibilities. The lack of affordable quality daycare facility by MSME owners adds to this burden, making work-life balance even more difficult. Poor infrastructure like unreliable transport system and electricity, further limits their ability to work or even reach their jobs on time. These issues often go unspoken but have real consequences on women's participation and stability in the workforce. To address this, policies must go beyond general labour laws they need to support fair pay in par with their male counterparts, stop discrimination and provide basics like maternity leave and childcare. More importantly, helping women build skills isn't just a bonus it's a necessity if they're to stand a fair chance in the MSME space. (Tiwari, 2023)<sup>13</sup>

## 2.3 Labour Law Non-Compliance

There is structure in place for a progressive legal framework meant to protect women in the workforce, the reality on the ground often tells an altogether different story. Laws like the Equal Remuneration Act 1976 which has now has been subsumed into and repealed by the Code on Wages Act 2019, Factories Act 1948, Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and the POSH Act 2013 were created with good intentions but when it comes to practice, they often fall short. For many women, working in the informal spaces of MSMEs, basic equal treatment and legal safeguards remain distant promises and the gender wage gap continues to widen and hiring decisions are still influenced by outdated biases. Even basic facilities like safe working hours legally mandated are either missing or ignored, often brushed aside due to lax enforcement or quiet corruption. While maternity leave is guaranteed by law, it ends up being one more reason for employers to hesitate in hiring women. Protection from workplace harassment, though formally in place, is weakened by fear, stigma and ineffective complaint systems. In the end, the problem isn't the lack of laws it's the lack of sincerity and systems to make those laws work where they matter most in real workplaces, for real women. (Kaur, 2024)<sup>14</sup>

## 2.4 Total Quality Management (TQM) as a Corrective Tool

Modernization and technological advancements are mandatory to bring in operational effectiveness and product quality in MSMEs when it comes to Total Quality Management (TQM). Government supported modernization projects have immensely helped the Tirupur garment export industry become more productive with lower fixed costs per unit and faster delivery times. These changes show how TQM stresses process standardization and ongoing improvement. Exporters have also concentrated on adding value by working with or outsourcing to worldwide brands, which indirectly raises quality demands. However, ongoing problems including decentralized production and reliance on job workers have caused quality issues, such as goods being rejected without warning and export orders being cancelled. This shows that just modernizing isn't enough one also need quality systems built in. To make sure that all parts of production are consistent and accountable, a systematic method like TQM is essential (Palanivelu & Sureshkumar, 2009)<sup>15</sup>. The introduction of TQM philosophies like 5S Sort, (Set in Order, Shine, Standardize and Sustain) and Kaizen brings a visible workplace shift, turning it into a serene, orderly and welcoming space, one that employees could genuinely feel proud of. By creation of orderly management procedures and prioritizing safety in everyday operations, it cut downs on wasted time and cleared

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<sup>13</sup> (Tiwari, 2023)

<sup>14</sup> (Kaur, 2024)

<sup>15</sup> (Palanivelu & Sureshkumar, 2009)

bottlenecks, allowing work to move more smoothly. In practice, it echoed the very heart of TQM that having clear processes, making steady progress and showing that even small, consistent changes can lead to big and lasting improvements. (Jamadar, Awasare, Mulani, Kanase, & Gumvant, 2021)<sup>16</sup> 5S and Kaizen work because they bring everyone into the process, giving employees a chance to voice their opinions and valuing their ideas. When people are given enough importance to suggest and own improvements, they feel respected and connected to their work. These methods are simple, clear, and free of complicated jargon, what they really need is committed leadership to make them happen. Their straightforward nature means they can fit into any industry big or small, and these practices being cost effective are especially well-suited for MSMEs unlike other Statistical Process Control Tools. By making workplaces more organized, efficient and fair, they don't just raise productivity they also help create an environment where everyone, irrespective of gender can thrive. (Gupta & Jain, 2014)<sup>17</sup>

