

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the workplace: A case of the
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Ruth Bhekekile Shandu**, declare that:

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- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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ABSTRACT

Currently, South African government departments face common problems such as punctuality, frequent leave requests, lack of engagement, absenteeism, and poor management of employee wellbeing, resulting in high absenteeism rates. These issues affect the work-life balance, which negatively impacts employee performance, thereby affecting delivery of services to the department and community at large. This study investigated how flexible work arrangements can reduce time management issues while increasing job satisfaction and performance in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Flexible working schedules can increase the level of contentment and performance, which has been discovered to benefit both the employer and the employee. A qualitative research method was chosen for the study because it provided an opportunity to explore the research objectives in greater detail. The sample size and strategy used comprised organising focus group interviews as well as individual interviews, representing the population by using a sample of 10 participants from different levels, namely senior managers to lower levels in the Department. The study reviewed aspects of analysis of the impact of workplace flexibility and its effect on employee performance by looking at previous research on similar topics. This review was designed to explore workplace flexibility in order to delve deeper into the need for it and the benefits it could provide. The findings of the study revealed that offering flexibility could help and support the emotional health of the employees, as well as improving their relationship with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. A call for a flexible work strategy is of interest to most employees in the Department, since flexibility provides for a work-life balance that is essential to everybody. The conclusion and recommendations were that the Department should consider implementing and making provision for flexible working arrangements, which can achieve greater job fulfilment, a better balance between work and life and motivate employees, as well as reducing absenteeism and increasing the quality of service delivery at all employee levels.

Keywords: Flexible conditions; work-life balance; employee motivation; employee engagement; KZN Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APP	ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN
BCEA	BASIC CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ACT
CIPD	CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT
COGTA	COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
EAP	EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME
EEA	EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT
FWC	FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS
FWA	FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS
HR	HUMAN RESOURCE
HRM	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
HRM&D	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT
KZN	KWAZULU-NATAL
ICT	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
PSC	PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
RSA	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
SA	SOUTH AFRICA
SHRM	STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
SMS	SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES
USA	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Work is important, not just for individual income purposes, but also because it satisfies human necessities by contributing to personal identity, guaranteeing social standing, and providing structure and purpose to everyday life (Black, 2008; Waddell, 2006). It has been noted that organisations are experiencing difficulties with staff turnover as a result of unhappy and dissatisfied employees. One strategy to address this is the implementation of flexible working conditions for employees. Non-appearance in the workplace, poor time management and demotivation has played a negative influence on service delivery and production. A healthy work-life balance boosts productivity and effectiveness in the office. As a result, employees and employers from various businesses have unanimously recognised the necessity for workplace flexibility.

Government entities in South Africa are mainly guided using long-established frameworks which have been proven to be change drivers through observing performance. These include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997, the Code of Conduct, and Employment Labour Law, to name but a few.

This chapter provides the context of the study, the research problem, the goal, as well as the contribution to a larger body of research. The research objective and research questions are presented. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the literature review and research methodology used in the study, as well as the study's limitations, definition of terms, and chapter summary. The emphasis will be on how flexibility in the public sector affects and engages employees. The analysis will focus on how flexibility contributes to the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs employee and service satisfaction, as well as looking at flexibility from a wider perspective which includes behaviour, motivation, commitment, and work-life balance.

1.2 Background of the study

The public and private sectors are looking for ways to enhance productivity and service delivery in today's hectic industry environment, where staff levels are at their lowest and workloads are at an all-time high. Organisations require the services of people to help them navigate their affairs as they strive to achieve their aims and objectives, all of which are indicators of achieving optimal performance. According to Jackson (2007), employees are the most valuable assets that organisations have. These employees, on the other hand, are frequently confronted with the dilemma of allocating their time across several competing needs, such as attending to family issues, socio-political events, and a variety of other activities that sometimes conflict with organisational goals.

Many men and women have adopted a family-oriented lifestyle. Mothers now work while juggling parenthood and their jobs. Fathers are becoming more involved in parenting instead of simply serving as sole breadwinners. Dual-income couples are now the norm and parental prospects are changing. This can become even more complicated when single parenting is involved. Because social needs are constantly being redefined and are changing at such a rapid rate, many countries have recognised the need for flexible work arrangements.

The outbreak of Covid-19 in 2019 globally has elevated the growing popularity of flexible working arrangements. The government issued orders for citizens to stay at home and many organisations had to adopt policies which provided for flexible working arrangements. As a key player in the country, the South African government was required to be responsible and provide leadership, inclusive of the necessary services to citizens. Moreover, the government had to develop and enforce applicable regulations, providing accurate, up-to-date information on the status of the pandemic; coordinating efforts to mitigate the pandemic's impact; and providing social services, resources, and infrastructure to respond to the pandemic. This unusual situation necessitated creativity, adaptability, quick decision-making, and an unconventional approach to service delivery. As a result, the availability of effective systems and processes, as well as highly efficient, professional and accountable public servants, capable of carrying out their duties optimally, was critical during this time.

The only exceptions were departments which supplied essential services in government institutions. With the stay-at-home orders, many employers were caught off-guard. Policies that accommodate and allow these arrangements had to be developed and implemented. Flexible and remote work became increasingly necessary, but also more difficult for government departments to subscribe to as many still adhered to a mindset which accommodated the old working arrangements. Numerous studies have been conducted on flexible working conditions (FWCs), but in government departments, a minimal research has been done on the view of flexible working arrangements (FWAs).

Earlier researchers focused on the impact of FWAs on performance and job satisfaction internationally. In this study, FWAs and their impact on performance and job satisfaction is analysed in the South African public sector. For the purposes of this study, the analysis will be limited to the Provincial Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in Pietermaritzburg. The Department is responsible for coordinating and promoting collaboration among government institutions, as well as building capacity to accelerate the delivery of high-quality services to communities.

Ochieng and Kamau (2021) describe the term "flexible work arrangement" also known as "flexitime" as referring to a work environment and schedules that are not subject to the usual constraints of traditional work. Moreover, it is defined as a non-standardised or alternate work arrangement, which is regarded as a required option that permits an employee to work outside the traditional standard of work, in terms of modalities such as allowance on arrival and knock-off time, distribution of working time and place of work (Cameron & Garrett, 2017).

This is a striking difference compared to traditional work arrangements, which require employees to report to the workplace every day and includes offering consideration of employees' needs, particularly in so far as balancing work and personal life is concerned. It also indicates 'flexible working' as a term which refers to any work pattern that may be modified to meet employees' needs. A range of schedules have been identified as 'flexible working' by Human Resource professionals. This includes flexitime around core hours, as well as employees in the same workplace having varying start, break, and finish times; part-time

work entailing working fewer hours per week or working fewer days per week; working from home, compressed hours; annualised hours, job sharing, and term-time.

It is asserted that providing such initiatives enhances motivation and morale. Job satisfaction and performance are linked to service delivery. Usually, employees who are not productive are commonly dissatisfied with their jobs. This affects their performance and makes them more likely to be absent from work on a regular basis, resulting in an unnecessary amount of time off and high absenteeism rates.

According to national studies (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2012), nearly all employee demographic groups report increasing difficulty balancing work and life responsibilities, highlighting the critical need for organisations to implement workplace flexibility to give employees more control over where, when, and for how long they work (Kossek et al., 2014).

1.3 Statement of the problem

While great efforts have been made to improve performance levels within the public sector, criticism of the poor provision of services and the lack of responsiveness to people's needs persists. Concerns about service delivery can be attributed to public officials' performance. Currently, government departments in South Africa face common challenges such as punctuality, frequent requests for time off, lack of commitment, abscondment, inadequate management of employees' wellbeing. These have resulted in high rates of absenteeism in the departments and these effects are associated with the work-life balance, which has impacted negatively on employees' performance.

Department management has attempted to address these matters related to time management and delivery of services because these affect employees' and employers' total working hours per week, which should amount to 40 working hours per week as per the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997. The accumulation of leave by public officials is a standard procedure that has a major financial impact on the State as the employer. If leave is not properly managed and controlled appropriately, consequences could result in substantial losses in the form of unnecessary spending.

Discussions concerning organisational flexibility in terms of field of work have become more common in recent years, owing mostly to family adversities, structural changes, and

globalisation, which have had a severe impact on both firms and employees. As a result, organisations have been required to remain flexible and respond to unforeseen changes in the area of demand, as well as to adjust to new technology and other factors.

As a result, numerous studies have been conducted to examine the outcomes of flexible arrangements. However, it appears that, despite the fact that flexible work arrangements are universally recognised as beneficial to both employers and employees, they have yet to be successfully implemented in the public sector. Notably, providing quality delivery of services is a crucial component of the Department's goals, as outlined in the Department's strategic plans. Nevertheless, there are concerns about the actual commitment and capacity to achieve these goals in light of the institution's recent increase in employee absenteeism. In addition to the financial implications, the incapacitated employee absenteeism from work may have a negative impact on the implementation of the constitutional mandate to meet public service demands.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of flexible working conditions in the workplace using a case study of the provincial Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs situated in KwaZulu-Natal. Public sector organisations make use of their employees' creativeness and potential to achieve both short-term and long-term goals and objectives. Humans are the most important resource for organisations in the service sector, therefore it is critical to research factors which can aid in the development of human resources. Furthermore, because the public sector is responsible for providing services in communities, the availability of a proficient and adequate workforce should be considered. As a result, if employees in the Department are given flexible working conditions, it is more likely that they will serve communities with strong integrity and high moral values.

Working-hour flexibility is frequently regarded as a beneficial work attribute that enables employees to efficiently resolve demands originating from many life challenges, which urges organisations to support working-hour flexibility for employees (Uglanova and Dettmers, 2017). This study will look at analysing the benefits of promoting a flexible working

environment within the Department and how this may affect the behaviour of employees and their work-life balance.

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs;
- To analyse whether flexibility in working conditions will have a positive impact on work and family life, and will influence and increase the job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs;
- To evaluate whether the introduction of flexible working conditions will reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs; and
- To investigate the elements to be considered in order to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

1.5 Research questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will flexibility in working conditions have a positive impact on work and family life, and influence and increase the job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will the introduction of flexible working conditions reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- What elements need to be considered in order to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this research is to submit the analysis to the government authorities for the purpose of policy implementation into flexible working conditions which can inspire and motivate employees, thus eliminating the high level of absenteeism and ensuring retention of staff in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The mandate for the delivery of fair services to communities places a huge demand in terms of dedication and commitment levels on all liable officials of the Department.

According to Dancaister (2014), despite increased female labour-force participation, as well as an increase in broken family structures, divorce, ill-health, and family commitments, there is still a lack of government policy governing work/personal life integration. The study is thus motivated by factors such as providing insight into flexible working conditions in the Department, opening avenues for greater allowances for time off, working from home, and arrangements of working hours to meet the needs of employees.

Furthermore, the significance of the study proposes to contribute to the discourse of work-life balance experiences, by assisting the employer to understand work and home-life balance challenges for both male and female employees. This will also assist the Department in gaining a good understanding and appreciation of the importance of accommodating work and home-life balance and recognising that this is a significant factor in enhancing employee performance and motivation.

1.7 The review of the literature

The review of the literature chapter will probe aspects of analysing the impact of flexibility in the workplace and the effect it has on employee performance, by looking at previously conducted research studies which covered similar topics. The literature of various authors will be utilised with the purpose of providing information about flexibility in the workplace. This chapter will discuss the background, providing a brief history of the evolution of flexible working conditions which will enable a perception of the origins of flexibility, highlighting the benefits of and barriers to flexible practices faced by all employees, including management.

