

SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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RESEARCH REPORT

Declaration

*I hereby declare that the Research Report
submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce Honours
in Management degree to The Independent
Institute of Education is my own work and has not
previously been submitted to another University or
Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.*

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Abstract

There are currently various studies in South Africa regarding the use of flexitime but very limited information regarding its implementation. There is also little evidence of its contribution to the WLB in respect of South African employees. Therefore, the objective is thus to compile a report based on the implementation of flexitime, its challenges and benefits with regards to a South African organisation.

In this study, a qualitative research design with an exploratory approach was used to explore and describe employees' perceptions regarding the implementation of flexitime. A non-probability purposive, voluntary sample of 3 participants was taken Durban. Data was collected by means of semi-structured individual interviews. In this study, thematic content analysis was utilized for data analysis because of its qualitative nature.

From the finding flexitime experiences differ from one employee to the other and with the help of this research, it is easily deduced that each have their own set of pros and cons with regards to the implementation of flexitime. From the data accumulated, four themes were extracted from the interviews, namely: the types of flexitime methods used, reasons for using flexitime, advantages of using flexitime and pitfalls of using flexitime were noted to support the conclusions of the preceding research and highlighted some other new key issues in relation to flexitime implementation.

Title

South African Perspectives on The Implementation of Flexible Work Practices: An Exploratory Study

Background

Flexitime has proven organisational and employee benefits yet there can be no guarantee of policy success" (Carlson et al., 2010). Consequently, the design, implementation and management of such a policy requires careful consideration since it is the implementation of such policies that will effectively determine achieved success" (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). In addition, from this we can deduce that Work-Life Balance (WLB) policies like flexi-time must be further advanced and developed on an on-going basis so that it can be correctly implemented. By doing this, a better understanding is obtained of the views and experiences of all concerned especially the employees, their challenges and benefits regarding flexi-time implementation. Thus far, usage of WLB policies have increased tremendously worldwide but in South Africa only a limited number of multinational companies have implemented these policies.

Problem Statement

There has been an increase in competitive pressure with regards to organisations whereby they are now required to perform more efficiently and cost effectively (Blyton et al., 2006; Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). As a result of technological advancements and globalisation, offices are now undergoing rapid changes (Castells, 2000). Further to this, the traditional working contract and lifetime employment notion is fast becoming a thing of the past (Galinsky et al., 2004; Halpern, 2005).

There are currently practices in place that balance work and life. By implementing such practices, work-life conflict is reduced and employees tend to perform better in all roles, personal or professional. There is also a shift with regards to employees that are caregivers and how their contribution and performance affects the organisation. This evolution, although still in process, is significant nonetheless.

There are presently various studies in South Africa regarding the use of flexitime but very limited information regarding its implementation. There is also very little evidence of its contribution to the WLB in respect of South African employees. The possible challenges and benefits that may apply to this policy is missing from any prior research. Therefore, the objective is thus to compile a report based on the implementation of flexitime, its challenges and benefits with regards to a South African organisation.

Rationale & Relevance

According to Peeters et al.,(2005), balancing both family and professional life is difficult for most women and as a result, disharmony and imbalance arises. Earlier on, women occupied mainly low-profile positions in the business world as opposed to today's times where they are found in all levels of employment. This drastic change has increased a women's responsibilities to her family and to the business world as well (Mathew & Panchanatham, 2009).

There is no assurance of policy success even though flexitime has already been proven to have employee and organisational benefits (Carlson et al., 2010). In order for such policies to be effective and successful, the design, implementation and management must be wisely monitored because it is these factors that will eventually determine success or failure (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). In addition, more understanding and research is required to determine the outcome of the policy in terms of how the stakeholders respond, their views and experiences regarding the benefits and challenges of utilising such a policy.

Research Questions

- Do employers offer WLB policies?
- What are the disadvantages and challenges with regards to the implementation of flexitime as a WLB policy?
- What are the advantages with regards to the implementation of flexitime as a WLB policy?
- Are there any recommendations with regards to design, development and implementation of this policy?

Research Objectives

General Objective

The main goal of this research is to ascertain how employees feel about the execution of the flexitime WLB policy within South African companies.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To gather information regarding how and whether the employees will actually use the WLB policy that is been offered to them by their company.
- To gather information regarding the disadvantages and challenges in terms of flexitime WLB policy for employees.
- To gather information regarding the advantages of this policy.
- To suggest recommendations in respect of design, development and implementation of the WLB policy, based on information already collected.

Many theories such as the roles theory, boundary management theory, compensation theory and spill-over theory have been thoroughly researched in an effort to better understand the work-life concept. It is as a result of these studies that there is some understanding of the work-life balance concept and how it affects women employees in terms of the spill-over theory.

Invariably every theory explores the positive and negative effects of overlapping of the two domains which affects work life balance (Hill et al., 2001). The spill-over theory therefore examines the positive & negative aspects of how work and family systems affect each other. Spill-over is generally regarded as negative when work-family communications are strictly controlled by such factors as time, energy and space. Positive spill-over is achieved when work flexibility exists and both time & space is equally balanced between work and family. Positive spill-over is essential for achieving and maintaining a robust work-family balance (Hill et al., 2001). Spill-over crossover is a concept that describes how work issues affect the home environment and how emotions are transferred from the employee to others in the home environment. Experiences and well-being can be transferred from one domain to another via two mediums, namely, spill-over and crossover (Demerouti et al., 2001). These experiences can either be positive or negative, for example, an employee that has to sacrifice family time in order to complete work responsibilities may experience time-based conflicts and an employee that had a bad work experience will carry his troubles home with him. In both instances, there is a transference from one domain to the next.

On the other hand, crossover involves transmission across individuals, where demands and their consequent strain cross over between closely related persons (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Recent studies have linked demands and resources to the work-family conflict. Demands can be defined as psychological requirements displaying physical and mental determination whereas resources are psychological assets that enhance performance and decrease demands (Choi, 2008).

According to latest research, Voydanoff (2005), demands had a positive impact on the work-family conflict and were related to such issues as commuting time and bringing work home. Resources, on the other hand, displayed the opposite effect and displayed negative connotations in terms of stress and conflict (Remus Iles, 2009).

Work-family spill-over simply means that work-related issues are brought into the family environment and family-related issues are taken to work. Moods and attitudes both differ in nature and stability. The boundary theory further focusses on segmentation and integration (Baltes et al., 2010). This is best explained as the extent to which work and family affect each other and it was found that work-family segmentation decreases the effect of work on family and in this way also decreases spill-over. It was also established that job satisfaction is linked to family issues and

moods thereby reinforcing the spill-over effect once again and whether it is positive or negative depending on the spill-over direction (Baltes et al., 2010).

