An evaluation of the effectiveness of work-flexibility practices in improving performance of firms in the food processing industry in Zimbabwe

(2010-2013)

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Business Administration (MBA), Faculty of Commerce, Graduate School of Management, University of Zimbabwe.

August 2013

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DECLARATION

I, TrymoreMudzi, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extend indicated in the acknowledgements, references and by comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any university.

Signed............................................ Date 16 August 2013

Signed............................................ Date 16 August 2013

Supervisor
Abstract

The study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of work-flexibility practices in improving the performance of firms in the food processing industry in Zimbabwe for the period 2010-2013. Secondary sources gave pertinent insights on the topic through literature review. The Literature review highlighted significant links between work-flexibility and firm performance. Reviewing literature also explored the definition of work-flexibility, organisational performance and explored the different forms of work-flexibility practices. Literature of the drivers of these practices was also reviewed giving important insights into the significance of aligning to ever changing customer needs. The advantages and disadvantages of work-flexibility practices to firms in the twenty first century were also looked at.

In this study both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used to ensure the research’s validity and reliability was strengthened. A survey questionnaire was administered in a random stratified sample of employees in selected major companies in the food processing industry. The results were analysed using Microsoft excel and were presented in tables and figures. The nature and prominence of some form of work-flexibility was found to vary from widely to sparsely in nature. Declining worker protection from the unions and ever-changing customer needs are chief drivers for firms in the food processing industry to adopt human resources practices of work-flexibility. The findings of the survey show that the major benefits to companies in implementing work-flexibility practices is reduction in costs whilst the major shortcoming identified from the findings was that of loss of job security. It was concluded indeed, human resources practices of work-flexibility are effective in boosting performance in companies in the food processing industry. The research recommended further study in assessing the role played by the unions in ensuring the protection of workers’ rights in Zimbabwe in as far as implementation of human resources work-flexibility practices is concerned.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all staff in the participating companies in the food processing for their contributions. Their candid and honest opinions ensured that the research was successfully completed.

I am most indebted to Dr. N Kaseke the research supervisor for his dedication and guidance throughout the six months period.

The encouragement and invaluable support from my wife SB Mudzi also kept me going throughout the research period.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my children, Tanyaradzwa and Tapiwa this should inspire you that determination is the key to success.
LIST OF ACRONYMS

UK – United Kingdom
USA – United States of America
TNF – Tripartite Negotiating Forum
WEF – World Economic Forum
NECFAI-FIS – National Employment Council for Food and Allied – Food Processing
FFAWUZ – Federation of Food and Allied Workers Union
EMCOZ – Employers’ Confederation of Zimbabwe
ZCTU – Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
PDL - Poverty Datum Line
TQMS – Total Quality Management System
JIT – Just In time
OOS – Occupational Overuse Syndrome
EU – European Union
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................................... iii
DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................ iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS .............................................................................................................. v
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. viii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Background .................................................................................................................. 2
  1.1.3 Food Processing ....................................................................................................... 8
  1.1.4 Food Processing Industry Problems ...................................................................... 11
  1.2 Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................... 16
  1.3 Research Objectives ................................................................................................. 17
  The following were the research sub-objectives: ......................................................... 17
  1.4 Research question ..................................................................................................... 17
  1.5 Proposition ................................................................................................................ 18
  1.6 Rationale/significance of the study ......................................................................... 18
  1.7 Scope of Research ..................................................................................................... 20
CHAPTER TWO ..................................................................................................................... 22
LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................................................... 22
  2.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 22
  2.1 Definition of Terms ................................................................................................... 22
  2.3 Models of Work Flexibility Practice ......................................................................... 34
  2.4 Drivers for Work – Flexibility .................................................................................. 39
  12.7 Benefits of Work Flexibility to Organizational Performance ............................. 47
  2.8 Short Comings of Work Flexibility ......................................................................... 53
  2.9 Resistance to work flexibility practices ................................................................. 55
  2.10 Policy Implications of Work Flexibility in Organization ...................................... 56
  2.12 Chapter Summary .................................................................................................. 57
CHAPTER THREE: ................................................................................................................ 58
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .............................................................................................. 58
  3.0 INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 58
  3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN ............................................................................................... 58
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 shows responses on the benefits of work-flexibility .......................86
Table 4.2 shows responses to challenges of work-flexibility .........................89
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.2 Gender distributions of the survey results ............................................75
Figure 4.3 Responses to length of service categories .............................................76
Figure 4.4 below shows the highest level of education for the participants ..........77
Figure 4.4 distribution of highest level of education of the respondents ............77
Figure 4.5 shows types of employment contract of the respondents ....................78
Figure 4.5 Types of employment contracts of the respondents ..........................78
Figure 4.6 Participants’ responses on internal numeric flexibility .......................79
Figure 4.7 Responses on external numeric flexibility .............................................80
Figure 4.8 Responses on functional flexibility .....................................................81
Figure 4.9 Responses to locational flexibility ......................................................82
Figure 4.10 Responses to the remuneration model of companies .......................83
Figure 4.11 Key drivers of work-flexibility responses .........................................84
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Managing the cost of doing business is a key success factor in companies worldwide and the food processing sector in Zimbabwe is no exception. The fixed nature of labour cost in production has compounded the food industry viability problems. The drop in production capacity in the domestic market from around 95% in early 1990s down to 44.2% in 2012 (Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry, 2012) has meant that most companies would have retrenched excess labour, but the high cost of retrenchment has meant that some companies have had to retain dormant staff. This means companies continue to carry huge overhead costs that make them unattractive to potential investors. For the few companies that can afford retrenchment, laying staff has been the norm across the industry. The unions on the other hand have been resisting the productivity-related pay rises whilst pushing for companies to remunerate workers in line with the ruling Poverty Datum Line (PDL).

According to CZI (2012) companies are facing viability challenges due to a myriad of reasons such as, shortage of raw materials, lack of working capital, inability to pay wages, power cuts and drop in product demand. It is imperative for companies therefore, to craft strategies of reducing costs of production including cost of employing labour by adopting a flexible working regime. Labour costs in this industry ranges between 12% up to 14% to revenue severely impacts on the performance of the food processing industry as such flexible employment model give an opportunity for companies to survive (CZI, 2012).

Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Cotsa and Shulkin (2008:152) refer to workplace flexibility as “the ability of workers to make choices influencing when,
where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks”. This concept is not new to Zimbabwe as it is informally being practised in the medical fraternity in Locum arrangements. According to Zeytinoglu (2005) western countries like the Finland, UK, USA, Canada, Netherlands and Spain, have implemented work flexibility successfully at least for the past two decades.

A review of employment patterns prevailing in Zimbabwe is important especially after the consummation of the Inclusive government in 2008. The country started to operate under a changed environment following the adoption of a multi-currency monetary policy (RBZ, 2009). An analysis of the prevailing employment types makes it easier to reconcile the ever conflicting monetary interest between the employer and employee. On the other hand the sovereign debt and double dip recession in the western countries (World Economic Forum, 2012), offers an opportunity for brain gain to emerging and developing economies like Zimbabwe as long as the labour policy changes are informed by authentic research findings.

This chapter gave a background for the study, subject of survey, statement of the problem, the research objectives, the research question and the rationale for undertaking this survey and finally a discussion of the delimitation of the subject of the research.

1.2 Background

Western countries have successfully implemented the concept of flexibility (Working Families Department, 2008). The practice has proved to have benefits to both management and employees and has indeed induced high levels of productivity for the companies. Employee satisfaction has been recorded to be high from the engagement surveys conducted (Working Families Department, 2008).
The unfavourable economic conditions that prevailed between 1998 and 2008 forced Zimbabwean employees to supplement their earnings through extra jobs (Mariwo, 2008). This has been happening unofficially through moon-lighting and in some cases, employees using company resources (Kanyenze, 2009). Work-flexibility offers opportunities to formalise such practices since Zimbabwean companies are not able to utilise human capital due to low capacity which is around 50% (CZI, 2012) and yet employees are demanding regional parity wages and Poverty Datum linked wages (EMCOZ, 2013).

1.1.1 Broad Macro Environment

This section outlines the macro environment peculiar to the food processing industry for the period of the study which is the first half of 2013. Human resources practices of work-flexibility are to a larger extent affected by the broad macro-fundamentals obtaining in the country.

a) Political Environment

The political environment is currently relatively stable. The Inclusive government has agreed on the constitutional draft and the citizens have endorsed the draft through a referendum that was held in March 2013 under a peaceful environment (Zengeni, 2013). The general election dates have been announced. Political stability is a key ingredient that is needed for proper business planning, as well as making employment decisions both at company and individual level. Companies at the moment tend to favour to employ on a short-term basis whilst they await election results. Conversely, workers tend to prefer permanent employment due to the current uncertain political landscape. Workers decisions are not affected by any
election outcome, as workers in most cases tend to favour job security over short-term gains like financial gains (Kanyenze, 2009).

A stable political environment is therefore conducive for human resources work-flexibility practices. It encourages firms to make long-term commitments in terms of capital injections thus increasing job creation (EMCOZ, 2013). The creation of more work increases work-flexibility options and ultimately positive firms’ performance.

b) Economic Environment

Since the adoption of multi-currency in February 2009 (RBZ, 2009), the economy registered very low levels of inflation averaging 4.5%, the major worry however, is the exposure of the Zimbabwe economy to international shocks for example the oscillating of the South African Rand against the United States Dollar (RBZ, 2009). Price stability encourages forward planning by both organisations and individual in an economy. Liquidity challenges are being experienced across all sectors. The food processing sector has been hard hit by the liquidity challenges as it has reduced the demand of the processed goods. Liquidity challenges are likely to continue as there is no solution since there is no fiscal and monetary instrument that can be used for quantitative easing (RBZ, 2010).

Productivity as measured by GDP per capita income averages $6000 in Southern Africa in 2011 whilst in Zimbabwe it is still averaging $741in 2011 (Economic Outlook, 2012). Reviewing of the existing work-flexibility practices will be a good starting point before proffering any recommendations for implementation as far as work-flexibility and productivity improvement is concerned. The projected GDP growth of 9.4% in 2013 (RBZ, 2010) is a positive economic indicator that boosts the food processing industry’s performance from an increase in consumer spending. Additional consumer
spending is likely to come due to salary increases for civil servants since the private sector is currently strained due to myriad of problems for instance liquidity and demand contracts. As the economy improves, it gives hope for more people to be employed (CZI, 2012).

c) Social Environment

Improvements in the economy also mean that the standard of living is likely to improve. The provision of affordable education and public health system and housing means that employees in the food processing sector may reduce investment in these areas. The concept of work-flexibility also increases employability and has a bearing on the reduction of the unemployment rate.

d) Technology

Zimbabwe has remained behind in the development of technology due to a decade of economic meltdown (1998-2008). The political environment has also played a part as it limited foreign direct investment into the economy. Technology is an enabler as it encourages the use of other forms of work-flexibility practices such as tele-working and other forms of remote interaction (Blyton and Morris, 1992). The food processing industry is technology driven, and as a result it could also have missed in the uptake of new technology. This would also mean more reliance on technology and increase in the need of skilled employees. The ICT penetration rates also aid the increased implementation of work-flexibility practices.

e) Legal Environment
The food processing industry is governed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Labour Act and its amendments (LA) and also by the Collective Bargaining Agreement of National Employment Council Food and Allied Industries – Food Industry (CBA NECFAI-FIS). The legal framework provides an inflexible employment relationship between the employer and employee. In particular, the industry agreement prohibits piece-work, time rates and task system. The LA however, allows flexibility in certain as a measure to avoid retrenchment in cases where a company is facing operational challenges. Section 12(d) of LA provides for special measures to avoid retrenchment, such as short-time, unpaid compulsory leave and alternate shift work. The LA however, is silent on whether an employee has a right to undertake work with another employer but most employment contracts prohibit employees to undertake employment with any other employer.

In the industry CBA, the employers are organised and are members of the Food Processing Employers’ Association (FPEA) which is registered in terms of section 37 of LA chapter 28:01 as amended (Mariwo, 2008). There are about 5 000 employees who subscribe to Federation of Food and Allied Workers Union of Zimbabwe (FFAWUZ). The FFAWUZ yields much power as it is the only union that represents the food processing employees.