The review will also examine employees' satisfaction and probe how engaged and totally dedicated employees, who are content in their jobs, are confident in their roles within their organisation, as well as the benefits of promoting a flexible working environment for both the employer and the employees within the Department. A brief overview of flexibility in the workplace will be explored with the aim of digging deeper. Furthermore, this chapter will be supplemented by a discussion of related theories and practices relating to flexibility conditions. The chapter will discuss the consequences of management interventions as a result of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

1.7.1 Legislative framework

1.7.1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996

From the beginning of the democratic government in 1994, the South African public sector has complied with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which cites that the country is a multi-party democracy that is democratic, independent, with interrelated spheres of government which are local, provincial, and national. The Constitution provides that all three divisions of government be administered by principles and ethics in the interest of the wellbeing of the people. Section 24 of the Bill of Rights, the second chapter of the Constitution, provides that "everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being". According to the Constitution, every individual must act as a responsible citizen and uphold the rule of law. Chapter 10 of the Constitution addresses specifically the management of public administration and provides a framework for civil servants to follow.

1.7.1.2 Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA) governs how much time an employee spends at work in South Africa (1997). Until now, the structure of the BCEA 75 of 1997 has been the most remarkable framework in terms of the application of the structured flexibility policy. The Act states that all South African employers must regulate each employee's working time/hours. The aim of the Act is to provide the right to non-discriminatory labour principles, as indicated in Section 23(1) of the Constitution, by establishing and regulating basic working conditions. As a result, the Republic accepts responsibility as a member of the International Labour Organisation, providing for all related matters.

1.7.1.3 Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) indicates that employers should make every effort in providing an accessible, supportive, as well as flexible working environment for employees with family accountabilities. This consists of taking into consideration flexible working hours and adequately providing family responsibility leave for both parents. According to Horwitz et al. (2000), in South Africa, flexi-working time has mostly focused on the labour market, rather than engaging with the concept of work/family life balance. According to Dancaster (2006), there is a need in South Africa to scrutinise state policies in order to identify key players, as well as to conduct research on the application of flexible working hours within the public service.

1.7.2 Workplace strategies affecting flexible working conditions

The purpose of this study is to analyse the effects of flexible working conditions in the workplace using the case study of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

1.7.2.1 Analysis of flexible working conditions

According to the Business Dictionary (2012), flexible work is a practice that permits employees specific levels of flexibility in relation to official working hours. This determines how the work will be done and how employees' work schedules will be coordinated in relation to other employees. Workplace flexibility, as defined by Hill et al. (2008:152) occurs when workers make choices that influence when, where, and for how long they should be employed in work-related tasks.

1.7.2.2 Work-life balance

Greenhaus (2010) explains work-life balance as an undertaking that has an effect on satisfaction and smooth operation in both areas with the least amount of conflict in their roles. Furthermore, it is described as a concept which boosts employees to balance their time between work and other important features of their lives. Work-life balance has been described as time management of employees and inter-role conflict, as well as arrangements for the care of

dependents, and can be regarded as vitally important because it impacts significantly on all aspects of a person's life (Dave & Purohit, 2016).

1.7.2.3 Employee engagement

Employee engagement, according to Howe (2003), relates to the state of emotional and logical participation employees invest in the organisation which employs them. Engaged employees want to and do take action toward the improvement of their organisation's business outcomes (Howe, 2003). Additionally, the level of employee engagement, both emotional and intellectual, is a key factor.

1.7.2.4 Employee motivation

According to Griffin et al. (2017), the key dissimilarity between mostly effective, productive organisations and less effective ones is employee motivation. As a result, motivation is one of the most interesting and investigated topics in organisational behaviour. There are several motivational theories which attempt to discern exactly which factors prompt employees to work harder. Employee motivation will be further discussed in chapter Two of the study.

1.7.2.5 Remote working

Accounting Officers have a mandate to fulfil a legal responsibility to determine work conditions and ensure the delivery of the full public service package. COVID-19 accelerated many changes that had been in the pipeline for a long time but had been retarded by old habits and a work culture which was characteristically bureaucratic. Flexibility is an essential factor of a positive workplace culture. The adoption of remote working has assisted in improving trust, in some cases by signifying that physical presence in the office is not required for productivity.

1.7.2.6 The organisational culture

Organisational culture has been associated with motivation and retention of staff as well as an organisation's overall effectiveness (Macintosh and Doherty, 2010). According to Lewis (2003), organisational culture is a critical variance that frequently impacts the result of flexible

working arrangements. According to the research conducted by McDonald et al. (2007), management support is crucial in an organisation with a view to promoting flexible working hours. Kristof (1996) states that, when an organisation's culture incorporates a work-life balance, staff retention is high. In the absence of such, conflict arises when employers and employees adopt opposing views with regards to work-life balance. As a result, employees tend to leave and seek employment in a company with a strong work-life balance culture.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Many models using theoretical frameworks have been comprehensively explored for the purpose of better comprehending flexibility in the workplace. As a result of these studies, there is a greater understanding of the concept of flexible conditions and how these affect employees in terms of different theories. Theory's contribution serves mainly to draw a relationship between flexible working arrangements and improvement in service delivery. Such theories include the following:

1.8.1 Herzberg's two-factor theory

Frederick Herzberg, a psychologist, attempted to comprehend how organisations can support their personnel to become inspired at work during the 1950s and 1960s. He then conducted an investigation to determine the sources of inspiration in the workplace by questioning employees as to exactly what made them happy or unhappy in their jobs. Ever since, the two-factor motivation theory has become the most broadly utilised theoretical framework in terms of job satisfaction research (Dion, 2006). The two-factor theory consists of:

- **Intrinsic/ Motivator factors:** These are motivating factors that encourage individuals to perform exceptionally well because they are intrinsically rewarding and represent employees' psychological needs which will result in long-term motivation and drive. Intrinsic factors consist of attention, achievement, career advancement, growth, recognition, responsibility and the nature of work.
- **Extrinsic /Hygiene factors:** These factors are linked to contextual factors, rather than the job's content, and include elements such as relations, remuneration, policies of the organisation and administration and working conditions. According to Martin (2007), these are the factors that can either push or pull an employee out of an organisation. This theory will be discussed further in chapter Two.

1.8.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory

In support of the flexibility system in the workplace, Maslow's theory on the Hierarchy of Needs (1943) is also discussed as it pertains to employees' emotional and physical wellbeing. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a well-known theory in motivation, in which Maslow divides human needs into five categories: physiological, security, belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. In support of this study, the researcher has carefully considered Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory as applicable to this research.

1.8.3 Self-determination theory

The self-determination model is a human and personality motivation theory which proposes that, once the needs for competency, affiliation, and autonomy are met, people can become self-determined (Garrido, 2021). It is essential to create an environment that is interesting, thereby providing recognition, and to inspire and encourage employee growth and development.

Employees who believe that what they do is under their control and as a result of their free choice, are more likely to be motivated and committed to their employers. These individual employees feel a sense of individuality, they are in control over their work; they experience acceptance, and thus strongly identify with organisations that provide them with freedom. According to Berkery et al. (2017), it is possible that employees will increase their efforts if the flexible arrangements they decide upon assist them manage their work-life balance by reducing levels of stress, exhaustion, burnout, and so on.

1.8.4 Vroom's theory

The relationship between workplace and personal factors was examined in Vroom's theory of job satisfaction. The three factors: valance, expectancy, and instrumentality, according to Vroom's formula, influence job satisfaction, motivation, and performance at work. When these three factors are low, employees' work performance and motivation suffer; when these factors are high, employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation (Vroom, 1964). Furthermore, Vroom stated that satisfying the needs of employees within an organisation can have a positive effect on employee performance.

1.8.5 Spill-over theory

The Spill-over theory is regarded as the most popular theory of the work-life balance. This theory proposes that involvement in one area will have an impact on another. According to Bell et al. (2012), in today's workplace, employees are juggling work and life, which often leads to spill-over. Furthermore, there are two types of spill-overs namely positive and negative spill-over. Positive spill-over refers to how fulfilment and accomplishment in work/life can have a similar effect on life/work.

1.8.6 Border and Boundary theories

Both border and boundary theories are also contributors to the study of flexible work-life balance by detailing how dissimilar stages of work-life integration affect wellbeing and exploring how people establish and cross work-life limitations.

1.9 Research methodology and design of the study

This chapter describes the methodology and research design process. The methodological option was mainly guided by the theoretical viewpoint and the research problem. This section describes the research process that will be utilised in order to answer the questions of the study, the intentions to examine different methods of data collection and the particular techniques used throughout the research.

1.9.1 Research design

A research design is defined as a process of gathering, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:58). According to Creswell (2014), these designs are broken down into three classifications, namely qualitative; quantitative and mixed methods design. Examples of these designs reveal that they all follow a similar pattern. More information will be discussed in chapter Three of this study.

1.9.2 Data collection method

A qualitative method was utilised for the purpose of this study. The researcher saw fit to identify the content that will be analysed in order to provide clarity on flexibility in the workplace. Content exploration will be used to observe the literature and interviews. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), there are quite a few recognised methods of qualitative data collection, which include observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, document archives, and historical research. All of these methods of data collection were used by the researcher. The primary data were collected using in-depth interviews with an interview guide which included open-ended and closed-ended questions.

1.9.3 Sample size and strategy

In research, the objective of sampling is to make an appropriate sub-group of data from a large population that is demonstrative of the population (O'Reilley & Parker, 2013). It is a practice of choosing a small group of the population which represents the whole, or targeted population in a research study. There are types of sampling methods, i.e., the probability and non-probability method. A non-probability method was employed for the purpose of this study. A focus group of interviews representing the population was scheduled, using a sample of 10 participants in the Department from different levels. Sampling strategy will be discussed further in chapter Three of the study. This allowed the researcher to examine the effects of flexible working strategies that the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs management can employ, as well as to identify why absenteeism and employee turnover remain high.

1.9.4 Data quality control

All the attempts and processes established by researchers to make certain that the quality and accuracy of data collected using the methods specifically chosen for the study, are referred to as quality control. Additionally, this must be consistent with features such as applicability, accuracy, relevance, accessibility and transparency of results, similarity and totality. The study considered reliability, sincerity, compliance and dependability as controls.

1.9.5 Data analysis and presentation

Data analysis is well defined as a method of transforming, modelling and cleaning of data with the purpose of finding valuable information for business decisions (Johnson, 2022). The goal of analysing data is to extract valuable information from data and to make decisions based on that information. To supplement the view of a *status quo*, data were collected using focus group interviews and individual interviews. The qualitative content analysis was utilised for the analysis.

1.10 Limitations of the study

Limitations can be described as possible faults or conditions that limit or affect external validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Individual and environmental issues such as attitudes, time of day and availability, as the KZN Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has a demanding work schedule, affected responses to the interview questions, as well as the outcomes. The researcher waited for approval to conduct the research for two months, because the Head of the Department was concerned about too much information being gathered within the Department. Another shortcoming was a delay in conducting interviews. Interviews can be time-consuming. Furthermore, finding the right time to conduct the interviews with the participants was also a challenge, translating the interviews was time-consuming. Extracting the findings from the interviews in relation to the research aims and objectives all consumed a lot of the researcher's time.