The main aim of this theory is to implement a system that will help people in bringing about balance between the work and family environments. By doing this, demanding work and family obligations are not transferred from one domain to another and when this is achieved then a balance will exist. The spill-over theory also studies how work-related issues and stress are transferred from the employee to the other people in the home environment – this is sometimes referred to as intra individual level because it occurs at with one person but it transferred across two different environments. Once again here, these can either be positive or negative depending on the situation. Although the focus in most work family studies has primarily been on negative spill-over, research has clearly indicated that positive spill-over is also possible (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Work-family conflict is commonly referred to as a discordancy between work & family whereas work-family enhancement is clearly defined as “the extent to which participation at work/home is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home/work)” (Frone, 2003, p.145). It simply means that whatever occurs at work is eased off in the home domain and does not further complicate issues.

Negative spill-over occurs as a result of inter-role conflict – this happens when work problems affect the family and family stress is taken to work. In both instances spill-over occurs from one domain to the other and both could be viewed as negative. Certain conditions give rise to negative spill-overs and some examples are unreasonable work schedules and demands, ill health and lack of family support. Not all spill-overs are negative, some are positive and these occur when there is balance and family enrichment reinforced by a similar working environment.

Literature Review

Work life Balance

The work-life balance is a difficult concept to explain or describe – it was initially invented in 1986 when work issues started to take prevalence over family, so much so, that it became more important than quality family time. A successfully balanced life is best described as one where there is balance between all key factors, such as, emotions, effort, intelligence, religion etc. Should more emphasis be placed on only one factor and not the others then there is an imbalance in the work-life balance which in turn leads to mismanagement of remunerative work versus family & society responsibilities (Krausz & Hermann, 1991).

Since Work-Life Balance is an important indicator of a professional's health and well-being a number of researches have challenges to identify the predictors and background of this raise. In addition, employers may provide a range of benefits related to employees' health and well-being, including extended health insurance for the employee and dependents, personal days and access to programs or services to support fitness and physical & mental health (Krausz & Hermann, 1991).

Appropriate Jobs for Different Flexible Work Arrangements

There are many pros and cons to flexible work arrangements and it doesn't necessarily work for all job types or employees but when appropriately managed it can be advantageous to both employers and employees.

- **Telecommuting:** Telecommuting is perfect for any employee that can work remotely without supervision – it can work in the following occupations such as computer programming, bookkeeping and accounting, clerical fields. Today it is quite commonly used in the following business sectors: banking, healthcare, accounting and insurance to name a few. It is most favoured and supported by high-tech companies (Abdel-Wahab, 2007).
- **Part time:** Full-time workers make up a major fraction of workers in the education and health sectors whereas part-time workers equates to a low percentage of workers in the following sectors: mining, construction and manufacturing (Galinsky, 2004).
- **Job-Share:** According to recent surveys it has been established that job sharing has increased to 44% (2005) in comparison to 38% (1998). Companies are now allowing job sharing and it is more common in small companies than large industries (Bond, 2005).
- **Flexitime:** In a recent survey, it was established that certain occupations, depending on status levels, had the most access to flexible working times: managers, engineers and administrative workers – almost 30% more (Golden, 2005).

Work-Life Balance Policies in Developed and Developing Countries

Current work trends have led to an increase in economic pressure within companies and this in turn has caused an increase in work pressure, as a result, the work-life balance has been compromised. Currently there are four major categories of work-life balance and family friendly initiatives:

- Flexible work provisions, for example, compressed working weeks & part-time positions.
- Paid/unpaid leave arrangements, for example, maternity, paternity, cultural and adoption leave.
- Dependent care services, for example, the provision of childcare/elderly services.
- Access to information and resources, for example, employee support programs, stress initiatives and health facilities (Gray & Tudball, 2003).

In Australia, policies are based on individual responsibility and are mostly voluntary with very little government interference whereas in Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Norway it is the exact opposite (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2005; Gauthier & Hatzius, 1997).

Important issues such as productivity and retention can be successfully addressed by companies using family-friendly and work-life balance approaches. According to

Glass and Riley (1998), it was deduced that sufficient maternity leave and reduced turnover rates had a positive impact among female employees. In the same way, Australian research revealed that 70% of businesses who had introduced telework opportunities, experienced various positive benefits such as, increase in productivity, decreasing costs and improved work-life balance (Australian Telework Advisory Committee, 2006). In contrast, the exact opposite is true with regards to an increase in organisational costs as a result of work-life balance policies. Myer, Mukerjee, & Sestero, (2001) found that not all family friendly policies enhanced productivity – a good example is job sharing which was found to reduce productivity. Some have even questioned whether the cost of implementing these policies are feasible with regards to profitability. Bloom, Kretchmer, & Van Reenen (2006) also concluded that these policies are expensive to maintain thereby resulting in lower profit margins. Equally important is that a survey of 2191 UK companies (Heywood, Siebert, & Wei, 2007) revealed that family friendly policy costs was counterbalanced by low employee earnings. In contrast, in developing countries like Asia, work-family balance is a rare concept – Lo (2003) stated that married professional women in Hong Kong were given very little assistance from their spouses and employers in helping them balance work and new family responsibilities. When asked what would assist them with regards to their current situation, it was a unanimous that all they needed was flexible work schedules (Brough, Holt, Bauld, et al, 2008).

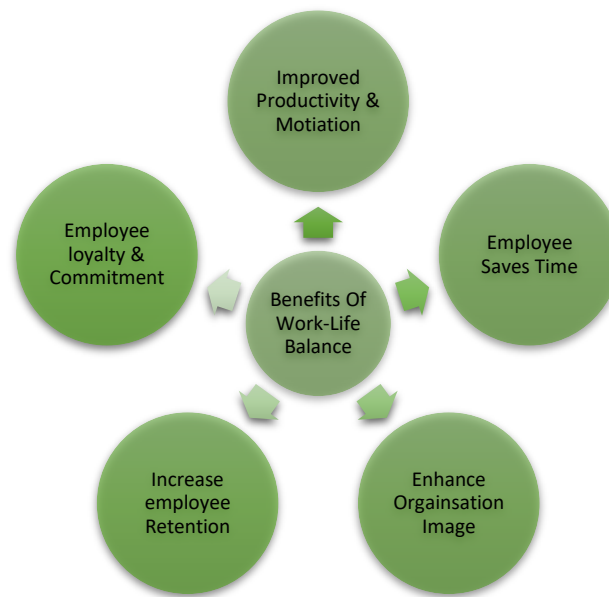
According to an independent report compiled by UNISON, Visser & Williams (2006) reported the following significant factors:

1. Majority of the employees are content with current working conditions and have high job satisfaction as well.
2. The work-life balance is significant but other issues are given more importance, for example, the control you possess over your own work.
3. Although employers propose the work-life balance initiatives, very few actually implement and maintain them.
4. Some feel that that the work-life balance is not correctly and consistently implemented with regards to themselves and the staff they manage.
5. Most employees are realistic regarding the search for solutions to their problems – they are willing to compromise their desires for the sake of the company and its customers.

Benefits of Work-Life Balance Policies for Organization and Employees

There are many factors that influence healthy work-life balance – these include job satisfaction, job stress, projected sales, time saved and commitment to company. All these, sequentially, affect job performance, customer satisfaction, loss & replacement of employee costs and productivity.

