

**AN ANALYSIS OF MEETINGS
MANAGEMENT
IN ORGANISATIONS: THE CASE OF
ZIMBABWE NEWSPAPERS (1980)
LIMITED**

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DECLARATION

I, Chancelles Annah Chinhuru, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent 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 other university.

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Student signature

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Date

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to identify and assess the impact of meeting design characteristics on the meeting effectiveness with specific reference to Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited. The research reviewed both theoretical and empirical literature underpinning meeting design characteristics and meetings in general. The researcher used a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative which gave rise to descriptive research design which was found to be the most appropriate for this study. From an initial population of 890 management and staff at Zimpapers, a sample size of 150 was used. The sample was selected using first purposive sampling and then simple random sampling. The questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument and was complimented by participant observation and face-to-face selective interviews and other secondary data sources both internally and externally generated. The research confirmed that agenda use, punctuality practices, leadership of meetings, quality of facilities, decision making approaches and minute keeping as meeting design characteristics are antecedents to the effectiveness of organisational meetings. However, the study indicated that there is little match between what reviewed literature on meetings informs and the actual current practices of meetings in organisations such as Zimpapers. Failure to allocate specific time on each agenda item coupled with participants coming late for meetings resulted in meeting taking more time than necessary at Zimpapers. Minutes were not properly used as a tool of creating a group memory resulting in delayed implementation of decisions made in meetings. For this reason, this tended to negatively affect the effectiveness of meetings as an organisational communication tool. The study recommended that companies should invest in meetings management training and new technologically advanced meeting platforms. The study recommended that further studies can be done on exploring fully the four P's- people, place, process and period, of context on meeting management.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
COR	Conservation of Resources
NATPRINT	National Printing and Packaging
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
ZIMPAPERS	Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Research by management scholars has shown that meetings are an ".....understudied aspect of organisational life " (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008: 5). This does not, however, imply that meetings are of no significance to organisational management. In fact properly managed meetings from preparatory stage, duration and completion contribute significantly to organisational communication and cohesion resulting in enhanced organisational productivity and performance. According to Ducker (1967) cited in Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2014:236), "the knowledge and experience needed in a specific situation are not available in one head, but have to be pieced together out of the knowledge and experience of several people." This underscores the importance of conducting meetings in organisations. However, the conduct of effective meetings is not a stroll in the park. There is a need to ensure that effective meetings management is upheld in organisations if they are to benefit from such a crucial activity. It is in this regard that there is need for researchers to conduct research in organisations in order to identify the factors that promote effective meetings management and it is from such studies that prospects for better meetings management can be drawn.

Rogelberg (2006: 474) defines a meeting as "purposeful work related interactions occurring between at least two individuals, that have more structure than a simple chat, but less than a lecture, and can be conducted face to face, in distributed settings (for example, conference calls) or a combination". Romano and Nunamaker (2001: 1) define meeting as a "focused interaction of cognitive attention, planned or chance, where people agree to come together for a common purpose, whether at the same time and the same place, or at different times in different places".

From these definitions, meetings are, therefore, purposeful work related interactions between two or more persons/ individuals which are more structured in order to reach a common purpose.

1.2 Background

The focus of this study was to examine meetings procedures at Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited. This was done in order to find out whether or not the meeting design characteristics in the conduct of organisational meetings resulted in effective meetings. A scrutiny of the major components of meetings which include initiation, conduct as well as termination was done in order to get a critical appreciation of how meetings, a key feature of organisational communication are held vis-a-vis meeting management ideals propounded by other researchers. The researcher carried a case study whose context of study was Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited (Zimpapers), a public listed company and the biggest Newspaper publisher in Zimbabwe. Zimpapers is also into commercial printing and broadcasting. The company has three divisions, one of which is the Newspaper Publishing Division which is made up of two branches namely Harare and Bulawayo. This division publishes nine newspaper titles and two magazines. The second division is the Broadcasting Division which is made up of a free-to-air commercial radio station, StarFM. The Commercial printing division is composed of National Printing and Packaging (Natprint). Because of the numerous number of newspaper titles published by Zimpapers and the semi-autonomous divisions, the organisation has a huge workforce who are divided into a number of departments and divisions each headed by a manager/ supervisor. All these departments and divisions carry out regular meetings and this made the organisation, a fertile context from which data for analysing meetings management can be collected. The researcher focused the study mainly on the Harare based divisions, namely Harare Branch for Newspaper Division, StarFM, Natprint and the Zimpapers Head Office.

According to Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008), notwithstanding their role in organisational management, there has been very little research on meetings by researchers on management. Ravn (2014) likens the lack of research on meetings by academics and practitioners to an orphan. Workplace meetings have generally been viewed by scholars including Gharakhani and Eslami

(2012), Quinn (2005), Bradt (2010) and Sky (2012) as a waste of time and resources especially those of a financial nature. To corroborate this view, Quinn (2005) argues that poor planning and conduct of meetings can result in consumption of corporate and personal time of the meeting participants. From a critical analysis of the benefits of meetings, one cannot conclude that meetings are of no significance per se in organisational communication. It is actually poor meetings management from the initiation, conduct and conclusion that make them not so effective, hence the perception by employees and other researchers that they are a waste of time. Perceptions of this nature especially either from researchers or employees, have motivated the present researcher to critically analyse the management of meetings at Zimpapers in order to find out how meetings are managed at different levels of the organisation namely divisional, departmental and executive levels.

According to Lopez-Fresno and Grandes (2010) cited in Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2014), meetings have been dominantly used in the running of organisations and are an important management tool in order to achieve problem solving, decision making and building of trust among organisational members. This implies that meetings are a crucial activity of organisational communication, the absence of which breeds suspicion, confusion and lack of group cohesion in day to day organisational activities. It is against this background that this study analysed the management of meetings at Zimpapers in order to get an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation's meetings procedures. In addition, this study suggested ways through which the quality of meetings could be improved in organisational communication in general and Zimpapers in particular with the aim of ensuring that organisations derive maximum benefits from the conduct of meetings.

1.3 Research problem

Meetings are a critical element of organisational communication yet there is generally a dearth of research studies on meetings management. A number of researchers including Bradt (2010) and Sky (2012) purport that meetings are a liability to organisations since they have financial and emotional burden, and they also unnecessarily consume working time. Such perceptions by

researchers have permeated some organisations who now fail to appreciate the benefits of meetings. It was, therefore, important to carry out research which identified the factors that promote effective meetings management so that organisations realise that meetings are not a problem but there are some factors which need to be evaluated in order improve their effectiveness. Given the pivotal role that meetings play in organisational communication and teamwork, there was a need to critically analyse and evaluate the factors that lead to the effectiveness of meetings as conduits for discussing important day to day matters of concern.

1.4 Research objectives

The overall research aim was to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the meetings management in organisations. The research also aimed at finding out how to derive the best results from meetings. Therefore, to achieve a successful research project, the researcher sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify the factors influencing effective meetings management in organisation.
- ii. To evaluate the effects of identified factors' influence on meetings.
- iii. To critically analyse meetings management practices at Zimpapers.
- iv. To suggest ways to improve meetings.

1.5 Research questions

Based on the research problem and objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the factors influencing effective meetings management?
- ii. How is the effectiveness of meetings in organisations affected?
- iii. What steps can be taken to improve the meetings management and productivity?

1.6 Hypothesis

The main hypothesis was:

Meeting design characteristics have a significant relation with effective meetings in organisations.

1.7 Justification of the research

The study assists the company under study and other organisations as they would be in a position to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of managing meetings resulting in improved and enhanced efficiency of business operations of the organisations. This study evaluated ways of improving operational efficiency when managing meetings since in most organisations, managers and employees spend twenty-five to eighty percent of their working time in meetings (Romano and Nunamaker, 2001). The research allows the researcher to gain knowledge in analysing the effect of meeting design characteristics on the effectiveness of meetings management in organisations. In other words, the study is expected to assert the significance of meetings as an important organisational activity which helps management and employees to achieve organisational goals and objectives by providing a platform through which pertinent issues which influence well informed decision making procedures are discussed. By so doing, findings from this study goes a long way in providing counter arguments against perceptions by employees in organisations and other researchers who have embraced the attitude that meetings are not beneficial but are a waste of time and resources.

In addition, this research work is useful for academic researchers studying meetings management in organisations as it also augments the already existing literature. As already mentioned earlier on in this research, studies on meetings management are generally scarce. The present study, therefore, adds to existing literature especially from a Zimbabwean perspective. Most of the studies on meetings management have been carried out in other parts of the world mainly Western hence there is need for similar studies from a Zimbabwean context to contribute to the debate on the controversy surrounding meetings management. While there are many textbooks on meetings in organisations globally, there are little journals and studies whose research purpose is on

understanding the determinants of effective meetings in Zimbabwean organisations. This research study addresses this gap. Finally, the research study also contributes greatly to the limited literature on effective meeting management as highlighted by Jarzabowski (2007) who posits that it is an understudied aspect of organisational life.

1.8 Scope / delimitation of the research

The researcher carried out a case study whose context is Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited, a public listed company. The respondents engaged during the research included employees, management, and directors. The study was carried out in Harare since this is where the company has its head office and the group flagship, Harare Branch and that is where the major operational and strategic decisions are made through meetings. The company's various departments and divisions carry out regular meetings and this made the organisation a fertile context in which data for analysing working meetings management can be collected.

1.9 Dissertation outline

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter that covers the background to the study, problem statement and purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and delimitations. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature. It covers issues regarding the working definition of a meeting and effective meeting. It also analyses other documented studies on the factors that guarantee effective meetings in organisations. Chapter 3 provides the frame of reference needed to create a solid foundation for this study. The chapter focuses on the research perspectives, sampling, research instruments, data collection, access strategies and credibility of the study. Chapter 4 is presentation of data and analysis of results and discussion of findings. The chapter summarizes and presents the information obtained from the studied company. The information is organized and structured according to the research questions and frame of reference. Lastly, Chapter 5 is the summary, conclusion and recommendations. Insights are also offered alongside the recommendations, directly addressing the stated problem. However, due to the relative complexity and extent of this

research area, certain issues of interest may not be sufficiently covered herein. These aspects are highlighted in this chapter for possible further research.

1.10 Chapter summary

The chapter presents an overview of the entire research as it introduces the background, objectives and significance of the study, research questions, limitations and delimitations. The chapter represents the background of the study, motivation of the study, introduces the reader to the objective and the problem research questions that lead us to our purpose. Subsequently, it reports contribution of the study and structure of the study. The research objectives and research questions covered the issues relating to the significance of the study in adding knowledge not only to the organisation under study but also to other organisations and the existing literature on meetings. The study assumed that truthful and unbiased information would be obtained from the company.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The process of reviewing literature is a key element in research. A review of research studies which are related to the present study makes it possible for the researcher to find a gap in knowledge to be filled in. It highlights the contribution the researcher intends to make within the chosen area of study. For purposes of this study, the researcher reviews studies on meetings management which have been done by researchers in different parts of the world in order to find out how other scholars have analysed the phenomenon and what conclusions they have arrived at. Insights from these studies will form a solid foundation for the present research. In other words, a review of related literature is expected to provide a context to the present research study as well as give credence to the existence of the research problem under investigation.

2.2 Definition of a meeting

Various definitions of a meeting have been put forward by scholars. According to Rogelberg (2006), a meeting is a formal forum constituted by at least two people in which they interact and share ideas on work related issues. Romano and Nunamaker (2001) asserts that a meeting is characterised by the presence of a shared and common agenda which participants need to focus and deliberate on within the same setting or at different setting in terms of time and place. Hildreth (2000) also highlights the aspect of the availability of a common purpose as a precursor to holding of a meeting. Lopez-Fresno and Grandes (2010) define a meeting from the functional and structural perspectives in which meetings are meant to be purposeful interactions by groups of people within a clearly defined environment and time frame.

From the definitions put forward by different scholars, some common characteristics of meetings can be discerned. One of the characteristic features on a meeting is that a meeting is normally a formal occasion in organisational communication. It is also done for work related purposes and is characterised by the presence of at least two participants who conversationally deliberate on set objectives in order to come up with certain binding decisions. This implies that one of the basics of a meeting is to have an agenda and each agenda item should be discussed to its finality so that the objectives of the meeting are realised.

In this research study the combined definitions of Rogelberg (2006), Romano and Nunamaker (2001) and Lopez-Fresno and Grandes (2010) will be adopted. Meetings are, therefore, purposeful work related interactions between two or more persons/ individuals which are more structured in order to reach a common purpose. Meetings can be face to face or electronically aided. Electronically aided meetings are sometimes called virtual or technology driven meetings. Electronically aided communication media such as video or audio conferencing, are other forms of conducting meetings that are being used by organisations in order to contain costs that are associated with conducting offsite meetings such as travel and accommodation. Therefore, companies are now using technology to provide an alternative to face to face meetings such as teleconferences, video and web conferences. The use of these collaborative technologies in conducting meetings, according to the report by the Global e-Sustainability and the Climate Group (2008) is estimated to reduce business travel by up to 20 percent. The use of virtual meeting technology which has become an in-thing, can be blamed for removing the human element and making such meetings unnecessarily unproductive.

However, one should not lose sight of the idea that a human being is a social animal who finds satisfaction in face to face interaction when carrying out activities whenever it is possible. This is supported by Barker (2002) who posits that human beings are biologically gregarious. This shows that humans are naturally social and therefore, they are hardly comfortable with situations in which they are isolated from fellow humans. They derive satisfaction from contexts in which they are able to relate to their counterparts, hence, meetings provide a platform for that in workplace environments. Meetings could, therefore, be more productive when participants gather and discuss issues face to face while at the same time getting opportunities to interpret and probe each other's

both verbal and non-verbal codes including paralanguage as they try to communicate effectively. From the above discussion, a deduction can be made that meetings are an important tool for organisational communication and collaboration in order to achieve organisational goals.

2.3 Classification of meetings

Researchers classify meetings into various categories in order to understand issues and design methods and tools of each type of meeting. Different meetings tend to be handled differently because of the differing goals, issues and objectives of these various categories of meetings.

Leach et al (2009) come up with five types of meetings namely:

- i. Information sharing meetings where these meetings are mainly about announcing and discussing organisational, departmental, unit, team and / or personal news. This type of meeting has a primary objective of being informative.
- ii. Training meetings which are about getting some form of on-the-job training. This type of meeting has a primary objective of education
- iii. Routine meetings which discuss day to day issues such as daily production meetings.
- iv. Special or unusual issues meetings whose purpose is the discussion of the non-routine issues or problems
- v. Recognition/ celebrating meetings which are about celebrating accomplishments and events.

However, Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi (2013:663) compress the above meetings categories and posit that there are three main categories/ classes of meetings:

- i. Huddles or Stand up meetings which are brief and informal meetings with the purpose to share minor issues or problems that can be addressed immediately, including making daily working assignments or discussing the day's priorities. According to Yip (2011), this meeting does not necessarily need a formal agenda but decisions and action items should be documented and distributed if some team members were not in attendance. At Zimpapers, this type of meeting includes Editorial Diary sessions and weekly production meetings which entails discussing issues to do with production runs and meeting target Editorial deadlines.

- ii. Information Sharing or Status meetings which are scheduled, formal and often routine meetings with the purpose to ensure all members have a chance to speak up and ask questions about. It should have a formal agenda, ground rules and assignment of meeting roles. These meetings include monthly departmental meetings where every departmental head has to present his/her report on the performance of the department. Included also in this type of meetings are divisional meetings where every Divisional Head or Unit General Manager has to report on the monthly performance of the division and chat the way forward.
- iii. Problem solving or Working meetings which are scheduled formal meetings to solve a problem. The group previously agreed to work together and make decisions. According to Smith (2010), emphasis is on participation, interaction by all members and consensus building. This type of meeting tend to include projects or committee meetings. At Zimpapers, various small committees comprising of individuals from different departments with varying expertise are chosen to solve some regular problems. A good example is the Business Development Committee that works on continuous product development in the face of the digital age whilst the Procurement Committee looks at the procurement of critical raw materials and equipment such as newsprint in the face of shortages from local manufacturers.

In this research study, the researcher focused on two meeting types which are information sharing and problem solving meetings. These two types of meetings were selected due to their frequency and importance to Zimpapers in particular and organisations in general. Through these two types of meetings, management and employees achieve organisational goals and objectives by providing a platform through which pertinent issues which influence well informed decision making procedures are discussed. Information sharing and routine meetings are the most common types of meetings held at Zimpapers. The researcher also selected these two types of meetings for analysis in order to clearly outline the perceived debilitating factors affecting the effectiveness of meetings in organisations. However, in as much as, meetings can be categorised as done by Leach et al (2009) and Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi (2013), most organisational meetings are a combination of all the types mentioned above. One meetings can encompass all the different types/ categories of meetings.

2.4 The role of meetings in organisations

Meetings are ubiquitous and useful tools that help people to strive towards organisational goals (Montelogo, 2002). Meetings are, therefore, essentially communication tools used by groups and teams to accomplish organisational goals (Maitlis, 2005). According to Rogelberg et al (2007:19), meetings are used as an important collaboration and organisational communication tool which assists in vision dissemination, designing and deployment of strategic plans, product development, information sharing and training. This is supported by McComas (2003) who argues that, in meetings key strategic and management decisions are made and the company's overall vision is clearly articulated and discussed in order to have one common understanding. Tracy and Dimock (2003) cited in Gharakhani and Eslami (2012) posit that meetings are the primary communicative practice that organisations use to accomplish important goals, make changes, display power and come up with new ideas. Meetings therefore provide a platform through which employees interact and discuss important issues which have a bearing on their day to day activities. They get regular updates on important activities. They also feel valued since they get an opportunity to partake in important decision making processes within organisations.

According to Gorse et al (2006), meetings are used to bring together key individuals to exchange information and make informed decisions. Organisations, therefore, hold meetings because they believe in shared decision making since groups can have a broader perspective and can accumulate more knowledge resulting in more alternative solutions. All those employees who attend meetings and participate in decisions making will be more satisfied with the decisions made and are more likely inclined to support them through its implementation stages.

Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2014) assert that meetings are one of the important tools in organisational communication which provide a platform for the exchange of information as participants make decisions, proffer solutions to problems, get access to pertinent information as well as building and maintaining good working relationships internally and externally. Meetings forms an integral part in information sharing and communication in organisations. This is also supported by Allen et al (2012) whose majority of respondents who were having more meetings concurred that meetings allow more information sharing. Kelly (2007) asserts that communication

within an organisation strengthens organisational identification and creates solidarity due to the trust among employees and between different departments. Similarly Rogelberg et al (2006) identified the benefit of integration and coordination of the work activities of employees through meetings. In a nutshell, meetings foster the spirit of working together in organisations which becomes the basis for the achievement of set organisational goals. Meetings also provide a springboard for collaborative effort which leads to the generation of solutions to problems affecting organisations.