1.11 Ethical considerations

Considering the nature of this research, it was crucial for the researcher to inform participants that the interviews were highly confidential, since the questions could interfere with their privacy in relation to how they perceive the Department. Ethical consideration can be described as guiding principles for research strategies and practices. When data is collected from participants, scientists and researchers, collection methods subscribe to an obligation to follow a set of rules. In so far as this study is concerned, officials in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs were treated fairly and equally. The information gathered, together with responses to the interview questions, was utilised specifically for the purposes of

this study. The researcher acquired authorisation from the Department to conduct interviews. Consent forms, together with letters enlightening participants as to the nature of the study and the purpose of the interviews were circulated to targeted participants, inclusive of senior management, consisting of DDG and Chief Director and Directors from different Business Units. A sample of Middle Management from other Directorates was also included. The researcher applied for Ethical Clearance through the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Office.

1.12 The structure of the dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction and overview of the study

This section introduces the foundation of the research and reveals the research problem. It elaborates on the research questions; providing insight on the objectives that the study anticipates attaining. The study discusses a brief review, the methodology to be utilised, the significance of the study, as well as the study's theoretical frameworks and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter discusses the main elements of the literature that supports the study's requirement. The history, brief overview, theoretical and legislative framework that supports the study, as well as the significance of the model's relevancy to the study is also demonstrated. Analysis and brief evaluations that support flexible working conditions are discussed further in this chapter.

Chapter Three: Research methodology and design

The research methodology employed in this study is detailed in this chapter. The approach used to conduct the empirical study to observe the nature of the correlation between flexitime and employee absenteeism is extrapolated by the researcher. The sampling method, data collection methods, research instruments, and data analysis techniques are explained.

Chapter Four: Presentation of findings and analysis

The outcomes are presented and interpreted, based on the intentions projected to be achieved using the study of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The analysis of the findings of the study will be discussed.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

This section covers the conclusions of the study and provides recommendations which emanate from the findings.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the extent of the study, including the motivation, and limitations of the study. An outline of the chapters was provided. For the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to improve service provision, factors such as non-attendance, punctuality and staff retention will be examined. Challenges related to the non-delivery of services can be managed by introducing flexible conditions for employees. The focus of the next chapter is on literature review. This will assist in laying the groundwork for understanding the relationship between flexible work arrangements, motivation, and performance within the Department's shared service.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the growing interest in flexible working conditions using a case study of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Working patterns are changing, moving toward flexibility and mobility over the course of several decades. Alternative workplace models, such as co-working spaces, digital working hubs, working from home, on-demand spaces and office clubs are developing in major organisations. These current trends will certainly result in remarkable changes such as flexible working hours, altered workplace business operations, and new workplace location options. However, there is still a lack of understanding about the implications of such adaptable modern conditions. To address this issue, the current paper employs a systematic literature review method, discusses the historical evolution and different types of flexible working arrangements (FWA) and investigates their impact on the Department.

Workplace flexibility has recently become a key-point on many organisations' agendas in the modern economy, including the public sector. Furthermore, flexibility in the modern workplace has become so fundamental that few scholars now question the importance of workplace flexibility. As a result, research on workplace flexibility is primarily focused on how it can be beneficial for both employees and organisations, as well as how flexibility enables employee and organisational performance (Way et al., 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2017). Employees, for example, are said increasingly be demanding flexibility in their jobs and negotiating flexible working hours (Bal et al., 2012). Simultaneously, in a hypercompetitive environment, organisations strive to become more flexible (Sanchez, 1995; Berk and Kae, 2010).

2.2 Overview and a brief history of the evolution of flexible working conditions

Workplaces and styles of working have changed dramatically over the last three decades, owing to the increasingly huge impact of advances in technology (Harris, 2015). The

continuous development of information and communication systems, changing organisational structures, and modification of work requirements has necessitated change (Göçer, Göçer, Karahan, & Oygür, 2018). This section illustrates the historic evolution of flexible working, from its inception to its development period. In the 1970s, when he was working remotely on a complex NASA communication system, Jack Nilles proposed the first flexible working concept by defining the term "telecommuting". The International Telework Association and Council, later renamed Telework Coalition, which was established in 1993 with the goal of promoting telework aimed to improve work-life balance, increase employment opportunities, and reduce traffic and associated pollution.

Furthermore, Veldhoen (1995) recommended the approach of the "activity-based workplace" in which employees' workplaces are organised around their activities rather than spending the entire day at a single workstation. Such attempts at new workplace strategies and creativity are commendable. A number of Dutch organisations have adopted "flexible" office concepts. Meanwhile, there have been several attempts to create flexible workplaces. Well-known companies such as Steelcase, IBM, Johnson Controls, and other organisations around the world have seen this trend emerge. According to earlier data collected, six out of every ten government offices have adopted flexible working hours. Switzerland had the most widespread acceptance, with 30 to 40 per cent of all employees covered, and up to 70 per cent in some cities such as Zurich (Maric, 1980).

Alternative work schedules have been widely used in developed countries however many superiors regard these as distant possibilities for their own organisations. Although there are uncertainties regarding the feasibility of such work schedules, the plea for approval of and acceptance of the concept of flexible working hours is growing (Noor, 2015). The development of flexible systems like in Switzerland, has compelled other countries to experiment with the system. In the USA, 10 of 19 organisations which attempted such flexible systems, have reported growth in productivity, 12 reported a decrease in lateness, while 6 reported a decrease in absenteeism, with only 1 organisation reporting an increase.

2.3 The approach and description of flexibility in the workplace

According to Hogarty (2021), workplace flexibility necessitates being able to adapt to new conditions as they arise. An employee who can adapt to change can adjust his/her procedures to overcome unforeseen difficulties. Employers can also support and encourage this mind-set, by allowing employees to decide work patterns which include work programs and locations, supported by flexible offices. Hill et al. (2008:152) define workplace flexibility as "the capability of employees to make decisions that are influencing when, where, and for how long they take part in work-related tasks". It simply means an agreement or program that replaces the customary workday and workweek. Employees can choose a different work schedule to meet their personal or family needs. In addition, employers can initiate different schedules to meet the diverse needs of their clients.

Work flexibility requires that employers be more considerate about their employees' wellbeing and realise that they also have a life outside of work. It is about offering opportunities and options to support them to meet the needs of their professional and personal lives. Flexible work arrangements are available, deciding on the right one can bring about a huge transformation in employees' lives. According to studies, employees in a flexible working environment are more likely to stay in such an organisation hence be more productive. It is imperative to be aware of flexible work practices and understand their differences. Some common types are discussed below.

2.3.1 Flexitime

According to the South African public sector, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 emphasises that the working day starts from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., which is an example of working conditions' hours. Many employees around the world start and finish their jobs at this time. Any variation on these times is referred to as flexible time (flexi-time), in which an employee is permitted to begin and end the workday at times other than the standard working hours. The number of hours worked remains constant, but the employee is free to choose his/her start and end times. According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, all South African employers must regulate the working hours of each employee in accordance

- with the provisions of any Act governing occupational health and safety;

- with due regard to the health and safety of employees;
- with due regard to the Code of Good Practice on the Regulation of Working Time issued under section 87 (1) (a); and
- with due regard to the family responsibilities of employees (RSA, 1997).

2.3.2 A compressed workweek

An arranged workweek is a settlement between an employee and the supervisor whereby an employee will work more hours but fewer days in the week, for example, s/he may work certain hours a day, for four days in a week, as an alternative to eight hours a day for five days, in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (RSA, 1997). Employees reflect greater levels of job satisfaction when working in this manner, as an extra day of the week can be used for individual needs. In some instances, employers have discovered a growth in productivity and a reduction in staff turnover and absenteeism.

2.3.3 Job sharing

This is a system which is suitable for people who want to work less than 40 hours a week or who are unable to work a full week due to a lack of accessible amenities for children. In job sharing, two employees share the duties and time required for a specific job and are willing to be paid according to the number of hours worked by each (Ochieng & Kamau, 2021). Job sharing has potential in terms of benefits whereby qualified individuals are employed and tasks are shared. For this to be more effective, both employees must be compatible, have the ability to communicate and to trust each other.

2.3.4 Remote working

Remote working is not a popular option in the South African public sector. The regulated national lockdown compelled the public service to initiate and develop appropriate frameworks and policies to standardise remote working. The implementation of remote work in the public service will require the necessary infrastructure and complementary IT support to deal with cybersecurity issues. According to Almer and Kaplan (2002), remote working is regarded as a flexible or short-term established employment procedure between the employer and employees, who are permitted to work from a generalised office or from home, for

a particular period, depending on the situations and risks that are associated with predetermined requirements in the workplace with respect to the professional needs of the official.

The authorisation for remote working is a management choice, not an obligation or right. Remote work can be for a fixed term that recurs on a regular basis, which will depend on the nature of the work. This kind of arrangement must be supplemented by a formal remote working contractual agreement. This serves as a formal mechanism/regulation for accountability for the use of resources, as well as contracted services. Furthermore, the public sector is far different from many private sector firms. Some people and jobs will be better suited to remote work than others, which implies that any multi-purpose approach will fall short of its goals. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period should have provided new actionable insights into which types of tasks, positions, and employees are better suited to remote work than others.

2.4 Options provided by the South Africa Government

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 was designed in accordance with Section 23 (1) of the Constitution of 1996 to make certain that labour patents across all industries are fair. The law sets out employment conditions related to working hours, leave, contract termination, etc., and provides fair labour policies that employers and employees should follow. It outlines some of the key elements of the BCEA that apply to the public sector employees (RSA, 1997). SA labour affairs have always been debated, particularly given the country's history and the manner in which certain groups of people have been exploited. The number of different leave regulations that apply to various employment situations are outlined below.

2.4.1 Annual leave

An annual paid leave cycle refers to a 12-month duration of an employment service with the very same employer immediately after the employee has been appointed or immediately finalises the prior leave cycle. For annual leave, the following conditions must be met:

- ✓ The employer should offer officials at least 22 days of paid annual leave. The number of days differs when the employee has reached 10 years of service with the same employer.
- ✓ The employer and employee must agree to have one day of annual leave, which is paid in full after every 17 days the employee has worked (RSA, 1997).

2.4.2 Sick leave

The term "sick leave cycle" refers to a 36-month period subsequent to an employee's commencing date or the completion of that employee's previous sick leave cycle. An employee is eligible for paid sick leave during each sick leave cycle equivalent to the number of days the official would usually work over a six-week period. As an example, an employee is entitled to one day of paid sick leave for every 26 days worked during the first six months of employment (RSA, 1997).

2.4.3 Maternity and parental leave

Employees have an equal right to take various forms of leave under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 with reference to childbirth. Employees are authorised to take maternity leave equal to four ongoing months. Furthermore, the official may take maternity leave for up to four weeks before the expected delivery date, except when a doctor or midwife ascertains that the health of the employee or of the unborn baby does not require this. It should be recalled that an employee will be unable to work six weeks after the birth of the child except in the circumstances where a doctor or midwife attests to the ability of the employee to return to work. Employees who become parents are authorised to use 10 successive days of parental leave, regardless of their gender. Consecutive days of parental leave are days reflected on the calendar, not working days (RSA, 1997).

2.4.4 Family responsibility leave

Family responsibility leave is a fixed number of annual paid days approved for employees who work more than four days per week and have been with the company for four months. It is an addition to any other types of leave, such as annual and sick leave. Likewise, an employee is only entitled to family responsibility leave if, for example, an official's husband, wife or child

dies. Any other relative's death is not covered by family responsibility leave. Such situations must be treated as annual leave.