There are many advantages to a healthy work-life balance life and there are many ways in which it needs to maintained in order for the business to remain fruitful:



Reduced costs – high turnover and absenteeism, in any organisation, is a sign of job stress and low self-confidence therefore reducing absenteeism should be a priority because by doing so, business costs will also decrease. An excellent example was reported via Canadian Teleworkers Association that 25% of IBM's employees telecommute, by implementing this, the company has already saved in excess of \$700 million in estate costs (Hartel et al., 2007).

Enhanced organizational image and retention of “desirable” employees – this simply means that companies who are well-known for their progressive work-life balance, are in a position to attract the best of the best employees in terms of qualification and experience. A typical example is Arup Laboratories, a medical lab that currently has about 1789 employees in Salt Lake City – they have basically doubled their employees from 700 (1992) to 1700 (2004), simply by offering flexible working schedules. This, in turn, has led to an overall reduction in turnover from 22% to 11% (Hartel et al., 2007). Another good example is the famous SC Johnson corporation, a family owned business located in New Zealand – according to them work-life initiatives are responsible for improved staff retention and saves the company in excess of \$200 000 annually.

Increased productivity and employees' performance – There is much research that proves that work-life initiatives have a positive impact on the employees and the company as well. Capital One Finance, Pfizer Canada reported an increase of 30% in productivity due to fact that employees were allowed to telecommute. KPMG also reported that giving employees time-off in emergency situations has only positively attributed to an increase in customer satisfaction and excellent services. Companies that offer a more diverse selection of work-life initiatives are in a better position to attract and retain quality employees thereby increasing performance and profits.

Improved customer satisfaction – when employees are given flexibility through telecommuting, it is very possible that an improved customer response is achieved. It is also very possible that by allowing this, employees stay motivated to keep

customers content and spare no effort in going the extra mile to achieve and maintain customer satisfaction.

Barriers in exploiting work-life balance Policies – the main barrier with regards to taking advantage of effective work-life balance is the ignorance of it. Recent research has found that most employees are not aware of the work-life entitlements (Kodz et al, 1998). A recent survey involving 945 employees from various business sectors revealed that 50% of them were not aware of work-life balance and family friendly initiatives that their respective companies offered (Yeandle et al 2002).

There are four main characteristics of work-life theory (McDonald et al 2005), all of which needs careful consideration, when making an effort to improve employees' lives:

Managerial support is viewed as a major contributing factor as far as work-life balance is concerned. Managers play a vital role in the successful implementation of these initiatives because they are in a highly influential position where they can easily encourage or discourage employees to balance work life and family life. If, for instance, a manager shows support for these initiatives then employees will definitely participate in whatever options are available to them but if the employee is made to feel otherwise, he will be reluctant and this will only further complicate matters (Hudson Resourcing, 2005).

Career consequences is another barrier with regards to successfully implementing work-life initiatives. There is a theory among employees that if they utilised these practises then they will be at a disadvantage in terms of career advancements and promotions especially when compared to those who don't take advantage of these opportunities although it is a known fact that these initiatives actually enhance employee contributions. This method of negative thinking is one of main barriers against the use of these family friendly initiatives (Kodz, Harper, Dench, 2002).

Organizational time expectation is the number of hours an employee is supposed to work, if he/she is expected to work over-time and if it is also expected that work be taken home to complete. There is much debate regarding this issue as one study found that in order to succeed, contribution is not enough, more important is your visible presence at the office – similar to the “come early stay late” culture that many still follow. It is also known as the new “face time” theory which conveys the message that being visible for prolonged hours shows your dedication and commitment (Beauregard and Lesley 2008, 9-12). This can be defined as a great barrier against the work-life balance as it creates the impression that people who spend less time at work are not valuable employees. Performance should be evaluated on the basis of achievements rather than on the time you spend at the office. In companies where presence matters more than performance, implementing work-life balance will be extremely difficult. Companies that want to promote work-life balance must now implement strategies that will reward performance and employees who have successfully achieved work-life balance – by doing this we can show that long hours do not necessarily facilitate good performance.

Co-worker support is major problem. It conveys the notion that those who implement work-life balance are not committed and therefore not deserving of promotions and salary increases. This theory was revealed after carrying out an experiment involving co-workers (Beauregard, Lesley, 2008) it showed that most co-workers were resentful towards those that balanced work-life. There is also a major issue with regards to employees that need to perform childcare/eldercare duties – they are also viewed with the same resentment and “getting away with less work” attitude. These desperately need to change and evolve if we want to promote the work-life balance.

It's not difficult to see why so many employees that need to use this work-life balance, don't use it simply because they are judged in an unfair and resentful manner.

Overview of Work-life balance literature in South Africa

According to the latest research, flexitime is regarded as being beneficial and positive for both employees and companies too (Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008). Many advantages have been associated with flexitime, such as, increased productivity, job satisfaction, improved mental health and reduced employee turnover (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2004; WFD Consulting, 2007). Recent research has also revealed that even a small amount of flexibility can have many positive effects and greatly improve job-satisfaction while decreasing stress (Corporate Voices for Working Families & WDF Consulting, 2007). Burud and Tumolo (2004) concluded, after a study of 550 surveys, that flexible working times have many advantages, they minimise stress, decrease employee turnover & absenteeism, enhance job satisfaction and improve employee dedication & commitment (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001).

Many companies have now only begun to implement flexitime work schedules in order to assist employees to balance work-life demands. A report compiled by Eldridge and Nisar (2011) negatively reported flexitime workers as been more stressed with regards to job security than their non-flexitime counterparts – these results are contradictory since so much research already exists that proves otherwise.

As far as South Africa is concerned, research and implementation of flexitime as a WLB policy is currently very limited (Dancaster, 2006). A few studies regarding flexitime have been carried out but they mainly focus on flexibility (Horowitz, 1998) and unusual work patterns (Greef & Nel, 2003; Valodia, 2000) instead of methods that enhance flexibility and potential challenges & benefits (Dancaster, 2006).

Furthermore, at this present time in South Africa, there is no available research that can be used as a basis to implement flexi-time. If it was available it would have proved to be a useful tool in the successful implementation of flexitime in South Africa but since its non-existent, it is definitely a great disadvantage and an even bigger cause for concern.

Conceptualization

- **Work-Life Balance:** This is best explained as a balance between employment responsibilities and private life. Many psychologists believe that this balance is imperative to a content state of mind and that work commitments should not overpower an employee to such an extent that he is not able to sustain personal relationships and enjoy life outside of employment (Visser & Williams, 2006).
- **Work-Life Balance Policies:** these are policies that recognizes that employees are most successful when their work-life balance is stable. This policy outlines how best to assist employees achieve the work-life balance outside of the working environment (Wheat, 1982).
- **Organisational Policies:** These are procedures that need to followed with regards to acceptable actions within the working environment
- **Flexible hours (flexitime)** – this simply means having the capacity to decide the start and finish time of a specific working day (Kelly, 2006).
- **Compressed work weeks** – There are various examples of compressed work weeks such as working for four days and taking the fifth day off or working a nine-day fortnight (Sundo & Fujii, 2005).
- **Job sharing:** job sharing occurs when responsibilities are voluntarily shared between part-time and full-time staff – this could occur for a specific time frame or could be an on-going process (Gottlieb et al., 1998).
- **Part-time:** Part-time leave is when a full-time employee takes leave to work part-time only for a limited time (Wheat, 1982).