Workers in the food processing sector are favoured by the legislation as employers are often prohibited to implement work-flexibility practices that are detrimental to workers’ interests. This set up poses challenges in the implementation of work-flexibility initiatives in the work place. Employers on the other hand have relied on layoffs, re-call and temporary employees as a way of trying to reduce labour costs. The monthly minimum wage in the sector is currently sitting at $242.00 as at Dec 2012 (NEC, 2012). With stiffer competition, employees have come under pressure to be more productive as food processors who are not efficient are pushed out of the business because of a highly price sensitive shopping community, especially under the current multicurrency regime.
It is sad to note that with high levels of unemployment a minimum wage of $242.00 may be regarded as too high and some food processors have begun to work out a subcontracting arrangement to avoid paying such a minimum wage (LRIS, 2010). This is despite the fact that the PDL hovers around $550.00 (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, 2013).

1.1.2 Background to Food and Allied Industry

The Food and Allied industry is an industry in which employers and employees are associated together for the purpose of preparing, processing, or preserving food or food stuffs (Mariwo, 2008). It is one of the 16 subsectors in the manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe (CZI, 2012). The food processing industry includes ice-cream, blending and packaging of tea and the wholesaling and retailing of such products if carried out in conjunction with preparation, processing or preservation. The food and allied industry has also other subsectors such as milling, bakery, sweets, meat, fish, poultry and abattoirs, brewing and distilling, soft drinks, and catering industries (Zimtrade, 2011).

The sector manufactures semi-finished and finished products ready for human consumption. Currently, there are over 102 manufacturers/processors in this sector (CZI, 2012). Production is located in the main cities of Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare Gweru and 63% of factories are in Harare whilst other cities share the 37% (ZimTrade, 2011). Processed foods can be defined as edible products that have gone through a process of value-addition (ZimTrade, 2011).

Food Processing Employers have an Association which is called Food Processing Employers’ Association (FPEA). The employees are organised under the Food Processing Workers’ Union (FPWU). These two institutions form a National
Employment Council for the Food Processing Industry (NEC). The FPEA is represented by the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) and Employers’ Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) at National level. FPWU is an affiliate of Federation of Food and Allied Workers’ Union of Zimbabwe (FFAWUZ) which further affiliates to the National Labour body the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

1.1.3 Food Processing

The major companies in this industry are Tanganda Tea (Processing side), Dairibord, Lyons, Innskor Food Master, Cains, Chegutu Canners, Nestle, Anchor Yeast and Innskor Snacks. Food processing is a blend mainly of dairy processors and beverages. Main products from this industry include cordials, fresh milk, tea, salad creams, tomato sauce and ice creams.

The following are the employment statistics for major players in the companies as at March 2013.
Table 1.1: National Employment Contributing Employees as at 31 March 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Fixed Term Contracts</th>
<th>Permanent Employees</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanganda Tea</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairibord</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innscor Snacks</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Masters</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestle</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chegutu Canners</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cains</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor Yeast</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>515</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,611</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This industry is under immense pressure to remain competitive post multi-currency.

Costs have been rising astronomically above inflation such that labour costs have been the main contributor of the costs push. Table 1.2 below shows minimum wage increases against inflation from 2009 up to 2013.
Table 1.2: Comparative Trend on the minimum wage against inflation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Minimum Wage</th>
<th>Percentage Increment (year-on-year)</th>
<th>Inflation (year-on-year)</th>
<th>GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009 – Feb</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td></td>
<td>-7.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 – Jan</td>
<td>$101</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011- Jan</td>
<td>$222.64</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 – Dec</td>
<td>$242.00</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 – April 2013</td>
<td>$256.00</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Adapted from Labour Research Service(2012)

The table indicates that food processing industry is under immense pressure as far as labour costs are concerned thus the industry competitiveness is at risk especially from regional food processors which have better technology, consistent utility supplies and business friendly labour policies(CZI, 2012). Better still in South Africa big manufacturers can produce at almost half in terms of production costs due to massive economies of scale(EMCOZ, 2013). Producers are therefore fighting stiff competition on the market. Price is a major tool being used by foreign manufacturers to penetrate the local market (Zimtrade, 2011). High wages in the food processing industry relative to regional counterparts makes it difficult for local players to respond to foreign competition (CZI, 2010). The rigid labour policies also compounds the situation as food processors have difficulties in responding to peak and off-peak periods of product demands.
1.1.4 Food Processing Industry Problems

Food processing industry is facing a serious problem of aligning staffing levels against level of business at any given point in time. The industry has recorded tremendous growth since formation of Government of National Unity in 2009 up to 2010 as measured by revenues and profitability. In 2011 most companies started to experience declining levels of profitability due to increased competition, antiquated machinery, erratic supply of utilities and liquidity challenges (CZI, 2012). These challenges affected the production capacity of food processors. On the other hand the industry also experienced higher staffing overheads growth. Staff overheads are a major cost driver that had a significant bearing on the profitability of companies. This then raises a question as to whether the existing human resources practices are sustainable going forward.

The industry is failing to quickly respond to challenges in the business environment due to rigidities in the internal and external labour market. Employment levels have remained high yet the capacity utilisation is still very low. Lay-offs cost companies in this industry between 10-16 months’ salary bill in retrenchment packages. Table 1.3 below shows a breakdown of retrenchment costs per employee prevailing (2010-2013) on average from the retrenchment board endorsed settlements.
Table 1.3 Retrenchment Package settlements (2010-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutory Requirements</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notice Pay</td>
<td>Three months' salary &amp; benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash in Lieu of Leave</td>
<td>Maximum accrued leave days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negotiable Package</strong></td>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severance Pay</td>
<td>6-12 months basic salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Pay</td>
<td>1.5 – 2.5 of basic salary per every year serviced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation Allowance</td>
<td>1 – 3 months basic salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical cover</td>
<td>1-2 years medical aid cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>Write off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools of Trade</td>
<td>Sold to retrenched at book value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Ministry of Labour and Social Service (Retrenchment Board 2013)*

The food processing industry’s production cycles are not always the same, such that there is need to constantly adjust the input and output levels. However, due to high cost of laying off idle staff companies in the food processing industry find it difficult to employ on permanent basis

Electricity and water outages are frequent and unscheduled and companies are forced to pay for idle labour during such periods (EMCOZ, 2013). Although the Labour court has ruled that employers and employees may enter into an agreement
to pay employees for the time worked (Nemukuyu, 2012), the unpredictable nature of outages makes it difficult to implement such an agreement.

1.1.5 Food Industry Five Forces Analysis

Porter (1979) demonstrated that the state of competition in an industry is a composite of five competitive forces. The five-forces model determines the profitability potential in a particular industry. These forces include bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of customers/buyers, threats of new entrants, threat of substitutes and intensity of rivalry amongst firms.

a) Bargaining Power of Customers

The bargaining power of customers is high as food processors compete for customers, there is no one company which enjoys monopoly in the industry. Customers are also at an advantage as they can consume raw products from the primary sectors. Trade customers are well organised such that they buy considerable volumes produced. The major retail chains are OK, TM and Spar. These are well organised supermarkets such that every food processor would like to do business with them. These three retail chains hold considerable power as they have well-organised value chain systems such that they can also purchase foreign processed products efficiently.

All these three major retailers have South African links; OK through Investec, TM through Pick ‘n’ Pay and Spar through its global presence(www.economicwatch.com). In this industry for a company to survive it must have a competitive advantage not only to local players but also to global
players. Customers in this sector can prefer to buy processed UHT milk from Parmalat and Clover which are global players rather than Dairibord, Dendairy or Alpha and Omega UHT milk. Customers can also buy milk directly from dairy producers, hence there is a very high bargaining power of customers. The same can be said with ice-creams, customers have a choice between Lyons Maid Ice-cream and Ola Ice cream and other International brands. The cost of producing products becomes key in this industry as companies continue to outwit each other based on pricing and quality.

b) Bargaining Power of Suppliers

In this industry suppliers wield extreme power due to the commodity type of products they supply. The key ingredients such as raw milk, sugar and tea are produced by few suppliers thus they tend to control prices. The major raw material suppliers are Tongaat Hultlets (Triangle), Eastern Highlands (Tea) and few dairy farmers. Commodity prices are international in nature such that the only cost that is controllable by food processors is labour cost for them to be competitive. Suppliers of packaging material are also critical in the food processing sector. The major packaging suppliers are Mega Pack, CNB, Eligo and Hernmerge. All companies in the sector scramble for packaging material from these few suppliers. As a result, food processors are price takers on all raw and packaging materials.

c) Rivalry of competitors

In this industry the rivalry of competitors is intense as all the companies in the sector compete against each other, Lyons compete against Dairibord even though they are owned by the same company Dairibord Holdings Limited. Cains compete with Lyons and Tanganda. Only Innscor Zapsnacks and Food Master enjoy less competition (Zimtrade, 2010). Dendairy, Dairibord, Keffalos, Kersherim, Alpha and
Omega and Dorkings Dairy compete on milk processing. Schweppes Mazoe competes with Lyons Quench. In February 2013 Mazoe retail price was reduced from $3.50 to $3.00 (Sibanda, 2013) and Lyons Quench immediately followed suit in reducing its prices. This example demonstrates the intensity of competition in this industry. In this industry there is indeed intense competition thus players have to be innovative and creative to ensure that they out-price each other.

Increasing employee commitment levels is important in ensuring that high product quality is achieved. It is also important that there is also co-operation especially as they all fall under the National Employment Council for Food Processing Sector for the purposes of collective bargaining agreements.

d) Threats of new Entrants

Threats of new entrants are extremely high and the recent entry by Alpha and Omega is a good example. Gushungo Dairy was a producer of milk and it used to supply Dairibord and Nestle. Gushungo Dairy then went on to form a processing company and over-night it became a competitor to its former buyer of raw milk Dairibord. In the Ready-to-Drink (RTD) category over-night Schweppes – minute maid (pulpy) became a competitor to Lyons’ Cascade. Companies in the sector are now in a drive to invest in state-of-art manufacturing machinery so that they increase barriers of entry. Lyons invested in a cascade manufacturing plant in 2011(CZI, 2012). Schweppes invested in a minute maid PET manufacturing plant in 2012. These massive capacities are there to ensure that small players are discouraged to compete for market share.
e) Threats of Substitutes

In this sector substitutes are found from raw primary products, for example, instead of final customer buying Mazoe orange crush, raw orange fruits may act as perfect substitute. The availability of oranges reduces the reliance on the orange crush. The availability of raw milk especially in farm communities and communal areas makes the food processors especially milk processors’ products uncompetitive. Sales of Rabroy tomato sauce, a Lyons product, tend to be slower during tomatoes’ peak periods(CZI, 2012). Thus, primary raw products act as perfect substitutes in this sector. In the water purification business, the availability of regular and consistent municipal water has adverse consequences on companies such as Dairibord, Tanganda and Schweppes which sell purified water.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The economy has been bedevilled by collective bargaining deadlocks due to mismatched expectations between workers and management(EMCOZ, 2013). Low production capacity due to the erratic supply of utilities and antiquated machinery has continued to constraint the supply side (CZI, 2012). Labour scheduling has been negatively affected by low products demand from the subdued economic activities due to the on-going liquidity crisis (Ministry of Finance, 2013). As a result, retrenchment package disputes are on the increase. The food processing industry’s’ sub optimal operating costs especially high labour costs structure, high utilities and financing cost have compounded the sector’s problem. Given the myriad of problems highlighted, the companies’ survival today, therefore, hinges on the alignment of employment levels with the level of demand and business activities. The questions to be asked are; could work flexibility match the current operations demands? How effective is work-flexibility in improving performance? Is the appreciation of the concept of work-flexibility of any significance to organisations? It is against this
background that the researcher carried out this research to evaluate the effectiveness of human resources practice of work-flexibility in improving performance.

1.3 Research Objectives

This dissertation aims to evaluate the effectiveness of human resources practice of work-flexibility in improving performance of firms in the food processing industry in Zimbabwe (2010-2013).

The following were the research sub-objectives:

1. To identify forms of work-flexibility in the food processing industry.
2. To find out why companies in food processing industry have adopted human resources practices of flexibility.
3. To ascertain the benefits and short-comings of the prevailing forms of work-flexibility in the food processing industry.
4. To establish whether there is a link between work-flexibility practices and company performance.

1.4 Research question

The main research question was to find out on whether the human resources practice of work-flexibility has an impact on performance of firms in the food processing industry.

The following were the research sub-questions:

What are the forms of work-flexibility are available in the food processing industry?
What drives companies in the food processing industry to use human resources practice of work-flexibility?

Are there any benefits/ short comings on the use of work-flexibility practices in the food processing industry?

Is there a link between work-flexibility human resources practices and companies’ performance?

1.5 Proposition

The human resources work-flexibility practices prevailing in the food processing industry (2010-2013) are to a large extent effective in improving the performance of companies.