According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, family responsibility leave in South Africa is only granted:

- ✓ When an official's child, including adopted child, is sick and is younger than 18 years; and
- ✓ When it affects an employee's spouse or life partner, or a parent, whether adopted or not.

2.4.5 Special leave

The main goal of providing employees with special leave is to encourage the foundation of a supportive working environment for individuals and, as a result, to improve and acknowledge their contribution to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Each request for special leave is measured on its own merits, and approval will be subject to the supply of supportive documentation (RSA, 1997).

The leave requirements in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and sectoral provisions are basic principles offered, but these standard principles can be developed in two ways. The first is that an employer can make a decision to increase the number of leave days currently available to employees. The condition is that the leave may not be less than prescribed by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (RSA, 1997) or the sectoral provisions. Several employers have done the same, with leave policies specifying that employees must be given between 15 and 30 working days of leave. Employers frequently use leave as a retention and reward strategy, providing more leave to employees who have served the organisation longer, and offering leave days as a reward, increasing or providing a set number of days with a long service award. The Code of Good Practice for scheduling work hours emphasises that it is important to take the particular requirements of employees into account, such as those who are expecting, nursing, or have family responsibilities. Codes of good practice are regarded as recommendations for employers, not binding rules. There are programmes that are provided by the Public Service.

2.5 Flexible working implementation from the South African perspective

Referring to South African legislation, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 states that, “Employers should make every effort to offer an accessible, supportive and an environment that is more flexible for officials with family responsibilities. This is inclusive of permitting flexible working hours and allowing adequate family leave to both parents” (RSA, 1998).

Horwitz et al. (2000) states that flexible time in South Africa has focused on flexibility in the labour markets and rejected the concept of work/family life. Dancaster (2006) pointed out that from a South African perspective, the focus was on flexible working hours, more for the productivity and effectiveness of the organisation than a focus on work-life balance. This indicates that, in South Africa there is a need to explore the issue of state policy and identify key actors, along with relevant research on the implementation of flexible working hours within the sector.

Dancaster (2014) indicates that, in the South African government there is still a lack of policy provisions in reference to flexibility in the workplace regardless of improved female appointments in the labour-force as well as an increase in support structures for broken families. Additionally, Dancaster and Baird (2015) indicate that, when compared to international countries, South African organisations are not embracing work-care provisions. According to the study, the presence of women in higher positions in the organisational structure is associated with higher acceptance of work-care provisions.

2.6 Effects of non-flexibility in the workplace

2.6.1 High level of absenteeism in the Department

Employee absence is defined as an employee's common non-appearance from work. This type of absenteeism is commonly classified as a routine of absence that does not consist of approved leave. Organisations have recognised that it is challenging to go to work every day and that is the main reason for the introduction of flexible working conditions. On the same note, some companies including government departments have leave policies in place for employees in the event of crises or health issues. When employees are frequently absent, it becomes a

problem and is referred to as absenteeism. Employee absenteeism is a major issue in most government departments. Those who skip workdays and arrive late to work contribute to a high absenteeism rate. Such behaviour tends to affect service delivery and lowers employee morale.

2.6.2 Staff retention

The SA labour force's current developments indicate that the South African public sector is battling to retain vitally important employees. Currently, the South African public sector is regarded as short-staffed and is employing underqualified employees, creating difficulties for the provision of the required services to the community. Even though research has been executed on aspects that are causing employees to leave the public sector, little is known about the factors that influence public sector employees to remain in the sector. Some reasons for employees' attitudes to change stem from a lack of training, a poor career path, rigid and poor-quality working environments, a lack of recognition, limited promotion opportunities, low salary and job security and work without challenges (Nienbar & Masibigiri, 2012).

The South African public sector is presently dealing with a 52 per cent employee turnover and is continually planning and battling to retain key personnel and employees. The KZN Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is also encountering a high employee turnover rate and is currently dealing with a growth in the number of intentional staff turnovers. According to Goldsmith (2013), flexible working arrangements were perceived as one of the key factors prompting an employee's choice to remain within the organisation and thus retain staff; moreover, flexible working arrangements were distinguished as a principal feature in job satisfaction. As per a report on employee job satisfaction and engagement, flexibility in the workplace was ranked higher than career advancement and compensation in a report by the Strategic Human Resource Management (2012).

2.6.3 Employee stress

The South African government departments are facing a number of challenges related to employee stress. This could be work stress or family-related matters. A full analysis of the South African media and observations within the Department, reveals that employees and the public have lost trust in the government as an organisation. This is mainly due to immoral

behaviour and practices within the public sector, such as fraud, corruption, discrimination, cadre deployment, conflict of interests, and maladministration. As a result, not only has this destruction affected the public as recipients of government services, but it has also resulted in a lack of confidence and trust among long-serving public servants, has hampered their performance and has had an evidently detrimental impact on the welfare of employees.

2.6.4 Organisation culture

An organisational culture is defined by Wong (2020) as the compilation of values, practices and expectations that guide and inform the engagements of all team members. It influences every feature of the organisation from punctuality, terms of employment and employee benefits. The most common barrier to implementing a flexible workplace policy is changing the organisational culture. This is likely to be the case in the public sector, which is more hierarchical and controlled. The South African government, as in most emerging countries, is under pressure in terms of addressing transformation for better service delivery. This has an impact on the culture that is formed in the public sector.

According to researchers (Macintosh and Doherty, 2010), leadership and organisational culture affect the performance of the organisation, while a clash between leadership and organisational culture sends mixed messages to employees, thus building an unstable environment. When the workplace culture is not in accordance with employees' needs, they are more likely to feel stressed and unsupported.

The culture of an organisation provides an appropriate manner in which to conduct oneself within the organisation. This culture is made up of collective beliefs and values established by management, which are then communicated and reinforced through several procedures, eventually shaping employee perceptions, behaviours, and conduct. In an organisation where a weak culture is adopted, individuals accept their responsibilities out of fear of their superiors and harsh policies. Employees in such a situation act out of necessity. They only see their organisation as a means of making money and never become attached to it.

Organisational culture has been closely associated with employee job satisfaction and retention as well as an organisation's overall effectiveness (Macintosh and Doherty, 2010). It is a critical feature that contributes to the outcome of flexible working arrangements. According to the

research conducted by McDonald et al. (2007), management support is critical in an organisation to promote flexible working hours, when an organisation's culture incorporates a work-life balance, staff retention is high (Kristof, 1996).

Observations revealed that organisations with a concrete culture that supports its employees in carrying out their tasks and working toward achieving their goals, produce effective organisational performance. In their study of the banking and education sectors, Yadav and Dabhade (2014) have concluded that a lack of work-family life balance leads to job dissatisfaction. To ease the conflict between work and family, a supportive and understanding management is required. The recommendations made are that, for the purpose of improving an organisation's work culture, management must take drastic steps to boost employee morale by implementing organisational strategies.

2.6.5 Family issues

In recent phases, the working environment all over the world has drastically changed. The global economic situation has necessitated women entering the labour market. More women are entering the labour force because of the relaxation of laws and non-discrimination regarding empowerment of women, in addition to society's acceptance of women in the workplace. This means that they will have to make provision for their children and/or the elderly to be taken care of. Global economic conditions pressurise women to enter the labour market, and therefore, as women are progressively accommodated into the workforce, the demand for caregiving and household responsibilities increases. About 60 per cent of adults in households are employed due to changing economic factors, forcing them to rely on caregivers. As the demographics of the workplace change and more women move into leadership positions, taking on greater responsibilities, it is clear that they still need to provide for the needs of their families (Macintosh and Doherty, 2010).

Employees become strained when they have to fulfil the roles of being both an employee and taking care of family matters. This is because they are required to divide their time and energy, which are limited resources. Lack of work-life balance can escalate symptoms of stress and influence mental health adversely. Families in which both parents find it challenging to balance family and work responsibilities can become emotionally and psychologically drained which can lead to burnout. According to research conducted, stress that is triggered by work-family inconsistency has been associated with marital issues and dissatisfaction at home. The literature

confirms that women are in need of flexible working hours in order to balance work and personal life. A lack of flexibility can lead to increased stress levels, marriage problems and can minimise family time.

2.6.6 Working relationship between the manager and an employee

Manager-employee relationships are important, but if the two are incompatible, this can be detrimental to the organisation. Several studies (Yadav & Dabhade, 2014) conducted in recent years have established that employees respond negatively to abusive supervisors' behaviour which may be detrimental to the delivery of public services, and can, furthermore, lead to poor work performance, non-standard work behaviour, absenteeism and resignation. Abuse in the workplace is identified as harassment, nasty behaviour, prejudice, abdication, to name but a few. Some managers adopt and foster a culture of force, imposing fear and doubt. They set unreasonable expectations for the completion of work within a short space of time, provide excessively strict supervision, and, on a regular basis, dismiss employees who are incompetent.

The most significant barrier to public service delivery is a lack of effective leadership morals, while a lack of ethics in government causes people to behave in unacceptable ways, affecting the relationship between the employee and the manager, thus affecting public service delivery. To foster sound working relationships, leadership must always be held accountable. Leaders are viewed as an important component in the success or failure of public service delivery by government employees, and leaders are expected to guide employee performance.

Conflict between managers and junior level staff can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including non-cooperation, bullying and anger, personality clashes and misunderstood communication. Workplace conflict can lead to work disruptions, decreased productivity, project failure, absenteeism, turnover, and termination. Unresolved issues will fester into resentment and create a toxic environment, draining everyone's passion for their work and respect for their leader. Such issues will make it more difficult to collaborate and grow as a team.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Theories are established to give details, determine and comprehend phenomena, as well as, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the confines of critical

bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework for this study that will be used is Herzberg's two-factor theory comprising Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs will be used as a tool to analyse actions, explain events, and gain a better understanding of the impact of flexible work arrangements in the South African public sector, the Self-Determination theory, Spill-over theory and Vroom's theory will also be applied.

The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a research study's theory. It presents and describes the concept that elucidates why the research problem under consideration exists.

2.7.1 Herzberg's two-factor theory

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (also known as the Two-Factor Theory) was published in his celebrated article, "One More Time" *How do you Motivate Employees*. His discoveries were enormously influential, and still continue to form the foundation of good motivational practice almost half a century later. This theory attempts to elaborate on organisational motivation and satisfaction concentrating on factors of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg's theory, motivation and satisfaction are interrelated and the factors that lead to satisfaction vary from those that lead to dissatisfaction. The theory also indicates that motivational and hygienic factors inspire employees to perform and contribute to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 2003). When applying the two-factor theory, according to Herzberg, the insufficiency of hygiene factors in the workplace causes employee dissatisfaction. These factors must exist in order to eradicate dissatisfaction, nevertheless, their existence does not assure complete satisfaction. Meanwhile, motivational factors are essential to encourage an employee to perform better.