Rogelberg et al (2010) go on to highlight that meetings are a central part of the work environment that can affect many different aspects of one's job such as job satisfaction. The fact that employees can also contribute ideas on key decisions made in organisations can be a source of job satisfaction. Human beings by nature generally feel that they need to have some influence in collaborative activities. By influencing decision making processes, some employees get satisfaction from knowing that they have a hand in whatever positive outcomes which can be a result of their involvement in decision making processes. They do not feel that decisions are imposed on them and everyone is made to strive to add their voice to critical issues being discussed in meeting proceedings. This collective contribution is done in order to possibly come up with collective decisions which employees will not only dutifully but willingly abide by.

2.5 Drawbacks of meetings in organisations

Tracy and Dimock (2004) cited in Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2013:237) observe that "through meetings groups solve and create problems, give information and misinformation, develop and rework policies, make retooled decisions, and while doing these focal activities they build or fracture sense of community and solidify or cause tension among participants". This clearly shows that in as much as there are positives to be derived from meetings by individuals and organisations involved, meetings have also some drawbacks which shows the negative role of meetings.

According to Allen et al (2012), meetings provide and drain resources to and from employees and managers. In the research by Allen et al (2012), three times as many respondents concurred that more meetings make them feel worse with their largest complaint being time related. This shows

that meetings can be expensive to organisations in terms of time and money. Van Vree (1999) found that managers in small organisations spend approximately 10% of their working time in meetings whereas managers of large companies spend closer to 75% of their total time. Mosvick and Nelson (1987) in their study of American companies indicated that over 50% of meeting time is wasted and that compounded loss of person-hours represents a significant drain on American productivity. This is also supported by Rogelberg et al (2007) who assert that meetings can prejudice the financial status of organisations directly or indirectly as an opportunity cost through emotionally unsettling employees.

Romano and Nunamaker (2001) in their estimation of the financial and emotional costs emanating from meetings in the United States posit that estimated meeting expenses ranged from costs of thirty million United States dollars to over one hundred million United States dollars per year to losses ranging from fifty four million United States dollars to three billion seven hundred million United States dollars annually. Tice (2012) recommends that in order to contain both the financial and emotional costs associated with meetings in organisations, organisations should stop having meetings. This recommendation was given after the United States Bureau of Labour statistics estimated that thirty seven United States dollars was incurred annually through meetings in the United States economy. This shows that meetings can be costly in terms of financial and emotional resources drain to organisations and individuals involved.

However, it has to be acknowledged that whilst researchers such as Romano and Nunamaker (2001), Tice (2012) highlight the issue of costs as a major downside of meetings in organisations in the United States, a developed country, there is a need to critically analyse this variable in organisations found in other contexts like Zimbabwe, a third world country. These researchers seem to have focused on one variable of meetings management, that is, cost which result in resources drainage. The present study took a holistic approach to meetings in order to reveal both the merits and demerits through a critical analysis of the factors that promote effective meetings management in organisations. Whilst the issues of cost and time could be viewed as one of the downsides of meetings, these variables should not be viewed as indicators of uselessness nature of

meetings in organisations. There is therefore a need to critically analyse meetings in clearly defined contexts in order to find out how organisations can benefit from such a crucial activity.

According to Bradt (2010:12), "at their best, most meetings are a waste of time, instead of inspiring and enabling, way too many of them actually drain participants' willingness and ability to do real work". This shows that meetings can be a source of despondence to employees resulting in job dissatisfaction. Cohen et al's (2011) study shows that a significant number of employees under study indicated meetings as a source of job dissatisfaction since they result in reduced work related resources as per the conservation of resources theory which was propounded by Stevan Hobfoll. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by Stevan Hobfoll (1989) proposes that individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources. Stress is a reaction to an environment in which there is the threat of a loss of resources, an actual loss in resources, or lack of an expected gain in resources. Resources include objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies. The COR model explains stress outcomes for both intra- and inter-role stress. For example, employees experiencing work role conflict may come to believe that they cannot successfully perform the job. Consequently, they may be forced to invest more of their resources into the work role for fear of losing their job status.

The COR model also proposes that inter-role conflict leads to stress because resources are lost in the process of juggling both roles. Hobfoll's COR theory also finds that these potential or actual losses of resources lead to a negative "state of being," which may include dissatisfaction, depression, anxiety, or physiological tension. Some type of behavior, such as planning to leave the work role, is needed to replace or protect the threatened resources. If this type of behavior is not taken, the resources may be so depleted that burnout ensues (Hobfoll 1993). Similarly Quinn (2006) warns that meetings rob individuals and organisations of their time by consuming huge amounts of personal and corporate time. In the current study, the inter-roles are the meeting duties and day-to-day work roles which will be competing for the time resources. Failure of meeting role and daily duties to complement each other could lead to job dissatisfaction if one the roles is not completed in time.

Meetings can also result in interruption of the employee or managers' working schedule. According to Rogelberg et al (2006), meetings can be seen as an interruptions when it affects the workflow and disrupts work processes. The researchers in their study looked for the explanation of the interruption aspect of meeting. The researchers assert that participants in meetings are likely to be unable to concentrate on deliberating issues on the agenda since they would sometimes devote their thought processes to certain scheduled tasks or activities they need to accomplish. Because of these mental conflicts, meetings may fail to achieve the desired results (Rogelberg et al (2006). This also, according to Cropanzano (2000), supports the Role theory which proposes that multiple roles lead to personal conflict (inter-role) as it becomes more difficult to perform each role successfully, due to conflicting demands on time, lack of energy, or incompatible behaviors among roles. This shows that meetings can be interruptive to one's day to day working schedules.

According to the renowned economist, J.K Galbraith cited in Barker (2002) meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything. This clearly shows that meetings can be a source of redundancy If not properly managed within organisations. Ravn's (2013) findings through interviews with managers and employees of the Danish participating organisations, Vestjysk and Danish Ministry of Science resulted in the novel folk theory. The folk theory holds meetings as places of excessive talk by a domineering leader or highly vocal participants with a purpose to walk through the items on the agenda and dispose of each item. The researcher, however, proposed an alternative theory of meetings to ensure meeting productiveness which was based on the group facilitation approach to social order in meetings. According to Ravn (2013:171), "a facilitator/ leader can change meetings by controlling their form and process, providing direction, stimulating engagement and ensuring that meetings creates value for its internal and external stakeholders and meaning for its participants". A meeting facilitator should be in a position to the lead the discussion by allowing all meeting attendees to engage and contribute in meetings.

2.6 Meeting design characteristics

Like other tools, meetings as communication tools have certain design characteristics that are usually determined, or at least have the potential to be determined, by the meeting leaders or

organisers. Design characteristics of meetings are a variety of objective features on how meetings are designed and relate to the temporal, attendee, physical and procedural natures of the meeting (Cohen et al, 2011). These characteristics mainly comprise agenda use, facility quality, meeting punctuality and minutes keeping. Leach et al (2009) studied five main aspects of design characteristics namely agenda use, minutes keeping, punctuality, having appropriate meeting facilities and a chairperson. The results of their study indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between the minutes, proper facilities, agenda use and the presence of the chairperson, and effectiveness of meetings. A well designed meeting facilitates discussion, problem solving, decision making and full participation by everyone attending the meeting. This study by Leach et al (2009) plays a pivotal role in the researcher's conceptual framework development.

The research by Cohen et al (2011) validates Leach et al's (2009) findings showing that agenda use, meeting punctuality, quality of facilities and the presence of the meeting facilitator relate to meeting quality. Cohen et al's (2011) study expands the number of design characteristics to eighteen design characteristics categorised into four broad categories of temporal, physical, procedural and attendee. The research by Cohen et al (2011) also identifies specific relationships to meeting effectiveness for several facility quality characteristics such as lightning, meeting space, refreshments and temperature. These studies above play a pivotal role in the researcher's conceptual framework development.

2.6.1 Agenda use

An agenda is a sequential order of items meant for discussion in a formal or informal meeting. An agenda assists in the familiarisation of meeting participants with the topics and issues under discussion so that they are better prepared and have prior knowledge of the meeting expectations and outcomes. An agenda include five universal elements that describe a meeting namely:

- i. A clearly stated objective or description of items being discussed
- ii. Identification of person or people facilitating a meeting item
- iii. Statement of desired outcome for the meeting
- iv. Timeline that reference the time allotted to the discussion of an item, and
- v. Notations that clearly state expected involvement from participants in a meeting (Delehant, 2007)

These five universal elements by Delehant (2007) are based on Kaye's (1998) acronym of GOALS which has four parts and one activity. It stands for goals, outcomes, activities, logistics and strategy. Goals are the result or deliverables from the people in the meeting which have to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. Outcomes are the benefits from achieving stated goals. The schedule of activities acts as time budget for the meeting and tells the participants how they will work on each part of the meeting while logistics ask the participants to perform preliminary work before the meeting (Kaye, 1998). Therefore, meeting agendas are the preparatory roles that begins with the leaders describing the objective of the gathering, deciding on a meeting location and time, and structuring the topics of discussion in an orderly fashion to facilitate smooth flow (Harolds, 2011).

An agenda can be distributed to the participants before the meeting or discussed at the initial stages of the meeting. However, it is ideal practice that an agenda be distributed prior to the start of a meeting in order to ensure that participants are given ample time to read and comprehend information that will be discussed, rather than having to multitask cognitively to keep up with items being discussed during a meeting (Harold, 2011). Drawing up an agenda is therefore a crucial step of meetings management and it makes it possible for participants to prepare adequately for the meetings and be able to contribute meaningfully to the discussion of the agenda items during the meeting. Important also is to make sure that facilitators of each meeting item are informed of their role in time.

From the above discussion, an agenda is essential because it focuses the participants thoughts on the issues that leader wants to work on. An agenda that is prepared during the pre-meeting phases helps to structure a meeting and increase its overall effectiveness (Leach et al 2009). Kaye (1998) likens a meeting without an agenda to a journey without a map where everyone spends a long time wandering about without ending up anywhere in particular. Lee (2008) argues that the meeting is unnecessary when the leader fails to give a brief summary of meeting objectives and the expected outcomes of the meeting. This is supported by Greta (2009) who asserts that ninety percent of a meeting success depends on the members' preparation through the use of an agenda. Mirivel and Tracy (2005) emphasise the importance of premeetings through the use of agendas as a precursor

to effective organisational communication. This shows that the use of an agenda ensures a sense of temporal integrity which enables members to discuss all relevant details and achieve a sense of accomplishment and productivity during the attendance (Leach et al 2009). However Sonnentag (2001) disagrees by arguing that the rigid use of an agenda decreases the amount of active participation from meeting participants during the meeting, an unstructured meeting without the use of an agenda prompts more involvement in meeting discussions and cooperation in planned activities. While scholars are divided about the rigid use of the agenda, most of them emphasize the importance of having and following an agenda in order to ensure that meeting participants are adequately prepared for the meeting and reduce divergence from discussing the important issues as stated in the meeting objectives thereby resulting in efficient use of meeting time. This tends to reduce discussion by participants of topics that have no relation to the agenda and haphazard discussions of topics.

While some of the scholars agree that when an agenda is used, following it is associated with the effectiveness of meetings, an agenda is not necessary in all types of meetings in some types of meetings such as hurdles meetings. According to Yip (2011), this type of meeting does not necessarily need a formal agenda. This shows use of formal agenda is situational to the type of meeting at hand. While some researchers agree that when an agenda is used, strictly pursuing each agenda item leads to effective meetings, others have the view that some types of meetings do not really need an agenda.

2.6.2 Meeting punctuality practices

Meeting punctuality entails beginning and ending the meeting at scheduled times which is sometimes called temporal integrity. Starting a meeting as scheduled prevents the wasting of time and might encourage punctuality for future meetings (LaForce, 2004). Punctuality, or the ability of different individuals to exchange some words and then coordinate on time, is one of the crucial ingredients of modern life and progress (Basu and Weibull, 2002). Zerubavel (1982:2) cited in Basu and Weibull, (2002:3) notes that "standard time is thus among the most essential coordinates of inter-subjective reality, one of the major parameters of the social world. Indeed social life would probably not have been possible at all were it not for our ability to relate to time in a standard

fashion.” The timing is seen as an important factor in the design of meetings by Barker (2002) to attain productive thinking by meeting participants. Barker (2002) suggests that having meetings late in the morning is the ideal time for thinking by meeting participants and goes on to suggest that 0900hrs - 1100hrs and 1100hrs -1300hrs meeting slots are the ideal times. Barker (2002) goes to note that meetings held at the end of the day might force the participants to make the meeting shorter which might result in poor discussion of issues at hand. In the present study, the researcher looks at the timeliness and timing of meetings in the organisation.

2.6.3 Quality issues of facilities

The study by Cohen et al (2011) identifies specific relationships between meeting effectiveness and quality and several facility quality characteristics including lighting, meeting space, refreshments and temperature. Organisers of meetings should select a location that is easy to access, ensure the room has ample lighting and is technologically adept for their presentations, and spacious enough for the amount of members that will participate (Harold, 2011). Wadell and Rosko (1993: 42) as cited in Leach et al (2009) comments that "the room should be spacious enough to avoid the closed in feeling. Having windows and a pleasant view but not distracting view... are highly desirable" In light of advancement in technology, most organisational meetings should be held where participants are collocated with each other in a certain location (Luong and Rogelberg, 2005). According to Leach et al (2009) temperature, lighting, noise and seating provision are key aspects of the physical environment that have the potential to affect the ability of a meeting to function well, increase member comfort and minimise distractions.

2.6.4 Meetings leadership aspects

Leadership takes place in meetings when the chair facilitates and directs them (Myrsiades:2000). The essence of leadership in meetings is to influence and facilitate collective and individual efforts in order to achieve common objectives. According to Lunshof (2014), leaders facilitate meetings and create the right meeting context, contributing to effective follower task execution. The performance of a team or organisation can be improved by leaders (Yukl, 2012). This is also supported by Allen et al (2012) and Rogelberg et al (2006) as cited in Lunshof (2014) who confirm that through effectively organising meetings, leaders can influence task performance resulting in reaching common objectives and solutions to problems that cannot individually handled. Rees and Porter (2003) notes the general view that chairing skills can be acquired through the process of

personal development and the process of osmosis through learning from one another. Lack of leadership skills can lead to poor decision making and wastage of important organisational time as well as frustration and irritation.

Rees and Porter (2003) categorise the chairman's role into two leadership styles of handling meetings by leaders namely chair-centred and group-centred discussions. A chair-centred style is characterised by a pattern of interaction where flowchart of discussions is focused to the discussion leader whereas a group-centred shows the flow of interaction between every participant of the meeting. In a similar vein of categorising meeting leaders, Gorse, Mckinney and Whitehead (2006) in their study of the factors that affect group interaction and performance in meetings use four types of leadership namely nominated, emergent, task and social leaders. The task leader has a strong focus on the end product whilst social leader ensures that group relationships are maintained. Rees and Porter (2003) suggest that a good discussion leader should be able to have a mental picture of the pattern of interaction at meetings through the use of the sociogram which can verbal or non- verbal. Non verbal can be eye contact with all those present and inviting contributions, if necessary from those participants who have remained silent. He should be able to distinguish between procedural, process and substantive interventions. According to Emmitt and Gorse (2003; 2006), dysfunctional meetings ignore group knowledge and others who do not contribute. If team members are engaged in proactive communication, the group mood is positive (Meyers, Kauffeld, Neininger, and Henschel (2011). Positive group mood is positively associated with positive emotions which in turn lead meeting effectiveness (Fredrickson, 2003).

According to Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2014), those with the responsibility of leading in meetings should make sure that a conducive environment in which participants interact freely without being suspicious of one another is created. The research concludes that leadership impacts on the effectiveness of meetings. Positive and impartial leadership results in the sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge, reinforcement of group identity and enhanced group collaboration and cohesion. Gorse et al's (2006) qualitative study conclude that social leaders encourage participation and engagement through open interaction, and overcome individual dominance and blocking resulting in more effective meetings. However, the study by Nixon and Littlepage (1992) suggest that leader impartiality is not related to rated success at reaching meeting goals, but is related to

member satisfaction with group decision. Lunshof's (2014) results of the study of the effect of leadership behaviour of directing, task monitoring, informing and structuring the conversation on meeting effectiveness shows no significant association. The leaders of meetings should use a variety of tools in order to facilitate participation by all attendees. This includes use of various inclusive processes such as silent reflection, buzz dyads, round robin and other small-group discussion platforms. There are some standard practices that leaders should engage in during and towards the end of the meeting such as debriefing in order to recap agreed positions and areas of disagreements in the meeting.

However, leadership has been studied from a myriad of perspectives across diverse disciplines especially in the areas of business communication and organisational science by scholars such as Parry (2001) and, Bovey and Hede (2001). These studies predominantly look on effective leadership behavioural strategies in organisations such as charismatic, autocratic and authoritarian styles. Holmes and Marra (2004) in their study of leadership look at the range of strategies used by leaders in conflict management and the sensitivity of contextual factors in strategic conflict management in formal meetings using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. The study by Holmes and Marra (2004) also uses Rahim and Bonama's (1979) analysis of conflict management styles namely collaboration, accommodation, compromise, competition and avoidance while at the same time emphasising on the importance of context in conflict management in formal meetings. The importance of context is also emphasised by Yaeger- Dror (2002) who argues that differences in settings have an impact on the enactment of disagreement and conflicts in meetings through the investigation of a New Zealand workplace which was characterised by asymmetries of power between the leaders and subordinates in formal meetings.

Holmes and Marra (2004) conclude that good leaders manage formal meetings conflicts productively in order to achieve transactional/ organisational goals while at the same time taking into account aspects of relational practice. They also conclude that the use of different conflict management strategies is contextual depending on factors such as seriousness of the issue under consideration, existing workplace culture and the type of interaction in the formal meeting. According to Holmes and Marra (2004) , some contentious issues can be avoided or discussed at

another context through explicit guidance by the leader on issues to be discussed fully so that meeting participants are kept on track with discussion. If leading a closely knit team, the leaders tend to adopt a negotiation strategy and avoid confrontation as opposed to those that do not regularly work together who are more inclined to engaging in direct confrontational dialogue (Holmes and Marra, 2002a). They also conclude that if the leader is responsible and accountable to the decision being made or discussed, any disagreement on the issue is disallowed to go unchallenged if it is likely to result in a divergent and unacceptable decision from the organisational perspective. However most of these studies on leadership were restricted to the leadership styles in organisations in general, in the current study, the researcher looks at leadership narrowly at a microlevel by focusing at it on organisational meetings management as a meeting design characteristic.