1.6. Rationale/significance of the study

In human resources management work-flexibility is a strategic option available to organisations. Work-flexibility researches have been on-going since 1988 (Zeytinoglu, 2005). Today work-flexibility practical implications are now top agenda issues on strategic human resource management (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). This study sought to make a contribution by giving a comprehensive Zimbabwean perspective in as far as an evaluation of the effectiveness of work-flexibility practices in improving the performance of firms in the food processing industry. The thought process has been that work-flexibility increases productivity by fostering the right attitude from employees whilst at the same time ensuring that the employer pays the right price.
1.6.1 Benefits for the academic world

The results of this study would help the academic world in coming up with new models, theories/schools of thought and tentative solutions pertaining to work-flexibility based on up to date findings. The findings would go a long way in filling a developing economies perspective gap on the concept of work-flexibility, as well as providing a fresh insight on work-flexibility based on a post multi-currency Zimbabwe.

1.6.2 Benefits to Labour debate

The study recommendations would go a long way in setting the ground for further debate on labour reforms in the food processing industry and the economy at large. Results will assist human resources practitioners to strategically plan for the effective implementation of such practices, especially in a developing country such as Zimbabwe.

Labour has become a major cost worry for businesses in Zimbabwe. The costs of retrenchment have also made it difficult for business to offload excess staff when business is low. Given this predicament, companies are forced to remain with high fixed labour cost. As such work-flexibility practices offer a way out of this quandary.
1.6.3 Benefits to Policy Makers

Lastly, policy makers in central government would learn through the fresh findings of this research. Flexibility is apparently associated with lack of job security and as such this research would thus bring out the benefits and costs of such a concept. Policy makers would ideally make decisions from a well-informed point of view.

1.7 Scope of Research

The manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe is arguably one of the second largest from public sector in terms of number of workers 10% of the national formal employment (www.economywatch.com/world_economy/zimbabwe/industry-sector-industries accessed on 09 July 2013) and also its contribution of up to 25% to the economy on GDP (www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook accessed on 09 July 2013).

The researcher focused on food processing industry as it is the dominant one the whole manufacturing industry. In the food processing industry the researcher conducted a survey on seven major players as they are active participants at National Employment Council. Other players were excluded from this survey due to inaccessibility of background information as they are not members of NEC (NEC, 2012).
1.8 Chapter Summary and Structure of the Dissertation

The study is broken down into five chapters. The first chapter (Chapter 1) covers the introduction of the study, background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, proposition of the study, delimitation of the study. Chapter two captures the literature review to set the theoretical background to the study. Chapter three presents the methodology of the research, aspects on the study involved, the study sample, data collection methods, sampling procedures and data analysis. Chapter four covers the results and the discussion thereto. Finally, Chapter five presents the conclusion, recommendations and implications of the study to food processing industry as well as area of further study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at literature related to the study and this is important as it will assist in articulating the research topic by reviewing what other researchers have covered theoretically and empirically in the area of work-flexibility in a way that brings about a clear understanding of the problem statement. Models of work-flexibility are also reviewed as a way to get a deeper understanding of the fundamentals and work carried out by various scholars for easier consolidation of body of knowledge with respect to work-flexibility.

2.1 Definition of Terms

2.1.1 Work-flexibility

Work-flexibility, according to Van de Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Lens and DeWitte (2009) is the capability of an organisation to effectively and efficiently deal with changes. Changes refer to increased/decreased customer demand, responses to quality challenges, and finding better ways of serving customers. Leopold and Harris (2009) also highlighted that flexibility refers to the capacity to adapt to change. It is a way to define “how, when and where work gets done and how careers are organized” (National Study of Changing Workforce 2008:101). A more complete definition by Hill et al (2008:152) refers to workplace flexibility as “the ability of
workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks”.

2.1.2 Human Resources Work Flexibility practices

Human Resources flexible work practices are defined as strategies, programs, policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out and how they are eventually paid out (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell, and MacVicar 2007). This definition has been further explained by Grzywacz, Carlson and Shulkin (2008) who views that human resources work-flexibility practice allows organisation to increased productivity due to increase employee satisfaction. Costs are also reduced as these practices alignment of labour cost to output. These practices ultimately mean that the labour factory becomes a varied factor of production.

Flexibility is a concept of redefining work to encompass more diversified forms of work. It deviates from traditional practices were work is carried out in a routine way according to predetermined times and location, without any such way that varies this traditional ways. Mouritsen (1999) argues that a flexible organisation is one that biased towards serving its customers, adapting new technology to increase productivity and constantly adjusting its labour input factor.

According to Hill et al (2008), Maxwell, et al (2007) there are two viewpoints emerging from literature review. Human resources practices of work-flexibility can be defined from the worker view point, in that such practice give a worker the latitude to determine where and when they carry out work. On the other hand, from an organisational view point work-flexibility means that the employer has the latitude to

2.1.3 Organisational Performance

Organisational performance is the accumulated end results of the organisation’s work processes and activities (Robbins and Coulter, 2002). It is important to understand the factors that contribute to high performance in any business set up as stakeholders stand to benefit from superior performance.

2.2 Forms of Work-Flexibility Practices

There are four major forms of work-flexibility as indicated and discussed below.
2.2.1 Numerical flexibility

An organisation can achieve numerical flexibility through internal and external means. It is done through variations of employment numbers or employment hours (Michie and Sheehan, 2005).

2.2.1.1 External Numerical Flexibility

According to Michie and Sheehan (2005) numerical flexibility is defined as incorporating the use of non-standard employment forms, which allows the organisation to hire and/or shed labour flexibly in line with business demands. It is suitable where an organisation is relying on the external labour market for the management of manpower numbers. This can be done through changing the levels of employment such as layoffs or temporary employees or recalls (Martinez-Sanchez, Vela-Jimenez, Perez-Perez and de Luis-Carnicer, 2008). According to Rimbau-Gilabert (2008) external numeric flexibility is synonymous with contingent work arrangements. Contingent work arrangement is any job in which an incumbent have an explicit or implicit contract for a long-term employment. Fixed term contracts are also categorised under this scheme and are contracts that with a pre-arranged end time.

Numerical flexibility manifests in temporary contracts, agency work, labour pool, part-time, outsourcing, subcontracting, freelancing, consultancy and self-employed (Rimbau-Gilabert, ibid). If workers are externally motivated they value activities outside work more than those at work. Free times become more important thus numerical flexibility favour extrinsic motivation (Leopold and Harris, 2009).
1.2.1 Characteristics of external numeric flexibility

a) Part-time

This is a form of external numeric flexibility that carries fewer hours per week than an open ended contract. In the food processing industry a part-time employee is engaged to undertake regular daily work for period not exceeding a total of five hours per day, or engaged on a weekly basis not more than thirty hours per week (CBA, Food & Allied Industry 2012).

b) Fixed Term Contract

A contract of employment that does specify its duration or date of termination, other than a contract for casual work or seasonal work or for the performance of some specific services is called fixed term contract (Labour Act, 2005). In practice fixed term contracts are designed to cater for projects which have a specific start date and a defined end date. On the contrary permanent employment has a specific start date but has no definite end date (Labour Service Research, 2010).

c) Sub-contractor

A sub-contractor means a person who renders to an employer services which are related to or connected with those of the employer’s undertaking (Labour Act, 2005). Subcontractor is company in its own right that employs its employees and undertakes work to other companies on terms and conditions agreed upon.
d) Casual employee

An employee who is engaged by an employer for not more than a total of six weeks in any four consecutive months is referred to as a casual employee (CBA Food and Allied Industry, 2012). A casual employee is employed for tasks which may arise at a workplace but not necessarily be of permanent nature. Casual employment can be defined as where an employee is employed when and if needed, and where there is no particular expectation of continuing employment (IPMZ, 2013).

e) Seasonal Worker

A seasonal worker performs work at certain times in a year (LA, 2005). Seasonal work is mainly in the agricultural industry where a company relies on agricultural inputs which are seasonal in nature. Seasonal workers are found in Tea Plantations.

2.2.1.2 Internal Numerical Flexibility

It is also used by a company on varying the distribution of work hours in a given period of time (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). This can be achieved through changes in the amount of hours worked by the organisations’ employees without resorting to the external market. When a company focuses internally to make the volume of labour more flexible this involves a search for adjustment through changes in working time, e.g. by increasing and decreasing the number of working hours.

Some examples of internal flexibility practices are flexi-time, part-time or reduced hours, shift working, annual shut downs and overtime work (Martinez-Sanchez...
al,2008). Empirical evidence based on studies in Ireland by Michie and Sheehan (2005) confirmed that under economic depression it is inevitable that organisations reduce numbers and this confirmed earlier studies done by Flood(1990) and Suttle(1988).

1.2.2 Characteristics of Internal numeric flexibility

a) Flexible Working Schedules

Flexible working schedules are alternate work arrangements or schedules from the traditional working day and week (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety, 2008). In this arrangement employees may choose a different work schedule to meet personal or family needs. Employers may also initiate various schedules to meet their customer needs. Examples of flexible work arrangements include flexi-time, reduced hours, compressed work-week and teleworking.

b) Overtime

Overtime is regarded as time that is worked outside the ordinary daily hours of work required (CBA Food and Allied industry, 2012). Overtime is required to meet production demands. It is paid at one and half time when it is ordinary overtime and is paid at double rate when worked during a normal day off or a public holiday.

c) Reduction in hours

Reduction in working hours is commonly known as short-time work. According to (CBA Food and Allied Industry, 2012) this is done after an agreement entered
between the employer and employees to vary the ordinary hours of work in order to avoid total job losses to slacken of demand.

d) Shift Work

This whereby an employer organises work such that there is continuous work flow but employees rotate. A shift work is usually arranged into a day-shift and night shift. Night shift refers to the majority of hours which fall between 8pm and 5am (CBA Food and Allied Industry, 2012). Shift work is undertaken where companies are responding to an increased demand in its products (Zimtrade, 2011).

Benefits and Challenges of numeric flexibility to an organisation

Blanchard et al (2002) found that relying on fixed term contract employees was positively associated with organisational performance. According to a study done by Valverde et al (2000) it was found out that the higher the number of fixed term contract employees in an organisation the more likely the organisation is to report a profit. However, these authors (Valverde et al; Ibid) could not attach any statistical significant to the relationship between organisational profitability with the fraction of contingent work. Job security has significant impact on organisational performance (Brosnan, 1996). It was found that work that does not guarantee long-term employment tenure in the banking sector significantly weighed down on organisational profitability (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). Michie-Sheehan (2005) concludes that contingent work destroys investment in human capital and ultimately corporate performance in the long-run.

On the other hand, internal numerical flexibility was found to be positively linked to organisational performance (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). Freeman (2005) analysed 27 researches and found that flexible work scheduling had positive effects on employee...
productivity, job satisfaction and employee absenteeism. In summary, worker-friendly employment practices exhibited a positive impact on performance (Stavrou, 2005), however, inversely when an employer changes working hours arbitrarily this may adversely affect organisational performance.

2.2.2 Functional Flexibility

Functional flexibility is done through capacity to deliver a wide range of tasks that an organisation can or do without. It is the capability of an organisation to vary the type of labour they utilise without resorting to the external labour market (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). This is achieved primarily by having a workforce that is able to carry out a wide range of tasks within the organisation (Michie and Sheehan, 2005).

This internal arrangement is achieved through job rotation or other workplace practices that make the deployment of individual workers to particular tasks more adaptable. Organisations using these practices often respond to business activities changes in outputs by an internal reorganization of workplaces based on multi-skilling, teamwork and the involvement of employees in job design and organization. Martinez-Sanchez et al. (2008). Job holders in a functional flexibility practices exhibits all competencies associated with all the jobs of an organisation (Michie and Sheehan, 2005). Atkinson and Gregory (1987) opine that functional flexibility intends to develop a workforce that may deal effectively with exceptional situations which require creativity and innovation. Little empirical evidence was found to widely support this practice in the republic of Ireland (Michie and Sheehan, 2005) contrary to Storey, Quintas, Taylor and Fowler (2002) who argued that multi-skilling is gaining momentum in organisations.
Benefits and Challenges of functional flexibility to an organisation

Research has established an agreed position that functional flexibility spurs greater organisational performance (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). In an observation done by Bhattacharya et al, (2005), implementation of a functional flexibility, influences skills and behaviour that in turn improves organisational performance as measured in sales and operating profit. Higher productivity per employee were realised due to skills flexibility. Michie and Sheehan-Quinn (2001) in their study of publicly quoted UK manufacturing and service-sector organisations detected a positive correlation between functional flexibility with innovation and perceived financial performance. Empirical evidence shown by Blanchard et al (2002) was also consistent with this idea, as they found that extensive reliance on employment systems based on functional flexibility was advantageous to organisational performance.