- *The intrinsic/ motivational factors*

These factors are inherent to positive job satisfaction and motivate employees to perform at their full potential. They are also called satisfiers. They play a role in the implementation of work. Employees perceive these factors as fundamentally rewarding. The motivational factors signify psychological needs, which are perceived as an added benefit. Motivating factors include:

- ✓ Acknowledgement - Employees should be admired and acknowledged by their managers for their accomplishments.
- ✓ A sense of accomplishment - Employees need to have a sense of accomplishment, the type of the job that is done by the employee likely determines this, and anyway, work has to pay off.
- ✓ Opportunities for development – Opportunities for growth and advancement in an organisation must be available to motivate employees to perform well.
- ✓ Accountability - Employees must hold themselves accountable for their work.
- ✓ Managers should give them ownership of the work. One must minimise control but retain responsibility.
- ✓ Meaningful work - The work itself should be meaningful, interesting and challenging for the employee to achieve and to motivate them.

Stinchcomp and Leip (2013) conclude that labour turnover was reduced in environments in which employees were respected, appreciated and acknowledged, not to mention that recognition and appreciation can be motivating factors that ensure job retention within organisations. Moreover, employee passion is positively influenced by recognition and appreciation. Some researchers recommend that personnel, who are working in the direction of organisational goals for intrinsic aims, are commonly more pleased with their jobs and normally perform better because they perceive that they fit into the organisation better.

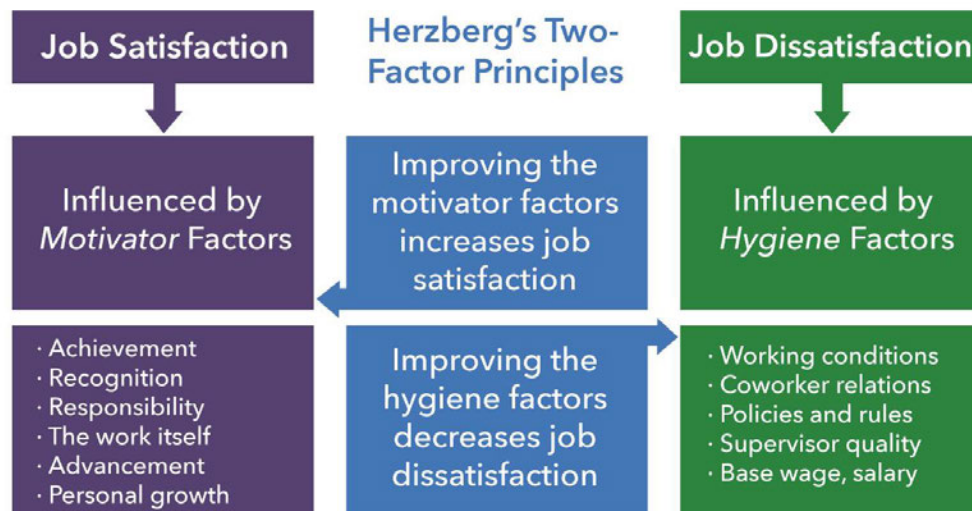
- *Extrinsic factors/ De-motivators:*

Extrinsic motivation is defined as behaviour motivated by external rewards. These rewards can be monetary or academic in nature, or they can be intangible. They include factors such as job security, salary increments, fringe benefits, working conditions, paid insurance and vacations. Unlike intrinsic motivation, which comes from within the individual, extrinsic motivation is solely driven by external rewards. People who are intrinsically motivated will continue to perform a task even if it is not inherently rewarding.

Furthermore, it is imperative to understand that extrinsic factors do not retain a lasting employee fulfilment, regardless of the fact that these factors have a significant influence on workplace motivation, as these may include fringe remunerations, position and status, personal

relationships and organisational procedures. Senior managers should bear in mind that not providing proper and anticipated extrinsic motivators will invite and sow dissatisfaction and decrease motivation among employees. Moreover, job satisfaction is often linked to economic conditions, according to Herzberg's 1959 Motivation-Hygiene theory.

Figure 2.1: Herzberg's two-factor principles



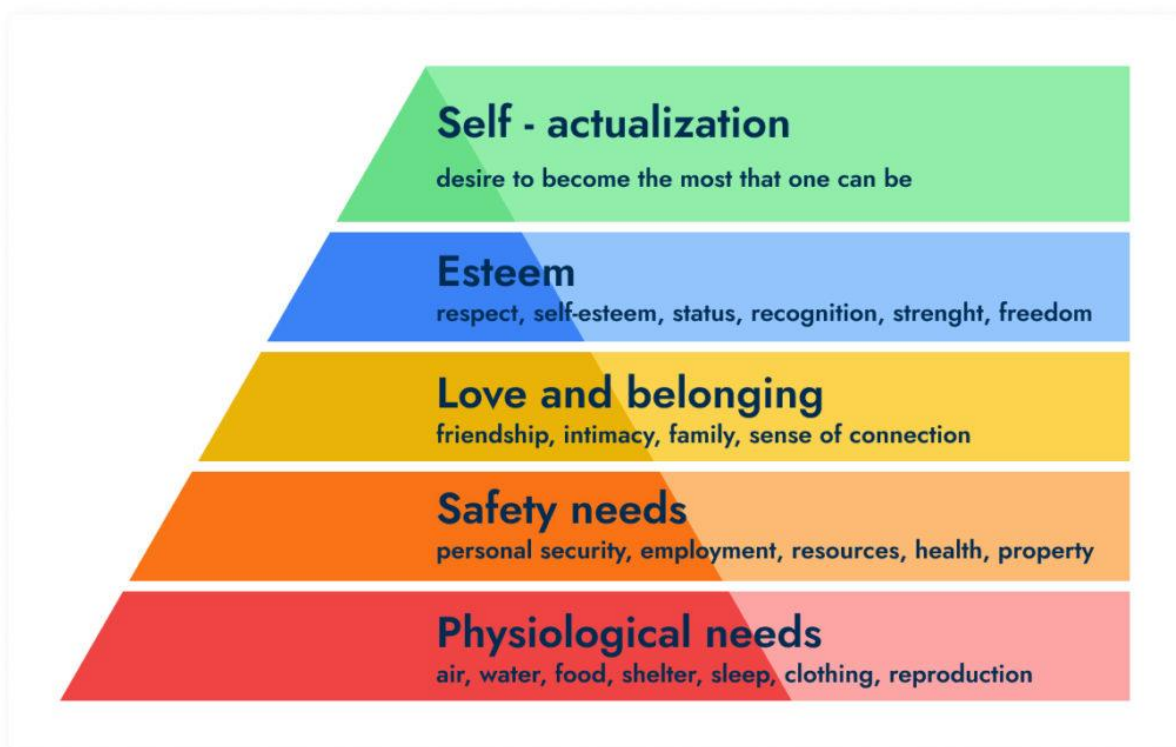
Source: Herzberg (1970)

In support of the above, the intrinsic and extrinsic relationship suggests resources that can be of assistance in meeting the demands of the workplace, such as personal characteristics like managing skills, problem-solving, decisiveness, time management and a good working environment as well as social support. Furthermore, the study recommends that resources be increased by investing in work infrastructure, training, good management and employment practices, as well as the way work is organised. This includes assessing the risk of stress among employees, looking for workplace pressures that could cause high and long-term levels of stress, determining who might be harmed, and determining whether organisations are doing enough to prevent that harm (Michie, 2002:68).

2.7.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Cairn (2013) examined the effects of flexible work arrangements in the context of Maslow's motivational theory, whereby Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) are seen as benefits that fall in the lower level of the hierarchy under security. The exclusion of the benefit of flexible work arrangements from the lower level of Maslow's Hierarchy, may not have an impact on employee performance. However, if FWAs were part of a higher need on the hierarchy such as self-actualisation, the removal of the benefit of FWAs from this level of Maslow's would have depended on an employee's motivation and individual capabilities. In other words, depending on where FWAs are placed on Maslow's Hierarchy, the impact of their absence will be diverse. It is therefore critical to consider FWAs and the impact they have on a group setting as opposed to an individual setting where employees are expected to work independently. Maslow (1943) describes five motivational needs, namely: self-actualisation, esteem, love/ belonging, safety and physiological needs. The rationalisation is that, if these needs are met or if a determined effort is made for them to be met, the pressure that is associated with these needs will be minimised (McLeod, 2014:370).

Figure 2.2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Online (2022)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs applies to this study because employee flexibility is interrelated with different themes, inclusive of motivation, and individuals who have a desire to further advance their prospects within an organisation will require recognition from their employer. Organisations that encourage and ensure their employees' ability to be flexible in their working arrangements enable employees to strive for their highest life accomplishments. Employees are motivated to perform at a higher level when an individual's basic needs are met. According to Maslow, once a need is met, it is no longer a motivator because an individual will only take action to satisfy unmet needs and gains, and, according to Maslow, before a person can take action to satisfy a need at any level on this pyramid, the needs below must already be satisfied.

2.7.3 Self-determination theory (SDT)

Deci and Ryan (2002) established the self-determination theory of motivation, proposing a shared belief that the best way to get people to be dedicated to their work is to compensate employees to inspire their performance. According to the self-determination theory, people search for methods to attain ability and positive connections with others in addition to being motivated by a need for autonomy, such as part-time work and freelancing. The ability to make choices and manage one's own life is referred to as self-determination. Being self-determined means that one feels more in control of one's life, as opposed to being non-self-determined, which can make a person feel as if his/her life is controlled by others.

This theory promotes internal control over one's actions above the effects of externality. Further to this, the theory has a major impact on intrinsic rewards obtained from work; the sense of achievement attained by an employee because of engaging in work that s/he enjoys. Subsequently, the upholding of self-esteem and the self-actualisation principle are evaluating indices of intrinsic motivation that encourage individual actions of competence and imply fulfilment in the workplace (Robbins, Judge & Vohra, 2012).

Though the original authors of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) acknowledge that extrinsic rewards such as verbal praise and feedback on competence can improve even intrinsic motivation under certain conditions, the central theme of the self-determination theory

is that rewards and deadlines reduce motivation if people perceive them to be coercive (Robbins, Judge & Vohra, 2012).

2.7.4 Spill-over theory

In general, the spill-over theory states that participation in one sector affects participation in another sector (Staines, 1980). In the reality of work-life today, Bell et al. (2012) state that employees rush to manage their work and life which often leads to conflict. Spill-over refers to the overlap between work and family. Furthermore, the level to which work commitments intrude into the family sphere and likewise the extent to which family requirements impose on the work domain, have been discussed and researched to help people balance these two equally demanding domains. The spill-over theory inspects the effect of the work domain on the home domain, as well as the transmission of work-associated emotions from the employee to others at home. Spill-over refers to the transferal of well-being states from one domain of life to another. The procedure arises at the inward level within one person, but across multiple domains. Transferred practices from one domain to another can be either negative or positive.

Furthermore, the theory suggests that the environment under which the spill-over between the work and family microsystems is either positive or negative. The researcher discovered that, if work-family interconnection is stringently regulated in terms of time and space, then spill-over in reference to time, drive and behaviour is usually negative. Research also underpins the concept that work flexibility, which qualifies individuals to incorporate and overlap work and family duties with regards to time and space, leads to positive spill-over and is influential in achieving a healthy work and family balance.

2.7.5 Vroom's theory

In 1964, Victor Harold Vroom established the Expectancy Theory of Motivation. His psychology lessons have enlightened how people conduct themselves in the workplace, specifically in terms of motivation, leadership, and decision-making. Maslow and Herzberg observe the correlation concerning internal needs and the determination required to meet them, while Vroom's expectancy theory distinguishes between motivation, performance, and end results (Channell, 2021).

Vroom identified that personal features such as persona, abilities, knowledge and capabilities commonly determine the performance of the employees. Additionally, he indicated that a person's motivation is interconnected to effort, performance, and motivation. To justify this, he employs variables such as Expectancy, Instrumentality and Valence.