2.6.5 Decision making approaches in meetings

According to Cohen et al (2011), a thorough systematic approach contributes to effective meetings. Barker (2011), Lopez-Fresno and Grandes (2010) and Rogelberg (2006) share the same sentiments by stating that a good meeting planning, preparation, realisation assessment and follow up contributes to effective meetings in organisations. Nixon and Littlepage (1992: 363) suggest a "vigilant processing strategy" when making decisions in meetings which entails explicit discussion of objectives, examination of a variety of options and thorough evaluation of various options. Nixon and Littlepage's (1992) study of sixty seven subjects from a variety of organisations reveals that there is a positive association between a thorough and systematic approach and meeting effectiveness. Similar results are also reported in the study by Woods (2010) that indicates that exploring fully a number of options and the consequences of a decision are generally regarded as critical to effective group decisions, thereby resulting in effective meetings.

2.6.6 Minute keeping practices

Minute keeping is important for clarification of decisions, plans and assignments to meeting participants. It will also increase the likelihood of participants to honour agreements made during the meeting. Minutes should comprise succinct, itemised ideas or tasks that are discussed or that require follow up on (3M Management team, 1994). As per principle of good governance guidelines (2007), the minutes of meetings document the actions taken and provide an official

record that the formal requirements for action such as notice and quorum have been satisfied. In general, the minutes will include the name of the organization; the date, time and place of the meeting; members present and absent; who called the meeting to order and who kept the minutes; all motions made and the results of all voting; and when the meeting ended. After the meeting, the minute keeper should keep accurate written minutes for approval in the next meeting as a good governance and accountability practice. Minutes are an important aspect in the follow up and reanalysis stages of the meeting.

2.7 Outcomes of other research studies on organisational meetings

Esfahani et al's (2013) study of Isfahan Gas Company in Iran identifies and ranks the factors contributing to the effective meetings in that organisation based on Streibel's (2007) effective factors which were based on the meeting process comprising of before, during and after meetings.

This process has been illustrated diagrammatically below:

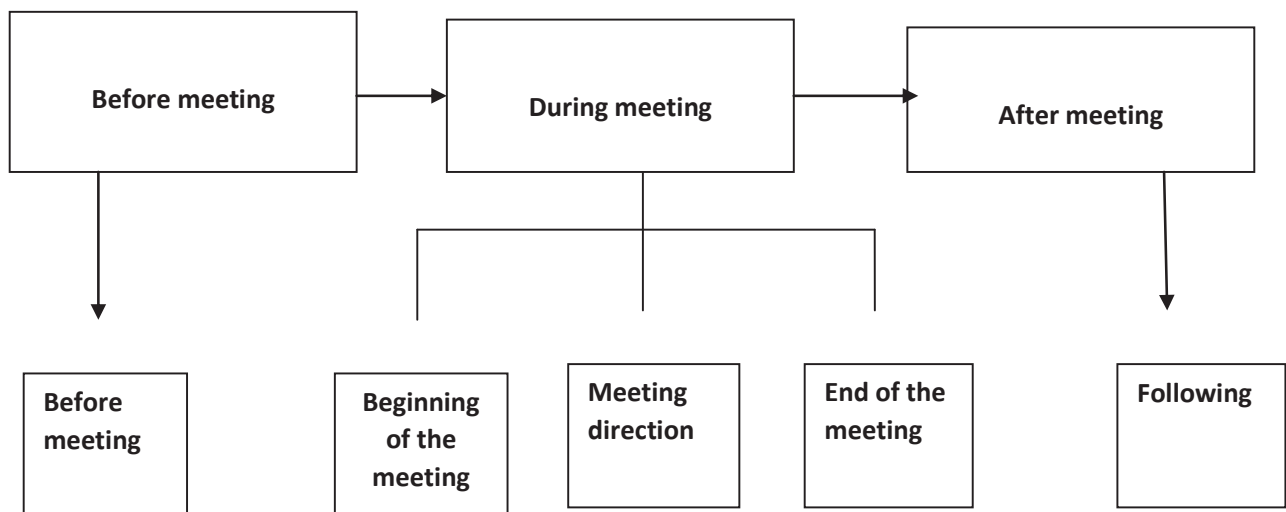


Figure 2.1 The effective factors on the effective meetings from Streibel (2007) viewpoint

Source: Adopted from Esfahani et al (2013: 74)

This is a schematic representation of the meeting process and within which one can identify the different factors that affect meeting management. From the results of the study by Esfahani et al's

(2013), planning is the most important and following is the least important effective stage/factor among factors contributing to the effective meeting. The study also indicates that there are significant differences between chairpersons, secretaries and other members' viewpoints about effective factors on the effective meeting depending on the role being played by a particular participant in a given meeting. The researchers recommend the following aspects to improve meetings in organisations: meeting participants have to be determined before the meeting; the meeting must be predetermined with a specific agenda; participants must be informed before the meeting; the meeting should begin and finish on a specific time; the agenda and goals of the meeting must be attended; the necessary follow-ups must be done after the meeting and meetings must be implemented for all members. This research work plays an important role in the current study. The researcher analyses the design characteristics of meetings throughout the meetings process from planning to follow ups.

Rogelberg et al (2006) study the impact of meeting time demands on job attitudes and well beings by examining three moderating factors of amount of interdependence inherent in one's job, the perceived effectiveness of a meeting and personal characteristics such as work orientation and meeting confidence. The pattern of the results is that there is no significant moderating effect of task interdependence, individualistic orientation and self confidence on the relationship between meeting time demands and job attitudes and well beings. For the moderating factor of perceived meeting effectiveness, a strong direct relationship is found with job satisfaction. This positive relationship is mainly seen on individuals reporting high perceived meeting effectiveness but for those individuals reporting lower perceived meeting effectiveness, a negative relationship exists. A negative relationship is found between a day's number of meetings and productivity when accomplishment striving is high but a positive relationship is found when such striving is low. Therefore, for those individuals participants with a strong desire to accomplish work goals, meetings were more of an interruption than for those with a lower desire. From the study, the researcher looks at the effect of the frequency of meetings on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers.

Gorse et al (2006) identify and analyse group dynamics within the context of meetings. The focus of the study is particularly on factors that affect group interaction and performance during the

conduct of meetings. In this study, the researchers use video data of group interaction in which they also participate. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, they attempt to highlight the patterns of interaction between participants within the context of meetings. This study reveals that social leadership provided by influential leaders largely influences group interaction. In a study on the effect of leadership behaviour on the effectiveness of meetings, Lunshof (2014) also concludes that to a certain extent leadership behaviour makes a significant contribution to how participants evaluate the effectiveness of a meeting. In relation to the same aspect of leadership, Lopez- Fresno and Savolainen (2014) also weigh in arguing that leaders have the responsibility for the creation of the trustful environment and conducting meetings effectively and efficiently in order to achieve meeting objectives. These studies are relevant to the present research because as the researcher gathers data, she interrogates the extent to which the same aspect of leadership affects the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers.

Bang et al (2010) explore the effectiveness of top management group meetings by establishing the link between goal clarity, focused communication, learning behaviour and team effectiveness based on Hackman's (2002) three dimensional concept of team effectiveness: task performance, relationship quality and member satisfaction. From this study, the researchers conclude that having clear goals and focused communication are elements of paramount importance in meetings management. Clear goals result in team effectiveness since it fosters focused discussions in meetings (Bang et al, 2010). Therefore, from this study, the researchers reveal that being able to raise one's voice in order to give clarity to meeting goals and being consistently focused as the meeting progresses is associated with meeting effectiveness. This study lays a solid foundation for the present research in so far as the researcher is interested in finding out whether or not this research supports prior research that for meetings to be effective the goal and objectives of the meeting should be clearly articulated to all participants.

Meetings are an integral part of workplace interaction. Without them, some organisations can hardly survive. However ".....most of the times, the meetings bring about dissatisfaction, tensions crises and conflicts" (Gharakhani and Eslami 2012:221). In other words, the majority of meetings held in organisations do not meet the objectives for which they are held because they are not

properly managed. It is against this background that Gharakhani and Eslami (2012) proposes in their paper a 5-part pattern whose objective is to facilitate the improvement of meetings management. The researchers suggest the 5- part pattern which comprises of key meetings managing process aspects namely:

- i. Describing the meeting objective,
- ii. Choosing the participants,
- iii. Preparing the meeting,
- iv. Directing the process of decision making, and
- v. Registering and evaluating the results of the meeting

This 5-part pattern is relevant to the present study as it will be used as an instrument to analyse and highlight some of the problems and strengths of meeting management at Zimpapers. In a nutshell, it will be used to interrogate the effectiveness of meetings management at Zimpapers. It will therefore put meetings management procedures at Zimpapers under the microscope in order to identify points of strength and weaknesses as well highlight possible prospects for improvement.

Luong and Rogelberg (2005) examine the relationship between the number of meetings held at an organisation and the wellbeing of employees. They specifically analyse the effects of the frequency of holding meetings and the amount of time spent while holding a meeting. In this study, the researchers conclude that the number of meetings held in an organisation is closely linked to fatigue and increased workload leading to low morale among employees. It is such issues which were examined through interviews at Zimpapers in order to find out whether research findings will confirm or refute findings from earlier studies.

Myrsiades' (2000) study of the requisite skills for meeting facilitation in group dynamics identifies two distinct forms of meeting leadership namely directive and reserved, that can be matched according to group dynamics, meeting time available, the team's experience and expertise and the general motivation of employees. The study notes that the directive leadership is suitable for large groups with little experience and expertise, low motivation and those groups that need structure whereas the reserved leadership is suitable for the opposite. The study concludes that meeting

leadership is not a 'one -shot process' but the chairperson should be able to mix the two types of leadership depending on the stage/ phase of the meeting, the type of meeting and the issues being discussed. Therefore, meeting leadership / chairperson should be able to function less as a boss and more as a facilitator in meetings, taking into cognisance situational changes.

Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi (2013) carry out a quantitative meetings management study in Lebanese private schools. In this study, a survey is done in which data is collected from over five hundred teachers in private schools in Beirut. Teachers are asked to analyse meetings conducted in their schools as well as what they perceive to be debilitating factors affecting effective meetings management. The findings from this study indicate that the conduct of meetings in schools fall far short in terms of expected standards found in literature on meetings management. The results of the study shows that some of the meetings are unnecessary since the meetings as per suggestions by the respondents can be replaced by other modes of communication technology, such as phone calls, e-mail, Whatsup, Facebook and Skype. The research also concludes that most meetings seem to lack agendas and time was rarely respected whether horizontally or vertically. This study is significant to the present research since data on meetings management is also going to be elicited from different participants who take part in meetings at Zimpapers. The only difference would be that whilst Al-Jamal and Ghamrawi (2013) uses questionnaires only in their study, the present researcher also used observation and interviews which makes it possible to get crucial detailed information on meetings management. This cements the final conclusions to be reached in this study.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

According to Svinicki (2008) , a conceptual framework is an interconnected set of ideas about how a particular phenomenon functions or is related to its parts. The conceptual framework can be explained, either graphically or in narrative form showing the main things to be studied the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them.

In as much as, the researcher reviewed studies that are mainly Western due to as earlier on alluded to lack of research in the area of study, it is believed that these mostly Western based research results can be generalised to the Zimbabwean context as well. This means that these studies can also apply to local organisations. Therefore, this current study seeks to identify the meeting design factors that promote and hinder effective meetings management by examining the components of meetings such as initiation, conduct and termination as key aspects of organisational communication. In as much as there are many potential moderators and independent variables at hand in the effectiveness of organisational meetings, the researcher looked at this variable or construct of meeting design characteristics. Based on research about meetings in organisations, the current study examines good design characteristics which have the following sub-variables of agenda use, facility quality, leadership, minutes keeping and a thorough systematic approach is the antecedent of effective meeting management in organisations. Properly managed meetings procedures from initiation, conduct and termination shape and result in effective meetings thereby enhancing organisational communication and team cohesion.

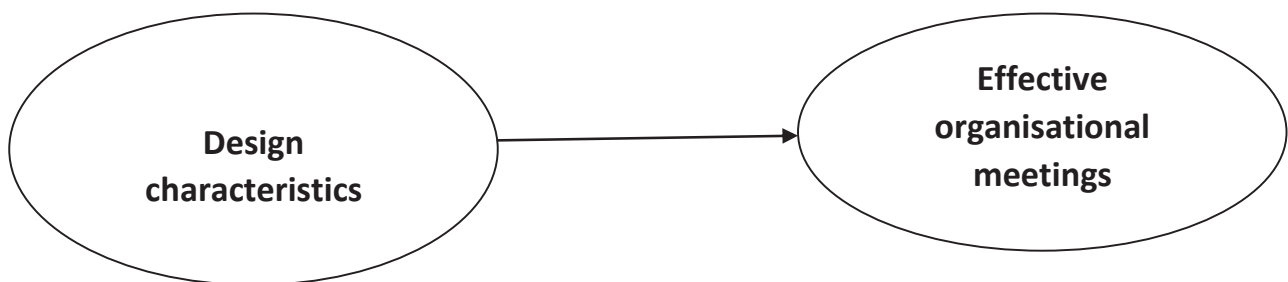


Figure 2.2 The Study's Conceptual framework

H1: Meeting design characteristics have a significant relationship with meeting effectiveness

Good design characteristics such as punctuality, temporal integrity, quality of facilities and minute keeping. Leach et al (2009) study five main aspects of design characteristics namely agenda use, minutes keeping, punctuality, having appropriate meeting facilities and a chairperson. The results of their study indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between the minutes, proper

facilities, agenda use and the presence of the chairperson, and effectiveness of meetings. This study plays a pivotal role in the researcher's conceptual framework development.

Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen's (2014) research conclude that leadership as part of design characteristics impacts on the effectiveness of meetings through the creation of the trustful environment and helping to bring about the desired meeting outcome. Positive and impartial leadership results in the sharing of explicit and tacit knowledge, reinforcement of group identity and enhanced group collaboration and cohesion. However, the study by Nixon and Littlepage (1992) suggests that leader impartiality is not related to rated success at reaching meeting goals, but is related to member satisfaction with group decision.

Cohen et al (2011) argue that a thorough systematic approach contributes to effective meetings. This is supported by Woods (2010) who posits that exploring fully a number of options and the consequences of a decision are generally regarded as critical to effective group decisions, thereby resulting in effective meetings. It also suggests the use of agreed decision making process beforehand as important aspect in meetings.

The basic construct of good design characteristics which have the following sub-variables of agenda use, facility quality, leadership, minutes keeping and a thorough systematic approach above make up the model which guides this research. The relationships between the proposed construct in the conceptual framework is as follows, good design characteristics positively impact on the effective meetings management in organisations.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter creates a strong foundation for the present study. It has been able to critically evaluate and synthesise related studies in meetings management. Studies on meetings and meetings design characteristics done by researchers from different parts of the world have been reviewed. In the same vein, the researcher has also reviewed works done on the same topic. This has given the

present researcher a firm background of the complex nature of meeting management in different organisational contexts. The researcher has also been able to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of previous studies in a bid to avoid non-productive methods. In a nutshell, the works which have been reviewed in this chapter provide this researcher with a firm base from which this study is going to be built. The next chapter highlights data gathering techniques and methods of data analysis which were used in this research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed relevant literature which is grounded in the study of meetings in different parts of the world. In addition, studies analysing the design characteristics in meetings management with a particular focus on effective meetings in organisations were also discussed. This chapter presents an outline of the research methodology used. The chapter also explains how the sample size was determined and the sampling methods used to select elements to represent the population. Furthermore, data collection methods used to collect data for the study are discussed. Finally the chapter describes data analysis techniques and concludes with ethical considerations and any limitations to the study.

3.2 Research design

Saunders et al (2009) asserts that research involves executing an investigation to acquire additional knowledge or idea to add to an existing understanding and knowledge of a particular discipline. A research therefore should add new knowledge. Kothari (2004) describes a research design as a plan and conceptual structure of the proposed research work. The use of an appropriate methodology in a research project is essential. Kothari (2004) argues that the choice of an appropriate methodology is a precursor for organised thought processes. This implies that the choice of a suitable methodology in research work is of paramount importance since methodology influences the research outcomes.

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al (2009), there are generally three major research philosophies namely positivism, phenomenological/ interpretivism and realism which play significant roles in business and management of research. Positivism is usually associated with natural science research and

involves empirical testing (Greener 2008). It promotes the idea of experimentation and testing to prove or disprove hypotheses and then generates new theory by putting facts together to generate laws or principles. Coolican (2004) posits that positivism is characterized by a research that intends to establish facts or causes of any social phenomena in a systematic way. Therefore, positivism places emphasis on numerical analysis and objectivity so reliability is high due to replication of findings. Critics of this approach, however, argue that the study of human beings is different from that of natural objects as human beings cannot be studied in an environment that is completely free from bias. Therefore, it is weak at understanding social processes and in discovering meanings people attach to social phenomena.

Contrary to positivism, the interpretivist philosophy is premised on the argument that human behaviour cannot easily be quantified or measured as in the case of natural sciences (Coolican, 2004). It is difficult to put human beings thought processes to observation and then come up with valid generalisations. The complexity of human nature is that people tend to interpret events in different ways and as a result they come up with varied explanations of the same phenomena. It is, therefore, based on inductive reasoning by collecting the data in order to arrive at possible explanations. Interpretivist philosophy points to subjective interpretations given by the participants. The realist takes aspects from both positivist and interpretivists positions. Realists argue that phenomena is objectively and statistically studied, attach value to social reality and is associated with mixed methods or triangulation.

In this study, the researcher used the realist approach which combines both positivism and interpretivist approaches by taking aspects from both philosophies. The current study adopted realist philosophy since the main objective was to assess the impact of meeting design characteristics on effective meetings at Zimpapers. This study involved testing hypotheses through measurement of observable social realities of the hypotheses developed from existing literature whilst at the same time subjectively interpreting design characteristics on those meetings. This philosophy was also chosen in order to take advantage of the strengths of both philosophies to come up with more accurate and reliable data. The researcher administered questionnaires to staff

and management of Zimpapers. Participant observations were carried out during meetings so as to get in-depth information on the area under study.

3.2.2 Research paradigm

Qualitative and quantitative research designs are the major research approaches. Bryman and Burgess (2003) also identify another approach which is a combination of both approaches, called triangulation. It should be noted that qualitative methods are the domain of the interpretivism and likewise quantitative methods are influenced by positivism. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), quantitative data comes from statistical measurements expressed in numerical form. Findings from quantitative research can be generalized with objectivity and standardized measurement. According to Creswell (2002), qualitative research produces findings arrived at by means of non-statistical procedures or other means of qualification. The research approach is concerned with quality or meaning rather than quantity and this approach is flexible as it allows for systematic data collection. The qualitative approach also provides a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data. Yin (2003) argues that the qualitative research paradigm allows the researcher to interact with respondents within an organisation in the process of data collection unlike when the researcher adopts quantitative approach. Thus, the researcher's role was to record what she observed and collect data from subjects in their natural environment.