2.2.3 Financial or Pay Flexibility

According to Atkinson (1984), financial flexibility is a system where employers vary employees’ wages to individual, team and company performance. The argument in this approach is individual employees’ activities are directly linked to the overall organizational goals such as an increase in profitability. Atkinson opines that this approach means that as individuals and teams increase their efforts they must be compensated through additional profitability coming from their increased efforts (Atkinson and Meager, 1986).

Financial flexible systems salary structures are not determined through a collectively bargaining agreement (CBA) but rather attempts are made to link individual performance to individual salary. This system creates more disparities between the wages of workers performing similar work according to Sarantios (2007) and does not give credence to job grading systems. This is done so that salaries and other
employment costs reflect individual contribution to the company objectives. Financial Flexibility can also be achieved by rate-for-the-job systems, or assessment based pay system, or individual performance wages (Martinez-Sanchez, et al, 2008).

On the other hand, Michie and Sheehan (2005) define pay flexibility as link of labour to product market conditions. Pay increases for individual employees are variable and contingent on performance. In other words, it is an attempt to align wage structures more closely with fluctuations in individual and team performance. On the same note Sarantios, (2007), describes pay flexibility as efforts on behalf of the organisation to reduce labour costs in order to protect profitability. On the other hand, Martinez-Sanchez, et al, (2008), postulates that financial flexibility practices may be considered as precursors or incentives for the adoption of internal functional and numerical flexible practices.

The implementation of financial flexible practices in a nutshell therefore, makes functional flexibility practices more attractive for employees to adopt as it contributes to enhance innovation performance (Martinez-Sanchez, et al, 2008). As a consequence, they propose a positive relationship between financial flexibility and innovation performance.

2.2.5 Locational Flexibility

Location flexibility is whereby the work is undertaken at various physical locations. Workers in this flexibility practice are allowed to work from home, from different locations from their organisations for example, at a stakeholder’s workplace like a supplier or a customer’s office (Steijn 2004. This flexibility arrangement also implies that the physical location is not of any significant value as employees do not need to physically reside in the same place to carry out a joint project (Rimbau-
Gilabert, 2008). The quick development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has to a greater extent increased the adoption of locational flexibility such as virtual teams, teleworking and home working (Steijn, 2004).

1.2.3 Benefits and Challenges of locational flexibility to an organisation

There has been empirical evidence that tele-working impacted positively on organisational performance (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). Collins (2005) found out that individuals who tele-work were 23% more productive that their office-bound counterparts.

Greater cost savings were recorded in organisations that implemented tele-working and home-based working (Stavrou 2005). This reduces employee absenteeism costs, office rental costs and labour turnover costs (Burud and Tumolo, 2004). Amin (1991) findings were also consistent with improved profitability emanating from increased employee effectiveness and decreased turnover.

Conversely, the findings of Hill et al (2003) contrasted with the view that virtual teams are less productive as opposed to teams which work at same work location. The findings of Collins (2005) on the other hand shows that a neutral position in terms of financial gains. He argues that tele-working set-up costs and recurring expenses almost cancelled out the benefits of an increase in productivity.

Overall it is difficult to conclusively measure the effects of tele-working (Verbeke and Illegems, 2003), the main reason is that there is a lack of consensus on the benefits, as results from tele-working are realised in the medium term and most of them are qualitative in nature. Long term effects tend to be overlooked when analysing tele-work results.
The contingent view assumes that locational flexibility may be implemented to meet business activities as part of a broader organisational strategy. Accordingly Guest et al (1999) studied various situations and found out that managers perceived higher benefits and barriers for tele-work could be found in smaller, younger, more innovative companies and in companies without training programs for employees.

2.3 Models of Work Flexibility Practice

Providing work illustrations is the best way of defining a concept. Literature reveals that work flexibility classification is extensive since the concept is widely used in different areas of an organization (Smith, 1995).

2.3.1 The flexible firm

The concept of a flexible firm was developed by Atkinson (1984). This concept was developed as a response to pressures in the working environment (Smith, 1995). The concept is illustrated in the figure 2.1 below.
Figure 2.1: Flexible Firm

Source: Atkinson (1984)
According to Bryson (1999), most human capital training and development is done on core workers as this is the most productive group in an organisation, whilst the peripheral workers are only used to boost business activity at the least possible cost. It is important to emphasise that job-sharing, part-time and temporary work are very classified in as peripheral. According to Sarantios (2007) peripheral workers during recession are more prone to having their contracts of employment terminated.

The flexible model therefore, is predicated on increasing the organisational effectiveness and efficiency through continuous alignment of human capital resources. The separation between functional and numerical flexibility is an important aspect in understanding how organisational performance can be boosted by the alignment process.

**Flexibility Firm Model Criticism**

Pollert (1985, 1987, 1990, 1992) is one of the most frank critic of the flexible firm concept. He argues that the model is not supported by enough empirical evidence worldwide and as such it remains theoretical. A change in the work environment reflects a myriad of management practices but not a simple strategy of flexibility. As such it is difficult to prove that the model works in a real work set up (Pollert, 1990).

Dyer (1998) also notes that there has been an unsatisfactory definition of a core and periphery in a normal organisation. There isa contention that there has been little evidence that supports a clear distinction between the core and peripheral groups. Radical unionists on the other hand, blames the model and argue that accepting the concept is tantamount to accepting the casualization of labour (Podnar and Golob, 2010).
2.3.2 Lean production – Toyota Production System

The lean production system was developed in the Toyota Car Company in Japan (Dyer, 1998). The Toyota plants in Japan went through a great makeover which eventually challenged the Fordism production system (Leopold and Harris, 2009). Toyotaism offered workers much more flexibility in performing their duties. It focuses more on reduction in production costs, reducing wastage whilst improving quality by utilising sub-contractors and Just in Time (JIT) delivery systems and Total Quality Management System (TQMS) (Leopold and Harris, 2009).

JIT systems relies on high quality inwards goods, close relationships with sub-contracting firms, managerial involvement in work, flexible labour utilisation, multi-purpose machinery, and short set-up times (http://www.1000ventures.com accessed in 4 March 2013). Lean production aims at cutting costs by making the business more efficient and responsive to market demands.

Quality circles are set up to help with continuous improvement and to improve worker participation in the production process (Thompson and McHugh, 1990). Cappelli and Rogovsky (1994) maintain that a lean production model improves quality and productivity through making better use of employees.
Fig 2.2 Components of Lean Production

*Source: http://www.1000ventures.com accessed on 09 March 2013.*

Mathews (1994) pointed out that being effective and flexible gives a company a cutting edge advantage. The integration of a flexible working arrangement in the value chain increases worker skills and participation, reduces wastage and allows quick response in meeting customer needs.

**Critique of Lean Production Model**

Lean production was a success story as witnessed in the Japanese car industry and the attempt to duplicate Japanese way of doing in the USA and other countries succeeded. Lean production displaced bulky production in the global manufacturing systems Womack *et al* (1990)
Berggren (1993) studied companies in the USA that have adopted lean production and Japanese firms operating lean production and found contradictory evidence to the extent of the benefits gained from the system.

2.4 Drivers for Work – Flexibility

Pollert (1991) and Green et al (1993) indicated that organisations are being forced to adopt work-flexibility practices owing to the following factors;

2.4.1 Intensifying levels of competition

An amplified world competition due to globalisation and trade liberalisation exerts pressure on companies to reduce long-term deals in employment costs and operations, for instance through the use of temporary contracts (Lockwood, 2011).

The production of superior quality products at minimum costs preoccupies every manufacturing system, paying closer attention to detail to costs structure is a prerequisite and total quality control extending through the supplier chain must be overemphasised. Such levels of competitiveness push organisations to implement work-flexibility practices (Schneider, 2010).
2.4.2 Growth in international trade

Organisations implement work-flexibility practice as they enter into international markets, Cooke et al (1989), Blyton and Morris (1991). Due to globalisation technology is transferred to different organisations. Human Resources practices of work-flexibility were successful in UK and USA, as result this it spread across all parts of the world (Source).

Flexibility occupies a prominent place in international competition (Aggarwal, 1997). Job re-engineering and cost containment programs are driven by competitive business environment (Lockwood, 2011). Labour cost management is a critical success factor to a business.

An emerging new economic order may be characterized by smaller firms, industrial districts, vertical disintegration, flexible firm strategies, production networks and flexible technology (Dyer, 1998).

2.5.3 Ever changing consumer needs

Satisfaction of customer needs is attained through the implementation of flexible work-practices (Dyer, 1998). Organisations are being challenged to increasingly foster closer ties between customers and producers to allow for 'learning by using' economies. These ties are more critical with faster product life cycles since suppliers must know precisely what customers are thinking and experiencing. This requires the same swiftness on the labour factors both in quantity and quality. Work-
flexibility encourages shorter product life cycles which improves innovation and creativity (Cooke and Morgan, 1993).

2.5.4 The effects of the world recession

Companies with a work-flexible system tend respond to economic shocks easier (Glosser and Golden 2005). Glosser et al (2005), suggested that labour as an input factor to production must always be linked to demand of goods and services. A delayed employment response may be produced by a strengthening of institutions that protect employment. New Zealand experienced a very high unemployment period in the 1970s. This was mainly caused by sluggish economic growth according to Glosser et al (2005) and resulted in flexibility in the labour market.

Germany labour market experienced less layoffs and retrenchments during the deepest recession in 2008 as a result of its effect flexibility system (Schneider, 2010). It was noted that Germany lost around 200 000 jobs a number which was less than any other economy in the Eurozone (Schneider 2010). The factors responsible for Germany’s job miracle were the extension of the, part-time, short-time work scheme, less paid overtime and the reduction of positive balances on working-time accounts. All in all, the cutback in working time saved around 1.2 million jobs (Schneider, 2010). Countries that failed to recover from the recession had arguably no flexibility for instance Spain and Greece (Giannikis, 2011), and are still struggling two years after the first recession.
2.4.5 The impact of new technologies

A break-through in Information technology(IT) advancement is a major driver of work-flexibility. Working from home (tele-working) is now easily being implemented through use of ICT technologies (O'Brein, 2004). In the same way, Claydon (2007) opines that the increased use of ICT implies that traditional jobs have been made redundant and thus there is a need to restructure to accommodate the impact of new technologies. Across the European Union (EU) as well as in Ireland itself, there has grown an increasing recognition that fundamental changes in the make-up of the labour market, rapidly changing technologies and other economic and social factors have focused attention on the potential role to be played by a more active promotion of flexible working arrangements in the modern workplace (Claydon 1997). Replacing manual production operation with automation is another driver of flexibility as improved technology then to require less labour resources, Blyton and Morris (1991). As such a shift work may be implemented to ensure that continuous production is attained 24 hours and 7 days a week. In some instances flexible schedules become inevitable as a higher efficient production system my produces a lot of products resulting in labour to be utilised only a few hours in a day (Cooke, et al 1989).

2.4.6 Reduction in employment protection for employees

Governments are under more pressure from labour movements to enact legislation that allows the free entry and exit to from work. Government and EU policies, for instance, have enacted legislation on working time, part time employment, which either preclude or encourage the adoption of flexible working and family friendly arrangements (Leopold and Harris, 2009). As more flexibility means more jobs will
be saved in a crisis, flexible working arrangements in an economy mean more citizens are going to be employed in one way or the other.

2.4.7 Necessity to balance work with other life commitments-workers

Clare (1998) states both the aspiration and vision of what could be achieved by the effective reconciliation of work and family life. There must be harmony between family and occupational life. In order to create a more balanced family and occupational life work-flexibility practices must be implemented. A satisfied citizen in the Third Millennium will be someone who feels comfortable that he/she can express his/her personal skills and abilities in all situations (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). This social approach to work has been a driving force in adoption of work-flexibility.

2.5. Empirical views on the impact of flexibility and organisational performance

The results of empirical research do not allow conclusive evidence on the relationship between flexibility and organisation performance (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). Three schools of thought have emerged in a way to contextualise how organisation is affected by flexibility practices. The key cause of these mixed results lies in a trend that pervades research in the field of strategic human resource management, the use of competing models for theorizing about the relation between human resources practices and organisational performance.

A universalistic or best practice view by which specific flexible practices always lead to positive or negative outcomes for the organisation whilst the contingent view gives a perspective that circumstances determine the relation between flexible practices and organisational performance (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008). Finally, the configurational
view suggests that the combined application of certain human resources practices of flexibility gives rise to configurations whose co-ordinated action positively impacts on organisational performance, especially when such configurations are consistent with the firm’s strategic orientation (Rimbau-Gilabert, 2008).