## 2.5 Government Schemes

There are many government initiatives which have developed an very conducive and favorable environment for MSMEs to embrace Total Quality Management (TQM) practices and labour reforms. The scheme of Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) encourages formalized systems and process standardization in small firms, which is directly in consensus with TQM philosophies such as defect prevention, documentation and continuous improvement. Through incentivization of standardization, ZED can indirectly facilitate wage transparency and improved working conditions, especially for women workers in the informal organizations (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2023)<sup>18</sup>. The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) provides collateral free financing option to MSMEs to enable investment towards technology, machinery, training and quality focused operational improvements. It was identified that close to 62% of beneficiary companies registered revenue growth ranging from 8% to 20% following the access to CGTMSE and its assistance indicating its effectiveness in the enhancing TQM adoption (Bhatt, 2021)<sup>19</sup>. More importantly, the Skill India Mission is supposed to align workforce skills with industry demands, although 71% of the small producers have registered limited gains so far, attributing this to implementation challenges (ANI, 2025)<sup>20</sup>. Working together, these plans to an overall structure that supports the building blocks of TQM efficiency, accountability. and worker development thus the creation of more equal and sustainable employment opportunities in the MSME sector.

## 2.6 Lower Absenteeism and Turnover

Workers safety if considered as an investment is best practice for MSMEs in number of ways. More effort on work place ease like using ergonomic workstations, doing regular maintenance and using Personal Protective Equipment diligently are all safer practices that reduce accidents, absenteeism and production shutdowns or delays. This leads to productivity while also lowering cost of rehiring and healthcare. A safe workplace under TQM enhances morale, retention, and product quality, driving MSME profitability through stable, efficient operations. (Safe in India, 2022)<sup>21</sup> 5S and Kaizen not only adds up the aesthetic value to the workplace but they also reshape how employees experience and feel at their jobs. By creating a cleaner, safer and well-organized work environment, the TQM techniques results in reducing everyday

<sup>16</sup> (Jamadar, Awasare, Mulani, Kanase, & Gumvant, 2021)

<sup>17</sup> (Gupta & Jain, 2014)

<sup>18</sup> (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2023)

<sup>19</sup> (Bhatt, 2021)

<sup>20</sup> (ANI, 2025)

<sup>21</sup> (Safe in India, 2022)



frustrations like searching for tools or working around clutter by replacing them with smoother and more predictable routine. Safety measures such as proper signage and clear fire exits give workers confidence in their surroundings, while organized layouts make problems easier to spot and solve before they grow. When workers are trained, involved and trusted to maintain their work space areas, they feel valued to take pride in their work. Recognition and small rewards reinforce these efforts that contributes to building a sense of ownership that strengthens teamwork, group cohesiveness, reduces stress and it also helps to keeps workers morale high. Over time, this engagement translates into higher productivity, lower absenteeism and a workplace culture that lives up to TQM's promise of continuous improvement. (Islam, Samad, & Islam, 2019)<sup>22</sup>

### 2.7 TQM and Skill India Synergy

The Ministry of MSME's Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP) works to uplift the skill set of entire range of workforce involved with MSMEs including women, SC/ST communities physically challenged, Ex-servicemen and also those from economically weaker backgrounds to see entrepreneurship and self-employment as real career options. Through training that include short awareness sessions to advanced technical and management courses, it focuses on building both practical skills and leadership capacity. For women in MSMEs, this means stronger competencies, greater confidence, and clearer paths to decision-making roles closely aligning with TQM's emphasis on skill enhancement and process excellence. Because the programme is flexible and industry-agnostic, it naturally supports Skill India's mission while also improving workplace quality, making MSMEs more inclusive, efficient, and fair. (Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India, n.d)<sup>23</sup>

### 2.8 Exports, Ethics, and Quality

MSMEs entry in export market tends to drive them towards buyer-driven compliance audits in which foreign buyers demand evidence of safer, fairer and lawful working conditions prior to ordering. This pressure induces improved working conditions from enhanced fire safety and health systems to fairer wages and union participation which in turn, increases trust and productivity. According to efficiency wage theory, firms also improve conditions to attract and retain better talent, reducing expensive turnover. Success in exports frequently leads to firm growth in size, enabling increased investment in safety gear, training and process improvement. Lastly, exposure to world trade promotes better management techniques, as world buyers exchange know-how and insist on disciplined systems, supporting TQM's focus on continuous improvement. (Tanaka, 2016)<sup>24</sup>