It should be noted that in order to achieve the objectives of this study, the current research mixed both quantitative and qualitative research designs. This triangulation method provided a powerful technique that facilitated validation of data through cross verification from the two research designs. According to Gummesson (2005), a merger of the best of both worlds, rather than a one-sided acquisition, will add substantial synergy to the research. By combining the two approaches, the researcher could overcome the intrinsic biases and the problems that come from a single method. As such, triangulation was employed in order to provide more profound insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, this research combined the research approaches in order to take advantage of the strengths of the two approaches, to obviate the weakness of a single approach and to increase reliability and validity of findings. However, to a large extent this study is qualitative since it tries to understand the "what" and "why" questions and used some

quantitative tools such as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to explain and interpret the meeting design factors influencing meetings effectiveness.

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the two main approaches in research are deductive and inductive. The researcher also adopted the inductive approach. Since there is little existing literature on meetings, it was more appropriate to work inductively in order to generate data on meetings management and critically analyse to get some suggested theoretical themes from meetings conducted at Zimpapers. The study also wanted to link the research to the existing but not so abundant body of knowledge in meetings management in order to develop themes. The study was not necessarily confirming or disputing the hypothesis but tried find out which design characteristics and factors in the conduct of meetings result in effective meetings.

3.2.3 Research Strategy

Research strategy is a general plan of how to answer the research questions and this is guided by the research questions and research objectives, among other things. These research strategies include, experiment, survey, archival research, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and case study (Saunders et al, 2009). These strategies can be combined in a single study for a particular purpose (Saunders et al, 2009). This research adopted the case study strategy where information was collected from the Zimpapers only. Robson (2002: 178), defines a case study as "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context". This approach is usually appropriate in situations in which the focus of the research is not easily separable from its context. A case study is an extensive examination of a single instance of a situation of interest (Saunders et al, 2009). Therefore, a case study should be understood as a thorough and focused scrutiny of a typical situation. The study adopted the single case study strategy in order to analyse meetings management at Zimpapers as a way to narrow down the context of study.

Narrowing down the context of study to a single instrumental case study was expected to help the researcher to be more focused and to dig deeper into the dynamics of meetings management in an

organisational setting. The researcher also used Zimpapers only, since she is an employee of that organisation such that it would be easy to get permission from authorities to collect data for the research. The inclusion of other organisations as contexts for the study was envisaged to be difficult since meetings are platforms for discussion of sensitive matters such that the majority of organisations would be uncomfortable to conduct their meetings with an outsider in their midst notwithstanding that this individual may only be interested in gathering data particularly for research purposes. Therefore, the researcher avoided a multiple case study because of the need to take into account several ethical considerations such as getting letters of authority from various organisations and the sensitivity of the area under study in organisations. The study looked at finding out how meetings are conducted at different levels in order to find out any differing aspects with Zimpapers as a single holistic case within which executive, interdivisional and intra-divisional meetings were embedded cases. This would also help in highlighting whether there are any peculiar ways through which the management manipulate meetings in their organisations and try to account for them.

3.3 Population and sampling techniques

3.3.1 Population

Yin (2003) describes a population as a group of people or entities that share certain identifiable attributes. A population, therefore, is the sum total of all individuals from which data for a research study can be collected. Kothari (2004) explains that many a time it is not possible to examine every item in the population and it may be possible to obtain sufficiently accurate results by studying only a part of the total population. Using this assertion, the research was based on a sample calculated from a population of 890 Zimpapers employees based in Harare. Therefore, the study population consisted of Zimpapers employees and management in Harare. The researcher chose Zimpapers, a public listed company because of the easy proximity and accessibility and the company has all the levels expected in an organisation.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

Easterby-Smith (2008) defines sampling as a process of selecting a few from a bigger to become the basis for estimating or predicting a fact, situation or outcome regarding a bigger group. Saunders et al (2009) argues that the purpose of a sample is to approximate the measurement of the whole population well enough and within acceptable limits. This current study used a mixture of both the probability and non-probability sampling methods in coming up with the required sample of respondents. For the non-probability techniques, the research used purposive sampling which enabled the researcher to select respondents that were believed to be particularly informative and knowledgeable about the research at hand. Using judgemental sampling, all divisional heads, supervisors and executives were selected as they are directly involved in the management of meetings and are the meeting participants/ attendees. For the probability methods, the simple random sampling technique was used to select managers and supervisors who were to complete the structured questionnaire. This technique was preferred because of the size and homogeneity of the population. Furthermore, the technique ensured that all elements of the population under study had an equal chance of being selected, thus eliminated bias. The researcher used simple random sampling technique for selecting the respondents because of both time and cost constraints and the target respondents were too many.

3.4 Sources of data

In answering the research questions, the researcher used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using self-administered structured questionnaires and participant observation as a meeting attendee. These methods were used in order to get management and staff experience and views on meetings management. On the other hand, secondary data which encompasses unprocessed and uninterpreted data already in existence, was collected from prerecorded tapes on previous meetings held at Zimpapers and other previously filed minute records to acquire relevant information for the study.

3.5 Data collection procedure

In this study, the principal unit of analysis was Zimpapers. The researcher used a combination of structured questionnaire, interviews and participant observation in the collection of data. These data collection techniques are suitable for a mixed quantitative and qualitative research. The structured questionnaire provided quantitative data which when analysed statistically allowed the various themes derived from meetings design characteristics to corroborate research findings. Participant observation was used in order to analyse meetings in an interpretive and subjective manner. Therefore, participant observation offers the researcher an opportunity to observe meeting participants' behaviour in meetings. The researcher would be able to record data as it occurs and by doing so, one minimises bias and distortion which might come as a result of memory failure. Hence, participant observation was expected to give the researcher more subtle meeting design factors influencing the effectiveness of meetings in organisations.

3.5.1 Structured questionnaire

One of the data collection instruments used by the researcher in this study was the self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed on the impact of meeting design characteristics on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers (1980) Limited. The researcher personally hand-delivered one hundred and thirty (130) questionnaires and twenty (20) were sent to respondents using electronic mail. Details of the questionnaire are found in Appendix A. A questionnaire is a data collection technique in which each respondent is asked to provide responses to the same preset questions (Saunders et al. 2009). Furthermore, the questions are answered in the absence of the researcher. The structured questionnaire allowed for the same questions to be answered in the same order so that the same information could be collected from every respondent. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions with a likert scale rating so as to allow numerical values to be assigned to each response. Some of the advantages of using structured questionnaires are that such questionnaires are easier and faster to complete. They also present a more practical and simple way to collect data and finally data collected using structured questionnaires can be easily coded and quantified. By using questionnaires, employees had the chance to express themselves without fear of victimization.

3.5.2 Participant observation

The other method of data collection used in this study was observation which gives simultaneous data collection and analysis. Observation involves the recording of participants' behaviour as the researcher watches them in order to enable her to analyse the meetings in an interpretative and subjective manner. It brings out a detailed and systematic view of behaviour that takes place in a particular setting. This researcher used participant observation in which case she became part of the meeting participants. As a participant observer, the researcher's identity and intention was concealed from the subjects under study. The concealment of the researcher's identity, however, does not auger well with some principles of ethics in research, issues which will be dealt with later in this chapter. However, the concealment of the researcher made it possible for the investigator to get an undistorted reflection of the behaviour of the people under scrutiny since people tend to create a different impression when they realise that they are being observed. In other words, informants' knowledge of the presence of the investigator can inhibit the usual and natural behaviour of the people under investigation thereby compromising on the quality of the data gathered and the validity of the findings. They become artificial in their behaviour to the extent that the investigator would get a distorted picture of the phenomenon under study.

By using observation as a data gathering technique, the researcher was able to avoid over reliance on previous studies about meetings management, which may not have yielded a typical representation of the behaviour under study. This implies that, if carefully carried out, observation was expected to give the investigator more subtle factors influencing effectiveness of meetings in organisations. In addition, observation also gave the researcher the opportunity to see the accompanying non-verbal cues involved and this would help the investigator to perceive meetings attendees' attitudes whenever they attend meetings. The other advantage of using observation as a data gathering technique in this study was that the investigator would be able to study many subjects in a short period of time. Under such circumstances, one would record a number of constant and variable features from many people who will be taking varying roles in meetings, leading to rich findings. In a nutshell, participant observation is dependable as a data collection technique due to the fact that it also allows the researcher to capture data as it occurs naturally in its undistorted form.

3.5.3 Selective interviews

The researcher also used informant verification through selective face to face interviews. Details of the interview guide are found in Appendix B. This allowed the researcher's informants to verify the content and was a source of new interpretations that had not occurred to the researcher. Therefore, these selective interviews allowed for the provision of an extensive and developmental answer to the what and why questions. This method was also used for the purposes of getting a deeper understanding of the meeting design characteristics. In this research, the investigator used the face to face selective interviews bearing in mind that it had the advantage of allowing the observation of facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures used by the informants. From these non-verbal cues, invariable data which could be used to explain the meeting design factors would be discerned. These selective interviews assisted in probing the respondents by complementing the closed ended questions on the structured questionnaires with open ended questions.

The face to face interview is, however, not without its own shortcomings. Its major weakness is interviewer bias, where the presence of the interviewer may inhibit free responses or the informants may give responses which tend to please the interviewer. Because of time constraints, other informants may not be able to avail themselves to the researcher for interviews to take place. Those meeting attendees who agreed to be interviewed were not told by the researcher that he had gathered other data covertly through participant observation. With the observation method, the researcher might not have been in a position to get a deep understanding of the social phenomena. The researcher might only have got some understanding of the behaviour under study but could have failed to understand why informants behaved the way they did. The interview method allowed the investigator to continuously probe the informant until a clearer picture of the matter under study was revealed.

The major reason why the researcher resorted to the use of these methods of data collection is that she felt that both observation, selective interviews and questionnaire methods would complement each other and eventually enhance the validity and reliability of the data collected. Each of the methods could cater for the weaknesses of the other. Using a single method of data collection could, otherwise, compromise on the amount as well as the quality of the data gathered.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data collected through participant observation was analysed through descriptions of the case and themes of the case in order to augment and elaborate the quantitative data obtained through questionnaires. Analysis of this data involved thematic analysis. This analysis involves analysing a theme and comparing it with others in order to deduce patterns and commonalities. These may be similar or different patterns for the development of conceptualisation of possible relations between meeting design characteristics or theme and meeting effectiveness. Therefore, this involves thematic analysis of design characteristics in order to detect commonalities and variations among and between them. The researcher used the analysis of themes because it allows her to use some preexisting theory or hypothesis against which to test new collected data on meeting management in organisations and critically analyse the reasons behind such a phenomenon.

3.6.2 Quantitative data analysis

Data processing consisting of questionnaire coding, data entry and data cleaning was done for data collected through questionnaires. Initially, the questionnaires were coded. In data analysis and interpretation, frequencies, percentages and mean were used using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The data collected was presented using tables, graphs and charts to enable easy comparison and clear projection of the situation. These findings are laid out in chapter four, together with their detailed discussion. Segonds-Pichon (2007) refers to SPSS as a statistical package for the social sciences which is used to present quantitative data in a comprehensible way. The study used SPSS Version 23 to enter data and perform data analysis because of the partly quantitative nature of the study.

3.6.3 Reliability test

The Cronbach's (1951) alpha test of reliability was used to estimate the internal consistency of the measuring instrument. The generally accepted range of the Cronbach's alpha measure is 0.6 to 0.8 and values significantly lower indicate an unreliable scale (Field 2013).

Table 3.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.919	34

The Cronbach's alpha for the study which was conducted to test the questionnaire for internal consistency was 0.919 which showed that the scale used for the study was reliable and consistent. Therefore, all items in the questionnaire were included as they provided meaningful data to the study.

3.6.4 Validity

Validity was guaranteed in this research by carrying a pilot study before the actual administration of the research instrument. Bryman and Bell (2003) suggest that if at all possible, a pilot study must be conducted before administering a self completion questionnaire to a sample. The desirability of carrying out a pilot study is not solely to do with trying to ensure that the questions operate well, but to ensure that the research instrument as a whole functions well. A pilot study was carried out for this study. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to 10 respondents. This was done in order to identify poorly worded questions and unclear or confusing statements on the questionnaire for refinement and revision.

3.7 Research limitations

Some respondents were not comfortable to release confidential information and in such instances, the researcher assured respondents that all information gathered would be kept confidential and be used for academic purposes only. The researcher also ensured that all the respondents signed a letter of consent. Lastly, the research was restricted to the Zimpapers therefore the findings and recommendations were limited to this particular organisation yet the issue of effective meetings management is of concern to all organisations.

3.8 Research ethics and data credibility

There is need for ethical responsibility of the researcher to the participants when carrying out a research study. The researcher gained informed consent from relevant authorities within the organisation to carry out this research, ensured that the participants' right to refuse to take part at any stage of the research study was respected, ensured that the participants' wish or need for anonymity and confidentiality was respected and lastly the researcher kept the moral obligation of maintaining confidentiality of data in order to ensure respondents anonymity. One other important principle of research ethics is that the researcher should respect the dignity of participants and confidentiality of certain information. To uphold this principle, the investigator informed all the respondents that she intended to give the questionnaires that they had freedom to refuse or be part of the study by signing the letter of consent. The researcher also informed the respondents that their identity would not be published and also that the contents of the questionnaires would be used for the sole purposes of this research.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter looked at the data gathering techniques which were used in this research. These include participant observation and structured questionnaires. The researcher also tried to give some justification as to why she chose the two methods as data gathering techniques. In addition, this chapter discussed tools of data analysis which were used in this study. In the next chapter, the researcher makes a presentation of the data gathered as well as giving an analysis of design characteristics in effective meetings management.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to present, analyse, and discuss the results that were acquired from the study. The results will be presented thematically, in accordance with the research objectives. The first part for each section will detail the *status quo* on the situation of meetings management at Zimpapers, while the second section will look into the inferential analyses, establishing the factors that positively impact on the effectiveness of meetings. The overall findings will be discussed with relation to the literature and empirical data discussed in the literature review.

4.2 Response rate

A total of 150 questionnaires were randomly administered to the employees of Zimpapers, including its other divisions, that is, StarFM and NatPrint. Out of the 150 questionnaires, 118 were successfully completed as shown in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

	Count	Percentage
Administered	150	100%
Valid Responses	118	78.67%
Non-Responses	32	21.33%

From the above analysis, the total number of valid responses account for a total response rate of 78.67% with $n = 118$. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), a response rate of 60% and above is generally considered to be appropriate. The response rate for this study was relatively high, and this was mainly facilitated by the fact that the data collection was, by and large, self-administered and the researcher as an employee of Zimpapers sent reminders and made constant follow-ups with the selected respondents to ensure quick responses.

4.3 Reliability analysis

To assess the reliability and the internal consistency of the use of the questionnaire as a research instrument used for the collection of data, the Cronbach's alpha was computed by means of the SPSS Statistics software. An overall significant alpha (α) statistic of 0.865 was established as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.865	0.898	49

The established alpha statistic is greater than the prescribed minimum of 0.60 (Field, 2013). From the foregoing, it follows therefore, that the research instrument that was used was reliable. This also showed that the questions contained in the questionnaire were consistently measuring the concept under study as the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.865.

4.4 Demographic analysis

This section presents the background characteristics of the respondents, and the main thrust will be mainly on their gender, age group, their level in the organisation, their highest level of education, the division of Zimpapers they worked for, the total number of years they had been employed at Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited, their frequency of attendance of meetings, and the role that they mainly play in meetings.

4.4.1 Gender of respondents

From the assessment of the respondents, it came out from Table 4.3 that the majority, 62%, of the respondents were males, while 38% were females. This dominance of male respondents over female respondents is actually reflective of the rather similar gender proportions in the population. In other words, the dominance of male respondents in this study resonated with the dominance of male employees in the studied organisation, Zimpapers. Therefore, based on gender balance, the

research findings are a true reflection of the gender dynamics at Zimpapers which are characterised by male domination.

Table 4.3: Gender Distribution

	Frequency	Percent
Male	73	61.86
Female	45	38.14
	118	100.00

4.4.2 Age range of respondents

With regards to the ages of the respondents, it can be seen from Figure 4.1 that the most distinctive age category was the 30-40 year category with 41.5%, while the 40-50 years category seconded, comprising 27.1%. The 20-25 years age group accounted of 21.2% of the respondents while the least category, with only 10.2% of the respondents falling within the 50-60 year age category.

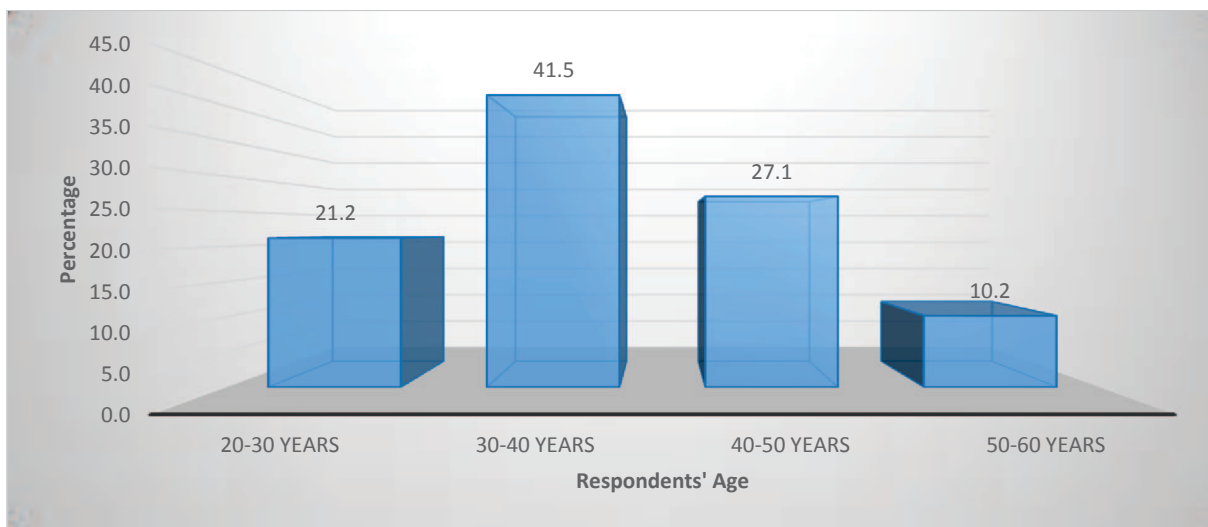


Figure 4.1: Age Distribution

The above findings show that the majority of the respondents 68.6% were relatively young ranging between 20 and 40 years. This shows that Zimpapers is dominated by the younger generation which can easily adopt new technological changes and are generally described as agents of change in many societies especially in the media industry (Avlonitis and Panagopoulou, 2005).

4.4.3 Level in organisation

From Figure 4.2 below, the greater proportion of the respondents (49%), were the non-managerial staff. This was seconded by the middle management staff, with a proportion of 34%. Only 15% of the respondents were senior managers, with the least distribution (2%) being attributed to the directors of the organisation.