Research Paradigm & Design

Interpretivism can be best described as feedback generally highlighting restrictions and inadequacies. Interpretivists are those that contest the objective truth and objective knowledge. They strongly believe that facts are not objective and impartial – their understanding is that the facts largely depend on the person's understanding of the data that has been collected. Interpretivists main goal is to achieve high level of detailed information and this is why they mostly depend on qualitative research. The research comprised of questionnaires, data collection, observation and this could also sometimes also include secondary data research (du Ploou-Cillers et al., 2014).

As a result of the above explanations – this research was therefore based on interpretivism because the ultimate goal of the study was to gather the most up-to-date, reliable and accurate information about the implementation of flexi-time in South African work environments (du Ploou-Cillers et al., 2014).

In terms of this study, the researcher had decided on using the qualitative research methodology and an exploratory single case-study design. The reason for this, is that the Qualitative research method is more in-depth and takes the employees' views, feelings and experiences into consideration (du Ploou-Cillers et al, 2014). By utilising this method, instead of quantitative method, it also meets the needs of the study because the intention of the researcher is to investigate and record the personal views and experiences of the employees. This type of research allowed the researcher to utilise question and answer interviews, in this way he/she was able to collect more comprehensive information from the employee when compared to using a quantitative method (du Ploou-Cillers et al., 2014).

With regards to this specific research, the time dimension concept that was utilized can be described as cross-dimensional as it produced a representation of a complete idea that is based on a specific time because data was only collected once. As far as inductive theorizing is concerned, we drew conclusions from data that was collected & evaluated in a specific survey. Inductive theorizing is commonly called bottom-up approach as it is viewed as the building of a current or new theory. In this specific study, we are referring to implementing flexible work practices in South Africa.

Unit of Analysis

With regards to this research, the unit of analysis was primarily based on people and companies that implement flexi-time in Durban. According to Yin (1994: p2), the unit of analysis is the real source of information: people, administrative documents and articles. Yin also proposes that single cases are chosen if it is with regards to a critical test and that it is vital to pick the units of analysis carefully.

The unit of observation was the entity in primary research that is observed and about which information is systematically collected (Humphrey, 2001). In terms of this study, the unit of analysis were manager and business owners, as well as their employees, that implement flexi-time policies in Durban.

Target and Accessible Population

The subject of the study was the population and therefore comprises of people, groups, companies, products, events and current conditions that they were exposed to (Welman, et al., 2001: p52). According to Mugo (2011), a population consists of individual people, objects or samples that are used for measurement purposes.

Target Population: All managers the utilize flexitime Policies in South Africa.

Accessible Population: Managers that utilize flexitime Policies in Durban.

Population Parameters (Characteristics)

Population parameters is a quantity or statistical measure that, for a given population, is fixed and that is used as the value of a variable in some general distribution or frequency function to make it descriptive of that population (Pascoe, 2014).

A participant should have meet the following criteria requirements:

- have access to flexi-time
- be a willing participant after being educated about the purpose, rules and regulations of the research.
- must have no objection to be interviewed by the researcher &
- must have no objection if the interview is recorded.

Probability or Non-Probability Sampling

A sample can be defined as a set of respondents (people or organizations) selected from a larger population for the purpose of a study; and sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Mugo, 2011). The purpose of sampling was to draw conclusions about populations from samples with a population's characteristics by directly observing only a portion (or sample) of the population, which is cheaper than observing the whole population (Mugo, 2011). Of course, generalizing these conclusions to the whole population will have to meet other criteria, which is not the aim of this study, as it is a case study based.

Non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population. In this sampling, the researcher carefully selected the sample from an accessible population and through those who can recommend other possible participants. The sample still met the population parameters for the study; however, the sample was selected using the researcher's judgement and the participants were therefore not randomly selected from a list. In this study, the researcher selected the sample based on judgement. The researcher selected the purposive sampling method (Non-probability sampling method) (Pascoe, 2014).

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling is a common example of the non-probability method that was utilized to pick a sample. Most samples that are selected are based on the researcher's judgement and is frequently an extension of convenience sampling (Statpac, 2011). The elements, that are included in the sample, are exclusively chosen by the researcher according to certain characteristics. The researcher analyses the research question & the population and from there concluded what characteristics are significant for the research – he/she then chooses population groups that possess these characteristics and ignore those that don't have it.

Prior to selecting the sample and field work, screening of the participants had been completed so that time is not wasted during the actual field study. Sometimes, unforeseen issues occur such as finding out that companies were not given the necessary information. The process thus involved explaining the aim of the interview and questioning if the participant had a flextime policy in place and at least 5 employees that utilized it. As a result, another organization was chosen to replace them and the study was concluded once 3 cases agreed to partake. Another important factor is that the researcher chooses to only include organizations that have been in business for about 3 to 5 years, since they have been in business long enough to provide valid and useful information that will enhance the study.

Sample Size

Cheney and Nienaber (2009: p448) quote the following authors and their suggestions on the sample size for case studies: Eisenhardt (1989) proposes between 4 to 10 cases, while Morse (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) suggest 6 cases and Creswell (1998) 3 to 5 cases. Many cases will be chosen but results from 6 to 10 cases will be presented in order to meet the requirements for qualitative case study. Consequently, 2 HR managers and a Lecturer from Durban were chosen, they agreed to partake in the study and that was the size of the study.

Data-Collection Method

Information was collected via semi-structured interviews – these were conducted at the various South African companies and as well as Varsity College where flextime is utilized and promoted. These interviews were significant and formed the basis of the interpretive method. The semi-structured interview was the all-important measuring tool. By adapting this technique, the researcher was able to collect the necessary data and place himself in the participants position, by doing this the researcher was able to better understand the participants viewpoint and experiences and not include any of their own predetermined opinions (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This was a very crucial point because the main goal here is to understand the employee's views and issues with regards to the policy. When these interviews were scheduled, it was always at the convenience of the participant, a time and place that he/she was content with. A lot of effort went into making it a comfortable and relaxing experience for the participant so that he/she was not pressurized into answering incorrectly and felt confident to air his/her grievances, if he/she had any (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

As far as the questions are concerned, it was important that they were relevant to the research, not only that, but the answers should lead to the objective of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). If for some reason, this did not occur it meant that the researcher did not ask the correct and relevant questions. Additional questions would have to be included in order to achieve the desired outcome. The following had to be adhered to when compiling interview questions:

- The research problem,
- Questions need to be general in nature, questions of a personal nature may offend the interviewee,
- The questions should be simple enough for the interviewee to understand,
- The questions should include all possible options.

The general rule of thumb for constructing interview questions is that the researcher should always bear in mind the research question and sub-problems" (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Generally, there are two types of question formats, open and closed questions. In terms of this research, primarily open questions were used – in this instance participants are free to answer as they please whereas with closed questions, they are restricted to a specific set of options that they are provided with.