2.6.1 Measures of Organisational Performance

In corporate organisations, there are three primary outcomes that act as measurements; financial performance, market performance and shareholder value (Richard et al, ibid). According to Robbins et al (2002) it is important to measure organisational performance for a better asset utilisation, increases ability to provide customer value, improves on organisational reputation and finally improved organisational knowledge.

Organisational performance is measured using a different number of tools according to (Robbins et al, 2002)however, they all tied up to the overall business strategy as shown in the below figure.
According to Robbins et al (2002) organisational performance is measured with the following dimensions;

1) Organisational productivity. This relates to how efficiently employees do their work. Productivity gains in an organisation can accrue in the form of yields from materials, capital in terms of increase in efficiency to investment in new and advanced machinery as well labour productivity to a highly motivated and engaged human capital within an organisation (CIPD, 2005).

2) Organisational effectiveness. This relates to how appropriate organisational goals are and how well an organisation is achieving those goals. This is basically organisation effectiveness.
3) Organisational efficiency. This is a process characteristic indicating the degree to which the process produces the required output at minimum resources cost. Capacity utilisation one such measure of organisational efficiency as a company with higher capacity utilisation outperforms one with a lesser capacity utilisation. Revenue growth and cost containment measures and ultimately profitability is a measure of organisational performance.

4) Industry ranking. These rankings are determined by specific performance measures.

5) Innovativeness – Measures the organisation’s success in creating change. The greatest achievement in productivity is gained through innovation. Frequent progress is achieved by many innovations, each of which is small. Creativity and innovation is mainly achieved through attraction and retention of top performers in an organisation and such the skills attraction and retention because a key measure of organisational performance in this respect.

6) Quality – Quality can have many different types of measures, and can also be measured at any point in the input/output chart. The degree to which a product or service meets customer requirements and expectations. Customer satisfaction is a measure of how an organisation meets customer or exceed customer expectation.

7) Quality of Work-life – Employees attitudes towards the organisations they work for. This also includes overall health of the organisation and the working environment of its employees. A high quality of work-life is positively linked to high labour productivity (Robbinet al., 2002).

Organisations use balanced scorecard models to implement and monitor strategic plans and objectives. The balanced scorecard measures financial, customer
services, internal business process and learning and growth (Kaplan and Norton, 1996).

A balance scorecard approach summarise all the measurements outlined above as although it does not consider outside measures such as industry rankings. It includes best practice indices on its measurement matrices (Source).

1.3

2.7 Benefits of Work Flexibility to Organizational Performance

2.7.1 Improves employees’ motivation and enhance organizational performance

Employees’ behaviour and attitudes are improved due to the adoption of work-flexibility. Motivation improves employee commitment levels. It was found that high levels of motivation are also associated with employees getting things right the first time resulting in minimal product wastage (Matthews, 1994).

Flexibility improves goal congruency between the employee and the work as such employees are not forced to perform. Flexible work practice contributes to a stable, cohesive, more skilled, enthusiastic and free of distractions human capital. According to Burud and Tumolo (2004) employees in a flexible work arrangement are highly motivated as they do not exhibit cognitive dissonance with the work they actually do. It was further discovered that employees tend to develop positive feelings towards their work. The ability to manage the demands of work and personal life had a strong positive correlation to higher levels of motivation (Richman 2006).
Work-flexibility strategy demonstrates to workers that management cares about them and their family needs (PodnarandGolob, 2010). Superior value is more likely to be attained by talented and focused employees on flexible work schedules (Burud and Tumolo, 2004). Positive employee attitude towards their work results from a better and improved social life of the employee.

According to CIPD(2005), it was found out that the psychological contract improves in a flexible working environment. The psychological contract is an unwritten relationship of mutual obligations that exists between an individual worker and the company. The positive effects brought about as a result of an enhanced psychological contract is the key reason that result in an increased commitment to the organisation, high morale and an highly developed sense of satisfaction.

In their summary of more than 550 pieces of research Burud and Tumolo (2004) concluded that flexible work practices reduce stress, absenteeism, and turnover, and increase employee satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. In a more recent study greater productivity is perhaps a direct result of staff feeling more energized and motivated thanks to flexible working (Regus, 2012) and apart from the business benefit in fact58% of workers globally declare that they feel healthier as a result of flexible working(Regus,ibid).

1.3.1
2.7.3 Flexibility increases attraction and retention of critical skills

A recent analysis by Giannikis and Mihail, (2011) concluded that flexible work arrangements are important to organisations, as it enable firms to attract and retain talented employees. It was reported that there is a positive attitude noted on part-time employees, especially if they have chosen this form of employment (Guest et al., 2004). In addition to this, more energized and motivated staff will be enjoying their jobs more and will be less likely to leave their company confirming that flexible working is becoming an ever more important and widely acknowledged talent retention tool (Regus, 2012).

Lower labour turnover has been recorded by organisations that had implemented work-flexibility as compared to those on traditional work practices. Employees experiencing conflict between their work and family commitment are three times as likely to consider resigning from their employment as compared to those who have a work-life balance (Johnson, 1995). Burud and Tumolo (2004) notes that in a survey conducted on part-time employees the results indicated that part-time employees are less likely to be contemplating to leave a company than their full-time counterparts as they have adequate time to achieve a work-life balance. Work-life balance according to CIPD (2005) is identified as one of human capital approaches that has a powerful impact on employees attitudes. A positive approach to concept of work-life balance has a gigantic effect in ensuring that employees exhibits discretionary behaviour or go an extra mile for their organisations.

A similar survey in Germany also proved that it is easier to attract a part-time worker that a full-time worker (Schneider 2010). A company can attract a part-time worker instantly whilst a full-time worker may be required to serve contractual obligations with previous employers needs more time to be placed. Empirical evidence suggested that organisations with flexibility are likely to have lower turnover costs.
Ernst and Young estimates savings of $17 million in staff turnover-related costs during 1997-1998 financial results upon the successful implementation of a flexible work arrangements and a culture that achieve work and personnel success (Burud and Tumolo, 2004). Retention rates have also been found to be better improved particularly with the women workforce after the adoption of a flexible arrangement.

Absenteeism has also been noted to be low in instances were an effective work-flexibility practice has implemented as employees are equipped, empowered and able to work from home. CIPD emphasized that employees may feel able to work in moments when a long travel to work is impossible done to emergencies. Absenteeism is better able to be managed upfront as a flexible arrangement allows swapping of shifts when necessary (CIPD, 2005).

### 2.7.4 Flexibility increases innovation and adaptability

Flexibility enables firms to cope with increasing uncertainty levels as it facilitates a rapid response. The development of flexibility capabilities can influence the innovation process, especially on new product development. A company can introduce more products faster than competitors as a result of flexibility capabilities. The competition in high technology and very dynamic markets requires greater combinations of innovation and flexibility. The development of hi-tech products cannot be carried out by in-house research and development alone (Miotti and Sachwald, 2003), for instance. This flexibility may enhance the employee’s innovation behaviour through increased organizational commitment because it can improve the quality of working life by reducing monotonous, repetitive work especially functional flexibility (Leopold and Harris, 2009).
Google has been the most innovative company despite being the least paying companies in its sector (Cameroon, 2012). The company has however implemented a flexible working model such that its employees do not operate on traditional models of employment. Its salary policy stipulates that its pays salaries on 25th percentile of industry scales and yet its employees are the most creative and innovative in the industry (CIPD, 2005).

2.7.5 Flexibility improves how organisations meet customer needs

Effective implementation of flexibility ensures that an organisation is better positioned to effectively and efficiently meet customers’ needs and supporting business objectives. Findings from a research done by (CIPD, 2005) revealed that 39% of organisations developed a flexible working model so as to meet the customers’ needs. It was also found from the research that 38% of the respondents implemented a flexible working model so as to support business (Leopold and Harris, 2009). Organisations exploited different workers’ desires to work at different times to extend opening hours or increase service levels for ultimately meeting customers’ expectations.

2.7.6 Flexibility allows sharing of the same national skills bank

Flexibility increases national skills pools. Organisations implementing flexible work arrangements allow employees to work for one employer and this increases the country’s efficiency in the medium to long term (Martinez-Sanchez, et al; 2008). Increasing a national skills stock of knowledge is an advantage of flexibility as Dyer and Sign (1993) declare that employing contingent workers in combination with internal employees might be advantageous to upgrade the firm’s knowledge base.
Knowledge of best practices and new ideas are easily introduced by externals. The presence of externals may stimulate exploration of new ideas outside the firm’s knowledge stock. Nesheim (2003) also supported this assertion when he discovered only 11 out of 26 Norwegian organisations that operate in dynamic environments often used various flexibility systems. In a developing country labour turnover is rampant yet companies share critical skills in cases where they are underutilised for the economy’s benefit (Chetsanga, 2008). This is beneficial were the scarce skills are used as pool to train graduates in universities and colleges (Kyambalesa, 2010).

Work-flexibility improves working conditions (Dyer, 1998). Real workers wages tend to increase, as improvement in profitability of organisations means that workers also benefit especially where a financial flexibility system is in place (Atkinson and Meager, 1986). According to Guest et al. (2004) a new culture is created under flexible specialisation and skills of workers will increase innovation and creativity which will include conception and execution of tasks. As the level of skills improves, this will increase innovation and creativity which will mean organisations become more and more competitive and profitable. The increase in profitability means that companies will also invest in other employee aspects as such as wellness programs (CIPD, 2005). Overall companies that have implemented work-flexibility practices tend to improve the working environment for its staff.
2.8 Short Comings of Work Flexibility

2.8.1 Encourage Casualisation of Labour

Work-flexibility brings uncertainty in the labour market. It also increases casualisation of labour to the possible detriment of job security to the workers. Innovation and creativity are negatively affected as employers tend not to invest in training and development since they can rely on the external market for human resources (Teece et al, 1992). Contrary to the view by CIPD (2005) work-flexibility practices tend to discourage organisations from committing long-term human resources investment as they often rely on developed skills in the market.

2.8.2 Encourages unnecessary skills poaching

Work-flexibility encourages organisations to be involved in unnecessary skills poaching (CIPD, 2005). Since these practices discourage skills development within an organisation, organisations tend to pay a premium to attract expertise from external sources (CIPD, 2005). Organisations that have implemented these practices have also been adversely affected by high labour turnover, as skilled employees tend to hope from one job to another (Claydon, 2004).
2.8.3 Increases worker fatigue and stress

Different organisations have different climates and cultures as such mobile workers tend to be more stressed in moving from one organisation to the other in fulfilment of a work-flexibility practice. According to Michie and Sheehan, (2003), Posthuma et al, (2005) although overtime increases production however, decreases employee productivity as due to increased accidents as a result of fatigue. It has also been noted that most accidents happen during overtime hours, as workers tend to defy safety procedures due to physical and psychological exhaustion. Work-flexibility practices were noted to have a significant bearing on stress levels (WFD, 2008). Flexible schedules were also found to pose a great challenge to the working population as employees find it difficult to organise flexible work-schedules to suit personal schedules (Hutchinson et al, 1994).

Although work-flexibility has been credited for creating an effective balance between work and family responsibilities especially for women (Posthuma et al, 2005), it is also noted that family commitments tend to suffer more as parents tend to work more hours to maximise on the financial benefits in order to take care of family (CIPD, 2005).

2.8.4 Discourages active debates at shop floor level between management and workers.

A research done by Pollert (1988) found out that flexibility decreases social cohesion within a workforce which is essential for an increased productivity. Team work is important and as such part-time employment increases changes of in work
Workplace democracy is also affected as unscrupulous employers tend to punish vocal employees by continuously rotating and putting them on short-working hours and even laying them off, this discourages active employee participation in issues that affect productivity and the way organisations are managed (Pollert, 1988).

2.8.5 Increases labour costs and less gainful employment

Work-flexibility meant that more people will be employed by an organisation (Dyer, 1998). It therefore follows that employers have to invest in more induction training costs to cater for increased numbers who will be entering the organisations at different times. There will be less numbers who are gainfully employed in an economy as organisations can easily lay off employees in times of recessions thereby creating vicious cycle of subdued demand in an economy (Steijn 2004).

2.9 Resistance to work flexibility practices

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has promulgated the decent work-agenda which is against the full implementation of work-flexibility since the full adoption of work-flexibility tends to prejudice the workforce (Mariwo, 2008). Trade Unions movements have also resisted the full implementation of such practices as it means more and more workers will not be meaningfully employed (LRIS, 2010). Trade Unions have however also supported partial implementation especially on their practices which labour friendly such as those practices that increase work-life balance as highlighted in earlier (NSCW, 2008).