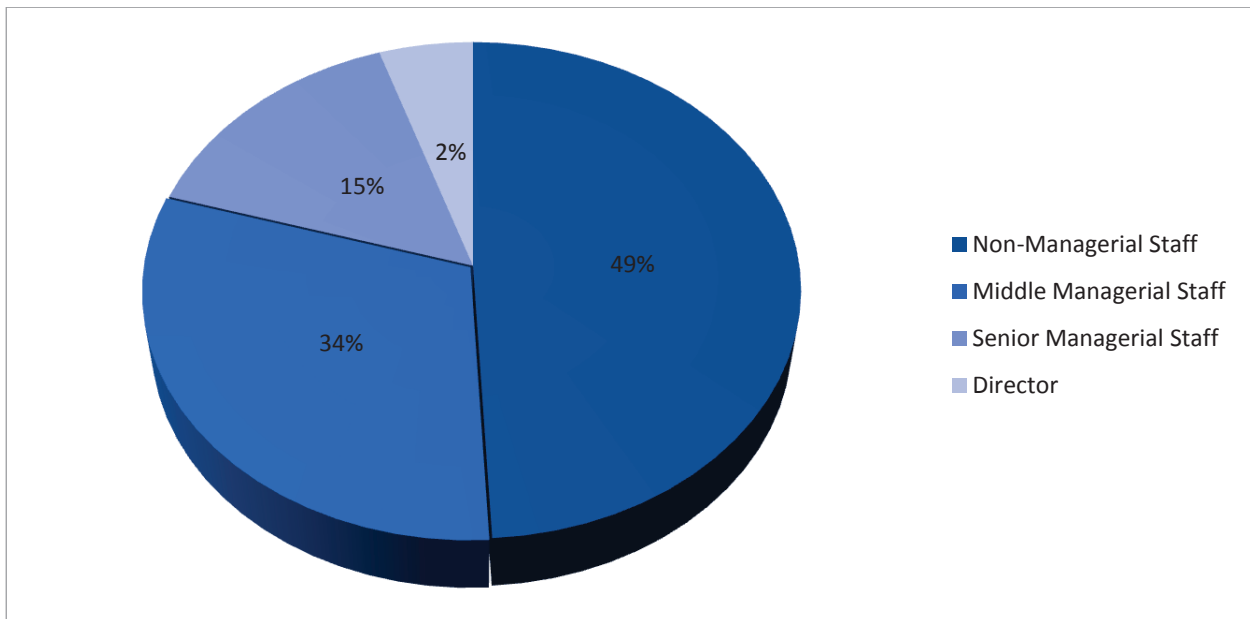


Figure 4.2: Level of Respondents in the Organisation

These distributions are a reflection of the population proportions of the employees, and such a parity was afforded by the random sampling method used, as each employee had an equal chance of being sampled, and hence a cross-validation of the representativeness of the research findings. The researcher had bias towards non-managerial staff who were mainly supervisors and middle management who are usually meeting attendees at information sharing and problem solving meetings. These two categories tended to have more information on the way meetings were being handled. This was done in order to give credence and justify the findings of the study.

4.4.4 Level of education

The level of education, often times, has an influence on the understanding of specific subject areas/ phenomena by the respondents. With this in mind, it was imperative that the academic profile for

the respondents was understood. The general academic profile of the respondents is presented in Figure 4.3 below.

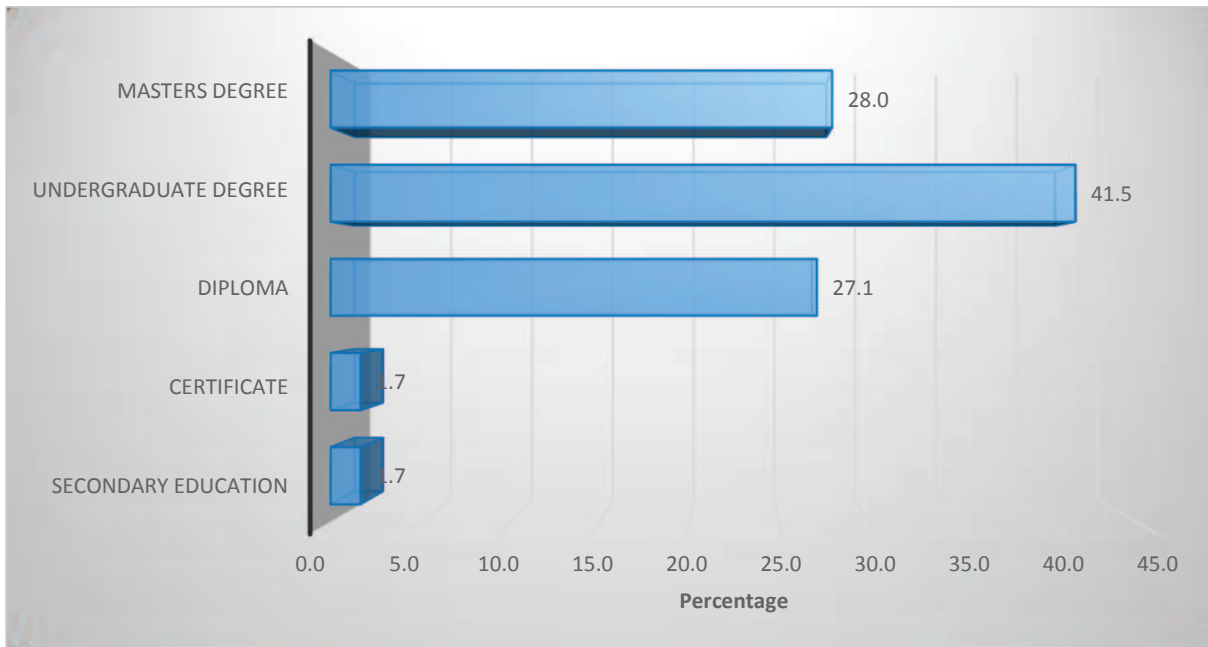


Figure 4.3: Highest Level of Education

From the above analysis, the greatest frequency (41.5%) was comprised of undergraduate respondents, while 28.0% had masters' degrees. The third dominant category, comprised of diploma holders, and this had a frequency of 27.1%. The least significant academic profiles, were those with certificates (1.7%), and those with secondary education as their highest academic qualification. From the foregoing, it can be qualified that the respondents had, by and large, attained higher echelons of education that one can safely assume that they were in a better position to academically understand the questionnaire and respond to it dependably. Furthermore, the purposively selected respondents were mainly manager and supervisors who would be expected that they are professionals with certain level of qualification and skills.

4.4.5 Respondents by division

With regards to the respective division of Zimpapers the respondents worked for, there was an almost even distribution of respondents, with a substantial bias towards those employed at the Harare branch, and this was mainly as a result of their relative proximity and accessibility, as the

time for the research could not afford an even representation of the employees from each of the divisions. The majority of the respondents, were from the Harare Branch, comprising of 37.3%, as well shown in Table 4.4 below. The second rated proportion comprised of respondents from the Head Office, which was again situated in Harare, in contrast to, say, the 9.3% coverage of Bulawayo respondents. These Bulawayo respondents are few marketing and distribution personnel stationed in Harare.

Table 4.4: Respondents by Division

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Harare Branch	44	37.3	37.3	37.3
Bulawayo Branch	11	9.3	9.3	46.6
StarFM	18	15.3	15.3	61.9
NatPrint	16	13.6	13.6	75.4
Head Office	29	24.6	24.6	100.0
Total	118	100.0	100.0	

The argument behind the lack of parity in the categories as discussed before, was a result of the convenience sampling technique which had been adopted by the researcher. Furthermore Harare Branch has the highest proportion of the group staff compliment of 60%.

4.4.6 Years employed by the organisation

With respect to the number of years the respondents had been employed by the organisation, it was rather relieving to note that the greatest proportion, 41% had been with the organisation for 5-10 years, while 20%, had been with the company for 10-15 years. The least category, 15%, had been with the company for more than 15 years, and this is better illustrated below.

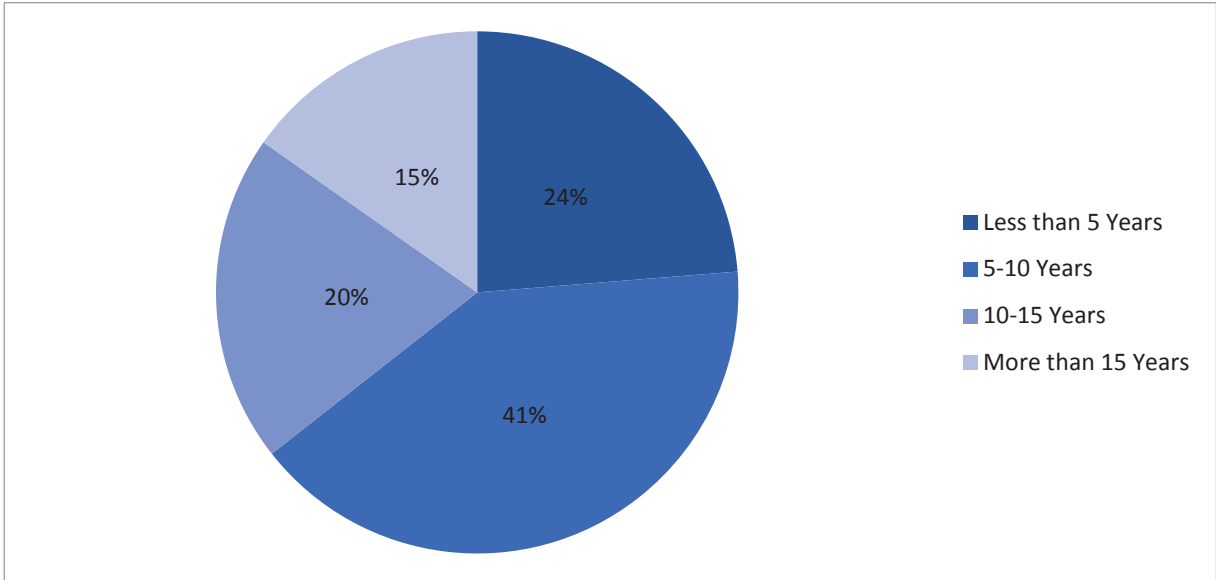


Figure 4.4: Years employed by the Organisation

In essence, 76% of the respondents had more than 5 years working experience with the organisation. This majority of the respondents with more than 5 years of working experience tends to aid in the qualification of the validity of the results from the fact that having experienced respondents implies that the respondents had vast experiences with the management of meetings within the organisation and their responses to the questions would be a true reflection of the actual situation on the ground. This also shows that the study had a wide mix of respondents who were experienced enough to understand the needs and expectations of the study, thus their contributions were important to the study

4.4.7 Frequency of attendance of meetings

The Figure 4.5 below presents the classification of the respondents by their respective frequencies of attendance to meetings at Zimpapers.

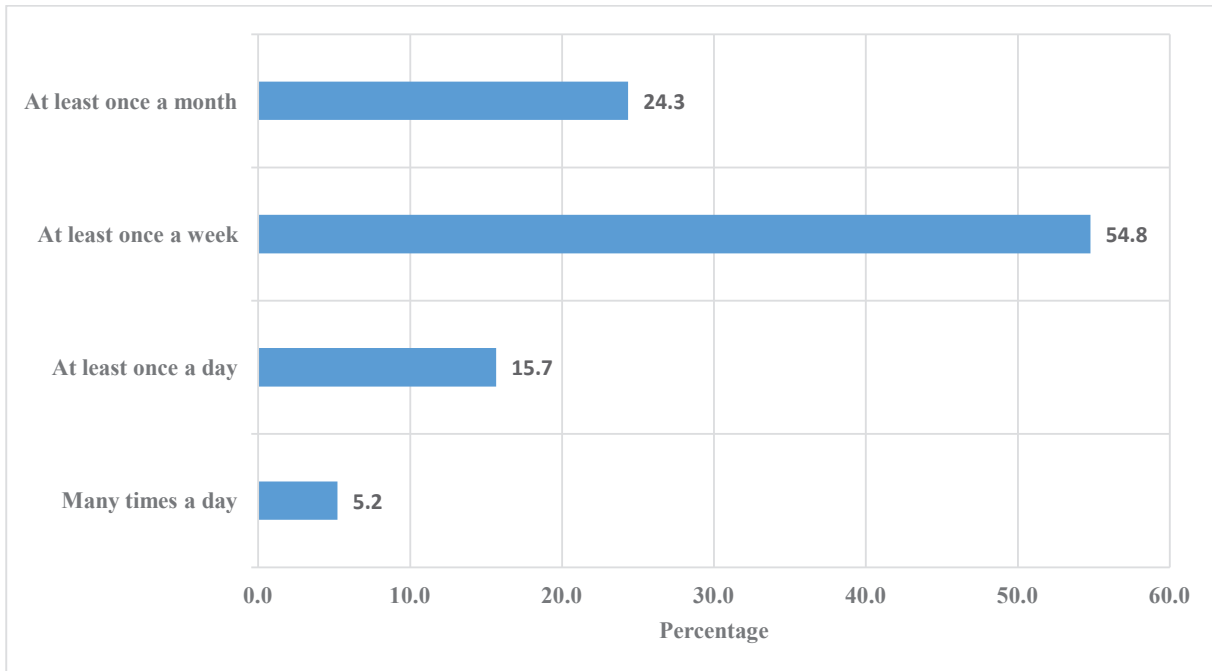


Figure 4.5: Frequency of Attendance of Meetings

The modal statistic for the above analysis shows that 54.8% of the respondents attended at least a single meeting in a week. Essentially, such a distribution would not be too spaced, with some respondents even attending more than one meeting in a week. Knowledge of these frequencies of attendance to meetings would also be beneficial as it could be used in the stand of experience. Therefore, respondents with higher frequencies of meeting convergence tend to have an expansive knowledge of the subject at hand. The respondents who attended at least a single meeting in a month were 24.3%.

4.4.8 Role played in the meetings

The last important demographic characteristic that would potentially influence the outcome of the research was the respective roles each and every respondent took. The bulk of the respondents (85%), were meeting attendees, while 10% would perform the Chairmanship role. The least covered profiles were secretaries, with a proportion of 5%. From the statistical assessment, the proportional segmentation of the respondents was rather reflective of the standard proportions in the real world, something which had been afforded from the random sampling techniques which had been applied to acquire the respondents.

4.5 Agendas and their influence on meeting effectiveness

The first aspect this research sought to explore was the *status quo* in relation to the aspects of agendas at Zimpapers, and, eventually, to ascertain the relative impact of the dissemination of the agendas on the effectiveness of meetings. The agenda status is summarized in the tables 4.5 and 4.6 below.

Table 4.5: Frequency rating of Agenda Issues at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not Sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total %
Meetings follow the agenda, and do not deviate	3.4	21.6	17.2	48.3	9.5	100.0
The goals of the meeting are clear and well defined in the agenda	1.7	5.2	31.0	44.8	17.2	100.0
There is specific time allocation on each agenda item	5.2	54.3	23.3	11.2	6.0	100.0
Agendas are distributed to attendees in advance.	5.3	15.8	23.7	36.8	18.4	100.0

Table 4.5 shows that about 57.8% of the respondents agree that meetings follow the agenda and there were no significant deviations and about 64% and 65.2% of the respondents agree that the goals are clear and well defined in the agenda and agendas are distributed to the meetings attendees in advance respectively. However about 59.3% disagree with the fact that there is specific time allocation on each agenda item during meetings at Zimpapers and about 23.3% were not sure on the specific allocation of time on agenda items. From the above it can be ascertained that some agenda use aspects are being followed at Zimpapers save for the lack of specific time allocation on each agenda item.

Table 4.5: Agenda Issues at Zimpapers

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Meetings follow the agenda, and do not deviate	118	3.39	.096	1.036
The goals of the meeting are clear and well defined in the agenda	118	3.71	.081	.875
There is specific time allocation on each agenda item	118	2.59	.090	.970
Agendas are distributed to attendees in advance.	118	3.47	.105	1.123
Valid N (listwise)	118			

The respondents had been asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the above statements. Being based on a 5-point Likert scale, positive feedback would be benchmarked by the median statistic of 3.0. From the responses in Table 4.4 and 4.5 above, it can be seen that the major weakness in relation to the handling of agendas, was that *there seemed to be no specific time allocation on each agenda item*, as evidenced by the relatively low mean rating of 2.59 and 17.2% respondents who agree and strongly agree to this notion. On the other hand, the major strengths in relation with the agenda issue, was that *the goals of the meeting are clear and well defined in the agenda* and this had relatively high mean rating of 3.71. The second strength of the agenda issue at Zimpapers was that *agendas are distributed to attendees in advance*, with a mean rating of 3.47.

From the point of view of design characteristics of meetings, issues relating to drawing up of an agenda before a meeting and its eventual use during a meeting are of paramount importance. An agenda ensures that meeting attendees do have a common ground from which a formal and orderly conversational interaction on issues can be done. It is a guide to meeting attendees without which a meeting can easily degenerate into an uncontrolled general conversational interaction. Data gathered in relation to this aspect reveals that there are some positives in relation to the designing or preparation of agendas. The distribution of agendas to meetings participants is also another crucial aspect which makes it possible for meetings participants as contributors in meetings to come for meetings well prepared to contribute meaningfully to issues being discussed during

meetings. This can somehow lead to fruitful interaction between meeting attendees thus leading to meetings effectiveness. However, failure to allocate time to each item on the agenda has been a drawback to meeting procedures. From data gathered through participant observation, this researcher observed that, in some cases, participants tended to focus on one agenda item thereby taking their time to discuss that particular issue at the expense of other issues. This in most cases resulted in meetings taking more time than originally scheduled thereby impacting negatively on the time for employees to carry out other tasks.

However scholars are divided on the rigid use of the agenda. Sonnentag (2001) argues that rigid use of an agenda especially specific time allocation on each agenda item decreases the amount of active participation from meeting participants during meetings. Therefore, unstructured meetings which are not rigid on agenda use prompts more involvement in meeting discussions and cooperation in planned activities. Whilst acknowledging the need to be flexible in terms of time allocation for each agenda item when conducting meetings in order to fully explore and understand the issues at hand, this researcher would recommend that there is need for meeting leaders to show some level of control by making sure that each agenda item is allocated adequate time so that all the issues are discussed exhaustively. Some issues could probably be highly controversial and debatable such that they could end up taking all the scheduled time for the meeting if there is no time limit for the discussion of each aspect on the agenda. It would, therefore, be important for there to be time allocation for each agenda item and those chairing the meetings should make sure that they exercise their role by parking off off-topic issues and time-tracking in relation to the road map in such a way that some participants are not left to dominate the meeting with a focus on one or two agenda items at the expense of other issues to be discussed. The allocation of time for each agenda item can be adhered to when the chairperson's controls are not too relaxed so that the meeting will run according to schedule.

4.5.1 Impact of agenda use on meeting effectiveness

The respondents were asked whether the issue of having an agenda had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings. The results are presented in Figure 4.6. From the analysis, the greater majority of the respondents 47.4% agreed that agendas had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. This was seconded by 42.2% of the respondents who strongly agreed to

this opinion. Effectively, a cumulative of 89.6% of the respondents were of the positive view that the proper management of agendas positively influenced on the effectiveness of meetings.