- *Expectancy*

Employees have diverse beliefs and levels of self-confidence in their abilities. Management must identify which resources, training, or supervision employees require.

- *Instrumentality*

This refers to employees' perceptions as to whether they will receive what they want, even if a manager has promised it. In this case management must ensure that reward agreements are kept and that employees are aware of this.

- *Valence*

This refers to people's expressive overview toward reward and the power of an employee's need for extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. Management must learn what employees value most.

Vroom's expectancy theory defines how to motivate employees. When employees are given the same rewards as anticipated, the expectancy theory is achieved through increasing productivity.

Effective leaders have an understanding that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach when it comes to employee motivation. Some employees in a similar role might approach their work differently, have different backgrounds and principles, and value different rewards which are meaningful to them. Understanding expectancy theory could contribute to the growth of more effective and concrete motivational strategies for individuals, as well as the progress of a positive association between determinations, outcomes, and rewards for all employees (Vroom, 1964).

2.7.6 Border and Boundary theory

Researchers have long documented that work and family life cannot be isolated but are mutually supporting roles with "permeable" limitations (Kanter, 1977; Pleck, 1977). Some have gone so far as to accept this link in supporting initiatives that help working families get involved in these sectors. The border theory of work-life (Clark, 2000) and the boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000) discuss the combination and reflection of boundaries in work and family life.

Clark (2000) suggests the work/life border theory, which holds that individuals manage and negotiate the work and family area in such a way that a balance is attainable between them. The perception is established on the theory that, work and life balance are two distinctive subjects that influence each other. The border theory sees the link between the domains as a field ranging from division to integration, with the two domains mutually exclusive at the pole of segmentation and identical at the pole of integration (Voydanoff, 2005a). These models contribute to the study of the work-family relationship by clarifying the primary circumstances at different levels, citing that work-family incorporation can develop or reduce the individual's well-being. Clark (2000) maintains that individuals can be categorised as "border crossers" and "border guards" in terms of how they regulate and cooperate with the sphere of work and family.

2.8 Legislative framework

The use of new public management as an updated method to restructuring the public sector has led to the development of a new paradigm, which includes change management, reprioritisation of management in governance matters, accountability, sustainability, capacity building, and performance management systems, none of which existed in the old public administration (Hughes, 2012, p. 2-3). According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, every person is equivalent before the law and is entitled to equal security and benefit from it. Equal opportunity consists of the full and equal advantage of all rights and freedom, as well as judicial processes aimed to protect or develop individuals or groups of individuals who have been deprived by unfair discrimination. The South African labour environment is highly administered, and the following are some sections of legislation intended to address workplace flexibility and work-life balance from a South African perspective.

2.8.1 Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

Section 9 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA) reveals that the employee's maximum working time is 45 hours per week. This does not imply that they must work 45 hours per week, hence they can work for 40 hours alternatively. The employer and employee agree on the amount of time worked.

Dancaster (2014) indicates that the South African public sector still lacks government policy regarding flexibility in the workplace, regardless of increased female labour-force participation, as well as an increase in awareness of assistance required concerning broken family structures. Furthermore, findings indicate that, when compared to international countries, SA organisations have not embraced work-care provisions. According to Dancaster (2014) the appointment of women in higher positions in the organisational structure is linked to the recognition of work-care requirements.

2.8.2 Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The purpose of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, is to establish levels of satisfaction among employees in the workplace, moreover it is organising employers to give officials unbiased employment by not discriminating against them. The act addresses the key features of life as it permits workers to organise how their family responsibilities will be defined (RSA,1998).

It also serves as a framework for enticing, developing, evolving, and retaining an employer's human resource talent. According to research, employers can boost productivity, motivation, and creativity in the workplace by investing in their employees and treating them fairly and equally. The Employment Equity Act of 1998 furthermore states that an evaluation of work principles, practices, techniques and work environment should be conducted to detect any obstacles that may lead to a lack of representation or the use of organised labour (RSA, 1998).

Human Resource practitioners are finding difficulties in developing and implementing policies that do not meet the needs of employees, which is causing organisations to be unable to accomplish their objectives. As a result, the purpose of this study is to analyse research input

on the effects of flexible conditions in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs that can be used to inform these policies (RSA, 1998).

2.9 Benefits of supporting a flexible working environment

The discussion which follows relates to the benefits of supporting a flexible working environment.

2.9.1 Work-life balance

Work-life balance has become increasingly more important in recent years. It has become a critical component of human resources in most organisations. Work-life balance has become more relevant recently for a variety of reasons, including an increasing competitiveness, a change in demographics, an increasing female labour-force, changing technology, and due to an increase in the number of dual-income households (Shoemaker, Brown, Barbour, 2011).

The balance between work and life is an essential factor in every person's daily routine, and it is critical that an organisation makes certain that each employee feels appreciated in the work that s/he carries out each day. This relieves stress and allows employees to be more engaged and productive at work as well as at home. The concept of work-life balance is very attractive to the 'Y' Age group, which encompasses those born in the 1980s and early 1990s. The output quality is more valued irrespective of where it is completed or the number of hours worked, as long as the work is done. Even though the 'Y' generation was raised in families where parents worked long hours with little flexibility, this generation understands that time spent with family is just as important as time spent at work. This understanding was reached at the expense of their loved ones and family. Their goal is to achieve workplace fulfilment while living a healthy lifestyle.

2.9.2 Employee engagement

Additionally, the level of employee engagement, both emotional and intellectual, is the main factor. Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement is widely used in research. He expressed this as the employment of organisational members according to their work roles, in

which employees express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development defines employee engagement as being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions, and meaningful connections with others.

According to research conducted (Kahn, 1990), the more engaged employees are, the more likely their employer will outperform the industry average in terms of revenue growth. Employee engagement, staff retention, business sales and profit, and total shareholder returns all have a connection. When employees are not engaged in what they do on a daily basis, an organisation's financial situation suffers significantly. The engagement of employees leads to higher levels of performance and productivity. Employees who are engaged have a high level of satisfaction, so they are unlikely to look for another job unlike those who are less engaged or not engaged at all. Employee engagement has quite a few elements comprised of leadership and culture, job satisfaction, work relations, employee wellbeing, value of the employee and individual professional growth. All these factors cultivate one's wellbeing within the organisation that increases employee engagement.

2.9.3 Employee motivation

To ensure employee job satisfaction, it is therefore critical to understand what really motivates employees to achieve and perform at their best level. Motivation influences performance and, as a result, has an impact on company productivity. Motivation can be defined as the zeal to expand and to reach greater attempts towards the goals of an organisation determined by the ability to make efforts to meet individual needs (Francesco and Gold, 2005.) It can also be defined as the psychological procedure that regulates employee behaviour in the workplace. These descriptions suggest that, whenever employees' particular needs are met, they become motivated, which leads to employee obligations to commit to the organisation.

2.10 Obstacles and challenges to flexible practices in the workplace

There was a lot of push-back against the support of flexitime. These uncertainties emanate from management who are unsure of how to deal with non-traditional work schedules and those who still believe in a bureaucratic style of management. According to O'Brien and Hayden (2008),

there are major difficulties and disagreements regarding workplace flexibility. A labour force that is pushing for the implementation of flexible working arrangements is mainly perceived as running away from responsibilities (Tajlil, 2014). Further to this, it is therefore challenging to apprehend the influence of professional success when flexible working arrangements can lead to shortcomings for employees.

The public sector is severely controlled, which leads to unnecessary bureaucracy. The sector in South Africa is influenced by political intervention in administrative affairs, resulting in a deliberate failure of the implementation of policies consistently for the benefit of employees, which can lead to unnecessary conflict and poor performance (Tajlil, 2014). Work- and home-life balance is influenced by the support of colleagues, support from home, company norms, and personal characteristics. The absence of any of these influencers could result in depression.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature of various authors has been used for the purpose of attaining an infinite concept of the existing research. The foundation of the area of study has been presented, giving the notion of a brief history and the evolution of flexible working conditions. This section probed into the approach as well as providing insight into different work practices of flexibility that are available for use and are relevant to the Public Sector. The section unpacked the effects of the non-provision of flexibility arrangements and their impact within the Department. A theoretical framework was discussed in order to link the study to the readily existing information, while providing a positive statement of theoretical assumptions. The literature on flexibility arrangement in the workplace has suggested varied outcomes with different results for both employees and employers.

The agreement between an employer and an employee to provide individual work control over time, place, scope or continuity and flexibility practices for non-work-related needs, presents benefits and barriers for both employees and the employer. This chapter examined the mixed effects of flexibility in the workplace, noting that each type can be understood with different outcomes and implementation challenges in the employment relationship. The chapter concluded by looking at the roles of different stakeholders to improve future research and

practice integration. The different types of ideas and opinions about workplace flexibility can be clarified by the fact that the level of research on workplace change, varies through the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

For the purpose of conducting the research, this chapter of the dissertation intends to explore several methods of data collection and the particular methods used throughout the research. The procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic are referred to as research methodology. This section allows the researcher to critically assess the total validity, as well as the reliability of the study. It provides answers to two major questions regarding how the information was generated and how it was examined. The chapter will present the manner in which the research was conducted throughout the study and the reason why the method used was chosen. It is vitally important that an accurate method is selected for the purpose of providing the best results for the analysis.

3.2 The methodology of the research study

The researcher obtained valuable information for this study from the literature review, different scholars, and a review of applicable legislation pertaining to flexibility conditions in the workplace. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:310), there are well-known data collection methods which include observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, document archives, and historical research. The researcher used these methods to collect data. The research method selected was fundamentally appropriate for the subject matter of the study and was applicable for the period involved.

The research methodology offers a theoretical description for data collection relating to phenomena (Bryman, and Bell, 2011). The method chosen by the researcher to collect data from participants directly influences data collection. As a result, research methodology is the gathering of data for use in the research study. This imparts the responsibility to participants when gathering data to implement policies in various institutions. It is imperative that the research method be accurately selected in order to provide the best results for the analysis. The purpose of this research is to analyse the effects of flexible working conditions in the

workplace: A case of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The research aimed at answering the following questions:

- What is the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will flexibility in working conditions have a positive impact on work, family life and influence and increase the job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will the introduction of flexible working conditions reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- What elements need to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

3.3 Study site

The term "study site" refers to the location governed by the institution where the study is in fact carried out. Taking into consideration the time and resource restrictions linked to the research, all of the Provincial government departments were considered to be far larger than the population required. To conduct a concrete and genuine study, one department within the provincial government was selected.

The primary aspect to contemplate as one channels a search for a study site, is to establish the existence of a connection with the identified location. It is also advisable for the researcher to create a personal connection with the site. Having that kind of connection to the site, one is able to unfold and assimilate the role played by the contributors in the data collection process. To some extent, as an individual, one visualises oneself as part of the site one is researching. Deciding on a research site focused on personal connection, allows one to easily become one of the subjects of one's own research, which increases one's ability to conduct a reflexive study of the population.

The study site is the KZN Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs which is a provincial department based in Wadley House, 115 Jabu Ndlovu Street in Pietermaritzburg. The Department has a permanent staff complement of 1160. The city is

founded in the core of KwaZulu-Natal and is in the capital city of the province, administered by Msunduzi Municipality. It was established in 1838, a city often referred to as the city of “choice”.