Security of tenure is at stake for employees, as job security and long-term employment benefits are compromised. The adoption of work-flexibility practice
means that more and more employers will not have any obligation for long-term security of their workforce (CZI, 2012).

Implementation of flexible work practices implies the introduction of change in an organisation. Resistance is therefore to be expected as both management and workers find it difficult to adopt a new way of doing things (NSCW, 2008). An employee driven flexibility is likely to be met with resistance by the organisation as it is viewed as a lack of loyalty and at the same time an employer driven flexibility is likely to be met with stiff challenge by the workers and it seen as unsocial.

2.10 Policy Implications of Work Flexibility in Organization

Work-flexibility is a descriptive term that is now universally shared. Its application and use has been popular with the workers and organisations. Following the arguments in this chapter, it appears that not all forms of flexibility are clearly distinct from each other and it is important to remember that an individual worker may be subject to several forms at the same time. The review has brought out that from 1990 researches of work-flexibility has been on-going. It is a fact that workers and managers have completely different and diverse interests when it comes to the implementation practices of work-flexibility. In some cases the interests may coincide whilst in others may not. In cases where the gap is so huge, legislation has chipped in to narrow the gap between the two parties.

Reviewing the literature also shows gaps from a developing country perspective in the area of work-flexibility. Theoretical and empirical researches have been done in the developed countries, particularly in the US and Europe. Japan has shown the
application of the flexibility concept in the manufacturing designs from the time of lean production.

2.12 Chapter Summary

Work-flexibility in a nutshell is a strategic option which in most cases benefits both the workers and organisations. Its success hinges therefore, on openness during implementation. Regardless of their labels, flexibility arrangements were intended to foster employee organizational commitment, reduce turnover, transform adversarial industrial relations, and channel workers' knowledge toward greater productivity and efficiency (CIPD 2005).

Proper implementation may lead to elephantine benefits such as increase in profitability due to increased productivity levels. The chapter looked at an in-depth analysis of different scholars of the definition of work-flexibility. Models by founding fathers of flexibility were discussed. Lastly, benefits and drivers of work-flexibility were given a thorough review.
CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and explains the research techniques used during the research study. It starts with a general description of research design. It then further describes and explains the population under study, the sample and sampling methods and techniques used.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design according to Leedy (1997:91) "is the strategy, the structure of conducting a research project or the plan for the study, providing the overall framework for collecting the data". Research design is about how to select the respondents that give authentic, valid and reliable information on the issues understudy. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. Walonick (1993) says that there is a trade-off between cost, time and quality that determines a method to be employed. A researcher needs to be clear about the problem statement, research objectives and questions. This will assist in coming up with a logical work plan that addresses the objective of the study. A survey design was used due to its convenience and appropriateness to the subject under investigation.
3.1.1 Research Paradigm

The term paradigm according to Kuhn (1962) refers to a universally-recognised scientific achievement that provides model problems and solutions over a period of time and serves a community of experts. It is based on people’s philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of the knowledge.

There are basically two research paradigms namely; positivism and phenomenology. Phenomenology is heavily connected to quantitative research methodology that is objective, repetitive and measureable that which is rooted in scientific investigative methods such as experiments. The positivistic includes cross-sectional studies, experimental studies, longitudinal studies and surveys. Whereas the phenomenological paradigm is subjective, value laden, humanistic and interpretative in nature. On the other hand phenomenological paradigm is subjective, value laden, humanistic and interpretative in nature. Phenomenologists believe that social reality is dependent on the mind-set, therefore, what is being researched can be affected by the mind. Action Research, case studies, ethnography and participative enquiry are examples of this paradigm. This is loosely connected to qualitative research methodology, where the results are debatable and subjective (Black, 2004).

The researcher believes a phenomenological approach is the best approach for this study at it requires a thorough understanding of people beliefs and values of the respondents.
3.1.2 Research Method

Research methodologies are ways of gathering data that provide evidence to address the objectives of the research (Kisch, 1995). There are three principal research methodologies namely the naturalistic observations, the case study and the descriptive survey. These are widely used in most researches although distinctions on these methodologies are theoretical and abstract as in most instances different methodologies are combined (Leedy, 1997). However, the researcher is going to used a survey method because of its distinct advantage for the matter under study.

Survey research according to Isaac and Michael (1997:136) is used “to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context.”

This survey was a cross-sectional study whereby the information was collected from various respondents at one particular point in time. The main reason for such an approach is that the effectiveness of human resources practices of work-flexibility and companies’ performance is measured using the same macro and micro fundamentals. Companies’ operations and performance are not static, as such measuring such variable from the perspectives of different respondents has to be at a given particular point in time.
3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Population refers to all finite elements a researcher is targeting. The collection of information the researcher is targeting from the entire population is known as a census (Black, 2004). Cooper and Schindler (2002) define population as the entire group about which some specific information is required. Wegner (1993) also echoed the same sentiment by saying that the population is all possible observations of a variable under study.

It is critical to define the population as it is upon this population results of the study will infer. The targeted population in this study was the entire workforce in the food processing sector. Although it is possible to do a census, time, accessibility and cost may constraint the process. The researcher therefore, needed to use sampling. Identifying a population target becomes a good starting point in ensuring that a representative sample could be selected.

3.2.1 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Levy and Lemeshow (1999) pointed out that survey design involves coming up with a sampling plan and then obtaining population approximations. A sampling plan is the methodology that is used to select the sample from the target population. Since the population size was large the researcher used a sample size of 10% of the population used. This is consistent with the recommendation of Saunders (2002).

To ensure that there was fair representation of each company the researcher used stratified sampling where 10% of the total employees were selected for each company. The researcher then proceeded to perform random sampling. The table below shows the population and sample size.
Table 3.1: The sample size distribution of each company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanganda Tea</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairibord</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innscor Snacks</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Masters</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestle</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chegutu Canners</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cains</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor Yeast</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,126.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>213</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were randomly selected. The researcher got employment numbers through the National Employment Council for all the workers in the Food Processing industry for the nine companies. The respondents were randomly selected from the employment numbers and the researcher approached the respective human resources managers for all nine companies.

**Ethical Consideration**

To ensure confidentiality the respondents were given an instruction to seal off their responses after completing the questionnaire and deposit the responses in their respective human resources managers’ office for collection by the
researcher. According to Cooper et al (2002) respondents give authentic information about a subject matter when they have faith in the confidentiality and credibility of the process.

### 3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In this study, the researcher used self-administered survey questionnaires to collect data. The most important opinion that can be recorded with respect to investigation is the one coming from the employees especially on work related issues, because as Whiteley (2002) claims, they are the best source of information. Therefore, the first step is to ask employees a wide variety of questions through a questionnaire.

The research instrument was chosen for its appropriateness for the workers and to better express themselves. The respondents were encouraged to complete the questionnaires at their free time. This is important so that they could feel more comfortable when providing their responses, free from colleagues' influence.

#### 3.3.1 Self-Administered Questionnaires

A survey questionnaire is a form prepared and distributed to secure responses to certain questions with the intention of obtaining information about conditions or practices of which the respondent is presumed to have knowledge or to inquire into opinions and attitudes of a group. Aggarwal (1996:46) defines questionnaires as “documents that asks the same questions of all individuals in the same sample”. The term ‘questionnaire’ has been used in different ways. Some use it to refer exclusively to self-administered and postal questionnaire (Bell, 1999). In this research it was used for both the self-administered and postal questionnaire.
3.3.2 Mail Questionnaires

Mail questionnaires can be divided into electronic questionnaires and postal questionnaires. During this research, both hand delivered and postal questionnaires were used. The hand-delivered questionnaires were meant to minimize delays which associated the postal system. The researcher also had to establish rapport with respective Human Resources managers’ questionnaires for respondents in Harare were all hand-posted. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), the researcher has to establish rapport with key stakeholders and ultimately gain trust from the respondents. However, questionnaires for all Chegutu Canners were posted to the Human Resources Department. An introductory phone call was made followed by several follow up calls so as to ensure that the selected employers were given the questionnaires and that the questionnaires were subsequently returned.

3.3.3 Structure of the Questionnaire

The structure of the questionnaire comprised of three sections namely the demographic, main body and conclusion.

Section A: Demographic Data. This section sought to gather demographic data. It contained questions on personal information such as sex, level of education, gender and marital status.

Section B: The main body section was the core of the questionnaire and contained questions designed to gather more data on work flexibility. The section focused on
forms of work-flexibility, key drivers and benefits and shortcomings of work-flexibility. The section covered the bulk of survey questions.

**Section C.** This section focused more on implications of work flexibility for organizational performance. Performance indicators such as improved revenue, customer satisfaction, capacity utilization and learning growth measures were also included as performance indicators for organizational performance.

### 3.3.4 Nature of Questions

Closed and open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. Open-ended survey questions allow the researcher to explore responses that would not otherwise be predetermined, where specific response options are not known in advance and are useful where supplementary insights are sought (Salant and Dillman, 1994).

The researcher used one very few open-ended survey questions because these questions require greater consideration and contemplation on the part of the respondent, and are, therefore, more time intensive to answer (Salant and Dillman, 1994). The results obtained from open-ended questions are also more difficult to analyze. Finally, it is more difficult to identify a single course of action from the broad range of responses that are received to open-ended questions (Cooper *et al* 2002).

Open-ended questions are those that are not followed by any kind of choice. A respondent is asked to give his/her view or opinion of issue to be addressed. During the research and with regard to open-ended questions, respondents were asked to record their full, honest and candid replies in spaces provided against each question.
To allow for full answers, adequate space was provided. This requirement was highlighted on all questionnaires distributed and emphasis was also given by word of mouth where possible.

Below is an example of a open-ended response used in the research

21) What recommendations for adoption can you give your company for effective implementation of work-flexibility that links to superior company performance?

Source: Human Resources practices of Work-flexibility Section C

Closed questions in contrast to the open-ended ones are those questions where respondents are offered a list of alternatives or possible replies from which they are asked to choose an appropriate reply. In addition they require the respondent to examine each possible response independent of the other choices. The choices are from a continuum of responses, such as those provided by Likert scales and numerical ranges (Salant and Dillman, *ibid*).
The researcher used a lot of closed questions in the survey mainly because they are easier for respondents to follow through and also they are easier for data analysis. It was important to conduct the analysis this way, since work-flexibility practice can be better investigated qualitatively than quantitatively.

An example of a closed question in this research was as following?

Table 3.2 Locational flexibility question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Flexibility practices</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To work from home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work from other places e.g. outside company physical location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only allowed to work at company designated premises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Human Resources practices of work-flexibility questionnaire

According to Newell (1993), closed questions can be divided into four categories as follows:

Multiple choice questions – more than two response options

Dichotomous questions – two responses
In the questionnaire the ranking questions were also used in the form of a 6 point Likert-scale, Burns (2000). This was used to gauge the feeling of the respondents on a scale of strongly disagree up to strongly agree. This was done in order to convert the responses of survey from qualitative to quantitative.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

McDaniel and Gates (1991) describe data collection as “the process when the researcher obtains information and records observations about phenomena being studied”. In this study the researcher distributed the questionnaires electronically and by hand.

3.5 INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

McDaniel and Gates (1991) point out that although validity and reliability are both important in the evaluation of an instrument of measurement, they are actually entirely different things all together. However, the two must co-exist to enhance effectiveness. An instrument with high reliability is useless if it has poor validity and vice-versa (Leedy, 1997).
3.5.1 Validity

Before an instrument is used to collect data, it should be tested whether it is valid. Validity is the extent to which the research tool of the survey provides the information required to meet the research objectives (Simon & Francis, 1998). It is also important to determine in advance on whether the questions measure the content they were anticipated to measure. They are various criterion to measure validity such as predictive, concurrent and construct but for the purpose of this study the researcher only considered face and content validity. In this study, the content validity was assessed by checking the questions on the questionnaires against the objectives. The questionnaire was given to the supervisor, Dr. N Kaseke to check whether questions contained therein measure what they were supposed to be measure. A pilot of seven questionnaires was tested on respondents at one company and necessary adjustments were made following the discussion of the results with the research supervisor.

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability deals with precision and consistency of survey responses over time (Glasow, 2005). It addresses the question; how accurate and consistent is the instrument? In order to ensure reliability of the instrument of measurement, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with five people who work in one company from which the sample is to be drawn. An attempt was made to make sure the questions were not ambiguous. Based on the responses from the pilot study, questions on the draft questionnaire were reconstructed and restructured for clarity.
3.6 DATA PROCESSING

Burns (2000) says the objective of data processing is to be able to turn qualitative data into quantitative data that is easy to tabulate and easy to analyze in statistical terms. Tabulations and statistical graphs make the report more presentable and comprehensive as well as adding flavour to the final report. They also remove the boredom of continuous prose in the final report. In pursuit of this objective, the first task was to get to a point where all responses to the questionnaire were turned into tables and graphs. Data was processed using Microsoft Office Excel package because of its easiness to access as well as its high quality of graphical presentation.