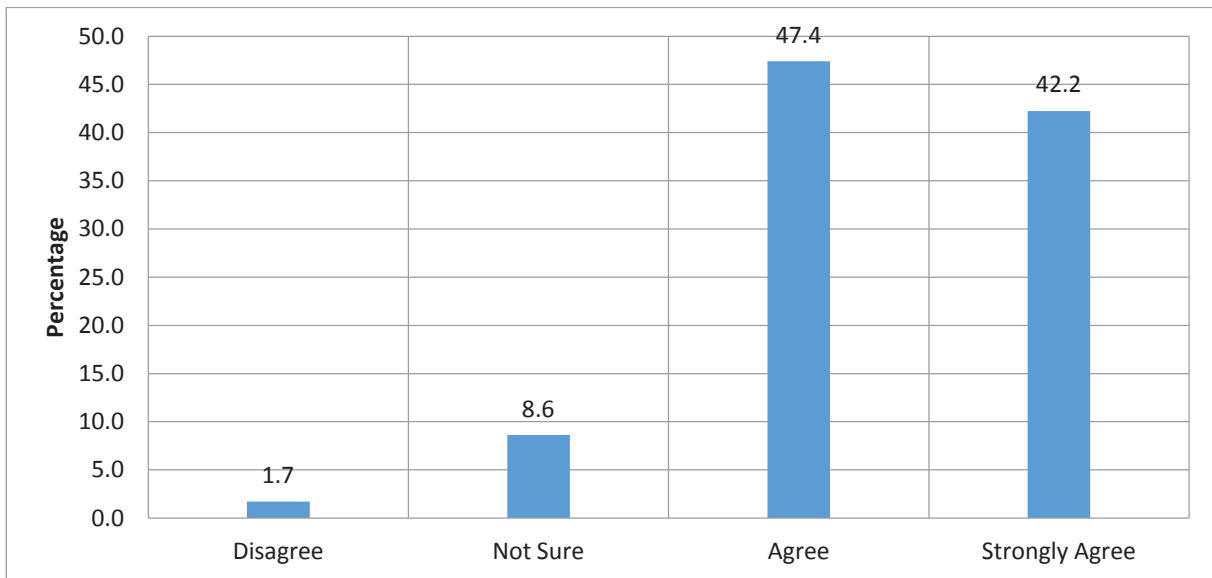


Figure 4.6: Impact of agendas on meeting effectiveness

To statistically test this assertion, the parametric ANOVA analysis was considered and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis:

H₀: *Agendas do not result in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness*

H₁: *Agendas do result in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 115 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: ANOVA Analysis – Agendas/Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	26.411	20	1.321	2.436	.002
Within Groups	51.496	95	.542		
Total	77.907	115			

The computed p-value was 0.002, and being lower than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was enough statistical evidence to conclude that the proper management of agendas result in a significant positive variation in the effectiveness of meetings. This shows that the majority of the employees at Zimpapers strongly believe that an agenda is a critical design aspect of effective meetings management. This is supported by Greta (2009) who asserts that ninety nine percent of a meeting success depends on the members' preparation through the use of an agenda. The distribution of agendas to meetings participants is a crucial aspect which makes it possible for participants to contribute in meetings because they would well prepared. This can somehow lead to fruitful interaction between meeting attendees thus leading to meetings effectiveness. Distribution of agenda before the start of the meeting, therefore, ensures that participants have sufficient time to read and comprehend issues to be discussed and reduce tendencies of cognitively multitasking to keep up with items being discussed during the meeting (Harold, 2011).

4.5.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal – agendas

Having qualified the relative importance of the proper management of agendas towards the attainment of effective meetings, it was also the essence of the first research dimension to establish whether there was any significant difference between the current practices and the ideal practices. To achieve this end, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was deemed as the befitting statistical method, and this was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H₀: *There is no difference between the current agenda practices and the ideal*

H₁: *There is a significant difference between the current agenda practices and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 115 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Paired Samples T-Test – Assessment of Agendas issues

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-1.01509	.81246	.07544	-1.16451	-.86566	-13.456	115	.000

From the foregoing, with a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than 0.05, one can, therefore conclude that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a significant difference between the current practices of agenda use and the ideal. It follows, therefore, from the foregoing that in as much as the agenda use is of relative importance in meetings management, the implementation at Zimpapers was not sufficient. The main weakness was non-adherence to specific time allocation per agenda item. There are more unstructured meetings which have tended to last longer than expected. This is supported by Hobfoll's COR theory which asserts that inter-role conflict creeps in where there are working schedule interruptions especially when meetings last longer than expected.

4.6 Punctuality and its influence on meeting effectiveness

The second dimension that this research sought to assess was the *status quo* in relation to the aspect of punctuality at Zimpapers, and the relative influence punctuality has on the effectiveness of meetings. The punctuality assessment is summarized in the tables 4.9 and 4.10 below.

Table 4.9: Frequencies of punctuality Issues at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not Sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total %
The timing of the meeting is communicated.	0.0	10.3	6.9	56.9	25.9	100.0
Meetings begin on time	0.0	12.4	39.8	44.6	6.2	100.0
Meetings end on time	0.0	44.9	25.4	13.6	16.1	100.0
People invited for the meeting arrive on time.	3.4	33.9	12.1	38.8	11.8	100.0

Table 4.9 shows that about 82% of the respondents agreed that the timing of the meeting is communicated to all meeting participants and about 44.6% of the respondents agreed that meetings begin on time. However about 44.9% of the respondents were of the opinion that meetings do not end on time at Zimpapers and about 25.4% were not sure on this aspect. From the above, a deduction can be made that meetings relatively start on time but generally participants arrive late as indicated by 33.9 of the respondents. This led to the conclusion of meetings behind schedule.

Table 4.10: Punctuality Issues at Zimpapers

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
The timing of the meeting is communicated	118	3.98	.080	.865
Meetings begin on time	118	3.64	.084	.912
Meetings end on time.	118	2.83	.082	.875
People invited for the meeting arrive on time	118	3.02	.094	1.021
Valid N (listwise)	118			

From the above analysis, basing on the 5-point Likert scale, the major problem in relation to the aspect of punctuality was concerned, was that more often than not, *the meetings do not end on time*, and this had a significantly low mean rating of 2.83. However, the major strength in relation

to punctuality issues at Zimpapers, was that *the timing of the meeting is communicated* and this had relatively high mean rating of 3.98. The second strength with regards to punctuality was that *meetings begin on time*, with a significantly high mean rating of 3.64. The problem of failure to end meetings on time could be attributed to the failure to give time limits to the discussion of each agenda item as already mentioned on item 4.6.

The idea of starting meetings according to schedule is one significant characteristic of meetings management which has not only demonstrated positive aspects of professionalism on the part of the chairpersons but also set a positive tone for the holding of meetings in the organisation. It has made it possible for employees to take seriously the need to value meetings as an important component of organisational communication. However, the rating on meeting participants arriving on time was moderately rated with a mean rating of 3.02 which shows that not all meeting participants come on time. To deal with this problem, there is need to organise workshops with employees highlighting the value of meetings in organisational communication. Employees should be informed that punctuality is an important indicator of professionalism and decisions made during meeting are critical for organisational survival and development. Therefore, there is need for all participants to be involved right from the initial stages of the meeting so that well informed decisions which will make a positive impact to the development of the organisation are made. In addition, starting the meeting on time also means time is not wasted and attendees reduce the dead time. Dead time is said to be the 30 minutes before and after the meeting when people are taken out of the work flow.

4.6.1 Impact of punctuality on meeting effectiveness

The respondents were further asked whether the meeting punctuality had an influence on the overall effectiveness of meetings. The results are presented in Figure 4.7 below.

From the analysis, 51.7% agreed that punctuality had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. This was followed by 34.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed. In summary, a cumulative of 86.4% of the respondents were of the positive view that meeting punctuality positively influenced on the effectiveness of meetings.

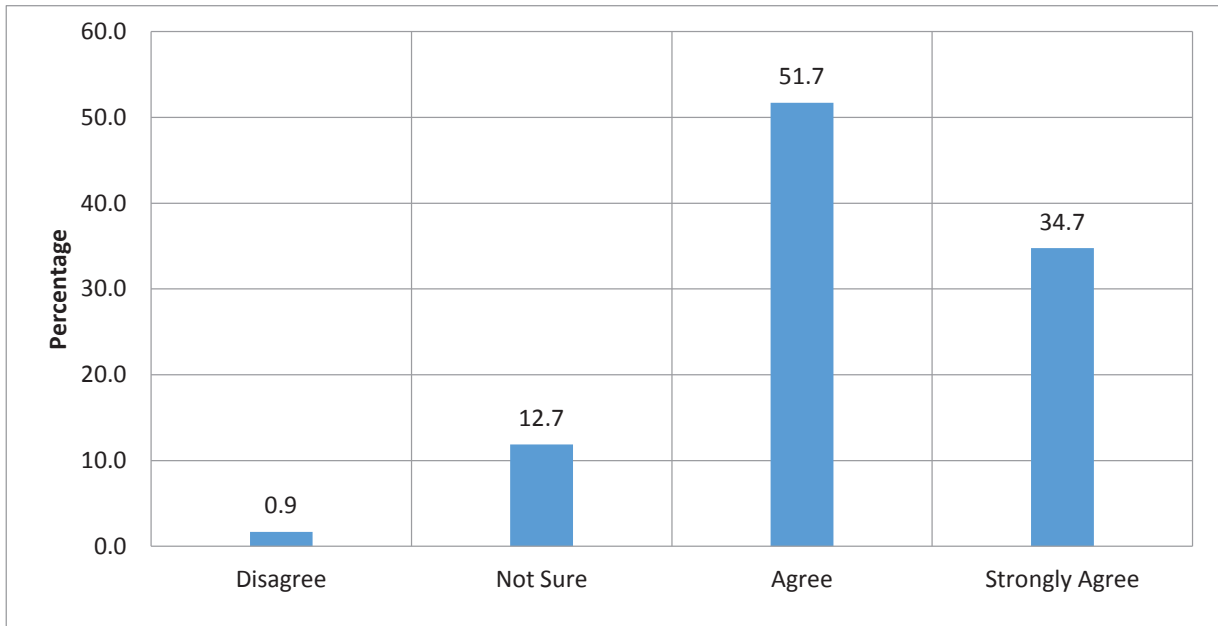


Figure 4.7: Impact of punctuality on meeting effectiveness

To statistically test this assertion, again, the parametric ANOVA analysis was considered and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis: H_0 : Punctuality does not result in the variation in meeting effectiveness
 H_1 : Punctuality results in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: ANOVA Analysis – Punctuality/Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.265	20	.813	2.103	.009
Within Groups	37.509	97	.387		
Total	53.774	117			

The computed p-value was 0.009, and being lower than 0.05, resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis and conclusion that there was enough statistical evidence to conclude that punctuality results in a significant positive variation in the effectiveness of meetings.

4.6.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal –punctuality

As part of the second objective, having established the relative importance of punctuality towards meeting effectiveness, it was important to ascertain whether there were any significant gaps between the current punctuality practices at Zimpapers and the ideal practices. Again, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H₀: *There is no difference between the current meeting punctuality and the ideal*

H₁: *There is a significant difference between the current meeting punctuality and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Paired Samples T-Test - Punctuality

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-.81850	.88324	.08131	-.97953	-.65748	-10.067	117	.000

From the above findings, a p-value of 0.000 was established, being lower than 0.05, one can, therefore conclude that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a significant difference between the current punctuality practices at Zimpapers and ideal practices. The results in the Table 4.12 above suggest that punctuality practices are not fully followed/ adhered to at Zimpapers.

From the data collected through participant observation, it was noted that sometimes meeting participants came late for meetings and some gave various excuses such as that they were attending to some clients. This tended to result in meetings taking longer than expected. The researcher's selective interviews noted that the major reason for some meeting participants coming late can be attributed to the timing of the meeting. Through selective interviews and participant observation, the researcher noted that most meetings started as early as 0830hrs which the respondents said was too early considering that they have to ensure that their respective departments and divisions function well in their absence whilst attending the meetings. This is supported by Barker (2002) who purports that timing is an important factor in the designing of meetings in order to ensure that there is meaningful contribution to the discussion of agenda items by meeting attendees. In order to ensure that employees are punctual for meetings, it would be important for meeting organisers to schedule meetings either mid morning or in the afternoon in order to avoid interfering with participants' organisation of their departments for the day. Failure to consider rescheduling meetings from early in the morning to later times during the day impacts negatively on meeting participants' ability to be focused on discussions during meetings. Such a scenario is likely to lead to some of the participants having divided attention between meeting

proceedings and making sure that their respective divisions or departments run properly in their absence and this negatively affects meetings effectiveness.

4.7 Quality of meeting facilities and its influence on meeting effectiveness

The third dimension of meeting effectiveness this research evaluated was to establish the existing situation with regards to the quality of meeting facilities at Zimpapers, and how it influences the effectiveness of meetings. The results on the overall assessment are presented in Table 4.13 and 4.14 below.

Table 4.13: Frequencies on quality of meeting facilities at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not Sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total %
The meeting rooms are spacious enough.	0.0	6.8	16.9	52.5	23.7	100.0
The meeting rooms have comfortable chairs.	0.0	3.4	15.3	57.6	23.7	100.0
The meeting rooms are equipped with air conditioning.	0.0	10.2	11.9	55.1	22.9	100.0
The meeting rooms are equipped with materials that facilitate the presentation and discussion.	0.0	3.4	10.2	55.9	30.5	100.0

Table 4.13 shows that over 75% of the respondents agree that all the four aspects of the quality of meeting facilities were being sufficiently met at Zimpapers.

Table 4.14: Quality of Meeting Facilities at Zimpapers

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
The meeting rooms are spacious enough	118	3.91	.080	.867
The meeting rooms are spacious enough	118	3.93	.076	.824
The meeting rooms are equipped with air conditioning	118	4.02	.067	.728
The meeting rooms are equipped with materials that facilitate the presentation and discussion	118	4.14	.067	.727
Valid N (listwise)	118			

The results above show that with respect to the quality of meetings facilities, the respondents were somehow content, as this had positive remarks, with mean ratings that approximate 4.0, off the maximum threshold of 5.0. From the above analysis, a deduction can be made that one of the major strengths with regards to ratings of the quality of meeting facilities is that, *the meeting rooms are equipped with air conditioning*, with a rating of 4.02. In addition, *the meeting rooms are equipped with materials that facilitate the presentation and discussion*, with a mean of 4.14. The provision of spacious board rooms which are well ventilated, including the requisite electronic equipment for use by presenters during meetings, is seen by employees as an important aspect which contributes to meetings effectiveness. The significance of these structural aspects of meetings management is echoed by meetings management scholars such as Cohen et al (2011), Harold (2011), Leach et al (2009), Loung and Rogelberg (2006) who emphasise on the need to make sure that meetings should be held in a conducive and well-equipped physical environments.

4.7.1 Impact of quality of facilities on meeting effectiveness

In spite of the rather positively rated quality of meeting facilities, the respondents were further asked whether the quality of the meeting facilities had an influence on the overall effectiveness of meetings. The corresponding results are presented in Figure 4.8.

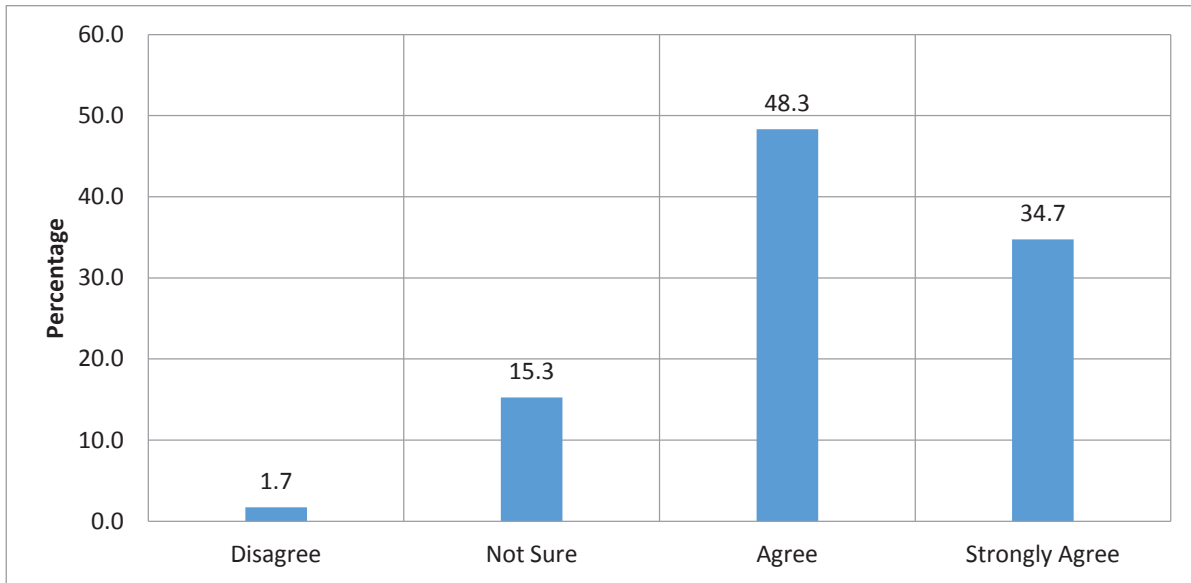


Figure 4.8: Impact of quality of facilities on meeting effectiveness

It can be seen that, 48.3% of the respondents agreed that the quality of the meeting facilities had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. This was followed by 34.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed. A total of 83% of the respondents were of the positive view that the quality of the meeting facilities positively influenced the effectiveness of meetings.

To statistically test this assertion, again, the parametric ANOVA analysis was considered and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis: H_0 : *Quality meeting facilities do not result in the variation in meeting effectiveness*
 H_1 : *Quality meeting facilities result in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15: ANOVA Analysis – Quality of Facilities/Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.542	20	1.077	3.570	.000
Within Groups	29.270	97	.302		
Total	50.812	117			

From the above analysis, the p-value was 0.000. The later being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was sufficient statistical evidence at the 95% confidence level to conclude that the quality of the meeting facilities results in a significant positive variation in the effectiveness of meetings. From these results, a deduction can be made that employees at Zimpapers generally value highly the need to ensure that meetings are held in well equipped rooms where participants are able to concentrate on discussing issues presented before the table without worrying about environmental challenges.

Data from selected face to face interviews held with some of the Zimpapers employees revealed that most of the staffers believe that there is a link between the nature of the environment of the room in which a meeting is held and the general attitude of the participants towards meeting proceedings. The respondents went on to give an example of the annual strategic meetings which are held on off site locations such as conference centres with a good ambience in order to show the importance of the meeting. In other words, there is a general opinion that holding a meeting in an environment which is not well ventilated and without adequate light has a negative effect on the effectiveness of the meetings to be held. This is supported by Bulter-Knight (2002) who asserts that the location of the meeting communicates and informs the meeting participants about the tone of the meeting. Therefore, the environment one selects has an impact on the meeting success. Poor facilities create the impression that the organisation does not really value the contribution meetings can make to organisational development.