### 2.9 Quality as Social Infrastructure

Tata Steel won the 2008 Deming Prize for fully adopting TQM. This illustrates that a robust quality system can be the key to long-term success by lowering costs, increasing productivity and making workplaces safer. (Singh, Jha, & Kumar, 2010)<sup>25</sup> Most of the time, these kinds of milestones are connected to big companies, but a lot of MSMEs have quietly adopted the same methodical strategy to grow from small beginnings to successful and respected businesses. Dela Foods Ratlam Madhya Pradesh made direct farmer ties, bulk buying, fair pricing, and processing surplus or imperfect produce echoes Six Sigma principles by cutting waste, reducing variability, recovering value, and turning discarded inputs into

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<sup>22</sup> (Islam, Samad, & Islam, 2019)

<sup>23</sup> (Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India, n.d)

<sup>24</sup> (Tanaka, 2016)

<sup>25</sup> (Singh, Jha, & Kumar, 2010)

profitable products, showing how an MSME can informally use TQM tools for both profit and social impact. (Spotlight, Economic Times, 2025)<sup>26</sup> Again, one Gharkul Industries Private Limited, an MSME from Amravati, Maharashtra, has become an export-ready brand with FDA, FSSAI, HACCP, and ISO certifications. It has won many quality awards and sells its products in a wide range of foreign markets in Asia and the Middle East. (Spice Exporters Directory, n.d)<sup>27</sup> The Chennai–Bangalore automotive belt has grown into a strong centre for quality-led competition. In the last decade, 11 auto component companies from this region have won the prestigious Deming Prize, creating a ripple effect where MSMEs adopted TQM, 5S, Kaizen and Six Sigma just to match the competition and meet global standards. Companies like IM Gears, EAPL and Polyplastics show how strict quality systems, ISO certifications and ongoing improvements can win awards from OEMs like Bosch, Renault and Brakes India and bring in export orders. (IDC (India) Limited for the Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology, New Delhi, 2008)<sup>28</sup> This push for excellence has encouraged even the smallest businesses to improve processes and invest in Research & Development, making quality a must for survival and growth. The cluster's story proves how a strong regional quality culture can turn MSMEs into suppliers trusted worldwide. These small businesses have not only enlarged their markets, but they have also made the communities they serve stronger by making quality a part of their daily lives.

### 2.10 Compliance as Competitive Advantage

In today's regulated, security-focused market, compliance-readiness has become a business enabler for MSMEs transforming them from just vendors into trusted strategic partners by ensuring they meet stringent legal compliances, data security and governance standards, which not only unlocks market access to large enterprises, MNCs and government contracts but also it builds credibility, operational resilience and sustainable growth while turning regulatory alignment into a lasting competitive advantage. (Synersoft, 2025)<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Need & Purpose of the Study:

1. Women workforce in MSMEs have to deal with seasonal, informal and unregulated working conditions without easy access to fair remuneration, benefits and job security.
2. Most the MSME owners treat labor laws and regulatory frameworks as just statutory requirements, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.
3. There hasn't been much research or practice in the workplace on how Total Quality Management (TQM) can make things better for women.
4. Many MSMEs are in no pressure to comply with ethical labor standards because they don't have to meet export requirements or buyer's mandates.
5. It is becoming more and more important to look into how TQM can be used as a voluntary, internal tool to encourage fair hiring and long-lasting work practices in MSMEs.

### 4. Problem statement:

It is observed that, notwithstanding the existence of statutory frameworks, the working conditions for women in MSMEs continue to be substandard due to inadequate enforcement and informal structures.

<sup>26</sup> (Spotlight, Economic Times, 2025)

<sup>27</sup> (Spice Exporters Directory, n.d)

<sup>28</sup> (IDC (India) Limited for the Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology, New Delhi, 2008)

<sup>29</sup> (Synersoft, 2025)

This study aims to investigate if Total Quality Management may function as a structural and cultural remedy to enhance these conditions. Hence the problem statement is "Towards Equitable Employment: Role of Total Quality Management in Enhancing Women's Work Conditions in MSMEs."

## 5. Research Methodology:

### 5.1 Research Design:

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design, based on a structured review of secondary literature and documented case studies related to TQM, labor conditions and women's employment in MSMEs.