Data Analysis Method

During case studies, the researcher may have had to combine data collection and analysis – for example, data collected in a field interview from earlier on may contradict with a current one. Data collection entails doing the actual interview in comparison to data analysis which involves surfacing the conflict. Most researchers will want analysis to be instant so that they can adjust and change the data collection while they are still in the field, even if this means re-interviewing the earlier participant or finding another that can solve the conflict (Yin, 2004:3).

In this particular study, thematic content analysis was utilized for data analysis because of its qualitative nature. Qualitative analysis is not only based on counting words or collecting impartial content – it also involves extracting new meanings and determining patterns & themes that maybe hidden in the text. Qualitative content analysis is best described as inductive because it involves examining themes & drawing conclusions from them. In some cases, qualitative content analysis attempts to generate theory (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2011:1)."

Thematic analysis is commonly utilized as an analytic research method by qualitative researchers, students and study researchers because it tends to produce exceptional conclusions that are well-substantiated (Lapadat, 2009). Lapadat further describes thematic analysis as a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning; coding and classifying data, usually textual, according to themes; and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalties, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles.

In this case, the researcher has made use of thematic analysis as it is excellent for managing large amounts of collected data without losing vital context, also good for organizing, summarizing and correct interpretation of data. Researchers might use their research questions, interview questions, or theory-derived categories as a start list of a priority themes for coding data documents, an approach that can facilitate within- or cross case comparisons (Lapadat, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers use a variety of measures to evaluate the trustworthiness of research results because most of them do not utilize numbers as evidence. It is also necessary to remember that the sole purpose of a qualitative research is to encourage a better understanding of a certain phenomenon and not simplify information. Qualitative research is mainly based on causal characteristics that can be monitored so if the same study was repeated using different samples, the results will be very similar. Nevertheless, when a qualitative study is repeated, it is very unlikely that the results will be the same because participant's answers are not measurable and are exclusive to each person's personal experience. The terms "reliability" and "validity" are still widely used by many qualitative researchers but the method used to determine reliability & validity greatly differs from how it is implemented in qualitative studies. The overarching term that is used for validity and

reliability in qualitative research is 'trustworthiness', which is further divided into credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Credibility is a term used to describe the amount of accuracy that was used by the researcher in interpreting that data that was collected from the participants. If the researcher spends quality time with the participants, credibility is increased and he also places himself in a better position to understand the participant's feelings and at the same time gain a more insightful glimpse of his actual life experiences.

Triangulation is also implemented in such cases where more than one research method is used to gather data (Marla, 2014).

Furthermore, credibility is enhanced when the participant believes your findings and can relate to the situation. With regards to this study, validity was not guaranteed because the study is not applicable to the majority population of businesses because of the sampling method and case study approach. But in this instance, because this was a field study based on interviews and conducted at business sites, the validity was not threatened. In terms of assuring reliability, all documents related to the study would be archived for future reference and re-evaluation (Marla, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

It is very important that ethical issues are given priority when compiling a research study therefore the researcher as included the following (Louw, 2014):

- Informed consent
- Voluntary participation
- Do no harm
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- Informed consent

Informed consent simply means that the participant has fully understood what the research entails and what is required of him/her (Louw, 2014). There were a few important issues that the participants needed to be informed about and these are as follows: the main objective with regards to the research, who is funding the research, how the collected data will be used, any possible disadvantages of participating and who will have access to the collected data (Louw, 2014) (Annexure 1).

The sole purpose behind the informed consent concept was, that the participant could decide if he/she wanted to participate in the study or not – additional information was also available should the participant become concerned during the interview (Louw, 2014).

Voluntary participation occurs when people freely partake in the research, without intimidation from any party. Participants were also free to withdraw at any stage without being subjected to any kind of prejudice or pressure. Explanations as to why they choose to leave or be excluded was also not required (Louw, 2014).

Do no harm: By this we mean that the participants should not be subjected to any form stress, anxiety, pain or even an invasion of their privacy. It was of utmost importance that the evaluation process did no harm, intentional or otherwise.

Confidentiality in this respect means that the participant's identity is private and only available to the program coordinator (Louw, 2014). It also prevented any identifying information from being included in any reports or published data. It was also vital that reports were correctly worded, because of the small research groups, so that people can't be identified even when names were excluded (Louw, 2014).

Anonymity is more difficult to maintain than confidentiality because although the research team is oblivious to the participant's identity – he/she was generally known to the program coordinator (Louw, 2014).

Anticipated Contribution & Research Limitations

There is no assurance of policy success even though flexitime has already been proven to have employee and organisational benefits (Carlson et al., 2010). In order for such policies to be effective and successful, the design, implementation and management must be wisely monitored because it is these factors that will eventually determine success or failure (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). In addition, more understanding and research is required to determine the outcome of the policy in terms of how the stakeholders respond, their views and experiences regarding the benefits and challenges of utilizing such a policy.

There are currently various studies in South Africa regarding the use of flexitime but very limited information regarding its implementation. There is also little evidence of its contribution to the WLB in respect of South African employees as well as the possible challenges and benefits that may apply to this policy is missing from any prior research. Therefore, the objectives of this study will improve the literature based on the implementation of flexitime, its challenges and benefits with regards to a South African organization.

With regards to qualitative research, many limitations still exist – it is costly, involves time-consuming tasks such as data collection & analysis, it relies on small group studies and many are reluctant to take it seriously.

In terms of this study, the research was firstly limited to businesses only in Kwa-Zulu Natal and as a result, the outcome would be different if it was based on businesses in various areas. The second limitation is that the data collected is based solely on information gathered during the interview process, so it is limited to only the participant's experiences and what he/she chooses to share.

Limitations also exist with regards to the researcher – because although they may receive training prior to interviews, it may not be sufficient if they lack the vital skill techniques that are required to retrieve the correct information from the participant. According to Terre Blanche et al., 2014, explorative research requires a certain skill level in order to extract the detail and richness from participants.

Narrative Description

These are descriptions based on each participant of this study. Due to ethical consideration, each respondent will remain anonymous and are provided with false names.

Respondent 1: Kelly is a lecturer who has been employed at Varsity College for the past 3 years now. Prior to this, she was self-employed and ran her own business for a period of 7 years. She has also worked at Nedbank for a period of 10 years, PWC and at Standard Bank in the final year of her degree.

Respondent 2: Alex is a HR Officer for Dimension Data, Alex. Alex's qualification comprises of a Bachelor of Commerce degree majoring in Supply Chain and Human Resources Management. She has been in Human Resources field for 6 years now.

Respondent 3: Max is a Director of Human Resources (Employer). Max has 12 years of managerial experience and was also in the following positions prior to this, skills development facilitator, payroll, taxation and industrial labour law.

While analyzing the data from each interview collected, it was noticed that there were a few common themes within the findings:

Findings and Discussion of Findings

Theme 1: The types of flexitime methods used

As far as this study is considered, flexitime is still regarded as a unique and virtually new concept to many individuals and it is accordingly implemented by them depending on their own personal preference and working schedules.