3.4 Research design

The research design specifies a procedural way to gather the necessary data, the approaches to be used to gather and analyse the data and how they will be used to answer the research question (Grey, 2014). Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) state that a research design is a set of procedures to gather, analyse, interpret, and report on the data in research studies.

Creswell (2014) categorises research designs into three types, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs. These designs affirm that they all follow a related design. For example, an author reveals a problem and gives details as to why it should be researched. The problem is presented in the introduction and will differ subject to the approach adopted (Creswell, 2014). These designs are explained more further below.

3.4.1 Qualitative research method

A qualitative research method is anticipated to furnish the researcher with an understanding of a phenomenon by observing and interacting with study contributors. Subsequently, qualitative researchers are mostly interested in investigating and clarifying the phenomena that transpire in natural situations. Moreover, qualitative researchers investigate phenomena in ordinary settings, seeking to make sense of or interpret the phenomena in terms of the significances that people assign to them.

One of the most significant advantages of qualitative methods is their capacity to create rich descriptions of participants' thought processes and to focus on the reasons "why" a phenomenon occurred (Creswell, 2003). The term "qualitative data" to some extent refers to data that are "not numbers". In other words, it's not the kind of thing you can measure with a fixed scale or with complex statistics or mathematics (Warren, 2020). The researcher decided on this methodology for the purpose of this study to uncover the possible sources of flexible working

conditions. Interviews were conducted with senior managers and junior officials in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. A sample comprises essential participants who are directly involved in defining the conduct in their decision-making.

3.4.2 Quantitative research method

A quantitative method assesses research by utilising statistical approaches and numerical data from experiments and surveys and perceiving the relationship that may or may not exist between variables (Gray, 2013). UKEssays Online (March, 2015), define 'quantitative research' as a method that is employed for the collection of data categorised as numerical. Numbers are thought to be more reliable than observations because observations can be influenced by the observer's point of view (Aydelotte, Fogel & Bogue, 2015). In general, quantitative data is gathered at the time where the researcher applies a positivist method and the data have to be scientifically analysed with a view to attaining an empirical conclusion.

3.4.3 Mixed-method

Mixed method research is a methodology which combines both qualitative and quantitative data. It integrates the advantages of both methods and can provide a broader picture than a stand-alone quantitative or qualitative study. Moreover, it is commonly used in behavioural, wellbeing, and social sciences studies, predominantly in multidisciplinary settings and complex conditional or societal research.

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative approach has been employed. It is significant for this study that the method is properly selected for the purpose of giving the best outcomes for the analysis. By collecting data through focus groups, observations, and interviews, qualitative research assists in determining how people feel about various topics, thereby aiding in the comprehension of the feelings, reasons, and values underlying human behaviour (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

3.5 Data collection method

Data collection is the process of collecting, measuring and analysing exact data from a selection of significant sources to discover solutions to research questions, evaluate results, and predict developments and possibilities. According to Teddlie (2013), collection of data is the preparation and attainment of valuable information on the matter that is under the investigation. Data collection supports the researcher, allowing him/her to concentrate on objective information, which develops decision-making.

A data collection system is purely regulated by examining and probing an appropriate data collection method. Subsequently there are several approaches for gathering and collecting data whereby the examiner determines the most suitable method for data collection and gathering. The qualitative method employs a number of data collection tools that can be utilised, including the following as discussed in the next section.

3.5.1 One-on-one interviews

Interviews are regarded as the most popular data collection systems and are a most suitable method when individuals want to collect structured information. There are structured and unstructured interviews. A structured interview is an interview where the interviewer has organised a predetermined set of questions. While an unstructured interview does not utilise any set method, the interviewer may have prepared some questions in advance (Surbhi, 2017). Informal interviews are good for open-ended questions that allow the researcher to obtain richer and more detailed data.

3.5.2 Focus groups

A focus group discussion is a system whereby a researcher assembles a group of individuals to talk about a certain issue, with the aim of raising the participants' personal involvement, views, observations and approaches using a moderated interface.

According to Surbhi (2017), focus groups are commonly piloted in groups; it is a "one-on-one interview on a specific topic, piloted by a trained facilitator or a researcher. The purpose of the focus group is to contribute valuable information on the topic" (Collins & O' Brien, 2003: 142).

Furthermore, a focus group is described as “an informal discussion between selected people on a specific topic” (Beck et al., 1986:73). In cases where one-on-one interviews are complicating or time-consuming to schedule, a focus group can be employed. These are considered beneficial when gathering information on a specific group of people, for example, if one seeks feedback on a new campaign from a group of demographically similar people in the target market, or if a researcher wants to allow people to express their opinions.

3.5.3 Observation

This is a data gathering method where the data collector detects and witnesses research subjects as they go about their daily lives, taking in-depth notes and recording material on video or audio.

3.5.4 Surveys

Several researchers employ surveys for the collection of data or to collect portions of in-depth information with the goal of developing a well-versed hypothesis. The respondent conveys his or her point of view on a particular topic or issue. There are different types of surveys which include online and paper surveys. Contrary to other qualitative data collection methods, online surveys have a wide range which permits multiple respondents to provide high-quality, reliable and valuable data.

For the purposes of this research, the primary data was obtained by using a focus group and through individual interviews. The focus group was chosen for the purpose of accommodating the lower level employees and to enable them to feel free to express themselves in their own vernacular language. One focus group made up of five employees from level two to seven reserved from the sample of ten participants were to be used. Moreover, one-on-one interviews were also conducted for the purpose of accommodating those individuals who were not comfortable sharing their views in front of their colleagues.

As one of the data collection tools for this study, the researcher generated an interview schedule, whereby eight (8) interview questions were scheduled for the purpose of using these

to interview employees from the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The interview questions were devised to elicit the most applicable information about the respondents' thoughts and feelings concerning the subject matter. During the interview process, questions about perceived problems of employees, as well as possible strategies for improving employees' workplace experiences, were probed.

For this qualitative study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were carried out with employees from different levels in the Department. Semi-structured interviews combine components of structured and unstructured interviews, which are described as comparable, reliable data and the ability to ask follow-up questions that are open-ended. By asking the same questions in the same order, it is possible to compare responses. The purpose was to accomplish a deep understanding of the perceptions and practices of different levels of employees from a variety of Directorates. Interviewees provided full informed consent to participate.

3.6 Target population

The target population is a particular and conceptually restricted group of potential contributors to which the researcher can have access that signifies the nature of the population of interest (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). Furthermore, Welman and Kruger (2005:52) refer to a population as "the matter to be considered because it entails people, groups, organisations, human products and events". In addition, Welman and Kruger (2005) further state that population incorporates the whole group of people or matters of concern that the researcher wishes to investigate. The targeted population of this study comprises 1160 officials who are public servants employed by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, reporting to different Directorates. A descriptive sample of the population was drawn from a population of all levels within the Department. All officials are over the age of 18 and come from diverse backgrounds.

3.7 Sampling size and strategy

According to McCombes (2019), when piloting research on a group of people, it is unusual to gather information from every single member of the group. Instead, a sample is chosen. The sample is described as a group of individuals who will, in fact, take part in the study. While Polit and Beck (2004) describe sampling as a collection of elements in the population

considered to accurately analyse the fundamentals of the study population, relative to the objectives of the study, that may affect these variables. A sample is a sub-group of a population. Individuals from a population are selected in two ways, namely by probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling is a random selection which permits the drawing of strong statistical conclusions about the entire group. This method of sampling is predominantly employed in quantitative research. Probability sampling techniques are known as the best option for producing results which are representative of the total population.

Non-probability sampling entails non-random selection established on accessibility or other criteria, making it possible to collect data quickly. It is used when members of the population do not have an equal chance of being selected to be a member of the sample, furthermore, it is frequently used because it is a less expensive method which makes it easier to create samples (Jackson, 2009). This method of sampling is used by researchers in different ways such as purposive sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, and convenience sampling.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher decided to use non-probability sample, which is purposive sampling. The purposive sampling method is employed to perfectly fit the sample to the research's goals and objectives, improving the study's accuracy and the reliability of the data and results. It is also considered to be easy to understand and straightforward. This model has previously been described using four techniques, namely reliability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Campbell, Greenwood & Walker, 2020). The sampling strategies clearly place each study in terms of data collection and analysis trustworthiness while this is also known as judgemental or rather an authoritative method of non-probability sampling.

3.8 Data quality control

Quality-control efforts vary from study to study and can apply to questionnaires to ensure proper case processing, observing of interviewer's behaviour and other quality-control aspects, all of which can affect the quality of data and the results. Reliability and validity are considered as two means of data quality control according to Rubin and Rubin (2012), who assert that this is necessary to make certain that the data collection mechanism in the study is measuring the

proper items accordingly. When evaluating quality, attention must be paid to the profundity, richness and relevancy of the data, analysing whether the data provides appropriate evidence to answer the research question.

With the intention and determination to adhere to proper data quality control, the researcher requested an independent observer to inspect the whole procedure to ensure consistency and that the appropriate guidance for the interview process was well-defined and properly specified to the interviewees. In order to ascertain reliability:

- The interview process like timing, content and data analysis process was openly expressed.
- The outline was explained to interviewees in greater detail.
- Questions utilised for data collection purposes in the interviews were clearly arranged and integrated in the additional part of the report.
- Efforts were made to moderate inaccuracies and unfairness during the data collection procedure.
- Before the finalisation of the interview procession, the researcher attempted to authenticate the data by deliberating the opinions expressed by the participants with them and soliciting their feedback.

According to Creswell (2014), validation measures the efficiency of a research tool to test the true purpose of the research instrument by supplying applicable information. For the purpose of this study, validity was embarked on by opting for the most significant methodology, target population, sample size and assessment tool. A well-structured interview was conducted whereby the researcher was able to identify and witness what transpired. This validation provided the researcher with a better understanding of the department officials' judgments, concepts, as well as behaviour. Interviews are well known as a flexible research method which permits the researcher to probe using questions then scrutinise answers.

3.9 Data analysis and presentation

Data analysis is the procedure of examining, cleaning, transforming, and demonstrating data for the purpose of discovering valuable information, advice with regard to the end results, and to encourage decision-making. Furthermore, it necessitates the collecting of open-ended data

by examining common questions and engineering a breakdown of the analysis constructed on the evidence that was provided by participants (Creswell, 2009).

There are several systems of data analysis and the gathering of qualitative data. One of the greatest approaches to avoid errors and data loss is to record and accurately transcribe interviews. A recording is regarded as an enormously effective method for piloting interviews and focus groups. It gives respondents the freedom to respond in an open manner and is the best way to gather feedback and analyse data. This compels the researcher to ensure the presence of a dependable way to record the interview, whether it is one-on-one, over the phone, or by means of a video call. Depending on the interview method, the researcher may perhaps select to record a video or audio-only of the interview.

To complement and expand on the opinions of the phenomenon, the data were collected through focus group interviews along with individual interviews. This chapter (chapter 3) classifies the methods supporting these and presents them per question, in terms of individual, as well as focus group interviews. Interviews were held face-to-face with individuals and groups, the interview process was recorded using a cellular phone. One individual requested to be interviewed by means of a phone call as he was away whereby a cell phone was utilised for the purpose of collecting the data.