Holding meetings, for instance, in venues which are not spacious, not well ventilated, where there is broken furniture and technology for making presentations during meetings always hampers meeting effectiveness. Such problems are likely to distract meeting attendees from concentrating on contributing well thought out ideas since they will probably be thinking about the not so

conducive environment in which the meeting will be taking place. This leads to negative attitudes by employees such that they may not take meetings seriously. There is, therefore, a need for organisations like Zimpapers to ensure that meeting facilities continue to be properly maintained and even improved in areas which need improvement. By so doing, meeting attendees will uphold a professional attitude to the whole business of meetings and their importance.

4.7.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal –quality of meeting facilities

Having established the relative importance of the quality of meeting facilities towards the effectiveness of meetings, it was important to ascertain whether there were any significant gaps between the present quality of facilities and the ideal quality of the meeting facilities. Again, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H₀: *There is no difference between current quality issues and the ideal*

H₁: *There is a significant difference between current quality issues and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16: Paired Samples T-Test –Quality of Meeting Facilities

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-.16314	.80952	.07452	-.31072	-.01555	-2.189	117	.092

From the analysis above, a p-value of 0.092 was established. This statistic is greater than 0.05, from the rejection criteria defined herein above, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that in as much as the quality of meeting facilities was concerned, there is no difference between the *status quo* and the ideal. It follows that the quality of the meeting facilities at Zimpapers was sufficient. This is consistent with literature where the environment, according to Leach et al (2009) comprising of temperature, lightning, noise and seating provisions as key aspects has the potential to affect the ability of a meeting to function well, increase member comfort and minimise distractions.

4.8 Meeting leadership and its influence on meeting effectiveness

The fourth dimension this study sought to explore was the existing situation with regards to the leadership issues evolving around meetings at Zimpapers, and how they influences the resultant effectiveness of meetings. The results on the overall assessment are presented in Table 4.17 and Table 4.18.

Table 4.17: Frequencies rating on meeting leadership aspects at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Not Sure %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total %
There is always a chairperson/leader	1.7	0.0	3.4	40.7	54.2	100.0
Participants at the meeting are given the opportunity to express their opinions.	1.7	1.7	12.7	47.5	36.4	100.0
The meeting chairperson shows respect for all the views of participants.	0.0	3.4	26.3	43.2	27.1	100.0
The meeting atmosphere is always friendly.	0.0	14.4	36.4	28.0	21.2	100.0

Table 4.17 shows that about 94.9% of the respondents agree on the presence of a chair in all meetings. about 83.9% of the respondents agree that participants at the meeting are given the opportunity to express their opinions and 70.3% of the respondents agrre that the meeting

chairperson shows respect for all the views of participants. However about 14.4% disagree that the meeting atmosphere is always friendly at Zimpapers and about 36.4% were not sure on this aspect.

Table 4.18: Meetings Leadership at Zimpapers

	N	Mean		Std. Dev
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
There is always a chairperson/leader	118	4.46	.067	.724
Participants at the meeting are given the opportunity to express their opinions	118	4.15	.077	.833
The meeting chairperson shows respect for all the views of participants.	118	3.94	.075	.820
The meeting atmosphere is always friendly	118	3.56	.091	.983
Valid N (listwise)	118			

From the results above, benchmarking against the median statistic of 3 for a 5-point Likert Scale, the results above show that in as much as the leadership of the meetings is concerned, there were positive remarks. From the above analysis, the major strength with regards to ratings of the leadership of meetings was that, *there is always a chairperson/leader*, and this had a very high mean rating of 4.46. The valid, but weakly rated mean rating was that *the meeting atmosphere is always friendly*, with a lower rating of 3.56. From the selective interviews with some of the employees, a significant number said that whilst it has to be acknowledged that participants can freely contribute ideas to issues under discussion, sometimes it is not easy to do that because of the intimidatory attitudes of some chairpersons of the meetings. Such attitudes, they said come as a result that the chair would be indirectly coercing participants to have a buy in on his/her decisions which are unpopular with other attendees. Consequently, the meeting atmosphere can become so tense that participants would feel uncomfortable to freely contribute ideas especially those that run contrary to the chairperson's.

4.8.1 Impact of meetings leadership on meeting effectiveness

The respondents were further asked whether the meeting leadership had an influence on the overall effectiveness of meetings. The results are presented in Figure 4.9.

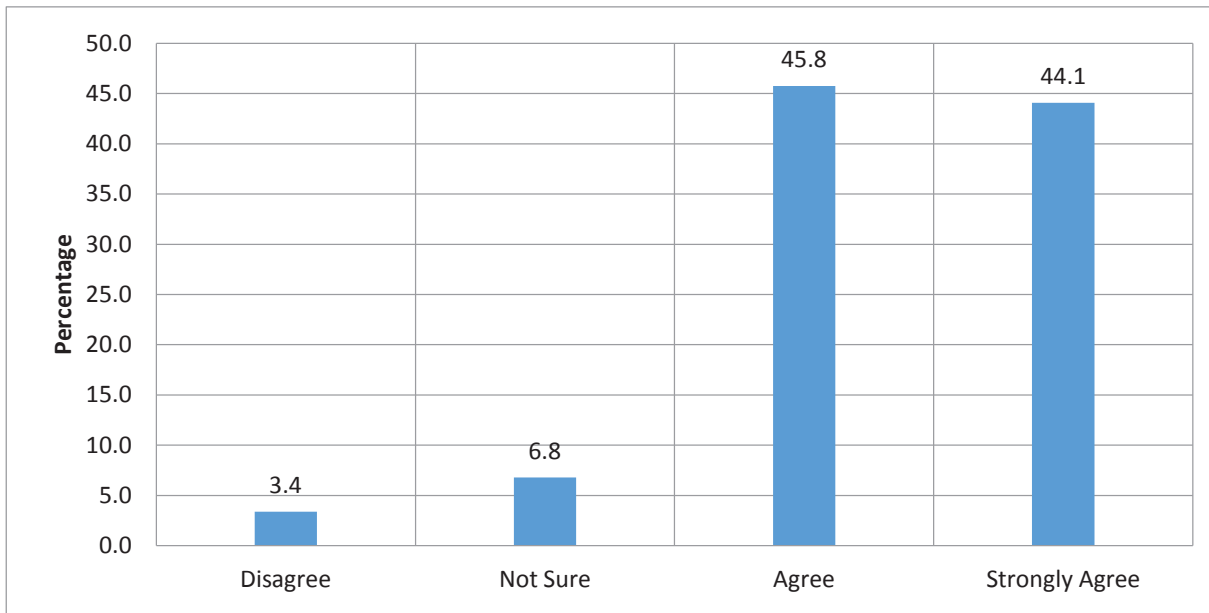


Figure 4.9: Impact of leadership of meetings on meeting effectiveness

From the analysis above, 45.8% of the respondents agreed that the leadership of the meetings had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. This was followed by the marginally lower 44.1% of the respondents who strongly agreed. It follows then that a cumulative of 89.9% of the respondents were of the positive view that the leadership of the meetings positively influenced on the effectiveness of meetings.

To statistically test this assertion, again, the parametric ANOVA analysis was considered and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis: H_0 : Leadership does not result in the variation in meeting effectiveness

H_1 : Leadership results in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 115 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.19 below.

Table 4.19: ANOVA Analysis –Leadership of Meetings/Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.970	20	1.598	6.562	.000
Within Groups	23.628	95	.244		
Total	55.598	115			

From the above analysis, the p-value was 0.000 and being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was sufficient statistical evidence at the 95% confidence level to conclude that the leadership of the meetings has a significant positive influence on the effectiveness of meetings.

4.8.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal –leadership of meetings

The above findings have established the relative significance of the meeting leadership towards the effectiveness of meetings, and as such, it was important to ascertain whether there were any significant gaps between the present leadership aspects at Zimbabwe and the ideal. To achieve this end, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H_0 : *There is no difference between the current leadership practices and the ideal*

H_1 : *There is a significant difference between current leadership practices and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.20 below.

Table 4.20: Paired Samples T-Test –Leadership of Meetings

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-.27754	.72853	.06707	-.41036	-.14472	-4.138	117	.000

From the analysis above, a p-value of 0.000 was established. This statistic being less than 0.05, from the rejection criteria defined herein above, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that with regards to the facilitation of meetings, there is a significant difference between the *status quo* and the ideal scenario. It follows from the foregoing that facilitation of the meetings at Zimpapers has some weaknesses for example facilitators tend to create an unfriendly atmosphere which stifles free and meaningful participation by meeting attendees. This creates a scenario which makes it difficult for meetings to accomplish set objectives since some of the participants may be hesitant to contribute their ideas to discussions during the meeting yet these could be beneficial to the crafting of well informed decisions.

The current practice at Zimpapers is inconsistent with reviewed literature where Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2013) concluded that a conducive and enabling environment that is characterised by participants interacting freely without being suspicious of one another impact on the meeting effectiveness. Positive and impartial leadership results in the sharing of both explicit and implicit knowledge, reinforcement of group identity and enhanced group coordination. To solve this problem, the researcher recommends that all employees should be continuously trained on the importance of the leadership role in meetings and the attributes of a good chairperson,

4.9 Decision-making approaches and their influence on meeting effectiveness

The fifth research dimension of this study was to explore the decision making approaches at Zimpapers' meetings, and how they influences the resultant effectiveness of the meetings. The results on the overall assessment are presented in tables 4.21 and 4.22.

Table 4.21: Frequencies on decision making practices at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
A variety of options are explored before making a final decision	0.0	6.8	15.3	47.5	30.5	100.0
The consequences of decisions are fully explored before making a final decision	0.0	10.2	16.9	55.9	16.9	100.0
The decisions made are put in writing	0.0	6.8	27.1	31.4	34.7	100.0
Follow-up on implementation of what has been agreed at the meeting is always done	0.0	10.3	45.2	28.8	15.7	100.0

From the table above, over 60% of the respondents agree that a variety of options are explored before making a final decision, the consequences of decisions are fully explored before making a final decision and the decisions made are put in writing. However, about 10.3% disagree that follow-up on implementation of what has been agreed at the meeting is always done at the Zimpapers about 45.2% of them were not sure on the on the follow up aspect.

Table 4.22: Decision making practices in meetings

	N	Mean		Std. Dev
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
A variety of options are explored before making a final decision	118	4.02	.079	.857
The consequences of decisions are fully explored before making a final decision	118	3.80	.078	.843
The decisions made are put in writing	118	3.94	.087	.945
Follow-up on implementation of what has been agreed at the meeting is always done	118	3.70	.085	.916
Valid N (listwise)	118			

The results from Table 4.22 indicate that with regards to decision making practices in meetings at Zimpapers, there are some positive observations. The major strength with regards to ratings of the decision-making approaches was that, *a variety of options are explored before making a final decision*, with a high mean rating of 4.02. The weakly rated, but valid mean rating was that *follow-up on implementation of what has been agreed at the meeting is always done*, and had a lower mean rating of 3.70. From the meetings observed by the researcher, data revealed that in some cases ideas contributed by participants during meetings are considered before final decisions on issues discussed were made. This usually happens in meetings where the meeting facilitators create a conducive atmosphere which is not intimidatory to meeting attendees.

However, in other meetings, the researcher observed that in situations where the meeting facilitators seemed to influence the decision making, not many options were explored since a few employees who could withstand the intimidatory atmosphere of the meeting would have added their voices on issues under discussion. This is detrimental in that the decision made at these meetings would not be having the buy-in from other attendees resulting in poor and undedicated implementation of the decisions. Again, attendees will not be able to give their opinions unabated and constructively resulting in failure to get best opinions and to be analytical. To circumvent this, the organisers might select independent, professional and knowledgeable external facilitators to

handle such meetings. This is ideal if the chairperson is not able to deal and manage areas of conflict of interest. A facilitator who has a lot of interest, or conflict of interest thereof, should recuse themselves from chairing in order to enable them to contribute fully.

From interviews held with some respondents, there was a general sentiment that follow ups on implementation procedures of decisions taken during meetings were generally not adequate. This impacts negatively on the effective of meetings in organisations because no matter how well crafted and informed decisions taken are, failure to put them into practical action derails the efforts by management and employees to deal with critical issues affecting the organisation through organisational communication.

4.9.1 Impact of decision making practices on meeting effectiveness

The respondents were asked whether decision making had an influence on the overall effectiveness of meetings. The results are presented in Figure 4.10.

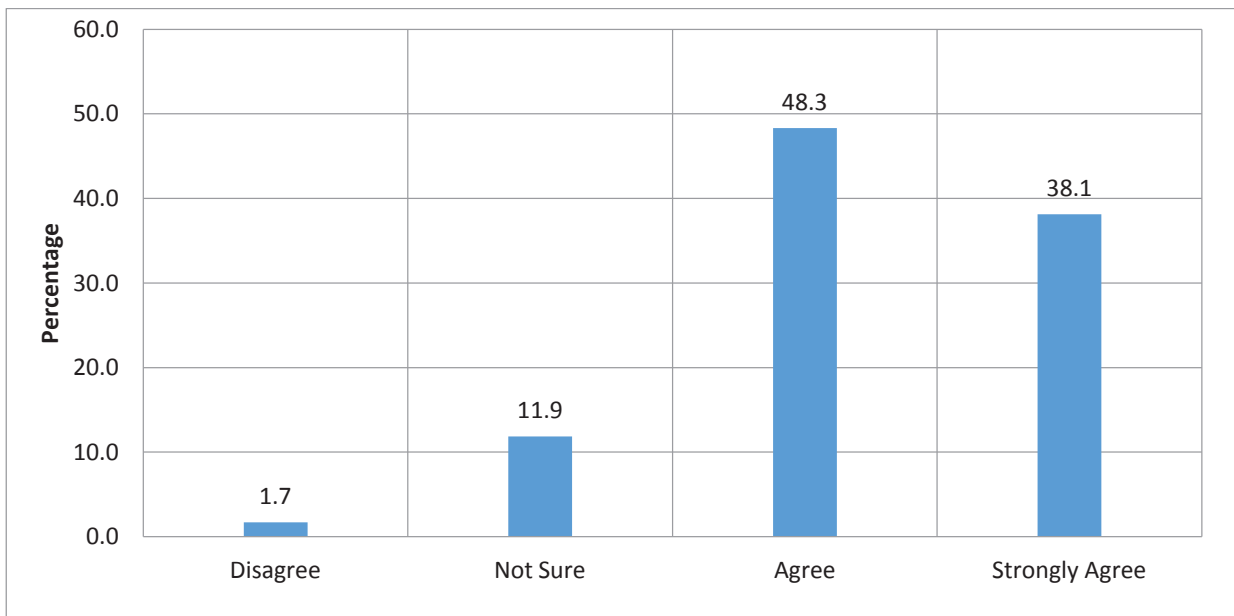


Figure 4.10: Impact of decision making practices on meeting effectiveness

From the analysis, 48.3% of the respondents agreed that the decision making at the meetings had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. The second dominant category was the

strongly agree group, constituting 38.1%. In total, 86.4% of the respondents were of the suggested that decision making at the meetings influenced the effectiveness of meetings.

To statistically test this finding, again, the parametric ANOVA analysis was used and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis: **H₀:** *Decision making approach does not result in the variation in meeting effectiveness*

H₁: *Decision making approach results in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 115 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.23 below.

Table 4.23: ANOVA Analysis – Decision Making/Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	30.803	20	1.540	5.307	.000
Within Groups	28.152	97	.290		
Total	58.956	117			

From the above results, the p-value was 0.000 and being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was sufficient statistical evidence at the 95% confidence level to conclude that decision making of the meetings has a significant positive impact on the effectiveness of meetings.

4.9.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal –decision making practices

From the foregoing, it has been established that decision making during the meetings has an influence towards the effectiveness of meetings, and as such, it was important to ascertain whether there were any significant gaps between the present decision-making aspects and the ideal. To achieve this, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H₀: *There is no difference between the current decision making practices and the ideal*

H₁: *There is a significant difference between the decision making practices and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H₀ if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H₀ if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.24 below.

Table 4.24: Paired Samples T-Test –Decision Making

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-.36441	.65015	.05985	-.48294	-.24587	-6.089	117	.000

From the analysis above, a p-value of 0.000 was established, and being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that with regards to decision making, there is a significant difference between the *status quo* and the ideal scenario. In as much as, the statistics means on the decision making practices aspects were all relatively above 3, the overall results suggests that there is some divergence between the current decision making practices in meetings and the ideal at Zimpapers. This can be attributed to the inadequacy in the following up of issues. These results are in contrast to Woods (2010) who concluded that exploring fully a variety of options and their

consequences should be followed by vigilant and effective follow up on the implementation of the action plans to ensure effective group decisions. A possible solution to the inadequacy in following up of issues could be the formulation of the action plan trackers which has to be discussed first in the next meeting.

4.10 Minute keeping practices and their influence on meeting effectiveness

The sixth research dimension this study assessed was the minute keeping practices at Zimpapers and whether they influenced the overall effectiveness of the meetings. The results on the overall assessment are presented in table 4.25 and 4.26.

Table 4.25: Frequencies on minute keeping practices at Zimpapers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Minutes are distributed to participants in the shortest time after the meeting	1.7	17.8	27.1	43.2	10.2	100.0
Minutes are readily available upon request	1.7	16.1	32.2	36.4	13.6	100.0
Minutes are distributed to all absentees	0.0	16.4	44.0	29.3	10.3	100.0
Minutes of the previous meeting are efficiently reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting	1.7	8.5	29.7	31.4	28.8	100.0

From the above Table 4.25, over 50% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that minutes were distributed to participants in the shortest possible time, minutes were readily available for inspection and reviewed in the next meeting. However minutes were not always distributed to meeting absentees.

Table 4.26: Minute keeping in Meetings at Zimpapers

	N	Mean		Std. Dev
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Minutes are distributed to participants in the shortest time after the meeting	118	3.42	.088	.955
Minutes are readily available upon request	118	3.44	.090	.974
Minutes are distributed to all absentees	118	3.34	.081	.874
Minutes of the previous meeting are efficiently reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting	118	3.77	.094	1.016
Valid N (listwise)	118			

From the results above, it can be seen that with regards to minute-taking, the mean ratings were generally favourable, being greater than the median statistic, 3.0. The major strength, however, with regards to ratings of the minute-taking practices was that, *minutes of the previous meeting are efficiently reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting*, and this item had a high mean rating of 3.77. The weakly rated, but valid mean rating was that *minutes are distributed to all absentees*, and had a lower mean rating of 3.34. From the observations, the researcher deduced that minutes were distributed mostly to those who would have deliberated and attended the meetings. In most cases, those that failed to attend for various reasons were not usually privy to the minutes. This has however, tended to affect the timing of the implementation of the decisions made in meetings because if an action role was assigned to the employee who will be unaware of the decisions made.