The compressed work week which is a formal practice of flexitime is more aptly implemented by individuals so that they can meet deadlines, complete pending work and have time off for personal matters as long as the required 40-hour work week is adhered to (Sundo & Fujii, 2005).

Max: I can work on days that are preferred and suitable to me as long as I work the required 40 hours per week. For example, last week I had planned to dedicate Thursday and Friday for family activities hence I put in the extra hours and completed all required work by Wednesday afternoon.

Alex: Last week was my friend's wedding and I needed time for preparations so I took time off work but I made sure that all pending work was completed timeously and all targets for the week was achieved.

More preferred than the compressed work week is the flexi-location concept. It is commonly used by many as the freedom to work from any location instead of a fixed office site is more appealing to them and also has many benefits (Hrcouncil, 2017).

The main benefit that is associated with flexi-locations is the reduction in travel time and the daily stress of commuting. Employees are no longer confined to the office environment to complete their pending tasks because the advanced technology of today permits them to work from any location. Most prefer working from home as the environment is more suited than some noisy & crowded office (Hrcouncil, 2017).

Max: One of my best employees has a serious health issue and cannot be around people for the fear of infection therefore the ability to work from home is the best option for him and it works well for us too.

Alex: For me, the ability to start my day at my convenience is great, I don't have to get up early if I don't want to and the best part is that I don't have to sit in traffic.

Another preferred flexitime option is the use of the reduced portfolio or the extended work week. This is more common among women and working mothers. This type of flexitime reduces the employees working hours & responsibilities to an extent that they have additional time for non-work- related issues, for example, mothers may want to finish work at 2pm on weekdays so that they can fetch their kids from school and be home with them instead of sending the kids to aftercare (Zimela, 2017).

Alex: Most people use this policy to drop and fetch their kids, it is versatile and convenient, even my wife uses it for our kids.

Max: Works great especially for mothers who need to pick and drop their kids and see to household responsibilities.

Kelly: I have young kids, my kids are at school until 2:30, this specific job allows me to choose the hours I would like to commit in a day and leaves me available during the times that I want to be available for my children.

From the above mentioned, common and previously researched uses of flexitime included, were compressed working hours, rearrangement of working hours per day and flexi-location. With regards to reduced portfolio, whereby an employee's work responsibilities and consequently required working hours are reduced as dependent on an employee's situation and preference, was not evident in the literature. Most employees implement flexitime according to their own preferences & needs. Therefore, it can be further divided into theme two factors as follows: Reasons for using flexitime.

Theme 2: Reasons for using flexitime

From these interviews, we can safely deduce that employees who use flexi-time do so because of specific factors and it is not always because of preference. There are a variety of reasons why an individual chooses to implement flexi-time into their work schedules, for instance, some parents need to drop/pick their kids from school, individuals with old/sick parents need additional time to cater for their daily needs,

others have additional family responsibilities, some want to avoid peak-time traffic and many are just trying to cope with stress of everyday life. For many of these individuals, balance is very important and this is something that is currently lacking with regards to work performance and home life (Bitti, 2008).

Many individuals use flexi-time in order to meet deadlines but in some instances the pressure of meeting deadlines is so great that most employees who have access to flexitime cannot use it and have to sometimes work overtime instead of taking time off. Another key issue with regards to flexitime is that client-facing participation needed employees to be present at the office during normal working hours in order to monitor their contribution levels – this makes the implementation of flexitime more problematic. These perceptions, although reflected in previous literature, centre around the importance of being seen in the workplace, the perceptions regarding level of position and management, and those regarding personal life and situation (Beauregard and Lesley, 2008, 9-12).

Alex: This tends to become difficult especially when some clients wish to personally see the employees that work on their accounts but they aren't present at the preferred times or not available because of prior commitments.

Max: It doesn't create a good image of the company when clients want to meet certain employees but they aren't available to assist.

Although flexitime is a formal policy that is offered to all employees, participants using the policy expressed concerns about it not been accepted at all levels in the company. For instance, some managers did not favour the use of flexitime while others who supported it were not comfortable with employees using it (Hudson Resourcing, 2005). Some employees reported that managers who had families and responsibilities were more supportive and considerate than those that were single.

Alex: Managers I have previously with don't really like flexitime, they don't think it works or don't realise the benefits. But as far as I'm concerned, I believe that it can reduce employee stress and can lead to a higher level of engagement which in turn equals to increased productivity. There is potential for a win-win situation.

The quote above highlights the negative connotations associated with the use of flexitime and why it is vital to manage these observations accordingly because this is one the main reasons that most employees elect not to use flexitime.

An apt quote regarding this issue is as follows:

Max: Most people judge you, like when they don't see you often, they are like "So why haven't I seen you in a while?" or "Wow, you're lucky, you get alot of time off."

It was also reported that there was much negativity associated with the participant's personal reasons for choosing flexitime. Many carefully chose their working hours

based on their lifestyle, priorities and personal commitments. Participants who have children have indicated a need for flexibility, support and home infrastructure which support any sudden changes in work schedules to fulfil deadlines.

Theme 3 further explores the challenges experienced by participants when implementing flexitime i.e. pitfalls of using flexitime.

Theme 3: Pitfalls of using flexitime

The implementation of flexitime does have its setbacks which come at an additional cost and inconvenience. The main disadvantage noted with regards to flexitime was delaying impending work and missing deadlines as a result of insufficient planning and sometimes even indolence. Most participants who displayed these traits expressed their lack of motivation to complete work timeously which led to them constantly postponing work and eventually when they decided to complete the work they had to continuously until it was complete, in most instances, without sleep & rest (Yeandle et al 2002).

Many employees reported that when others failed to adhere to deadlines and complete projects timeously, a decrease in overall productivity was noted. Another area for concern was that some employees were not present when new projects were being allocated and as a result they missed out on opportunities to contribute to teamwork and in so doing increased the workload of those that were present, this was also evident in existing research by Myer et al., (2001):

Alex: Sometimes it's quite annoying when some employees in the company don't work their full hours. They see this as an opportunity to stay out of the office, not all employees, just a handful that's sometimes difficult to weed out.

In addition, while some reported a decline in performance, others had an increase in their workloads as a result of employees not being present during task allocation times. The disadvantage is that when flexitime employees are not present during office hours, projects are allocated to those present irrespective of whether they already have full workload or not:

Max: When you are in a meeting with a client and someone from the team has to leave, then his/her share of work is allocated to others who may already have their hands full.

Some even reported that as a result of flexitime implementation, they were forced to spend most of their personal leisure time working instead of relaxing. Many also claimed that were constantly exhausted with fatigue possibly because they had so much to complete in a single working day as a result of increased workloads. This was, in fact, affecting their health and increasing their stress levels. One of the participants brought up the loss of income, of which was not evident in previous literature.

Kelly: I think that the disadvantage, is obviously financially uhlm you aren't working the full day so financially it does limit your earnings potential.

Participants also had great concerns regarding career growth and perceptions within the company. One felt that if a person is not present at the office, then the person is not being productive which in some instances couldn't be more further from the truth. This method of negative thinking is one of main barriers against the use of these family friendly initiatives as stated in previous literature (Kodz, et al., 2002). Such conclusions are a platform for confusion and misunderstandings among employees:

Alex: I always advise my employees that if you have to work from home, go ahead, but be careful of the image you are creating of yourself.