3.7 DATA PRESENTATION

Data presentation is all about presenting data in a way that stimulates interests to the readership, while at the same time maximizing comprehension of the issues at stake and research findings being deliberated. Data gathered was presented in tabular and graphical forms. This presentation helps in trying to give a clear picture of the findings.

Arguments are arranged into paragraphs. Each argument is linked to the research question that is presented in the first paragraph in the exact wording in which it appeared in the research proposal and introductory chapter one. Data useful to the statement of the problem and research questions are then presented to support the succeeding discussion. Presentation takes the form of graphs, charts, tables, lists of responses.
3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected and presented was analyzed descriptively since the data was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. According to Wegner (1993) data interpretation is the extraction of meaning and conclusions from the data set.

Data analysis involves interpretation of results of research to check for inconsistencies and for all types of misrepresentations and omissions that may have influenced the results. It seeks to inquire into the intrinsic meaning of the data by addressing not only the *who, what and where* questions but also the *why* question.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the research design and methodology which was used to collect data from the sample. Sources of data used were discussed and these included visiting libraries and archives for secondary data and administering questionnaires for primary data. Data collection instruments were discussed and nature of questions used to solicit data from respondents was also discussed. The chapter also looked at instrument validity and reliability, data processing techniques and wound up by focusing on data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The next chapter examines the research findings and deductions made.
CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and comments on research findings. In this chapter, consideration was made to the inter-relatedness between literature review and the analytic methodologies discussed in chapter three. The researcher's experiences and findings were examined in the context of the richness of empirical data. The primary objective was to bring out the meaning of data and be able to draw conclusions from that data through cognitive and inductive analysis of the research findings. Primary and secondary data gathered during the research were analyzed and evaluated against literature discussed in chapter two.

The analysis and presentation techniques adopted here were developed independently from phenomenological approaches pointed in chapter three. This was done in order to account for people beliefs and values from empirical data and observations. All questions from the self-administered questionnaire were adequately answered.
4.1 RESPONSE RATE

As indicated in chapter 3, the questionnaire was meant to be completed by 214 employees from the nine companies in the food processing sector.

Figure 4.1 indicates the response rate from the different companies

![Figure 4.1 Response rate from different companies](chart.png)
From the study the highest response rate (85%) was recorded from Nestle. This was achieved because the researcher went an extra mile in phoning those with questionnaires to return them after completion. This also happened for respondents at Chegutu Canners where only 1 person failed to return the questionnaire. The researcher was satisfied with the overall 80% response rate.

This response rate was sufficient to ensure reliability and validity of the research findings as Saunders et al (2000) commented that 50% response rate is good enough. This was further supported by Cooper and Schindler (2002) who also pointed out that a response rate of 30% is considered satisfactory. In a nutshell the response rate warranted the continuation of data analysis. Such a higher response rate could have been achieved by a heightened interest in the area of work-flexibility as well the rapport established by the researcher with respective company human resources practitioners at the various firms studied.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

Section one of the questionnaire sought to gather data on age, sex, level of education, type of contract and length of service of the respondents. This was meant to have an overview of who had answered the survey questionnaire and also to check whether the demographic profile of the response group matches those expected from the population. It was also important for the purpose of undertaking comparisons between groups of individuals in the data set.

The respondents were asked to state their gender as it was felt that gender could have an influence on the understanding of the merits and demerits of human resources practices of work-flexibility.
4.2.1 Gender distribution

Figure 4.2 shows gender distribution of respondents in the food processing industry.

Figure 4.2 Gender distributions of the survey results

Fig 4.2 shows that 95% of the respondents were males whilst 5% were females. This is consistent with the overall picture in the food processing industry where employees are predominantly males (Zimtrade, 2011).
4.2.2 Length of service categories of respondents

Figure 4.3 shows the length of service of the respondents in the food processing sector.

![Bar chart showing length of service categories: 38% above 10 years, 34% 6-10 years, 17% 1-5 years, 11% less than 1 year.]

**Figure 4.3 Responses to length of service categories**

Figure 4.3 reveals that 38% of the respondents had served for more than 10 years in the food processing industry, 34% have been in the industry for between 6-10 years, 25% have worked for between 1 and 5 years whilst only 17% of the research participants have been in this industry for less than a year. This revealed that information was obtained from experienced personnel in the industry who had an opportunity to have experienced all the economic changes and trends and this gave the researcher confidence to rely upon such responses.
4.2.3 Highest level of education

Figure 4.4 below shows the highest level of education for the participants

The study reveals that 56% hold a basic Ordinary Level qualification, 5% an Advanced Level certificate, 12% hold a diploma qualification and 25% indicated that they either held no qualification or any other qualifications that were not pre-determined this included journey qualifications, other professional certificates. A further analysis of other category was carried out and it was found out that 30% of the 25% had no qualification. Majority of respondents therefore, was educated and made a positive contribution through their informed responses.
4.2.4 Type of Employment Contract

Figure 4.5 shows types of employment contract of the respondents

![Bar chart showing types of employment contracts](image)

**Figure 4.5 Types of employment contracts of the respondents**

The study findings show that all types of employment had respondents except the seasonal workers category. The highest responses were recorded in the permanent contract category where a 60% response rate was scored, 34% in fixed term contract, 4% response rate was scored in trainee category and 1% in the subcontractor category. The findings imply that there were no seasonal workers in the food processing industry.
4.3.0 FORMS OF WORK-FLEXIBILITY

4.4.1 Internal Numeric Flexibility

Figure 4.6 below shows responses on how best their companies respond to changes in demand patterns as regard to flexible working schedules, overtime, reduction in working hours and finally the arrangement of shift working.

![Flexibility Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 4.6 Participants’ responses on internal numeric flexibility**

The findings show that there is internal numeric flexibility in the food processing sector. Respondents were mainly aware of overtime which scored 80% and shift-work which up 90%. On the other hand, 77% of the respondents were not sure of whether flexible working schedules were being implemented within their companies. Only 20% of the respondents indicated that their companies are implementing
reduction in working hours when responding to changes in demand. There is however, little evidence of flexible working schedules and reduction in working hours.

### 4.3.2 External Numeric Flexibility

Figure 4.7 shows the responses on how best companies use external labour markets in responding to the changing demands.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 4.7 Responses on external numeric flexibility**

The study shows that companies in the sector are fully implementing external numeric flexibility. 88% of respondents reported that their companies are employing fixed term contracts whilst 90% were employing casual employees. According to
Rimbau-Gilabert (2008) companies usually respond to changes in demand by hiring fixed term contracts.

### 1.3.2 4.3.3 Functional Flexibility

Figure 4.8 shows responses on how companies respond to changes in demand in as far as rotating staff within an organization is concerned. Job rotation and multi-skilling were identified as directly relating to functional flexibility.

![Figure 4.8 Responses on functional flexibility](image)

**Figure 4.8 Responses on functional flexibility**

The study findings reveal that there is functional flexibility as 88% of respondents indicated that they are multi-skilled to execute in different departments. The study gave however, gave contradicting results as no response indicated that they always implement job rotation. Martinez-Sanchez et al (2008) pointed out that multi-skilling is always accompanied by a job rotation system and this is done as a way of
responding to slack or peaks in other processes of the same company. It is therefore difficult to conclude that there is functional flexibility in the food processing industry.

### 4.3.4 Locational Flexibility

Figure 4.9 shows responses to the question on whether a company allows its workers to work either from home, other places or from the company only.

![Figure 4.9 Responses to locational flexibility](image)

The study reveals that 95% carry out their work at company premises. There was little evidence to suggest that employees are allowed to work from home as only 1% of responses indicated that they sometimes work from home. There is therefore insignificant evidence to suggest that there is a locational flexibility in the food processing industry.
4.3.5 Financial Flexibility

Figure 4.8 shows responses on the remuneration models of companies in the food processing sector.

The findings show that 81% of the salaries were linked to the collective bargaining agreement which is linked to a job evaluation system where employees are compensated according to the perceived job worthy within an organization. About 14% of the salaries were linked to individual performance and this is evident in performance management, productivity and incentive scheme. Only 5% of the respondents indicated that their salaries are linked to market surveys. According to Sarantios (2007), a financial flexible system ensures that the quantity and quality of work is rewarded differently. This is done to ensure that stimulation of production is
linked to reward. It is therefore important to highlight there is significant evidence to prove that there is no financial flexible system in the food processing industry.

The findings imply that the industry has pre-conditions for the implementation of the concept of work-flexibility comprehensively. The successful adoption of other forms of flexibility especially functional flexibility is predicated upon the successful implementation of financial flexibility (Martinez-Sanchez et al 2008).

4.4 Drivers of human resources practice of work-flexibility

Figure 4.9 shows responses on key drivers of work-flexibility practices in the food processing industry.

![Drivers of Work-Flexibility](image)

**Figure 4.11 Key drivers of work-flexibility responses**
The study reveals that 24% of the respondents felt that cost reduction is the driver to
the adoption of human resources flexibility practices. The highest responses
amounting to 30% indicated that decline in worker protection by trade unions is the
chief driver on why their companies have implemented human resources practice of
work-flexibility. A 28% response indicates that companies are forced to implement a
work-flexibility due to the ever-changing customer needs. This is in line with the
findings from a research done by CIPD, (2005) reviewed that 39% of organizations
developed a flexible working model so as to meet the customers’ needs.

Contrary to 78% respondents according to WFD (2008) research findings, only 1% in
this research felt that achievement of work-life balance was the driver of work-
flexibility of respondents. About 3% also indicated that companies are pushed to
implement work-flexibility in order to attract and retain critical skills. Only 12% of the
responses have attributed economic changes as driver for work-flexibility. All the
drivers according to literature review had responses in this survey.
4.5 Benefits of work-flexibility

Table 4.1 shows responses on the benefits of work-flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit of Work-flexibility</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Improved Motivation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Improved skills attraction and retention</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Increased innovation and adaptability</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Improved customer satisfaction</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Balance between work and life</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Motivation

The study findings show that 25% of the respondents strongly agreed that an effective implementation of work-flexibility practices result in improved motivation. In addition, 44% concurred with the similar observation whilst 14% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed. This means the majority of the respondents felt that effective work-flexibility arrangements boost morale within the work-force. This is in line with
findings of Matthews (1994) who found out that work-flexibility practices improve motivation in eight out of ten organizations.

b) Skills attraction and retention

The study findings show that 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that human resources practices of flexibility increased skills attraction and retention, 25% just agreed, about 5% of the respondents were neutral whilst on the other hand 13% disagreed with another 13% strongly disagreeing (Table 4.1). The majority of the respondents (69%) were in agreement that work-flexibility increased skills attraction and retention and this is consistent with the findings of WFD (2008).

c) Innovation and adaptability

The study reveals that 50% of the respondents were neutral on this benefit. This might suggest that they were not sure about the meaning of the concept and how it relates to their companies. About 31% agreed whilst only 7% strongly agreed. In addition 10% strongly disagreed and only 2% disagreed (Table 4.1). This means that from this survey there is no conclusive evidence to support that work-flexibility brings innovation and adaptability to companies in the food processing sector. These results are inconsistent with a study carried by Regus (2010) who found out that indeed there is innovation and adaptability as a benefit that accrues to an organization after successful implementation of human resources practices of work-flexibility. The survey results dispute a conclusion made by Storey et al (2002) which states that flexible employment contracts improves product and process innovation. The findings however are supportive of Martinez-Sanchez, et al (2008) who declared from their findings that only the full implementation of financial flexibility contributes to enhanced innovative performance.
d) Customer satisfaction

The study findings show that 51% of the respondents strongly agreed that work-flexibility improves customer satisfaction whilst 28% just agreed. A minority of 17% and 4% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively (Table 4.1). Customer satisfaction improved due to companies meeting their quantity and quality expectations and work-flexibility practices gives out such deliverables (Burud and Tumolo 2004).

e) Work and life balance

The study indicate that the majority of the respondents, 44% and 25% strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the question that work-flexibility practices improves work and life balance, whilst only 15% disagreed, supported by 10% who strongly disagreed (Table 4.1). Work and life balance is a benefit that employees enjoy when they are engaged freely on times that they are comfortable with. These findings are in agreement with the research findings of WFD (2008) which recorded a 78% positive effect and 13% negative effect on the impact of work-life balance as a result of human resources practices of work-flexibility.
4.5 Challenges of work-flexibility

The table below shows respondents’ views of the challenges of work-flexibility.