### 5.2 Data Collection:

The findings in this article are based on the secondary data sources. It is literature review-based study which helps in giving core understanding about the subject.

### 5.1 Research Objectives:

1. To examine at the current state and problems with women's working conditions in Indian MSMEs, with a focus on informality and workers' rights.
2. To assess into how Total Quality Management (TQM) could be used as a strategic framework to improve workplace standards and equitable treatment in the workplace.
3. To critically review national and international research and case studies on TQM, labour compliance, and employment of women in small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs).
4. To look into whether TQM may help close the gap between social fairness and economic efficiency in the MSME environment.
5. To suggest real-world practical, evidence-based ways to add gender-sensitive practices to MSME operations through the use of TQM.

## 6. Limitations of the study:

The study only used secondary data and no fieldwork or interviews were conducted. It might not show the most recent changes that are happening at the local level. There isn't a lot of information about how MSMEs work in different regions. The results are ideas and may not be true for everyone or in a statistical sense.

## 7. Findings and Discussion:

Across the evidence reviewed, three themes are consistent identified. They are as follows:

**Theme 1:** First is the status quo for women in MSMEs is structurally fragile. Employment is concentrated in informal, home-based, low-skill roles with piece-rate pay, weak voice and thin safety nets. Non-compliance with labour provisions (minimum wages, EPF, gratuity, POSH provisions in spirit) is common driven by low awareness, "avoidance by choice," threshold gaming and muted worker demand. Government protections exist on paper, but uptake is uneven in informal settings.

**Theme 2:** Second, TQM offers a practical, non-moralizing route to improve both operations and equity. Low-cost tools such as 5S, Kaizen, quality circles, SOPs, visual controls, simple metrics to standardize work, surface problems early and make performance traceable. That operational discipline reduces accidents and rework, stabilizes throughput and clarifies roles that in turn, it shrinks discretion in wage-setting and helps piece-rate women get credited accurately for output. Firms that institutionalize



suggestion schemes and team reviews report higher morale, lower absenteeism/turnover and smoother onboarding benefits that quietly narrow gender gaps without framing them as a “cost.”

**Theme 3:** Third, incentives matter. MSMEs rarely adopt new practices unless they see a business case or face external stakes. Export exposure and buyer audits create that pressure, nudging suppliers toward safety, documentation and fairer practices. Public programmes ZED (systems and standardization), CGTMSE (capex/working-capital without collateral), and Skill India/ESDP (shop-floor capability, supervisor training)—lower adoption frictions. Cluster effects (e.g., Chennai–Bengaluru auto belt) show how visible wins—awards, certifications, repeat export orders cascade to neighboring firms. Even small food and spice MSMEs that codify hygiene (HACCP/ISO), traceability, and shop-floor discipline signal reliability to large buyers and new markets.

Therefore, the most rationally and realistic pathway is to treat quality as social infrastructure inside the firm implementation of equity into processes rather than promises. Start with 5S and safety then publish simple, gender-neutral SOPs to digitize job cards/piece-rate records and run weekly circles that track defects, delays, and pay anomalies, couple this with basic compliance checklists (wages, hours, facilities) and a grievance loop that protects anonymity. Finance the change via CGTMSE which will be very cost effective and claim ZED incentives to align training to Skill India modules. For non-export MSMEs, reframe compliance as market access insurance and cost of unreliability, lost orders, rework, attrition and reputational drag. TQM doesn’t replace law, but it operationalizes dignity and fairness by design. Where MSMEs seek profit stability and risk control, quality-driven routines become the cheapest, stickiest way to get there and women workers are direct beneficiaries.

## 8. Conclusion:

Women working in MSMEs continue to face a mix of informality, weak safeguards and wage disparities, which laws and policies, while well-intentioned, have failed to address in practice. Total Quality Management (TQM) offers a practical solution to close this gap. By putting defined systems in place, defining responsibilities and tracking both performance and safety, TQM makes justice and equality a core motto of how the organization functions to bridge this legal compliance and operational quality practices. As these methods grow more common, fair pay, clear salaries and better working conditions stop being separate goals to aim towards and become a natural part of how the business operates. In this way, disciplined quality procedures lead to fair jobs and safer and more respected workplaces. These practices aren't just things that people do to cross off a box; they become part of the company's culture.

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