Regardless of the above-mentioned issues, participants still reported flexitime as being beneficial to them (theme 3).

Theme 4: Advantages of Using Flexitime

Individual benefits

The most important aspect with regards to the use of flexitime is that it allowed for a balance between personal and professional life. There was a great sense of relief that the both could be effectively managed without comprising the other. This reduced stress levels on the participants and they were able to perform better rather than been anxious all the time about balancing work-life (Hartel et al., 2007).

Most of the participants were quite excited that flexitime allowed them to experience such amazing psychological benefits. These include: a decrease in stress levels, increase in energy & a happy state of mind, more dedication & passion regrading work because of the tranquil working environment. All these positive attributes were achieved as a result of maintaining the work-life balance (Visser & Williams, 2006).

The participants in the flexitime program felt that since their immediate environments were basically stress-free, this allowed them to function and work more efficiently. They were able to plan better and achieve more. Their ability to choose between convenient working hours and times helped them to maintain productivity but at the same time also compensated unproductive times in unforeseen times like illness or other unexpected obligations. A high percentage of the participants were thrilled about avoiding peak time traffic and planned their schedule accordingly to avoid wasting time sitting in traffic.

The benefits of which are detailed in the quote below:

Kelly: I would say that the advantage is that you get to choose the hours in the day that you want to work. I also like the sense of being my own boss to a certain degree and to decide to what extent I want to commit to something. So, yes flexitime does work for me and also helps in determining the level of commitment that you want to put into something.

Alex: There is no feeling of anxiousness that you have to be at work. You can schedule a personal appointment, safe in the knowledge that if you stepped out to see your doctor, it's going to be frowned upon. But at the same time flexitime makes the company attractive to the outside world. You would be surprised how many people are interested in working here just because of this reason alone.

. Organisational Benefits

An important factor in any working environment is the ability to be flexible in relation to changing deadlines and demanding workloads. Flexitime therefore allows for this flexibility and by doing so aids with client deadline, performance and productivity achievement.

With regards to business, flexitime is also used as a retention strategy. Flexitime is regarded as an attractive incentive for many and there were instances where many employees returned to their former employers because they were offered the benefits of flexitime (Australian Telework Advisory Committee, 2006). Some also admitted that flexitime was the key reason for them remaining at their current companies because without the flexitime benefit their lives would be unbalanced and stressful.

Alex: Flexibility provides improved retention for individuals who might otherwise have left the organisation. In some cases, it can also improve the calibre of talent available for the job, as providing flexibility broadens the pool available.

As a result of flexitime benefits, there was a massive increase in employee commitment, dedication, motivation and loyalty thereby resulting in improved productivity. Most employees were eager and willing to meet deadlines even if they had to work overtime because they knew that they will be compensated with additional time off work. Some employees revealed that they were willing to go the extra mile just because of the attention and caring attitude of the company, as noted in the following quote:

Max: If they are giving you that flexibility, then I always feel like I have to complete all my work and actually do more. I cannot falter. They are so accommodating, how could I let them down by not finishing my work.

Alex: There are distinct examples of improved productivity. A team started work at six in the morning on site and then left at three because they were very early and were not stressed by the traffic; therefore, they were more productive.

Fascinatingly most employees who get time off as a result of flexitime use this time to complete pending work whereas others actually use the time to rest/family time.

With regards to trustworthiness, the findings of the study reinforced the research questions and maintained the study. In terms of data collection, there has been no manipulation in any form, all information has been recorded & presented as per transcript recordings. As a result, the data collected can be regarded as consistent & reliable and therefore can be used to further other flexitime studies in South Africa.

Recommendations

As far as flexitime is concerned, many organisations basic policies and strategies regarding the implementation of flexitime but lack correct planning and protocol in this regard. Therefore, to successfully implement flexitime, a suitable proposal with all important data needs to be designed, thereafter, depending on what works & what doesn't, amendments can be made to accommodate changing circumstances.

A certain amount of flexibility is possible with regards to all jobs but not all types of flexitime are apt for all forms of work. The easiest way to implement flexitime is to run a pilot project and deduce conclusions based on those results, managers should also include employees in discussions and get feedback from them as well.

Flexitime is not only limited to employees hence managers must also take advantage of flexitime. Flexitime allows for teams to assume more responsibility and since performance is no longer based on "facetime" but rather on outputs, managers should be able to successfully integrate flexitime into their schedules as well.

Most organisations fail to reap the full benefits of flexitime although they design and implement advanced work-life policies - the main reason for this is that the employees are not correctly informed and consulted thus leading to miscommunication and a lack of understanding in terms of the policy requirements.

It is quite significant that ongoing communication forms the basis of flexitime initiatives, this can be easily achieved in communications such as the company newsletter or even notice boards but this needs to be timeously reinforced by a comprehensive communication plan.

The following vital steps will aid in the successful implementation of flexitime – you can streamline these steps depending on the company's size and the number of staff members.

Step 1 - Keep a record of the agreement

All necessary documentation regarding flexitime policies and protocol must be recorded in formal documents before implementation, these should include health & safety details, agreements between the employees & the company and a commencement & completion date (Business Queensland, 2016).

Step 2 - Tell the employee what will be expected of them

Certain principles need to be adhered to when an employee first adopts the flexitime protocol, it is important to note that this must not adversely affect other employees especially if the office is regarded as the common work location. Therefore, it would be most suitable for all if they implement the following (Business Queensland, 2016):

- Their email signature should include their office hours.
- An “out of the office” notification should also be setup with contact details of relevant person that can be contacted in the interim.
- Arranging their phone calls to be transferred to an alternative number that will respond timeously to any enquiries.
- All relevant documentation needs to be correctly filed so that it is easily accessible by other employees should the need arise and especially when the employee is not present.
- It is also vital to discuss working hours with important clients so that they are aware if and when delays occur.

Step 3 - Managing the flexible working arrangement

When the flexitime arrangement is implemented, it is best to record all issues, the good and the bad, so that these can be further discussed during the review process. It is also important for the employee to be aware that he will be constantly monitored and reviewed afterwards in order to ascertain whether flexitime is being effectively implemented (Business Queensland, 2016).

Implementing and managing a job share protocol requires enhanced thought and planning so these guidelines are essential for successful implementation:

- Each employee must be assigned clear and concise instructions with guidelines regarding responsibilities, job-description, tasks, expectations and work-load.
- A work schedule must be drawn up highlighting specific working hours for each job sharer, this must also include objectives related to individual employees.
- Guidelines must also exist in terms of the following: the easy transference of information between job sharers, agreements with regards to covering for each other in the event of either one’s absence, constant monitoring of the work situation and protocol to be follow when one partner decides to leave.

Step 4 - Continue to communicate with all your employees

Consistent communication with employees is the key to successful flexitime projects and therefore these must be adhered to:

- Share and communicate flexitime arrangements with all employees at regular intervals so that they all are well informed and do not feel excluded.
- Make it a point to inform other employees which staff members are on flexitime schedules so that they can plan themselves accordingly.
- Also make a note to share online calendars, work schedules and contact numbers for those that are not office-based.
- On the company notice board, add a planning calendar for holiday/employee leave provision (Business Queensland, 2016).