4.10.1 Impact of minute-keeping on meeting effectiveness

The respondents were asked whether minute-keeping had an influence on the overall effectiveness of meetings. The results are presented in Figure 4.11.

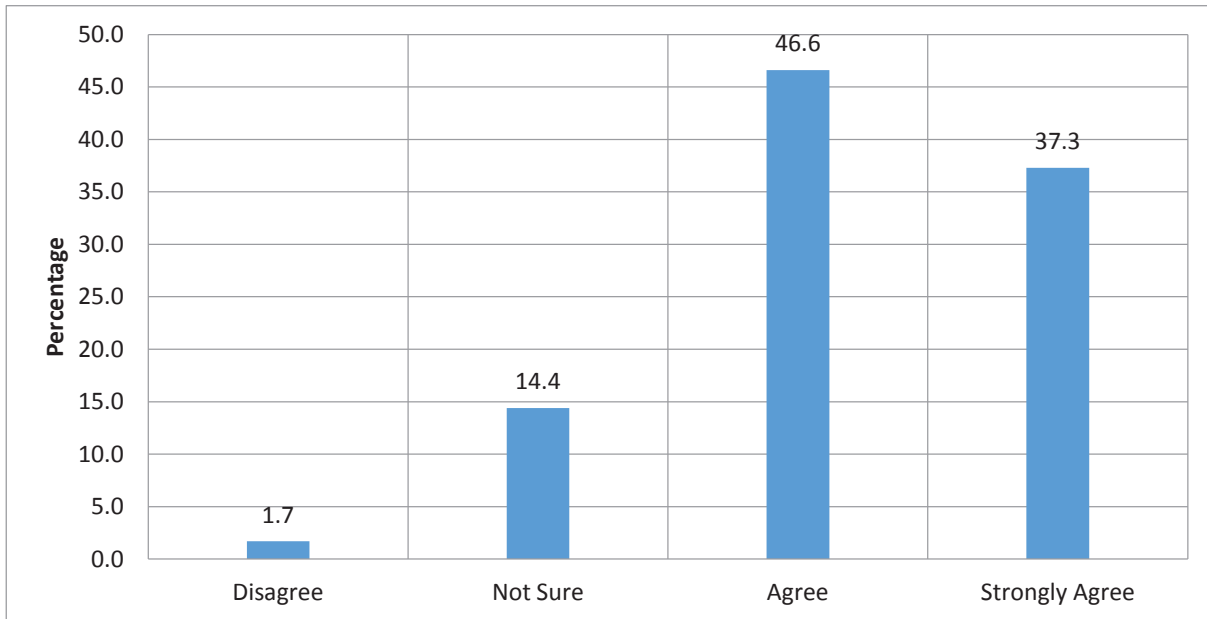


Figure 4.11: Impact of minute-keeping on meeting effectiveness

From the above findings, 46.6% of the respondents agreed that minute-taking at the meetings had an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers. The second-dominant category was the strongly agree group, constituting 37.3%. Overall, 83.9% of the respondents suggested that minute taking influenced the effectiveness of meetings. Minutes are an important component of meetings. They provide a permanent official record of what could have transpired during meetings which can be used as proof in cases of conflict. This also includes decisions made on issues discussed during meetings as well as what steps or actions to be taken to implement those decisions. In addition, they can be used for documentation of history of projects and their absence may hinder a proper heralding of events as well as lack of proof.

To statistically test this finding, again, the parametric ANOVA analysis was used and was performed with the following hypotheses.

Test: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Hypothesis: H_0 : *Minuting does not result in the variation in meeting effectiveness*

H_1 : *Minuting results in a significant variation in meeting effectiveness*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 115 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.27 below.

Table 4.27: ANOVA Analysis – Minute keeping /Meeting Effectiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	30.767	20	1.538	4.676	.000
Within Groups	31.910	97	.329		
Total	62.677	117			

From the above results, the p-value was 0.000 and being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was sufficient statistical evidence at the 95% confidence level to conclude that minute taking practices have a positive impact on the effectiveness of meetings.

4.10.2 Gap analysis – the current practices and the ideal –minute keeping

The findings herein above established that minute taking during the meetings has an influence towards the effectiveness of meetings, and as such, it was important to ascertain whether there were any significant gaps between the present minute taking aspects and the ideal. To achieve this, the Paired Samples T-Test Analysis was performed under the following conditions:

Test: Paired Samples T-Test

Hypothesis:

H_0 : *There is no difference between the current minute taking practices and the ideal*

H_1 : *There is a difference between the current minute taking practices and the ideal*

Significance Level: 95% (2-tailed); 117 degrees of freedom

Rejection Criteria: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$; Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

The results from the analysis are presented in the Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28: Paired Samples T-Test –Minute Keeping
Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	-.70056	.79224	.07293	-.84500	-.55613	-9.606	117	.000

From the analysis, a p-value of 0.000 was computed, and being less than 0.05, one can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that with regards to minute taking, there is a significant difference between the *status quo* and the ideal scenario. These results suggest that the current minute keeping practices at Zimpapers are not in total conformance with the ideal situation. The use of minutes as a tool for the creation of a group memory is moderately lacking. Minute recording during meetings is not fully and accurately capturing the process as well as the content of the conducted meetings. This is also compounded by the fact that information is not readily available to all participants especially those who would have failed to attend those particular meetings for immediate retrieval and clarification. This has resulted in delayed and poor implementation of decisions made in meetings, thereby rendering some meetings as ineffective.

Minutes also bridge the gap between previously held meetings and the meetings which would be in progress thereby ensuring interrupted continuity. It is against this background that failure by the organisation in question to avail minutes to employees who may have failed to attend a meeting weakens the effectiveness of meetings. This is so because such employees would not be able to see the link between the previous and the current meeting, let alone implement agreed decisions during previous meetings. To deal with the problem, the minute recording role should be assigned to neutral individuals who appreciate the business not Personal Assistants of the respective Chairpersons so that recording of minutes captures concisely the process as well as the content of the meetings. The minute recorders should have the ability to follow the critical reasoning of the discussions by attendees and the minutes should be sent electronically to all invited participants

including those that could have failed to attend to avoid conflicting memories of events. To reduce cases of wrongly capturing the process and content of meetings, the facilitators can assist the minute recorders by periodically summarising the agreed positions on discussed issues during the meeting.

4.11 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the analysis of the research findings. The objective of this chapter was to present, interpret and make an analysis of the meeting design characteristics and features which were used in meeting management at Zimpapers. The researcher managed to identify the meeting design characteristics which included agenda use, punctuality, leadership/ facilitation in meetings, quality of facilities, meetings decision making practices and minute keeping, which were used during meetings. These were analysed using the thematic approach. From the research findings, the majority of the respondents confirmed the role of meeting design characteristics such as agenda use, punctuality, leadership/ facilitation in meetings, quality of facilities, meetings decision making practices and minute keeping as important antecedents to effective organisational meetings. However, at Zimpapers, there are instances non-conformity with the ideal situation that require some improvements since the p-value was less than 0.05 save for the quality of facilities that had a p-value of 0.092.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions that have been drawn from the analysis of the results found in the previous chapter. The researcher goes on to recommend possible solutions to meetings management problems identified in the previous chapter. The chapter also spells out the limitations of the present research as well as indicating possible areas for future study.

5.2 Summary of findings

This study identified and analysed the influence of meeting design characteristics in the form of agenda use, punctuality practices, leadership of meetings, quality of facilities, decision making approaches and minute keeping as antecedents to effective organisational meetings. In addition, the research attempted to highlight and evaluate effects of these design characteristics on meetings.

This study managed to contribute significantly to the body of knowledge on meetings management in organisations. It made an important input in studies about design characteristics in meetings especially in Zimbabwe, since this study is one of the few studies that demonstrate the effect of meeting design characteristics on organisational meeting effectiveness.

From the data gathered, the researcher found out that the majority of respondents agreed and reflected that agenda use, punctuality practices, leadership of meetings, quality of facilities, decision making approaches and minute keeping as meeting design characteristics have a positive influence on the effectiveness of organisational meetings. This is in line with previous studies by Leach et al (2009) and Cohen et al (2011). This validates the study's conceptual framework of the significant influence of meeting design characteristics on meeting effectiveness. However, the study indicated that there is little match between what reviewed literature on meetings informs and

the actual current practices of meetings in organisations such as Zimpapers. The only variable with p-value greater than 0.05 was the quality of facilities and the rest of the other design characteristics variables had p-values which were below 0.05 when the gap analysis was done comparing the current practices at Zimpapers and the ideal practices. Failure to allocate specific time on each agenda item coupled with participants coming late for meetings resulted in meetings taking more time than necessary at Zimpapers. Minutes were not properly used as a tool of creating a group memory resulting in delayed implementation of decisions made in meetings. For this reason, this tended to negatively affect the effectiveness of meetings as an organisational communication tool. The findings that not properly designed meetings results in less effective meetings may be related to Al-Jammal and Ghamrani (2013) previous findings on Lebanese schools where meetings were considered unproductive if not properly designed. This validates the hypothesis that meeting design characteristics have a significant positive impact on meeting effectiveness.

5.3 Managerial and policy implications

The recommendations below are made based on the findings and discussions made in the previous chapter. These recommendations are intended to assist Zimpapers and other organisations in managing organisational meetings effectively by ensuring that meetings are properly designed throughout the meeting cycle.

5.3.1 Channel more resources towards meeting management training

Both meeting facilitators and other attendees should be trained on the important communicational role meetings play in organisational development. The training sessions should cover the roles and responsibilities all meeting participants play in meetings in order to make the meetings effective. The training should also include the importance and how to incorporate the meeting design characteristics into organisational meetings in order to make them effective for the good of the overall organisational performance.

5.3.2 Engagement of independent facilitators

If issues to be discussed are sensitive and the prospective chairperson cannot properly handle conflict of interest issues amicably, an independent, professional and knowledgeable third party

should be assigned the role of the meeting leader. This should also be considered when the prospective chairperson has conflict of interest on issues to be discussed. This allows constructive contribution without fear of victimisation on the part of other attendees. It also allows objectivity where criticism is focused on another attendee who is not chairing.

5.3.3 Investment in the new technologically advanced meeting platforms

There has been a surge on new alternatives to face to face meetings such as conference calls, emails, real-time electronic meetings such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing and virtual meetings and asynchronous meetings. These modes of organisational communication tools can be invested in so that they act as substitutes to in-person meetings which are less disruptive to day to day working schedules. In as much as asynchronous meeting have an inherent disadvantage of loss of immediacy, they can be useful in the inclusion of all participants independent of availability of all attendees at the same time so that the participants can reflect and prepare their contributions offline and transmit them later.

5.3.4 Inclusion of a annual business communication refresher courses

The company can include a annual business communication refresher course in its annual calendar which should be attended by all business managers. This will equip the managers and leaders with the requisite professional communication etiquette which is of crucial importance in the day to day interaction in business environments including meetings management.

5.4 Limitations and direction for future studies

This research was limited in its context due to the sample population which focused on one organisation, thus this limits generalisation. Future research should involve more organisations for instance a particular sector such as the Media industry so that a more comprehensive understanding of meeting management is derived from the perspective of the entire industry. Since the research was carried out at Zimpapers, which is one of the several organisations and companies in Zimbabwe, it would also be interesting to make a comparative analysis of meeting design characteristics between a number of organisations for instance private and public companies in order to note similarities and differences.

From the available literature, there are no studies on the meeting attendees as a variable. The meeting participants or attendees is also a variable which could be considered when analysing meeting design characteristics. This means that the composition of meeting attendees can influence meeting effectiveness. For instance, inclusion of participants not knowledgeable about some issues on the agenda may result in the meeting taking longer than scheduled because there could be a need to explain in detail some basic information to those employees so that they will not be technically excluded from the discussions. In this research, the researcher did not examine it. This is, therefore an area of research which could be studied to show the extent to which meeting participants' composition and behaviour influence the effectiveness of organisational meetings. Future studies should also explore the four P's of context on meeting management namely people, place, process and period in different organisations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent and Questionnaire

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Chancelles Annah Chinhuru, a Master of Business Administration student with the University of Zimbabwe's Graduate School of Management. As a requirement for the fulfillment of the degree programme, I am conducting a research on the *Analysis of meetings management in organisations: The case of Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited*.

I am, therefore, seeking your voluntary participation and informed consent in completing the attached questionnaire. The information you will provide will remain strictly confidential and shall be used for academic purposes. For this reason, can you kindly complete either of the two options on the Informed Consent Declaration section below.

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

OPTION 1: IF CONSENTING

Kindly tick in the box below, sign the declaration and proceed to complete the questionnaire and submit the completed questionnaire along with this consent declaration form as addressed.

I am willing to contribute my views to this research. I hereby confirm that I fully understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research, and I consent to participating in this research. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time. should I so desire .

Signature..... Date.....

OPTION 2: IF NOT CONSENTING

Kindly tick in the box below, and place the form in the attached envelope, seal it and submit it as addressed.

I do not wish to participate in this research

I would like to thank you for your time, effort and assistance

Yours faithfully,

Chancellor Annah Chinhuru

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: MBA RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Chancelles Annah Chinhuru, a Master of Business Administration student with the University of Zimbabwe's Graduate School of Management. As a requirement for the fulfillment of the degree programme, I am conducting a research on the *Analysis of meetings management in organisations: The case of Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited*. I kindly ask you to complete this questionnaire. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality, and will be used solely for academic purposes. It will take a few minutes to complete. Thank you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----|
| 1. Gender | Male | [] |
| | Female | [] |
| 2. Age Range | Less than 20 Years | [] |
| | 21- 30 Years | [] |
| | 31-40 Years | [] |
| | 41-50 Years | [] |
| | 51-60 Years | [] |
| | More than 60 Years | [] |

3. Level in Organisation

- Non-managerial []
- Middle management staff []
- Senior management staff []
- Director []

4. Highest level of education?

- Secondary education []
- Certificate []
- Diploma []
- Degree []
- Masters Degree []
- Doctorate []

5. Which division of Zimpapers do you work for?

- Harare Branch []
- Bulawayo Branch []
- StarFM []
- Natprint []
- Head Office []

6. Years employed at Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited

- Less than 5 years []
- 5 - 10 years []
- 10 - 15 years []
- More than 15 years []

SECTION B: MEETING MANAGEMENT ISSUES

7. How often do you attend meetings in your division at Zimpapers [Choose the best answer]

Many times a day []

At least once a day []

At least once a week []

At least once a month []

8. As a percentage, how do you rate the overall effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers?

--

9. What role will you be mostly playing in those meetings?

Chairperson []

Secretary []

Meeting attendee []

10. Please rate the frequency of occurrence of the following scenarios regarding when agendas for the meetings are usually made available.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Written agenda before meetings					
Written agenda at the meeting					
Verbal agenda at the meetings					
No agenda at all					

11. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following agenda use aspects in your meetings.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Meetings follow the agenda, and do not deviate					
The goals of the meeting are clear and well defined in the agenda					
There is specific time allocation on each agenda item.					
Agendas are distributed to attendee in advance					
Do agendas impact on meetings effectiveness					

12. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following meeting punctuality issues at your meetings

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The timing of the meeting is communicated.					
Meetings begin on time					
Meetings end on time.					
People invited for the meeting					

arrive on time					
Does meeting punctuality impact on meeting effectiveness?					

13. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following quality issues of meeting facilities.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The meeting rooms are spacious enough.					
The meeting rooms are equipped with comfortable chairs.					
The meeting rooms are equipped with heating and cooling (air-conditioning)					
The meeting room are equipped with materials that facilitate the presentation of information and the discussion.					
Does the quality of meeting facilities impact on the effectiveness of meetings?					

14. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following meeting leadership aspects of your meetings.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
There is always a chairperson / leader.					
Participants at the meeting are given the opportunity to express their opinions.					
The meeting chairperson shows respect for all the views of participants.					
The meeting atmosphere is always friendly.					
Does the leadership of meetings impact on the effectiveness of meetings?					

15. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following decision making approaches/aspects of your meetings.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A variety of options are explored before making a final decision					
The consequences of decisions are fully explored before making a final decision					

Decisions made are put in writing					
Following up on implementation of what has agreed at the meeting is always done.					
Does the decision making approaches impact on meetings effectiveness?					

16. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following minute keeping practices of your meetings.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Minutes are distributed to participants in the shortest time after the meeting					
Minutes are readily available upon request.					
Minutes are distributed to all those who were unable to attend.					
Minutes of the previous meeting are efficiently and timely reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting.					
Does minute keeping impact on meetings effectiveness?					

17. What other factors would you think have an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at your organisation?

.....
.....
.....
.....

18. What recommendations can you give that can help to improve the management of meetings?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR TIME IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Salutations:

Good morning/ afternoon. My name is Chancelles Annah Chinhuru, a Master of Business Administration student with the University of Zimbabwe's Graduate School of Management. As a requirement for the fulfillment of the degree programme, I am conducting a research on the *Analysis of meetings management in organisations: The case of Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Limited*. The study is being carried out purely for academic interest, and please be advised that this interview will be recorded on audio. You have been approached because you are involved in the chairing of most meetings and/ or have sufficient knowledge and experience in the management of meetings at a higher level in the organisation. For this reason, I would like to invite you to take part. You are kindly requested to provide as much information as you can, to the best of your knowledge from your experiences of meetings at Zimpapers, whether inter-divisional or intra-divisional. The information will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used solely for this study. Thank you.

INTERVIEW

1. Would you say meetings are conducted effectively, efficiently and consistently at Zimpapers? Why do you say so?
2. What is your comment on the manner in which agendas for the meetings at Zimpapers are made available?
3. Do agendas impact on the effectiveness of meetings? Why would you say so?
4. What is your comment on the punctuality of the meetings- the start times, end times and the punctuality of attendees?
5. Does meeting punctuality impact on meeting effectiveness? Why do you say so?
6. What is your comment on quality of the meeting facilities at Zimpapers?
7. Does the quality of facilities impact on the effectiveness of meetings? Why do you say so?
8. What is your comment on the management and administration of minutes at Zimpapers?
9. Does the minute keeping impact on the effectiveness of meetings? Why do you say so?

10. What is your comment on the chairing and moderation of meetings at Zimpapers? Is it done effectively, efficiently, equitably, professionally and consistently?
11. Does the leadership of meetings impact on the effectiveness of meetings? Why do you say so?
12. What is your comment on the management of decisions made from the meetings? Are there sufficient post meeting monitoring?
13. Do the decision making approaches impact on the effectiveness of meetings? Why would you say so?
14. What other factors do you think have an influence on the effectiveness of meetings at Zimpapers?
15. What recommendations can you give that can help to improve the management of meetings?
16. What else can you add on the issue of management of meetings at Zimpapers in particular and organisations in general?

END OF INTERVIEW

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME IN RESPONDING TO THE INTERVIEW