Table 4.2 shows responses to challenges of work-flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages of Work-flexibility</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increases job losses</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in job security</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family commitment may suffer</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to manage work-schedules</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue due to over working</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Increased job losses

The study shows that 52% of the respondents strongly agreed with the fact that work-flexibility increases job losses, 28% of the respondents were neutral on this point whilst 13% disagreed and an additional 7% strongly disagree. Increased job losses come from internal numeric flexibility in that companies may choose to implement an overtime system instead of hiring additional staff. The findings of this study are consistent with the views of Hutchinson *et al* (1994), who found out that implementation of work-flexibility, inevitably, results in job losses.
b) Reduction in job security

The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents views that work-flexibility reduces job security as 60% strongly agreed and additionally 30% agreed with this notion. 5% of the respondents were however neutral on these views with a minority of 2% disagreed whilst a paltry 3% strongly disagreed (Table 4.1). These results are consistent with the view that non-traditional forms of employment do not guarantee security of tenure, as well as future benefits such as pensions as propounded by (Hill et al., 2008).

c) Family commitment may suffer

In as much as generally it is acceptable that work-flexibility improves work-life balance but the results of this survey indicated that 40% strongly agreed that work-flexibility compromises family commitments and 31% concurred by just agreeing, 14% were neutral whilst only 2% and 10% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively (Table 4.1). These findings are inconsistent with the results of CIPD, (2005).

d) Difficult to manage work-schedules

The study shows that the majority cited difficulty to manage work schedules as a challenge of work – flexibility. 51% strongly agreed with an additional of 28% fairly agreeing to this challenge. 14% were indifferent on this challenge whilst only three percent disagreed and a partly four percent strongly disagreed. This is supported by
e) Fatigue due to over-working

The study shows that 44% strongly agreed whilst 25% agreed, six percent of the respondents were neutral on this challenge. A minority of 15% disagreed whilst 10% strongly disagreed. The WFD (2008) noted from their findings that 16% indicated that work-flexibility has positive effect on stress levels. This is mainly to do with overtime working and such reduction of working hours has a positive correlation with reducing the stress levels.

4.6 Impact of Human Resources Practices of Work-Flexibility on Organizational Performance

Figure 4.12 below shows the perceived impact of work-flexibility on organizational performance through the highlighted indicators.
Figure 4.12 Impact of human resources practices on organizational performance

a) Company Revenues – Financial Perspective

The survey findings show that 34% of the respondents indicated that company revenues had improved due to the implementation of work-flexibility practices, whilst 21% disagreed that company revenues improve, 45% on the other hand indicated that they were not sure on whether company revenues had improved or not. There are a lot of factors that can result in improved revenues including prices increases, new customer base, improved quality such that respondents found it difficult to attach improved company revenues solely to the implementation of a work-flexibility practice.
b) Company Profits – Financial Perspective

The study findings show that 58% attributed improved company profitability to implementation of work-flexibility practices whilst only 16% disagreed (Figure 4.12). This is in line with findings of CIPD (2005) who argued that work-flexibility reduces costs thus improving profitability of an organization. Increased profitability may also accrue to an organization in that the company may ensure that labour cost is a variable cost where the company can lay off staff when business activity is low and hire when business activities has improved.

c) Customer Satisfaction – Customer Perspective

The study findings show that 70% of the respondents indicated that customer satisfaction is likely to be improved. 13% of the respondents disagreed that that the implementation of work-flexibility practices by their companies leads to improved satisfaction whilst 17% were indifferent to this performance measure (Figure 4.12). According to Burud and Tumolo (2004) work-flexibility leads to improved customer satisfaction and this study confirms that assertion.

d) Employee satisfaction – Customer Perspective

The study findings show that at least score of 12% indicated an improvement in employee satisfaction, 59% of the respondents indicated that work-flexibility is associated with a declining employee satisfaction, 29% of the respondents were not sure on the effect of work-flexibility on employee satisfaction (Figure 4.12). These survey findings show that the human resources flexibility practiceis at the instigation
of the employing company and not at the request of the employees hence the results are showing that employees are satisfied with the current forms of work-flexibility.

e) Capacity Utilization – Internal Perspective

The study findings show that 55% disagreed that work-flexibility practices improve their companies’ capacity utilization. An additional 29% were not sure on the link between capacity utilization and flexibility practices (Figure 4.12). Only 16% confirmed that capacity utilization improves upon implementation of work-flexibility. This survey is consistent with CZI (2012) results that capacity utilization is low in the manufacturing sector despite a number of work-flexibility arrangements that have been found in this survey.

f) Skills retention and attraction – Learning and Growth

The survey results indicated that 61% of the respondents disagreed that work-flexibility arrangements improved skills retention and attraction whilst 16% agreed and a further 23% were indifferent. This result shows that lower level employees are not retained by a work-flexibility practice as there are less mobile in the labourmarket than higher order skills. The respondents were largely general staff the majority companies and as such, they are less mobile. Therefore the survey draws contrasting results from WFD (2008) who found that skills retention and attraction is improved following the adoption of a work-flexibility system.
4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter has presented findings on the practices of work –flexibility in the food processing industry. The first part commented about the response rate, demographics of the respondents and went on to address the objectives of the survey. In interpreting the results reference was made to the body of knowledge as discussed in chapter two. The next chapter presents the study conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendation of the research.

5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions of the study are as follows;

The findings of this study shows that firms in the food processing industry are seeking to utilise their workforce efficiently. The strategies that are adopted in the process of efficient labour utilisation end up in the adoption of work-flexible models.

The research findings indicate that work-flexibility practices are evident in the food processing industry. The assessment shows that numeric, functional, financial and locational flexibility are prevailing in the industry. The extent of work-flexibility practices however, vary as numeric flexibility is widely used as compared to locational flexibility which is sparingly used in the food processing industry.
It was concluded that the full implementation of financial flexibility will inevitably ensure employees are more motivated to accept other forms of flexibility especially functional and numeric flexibility. Financial flexibility from firms’ perspective ensures that individual performance is rewarded for mutual benefit.

It also emerged from the research that the key driver of flexibility practices is the decline in worker protection from the unions. It also important to note that meeting customer needs swiftly was also a key driver of the adoption of a work-flexibility practices in the food processing industry.

The work-flexibility challenges faced in the food processing sector that have impacted on the effectiveness of this practice are increased job losses, reduction in job security, family commitment compromised, difficult in managing work-schedules and physical and emotion strain due to over working.

It was the research conclusion that effective and efficient work-flexibility lead to improved motivation, skills attraction and retention, increased innovation and adaptability, improved customer satisfaction and ultimately improve the balance between work and life for employees.

5.2 Research Proposition

The study results agrees with the proposition that the human resources work-flexibility practices prevailing in the food processing industry (2010-2013) are to a large extent effective in improving the operations and performance of companies.
5.3 Recommendations

1. Work-flexibility practise are a welcome development in Zimbabwe as they are associated with positive performance. It is therefore important to ensure that human resources policies are aligned to ensure effective implementation of all forms of work-flexibility.

2. It is recommended that numeric flexibility, especially the part-time contracts be practised in the industry as they increase efficiency in further aligning flexible practices to performance.

3. Financial flexibility is not being used in the food processing industry. This has to be implemented starting at NEC level so that collective bargaining of wages and salaries is based on productivity and not the cost of living or the poverty datum line concept. Financial flexibility is recommended as higher performers are fairly compensated and this will further boost performance of firms in the food processing industry.

4. It is further recommended that financial flexibility must be widely implemented to extend of being incorporated in the industrial collective bargaining agreements so that the industry moves towards a productivity-based remuneration model. Apart from saving jobs in the industry, this will ensure that other forms of flexibility will be successfully implemented.

5. It is also important for firms in the food processing sector to adopt locational flexibility to other sections of their staff for instance, administration staff. Due to the rapid development in ICT, tele-working may be adopted especially with
service departments such human resources, where employees are allowed to work from home. This will increase company performance in savings due to reduction in transport costs, office rentals and other cost associated with commuting.

6. The fear of job losses by employees after implementation of work-flexible practices has to be managed, a demotivated work-force will derail the effective deployment of the practice. It is therefore recommended that proper education has to be undertaken to the work-force selling the benefits of flexibility especially functional flexibility which increase the internal and external employability of workers. Organisations, on the other hand, should also mitigate the short-coming of work-flexibility especially on fatigue by adhering to prescribed maximum working hours.

5.4 Area of further study

The study presents an area of further study to assess the role played by the unions in ensuring the protection of workers’ rights in Zimbabwe in as far as implementation of human resources work-flexibility practices is concerned.
REFERENCES


16. CBA, 2012


47. Labour Act, 2005 Chapter 28:01amended, Government Gazette. Harare


62. Ministry of Labour and Social Service (Retrenchment Board)


67. NEC (2012)


76. Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (2012) *Monetary Policy Statement*


Appendix 1

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Trymore Mudzi I am currently undertaking a research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration. The research topic is “An evaluation of the effectiveness of current human resources practice of work-flexibility on operations and performance of firms in the food processing industry in Zimbabwe (2010-2013)”
I am kindly asking for your assistance to complete this questionnaire. The information you provide will be treated with strictest confidentiality, will be used solely for this research project and will not be disclosed to anyone without your authority.

Thank you for agreeing to assist

INSTRUCTIONS

I. Please answer all questions as accurately and honestly as possible.

II. Answer each question by inserting an X in the box provided for the applicable response and if necessary substantiate your answer in the spaces provided.

III. The deadline for submission of the completed questionnaire is 14 July 2013.

IV. If you need any assistance please contact me on 0734 197 880

E-mail: trymore.mudzi4@gmail.com

Section 1

Demographic Details

Tick appropriate box

1) Gender: Male □ Female □

2) Marital status: Single □ Married □ Divorced □ Widowed □

3) Age: above 18 > 25 years □ above 25 > 35 years □ above 35>50 years □ above 50 years □
4) **Lengthy of service within the organisation:**

- > 1yr [ ]
- 1-2ys [ ]
- 2yrs-5yrs [ ]
- 5yrs and above [ ]

5) **Highest Academic Qualification:**

- Secondary Education
- Degree
- Post Graduate Qualification

6) **On what bases are you employed?**

*Tick where applicable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual Labour:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Term:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Workers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Contractor:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section 2**

**Human Resources Work Flexibility Practices**

7) Does your company hire employees on the following employment conditions to boost production capacity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Part-time Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8) Does your company consider the following options in order to meet business demands?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Flexibility practice</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Implement Flexible working hours schedules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Reduction in working hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Shift Working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick applicable answer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9) Does your company implement a Job rotation program to meet increased demand in other product lines?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Are you multi-skilled to the extent that you can work for more than one department?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Are you multi-skilled to the extent that you can work for more than one product lines?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12) How best can you describe your company remuneration model?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Salaries are awarded based on performance/incentive/productivity</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Salaries are achieved through collective bargaining process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c) Salaries are awarded based on a market surveys

13) Does your company allow employee the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work flexibility practice</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometime s</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) To work from home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) To from other places e.g. outside company physical location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Only allowed to work at company designated premises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14) What do you consider to be the main reason for adopting work-flexibility practices (non-traditional practices) at your company? Tick only one response
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Tick applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Reduce Costs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Meet customer changing needs swiftly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Meeting changing economic challenges of the country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Responding to company automations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Difficult to attract some skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Decline in worker protection by trade unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) To achieve work-life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the benefits of flexible practice in your company using Likert’s 6-point scale indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Improved Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Improved Skills attraction and retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Increase innovation and adaptability.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Improved meeting of customer’s needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Makes it easier to manage work and social demands.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
f) Improved country skills bank.

Please add any other benefit(s) that have not been mentioned in (16) using the space below:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________
16) Rate on how strongly agree or disagree on the following challenges of flexible work-practices using a 6-point Likert scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NATURAL</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Increases job losses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Reduction job security.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Family commitments may suffer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Difficulty to manage pressing schedules.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Fatigue due to over working.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other (specify)_______________________________________________________________
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Section 3

Company Performances

17) Have you ever heard of the term “company performance?  

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not Sure

18) In your view, is there a link between your company work-flexibility practices and the company performance?  

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Don’t know
19) In your view what has been the contribution of a flexible working practices to your company performance. In terms of the following dimensions. *Tick the best answer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Company Revenues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Company Profits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Employee Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Capacity utilisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Skills attraction and retention</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

20) What recommendations for adoption can you give your company for effective implementation of work-flexibility that links to superior company performance can you give?

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