Step 5 - Review and manage performance

Flexitime arrangements need to be frequently reviewed – every 6 to 12 months, in this way the process is reviewed and feedback is given to the employee regarding any concerns and any changes that need to be implemented.

All employees should be assessed on the same criteria irrespective of whether they are flexitime workers or office based workers thus performance should be based on outputs and not facetime. Make sure to advise any flexitime workers of changes that maybe needed to improve their results.

The review process should also include getting colleague feedback because flexitime needs to work for the entire team. By doing this, useful data can be collected to ascertain if flexitime is working for all concerned and what changes need to be implemented. This, of course, will have to be a confidential interview (Business Queensland, 2016).

Conclusion

Presently in South Africa, there is a substantial lack of research with regards to flexitime as a work-life balance policy. Therefore, the main purpose of the study was to gather and analyze data on flexitime implementation in South African companies and to also determine employee concerns. As a result of the study, four important themes were determined.

The views of both employers and employees are quite similar in terms of flexible working arrangements but their perception is different to each other. The reason for this could be a lack of knowledge regarding correct implementation and regulation of flexitime in South Africa. At the moment, no institutions offer education and training on successful flexitime implementation – even the government has not introduced any guidelines or policies to help the business sector in this regard. It can be therefore deduced that there is a genuine need to design guidelines and regulations for flexitime implementation in South Africa.

Flexibility is more of a management tool than an employee benefit – it can be correctly used to increase efficiency and productivity. Flexibility can positively result in many benefits to both the company and the employee but there are some important factors that need serious consideration such as increased costs in flexitime implementation, the ability to successfully meet customer's demands, the ability to redistribute work among flexitime workers and the effects on performance and quality.

For flexitime to be effective, it needs to support the objectives of the organisation. The benefits that are associated with flexitime as per participants are as follows: balanced work-family life, increased work performance, reduction in company costs and an increase in creativity. The problems encountered were a lack of correct guidelines & policies, people's attitude towards flexitime and organisational culture.

From the collected information, it is suggested that business size and sector are determining factors whether or not flexitime can be implemented. It was also advised that flexitime is more suited to the service sector rather than the production sector. The outcome of this is still open to debate.

As far as this study is concerned, many limitations were experienced with regards to data collection. The most important being the small size of the sample and the limited time in which to collect the relevant information and make deductions. The small sample size was not adequate in order to make correct assumptions but had to be done because of the limited time frame within which the study had to be completed.

Only three participants were used in this study, because of time limitations, had it consisted of more people, then more accurate results will have been collected and analyzed.

Prior to the interview process, the participants were required to read and sign ethical consent forms in order for the interview to take place and also be recorded. It was

the duty of the interviewee to make sure that the participants fully understood the aim of the study and the importance of their contribution. Notes were also taken in relation to how the participant reacted to questions and his/her body language (Guest et al., 2017). A paper-based transcript of the interview was also made. After the interview, no negativity was acknowledged so therefore it can be safely deduced that the interviews were ethically performed.

The results of the study revealed the minimum requirements of flexitime implementation but new studies could use this data to further develop intervention theories that support flexitime policies.

A quantitative study could also be undertaken based on the findings in this study, investigating the prevalence of the themes identified in this study within a larger organisation, thus allowing for a broader reflection or view of employee perceptions regarding flexitime throughout an organisation. Quantitative studies, specifically regarding work-life balance and well-being related outcomes that were found in this study, are recommended.

Currently in South Africa, very little importance is given to flexitime but with an increase in globalization, an increase in the need for flexitime will develop and will have to be addressed accordingly.

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ANNEXURE 1

Information sheet for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Mariska Rooplal and I am a student at Varsity College. I am currently conducting research about the use of flexitime since there is very limited information regarding its implementation. There is also very little evidence of its contribution to the WLB in respect of South African employees. The possible challenges and benefits that may apply to this policy is missing from any prior research. Therefore, the objective is thus to compile a report based on the implementation of flexitime, its challenges and benefits with regards to a South African organisation.

I will be further explaining exactly what participation in my research study will involve, which I have done below. I have listed these in the forms of questions that I will attempt to answer appropriately. If you have any questions that you feel are not addressed or explained fully in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this page, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you have access to flexitime policies. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you for about 15- 20 minutes.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer certain interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no impact on your work. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is purely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to recognise you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only myself and a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. No

other person will have access to your interview. I would like to use quotes when I write a summary of the research but I will make sure that no-one will be able to recognise you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be published in academic journals or books, or presented at academic conferences. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please do feel free to contact me should you have any questions about this research or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the protocol followed. The contact details of the researcher are as follows:

Mariska Rooplal

079 375 6328

mariska.rooplal@gmail.com

Annexure 2

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Mariska Rooplal about the use of Flexitime with regards to the implementation, its challenges and benefits with regards to South Africa.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during research interviews.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Annexure 3

Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Mariska Rooplal to audio record my interviews as part of her research about the use of flexitime with regards to the implementation, its challenges and benefits with regards to South Africa

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher and a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have to access to these recordings.

Signature

Date

Annexure 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

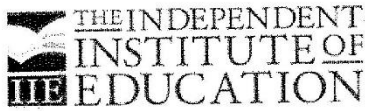
Research Question(s)

1. Do employees use the WLB policies that their companies offer?
2. What are the disadvantages and challenges with regards to the implementation of flexitime as a WLB policy?
3. What are the advantages with regards to the implementation of flexitime as a WLB policy?
4. Are there any recommendations with regards to design, development and implementation of this policy?

******Possible Questions**

1. Can work-life (and specifically flexible working) issues be discussed?
2. Is performance management such that results are more important than hours at work?
3. Is it recognised that people need different support at different stages of their lives?
4. Do managers understand the rationale for flexible working and the real benefits for the organisation?
5. Do employees understand their rights with regard to work-life balance and flexibility?
6. Are policies adapted to suit the needs of the organisation and the employees?
Are managers supported to find new ways of working with their teams?
7. Is there an effective communications strategy to encourage take up of policies?
8. Is open communication between manager and employee encouraged?
9. Are team members encouraged to plan how to make it all work so that they can meet everybody's needs?

Annexure 5: Ethical Letter



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Tel: (011) 878 8021
Fax: (011) 783 2574

5 July 2017

Student name: Mariska Rooplal

Student number: 14004032

Campus: Varsity College Durban North

Re: Approval of [Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management] Proposal and Ethics Clearance

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



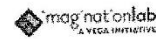
Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.



There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.



In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

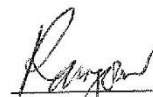


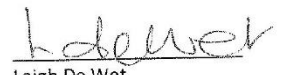
We wish you all the best with your research!



Yours sincerely,




Ajith Ramgoon
Supervisor


Leigh De Wet
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch (non-executive), A Isaakidis (non-executive) **Company Secretary:** C Koopman

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