Responses from respondents who were questioned formed the focal point of this study's analysis and interpretation. The significance of the relationship between FWAs, motivation and performance were determined through regression analysis which can be defined as a consistent process for determining which variables have an influence on a specified topic (Alchemer, 2021). The whole procedure permits the researcher to confidently outline factors that are imperative, or overlooked, and how these features cooperate with one another.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Study limitations are its failings or shortcomings caused by a lack of resources, a small sample size, or inconsistent methodology. The limitations in research are those design or systems appearances that affect or influence the application or interpretation of the outcomes of the

study. They are the limitations on generalisability and effectiveness of findings that result from the design of the study and/or the method used to establish internal and external validity.

The researcher waited for approval to conduct the research for two months, because the Head of the Department was concerned about too much information being gathered within the Department. Another shortcoming was a delay in conducting interviews. Interviews can be time-consuming. Furthermore, finding the right time to conduct the interviews with the participants was also a challenge, translating the interviews was time-consuming. Extracting the findings from the interviews in relation to the research aims and objectives all consumed a lot of the researcher's time.

The study focused on only one region and also only one type of public department which means that the study cannot be generalised across all public sector departments or necessarily across all regions of the country. Depending on the nature of the work done or the region in which the KZN Department of Co-operative Governance is located, that workplace may have been more free-thinking and greater flexibility arrangements or different challenges could exist. This means that further study is necessary among different departments in different regions or maybe with a larger sample size to attain more diversity.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research is described as a standard that controls a research design and practice, researchers consistently observe ethical values when gathering data from individuals (Bandari, 2021). Research ethics play a crucial role in any improvement and implementation of research studies. Researchers need to understand the principles and ethical procedures to avoid possible mistakes and enable them to explain their work as a researcher in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Ethical considerations are vital in qualitative research. It is discussed as a clear declaration on formal research ethics committee approval or waiver is made. It is of paramount important to acquire appropriate consent and safeguard participants' identities. The possibility of intimidation to participate must be well thought-out, especially when the researcher is in a position of power relative to the participants.

The respondents were informed about their rights and duties. They were informed that participation was voluntary, and that only completed questionnaires would be used. A request was made for them to sign the informed consent document, which was attached. All respondents were over the age of 18 and were made aware of the voluntary nature of the study which allowed them to withdraw from participating at any time. The questions were clearly discussed. They were drafted in such a way that they were easily understood by all levels of employees, especially lower level employees. Further to this, interviewees were notified that the interview process would only be facilitated if participants had agreed to take part in the whole process. No employee would be forced to participate. The privacy of all participants was ensured.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter served as the dissertation's centrepiece by presenting an analysis and discussion of how the data would be generated by the study's instruments. This chapter described the whole research methodology employed in this study. The research questions were outlined, the researcher explained why a qualitative design was the most preferable for this study. The chapter also covered research design, which laid down the technical means for gathering the necessary data, and why interviews were the preferred method of gathering data. The sample was also chosen with care. The research process was explained, the research's credibility ensured, and affirmations were made to add to the area of study on flexibility working arrangements. In conclusion, the chapter dealt with ethical consideration and gave details of issues concerning ethics, as well as indicating the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research approach that was employed, then presented the techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information for the study. The chapter presented the data collection method and the research design utilised to gather the data required for evaluation and reliability of the study, which analyses the effects of flexible conditions in the workplace using a case study of the KZN Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. This chapter reports the analysis of the major findings with reference to the research questions. It further reviews the study problem, the research questions, as well as the goals that the study aimed to address.

The key objective of this section is to discuss, analyse and present the data. To acquire a better understanding of the study, the researcher scheduled focus group interviews with the designated participants, as well as individual interviews, and, in addition, held in-depth discussions as mentioned in Chapter Three by means of prearranged questions intended to guide the discussions. A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 3) itemised all of the questions to be utilised in the course of the interviews. The researcher interviewed ten (10) respondents in total which included the group members, one (1) of whom was interviewed over the phone and nine (9) of whom were interviewed in person. All of the respondents work for the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and are based in KwaZulu-Natal, where they provide services to the Department. All of the research questions used to create the interview schedule are related to the research goals of the study. To conclude, these findings will be examined and interpreted before reaching a conclusion.

4.1.1 Research questions

The research questions that the study intended to observe were:

- What is the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will flexibility in working conditions have a positive impact on work, family life and influence and increase the job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will the introduction of flexible working condition reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- What elements need to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

4.2 A brief overview of the procedure followed

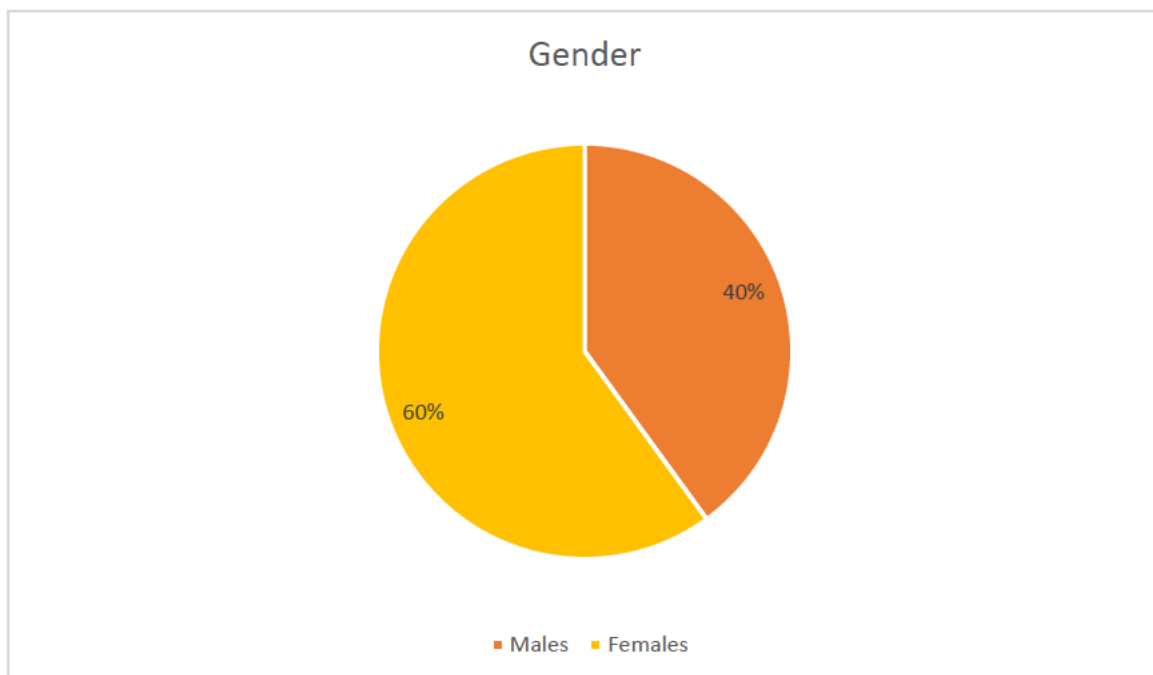
To ensure that the proper procedure was followed, the researcher needed to have a university-approved research proposal. Furthermore, a gatekeeper's letter signed by the Head of Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs was obtained in order to conduct the necessary interviews. The process of obtaining an approved Ethical Clearance (EC) for the purpose of conducting interviews was initiated, and the EC was eventually approved by the ethics committee. All participants were informed of the procedure and what was expected of them prior to the interview process. The issue of their consent was thoroughly explained to them and some participants agreed to participate as long as their identities were not revealed; however, it was discovered that some participants were afraid to reveal their names or even to sign the consent form. The interview schedule containing eight (8) questions was emailed as well as printed, then distributed to participants who were unable to receive emails. Few days after participants had received consent forms, the interview process, which consisted of five (5) individual interview questions and one group of five (5) participants took place.

4.3 Personality data of the respondents

The "representative sample" is one of the most essential research concepts, because without one, outcomes may not be efficiently suitable to the study. Data presentation is the core of research opinion. Demographic data permits the researcher to better comprehend the specific background of the target audience. It must be indicated that few of the participants are pursuing further education. Practically, respondents were in the age range of 20 to 55 years of age, permanently working for the Department. Additionally, they perform multiple roles at home as parents, guardians and caregivers for their parents, while also working as employees. Therefore, the respondents' demographic features have included gender, age, marital status, race and rank.

4.3.1 Overall gender of participants

Figure 4.1: Gender of participants



Source: Author

This graph represents the number of male and female participants. More females embarked on the study: forty per cent of the participants were male and sixty per cent were female. The

researcher understood that perceptions from both genders were crucial because recent research has discovered that flexibility in the workplace affects both men and women. Moreover, parenthood has become a fundamental part of both male and female identity in this day and age.

The study moreover revealed that flexible working arrangements positively impact male employees' capability to sustain stability between office tasks and family responsibilities. Likewise, other authors maintain that gender has nothing to do with flexibility and work-life balance. In this regard, the researcher saw fit to include both genders in the interview process to gain an understanding of various observations about the topic.

4.3.2 Overall age of the participants

Figure 4. 2: Age of the participants

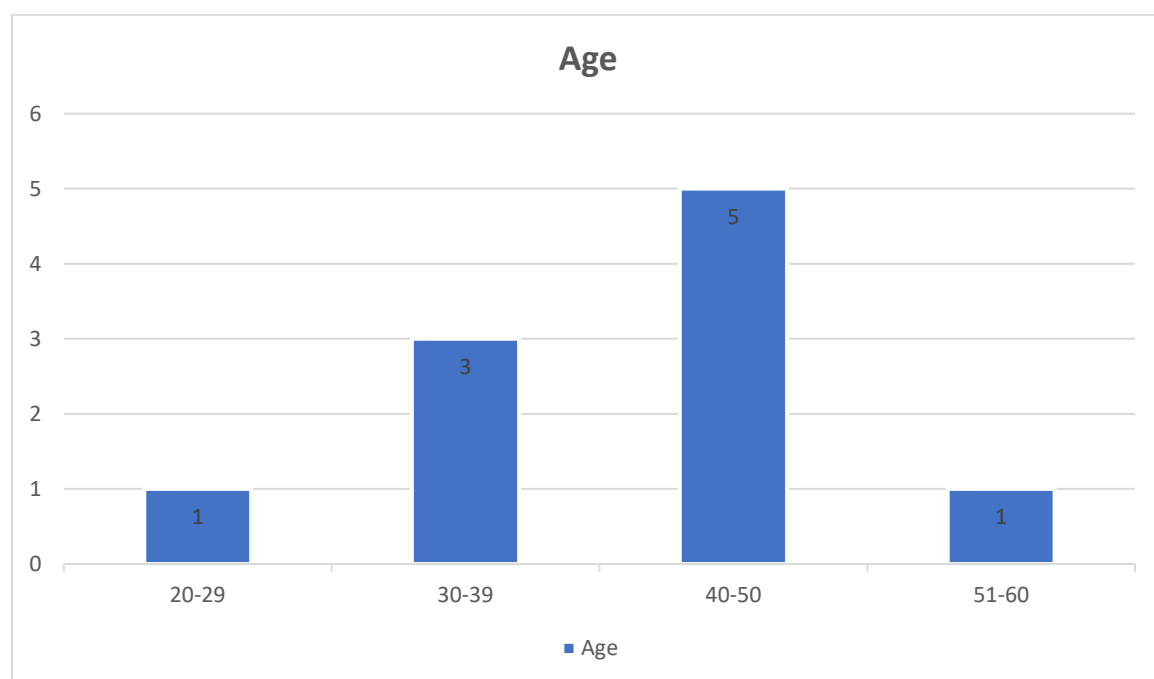


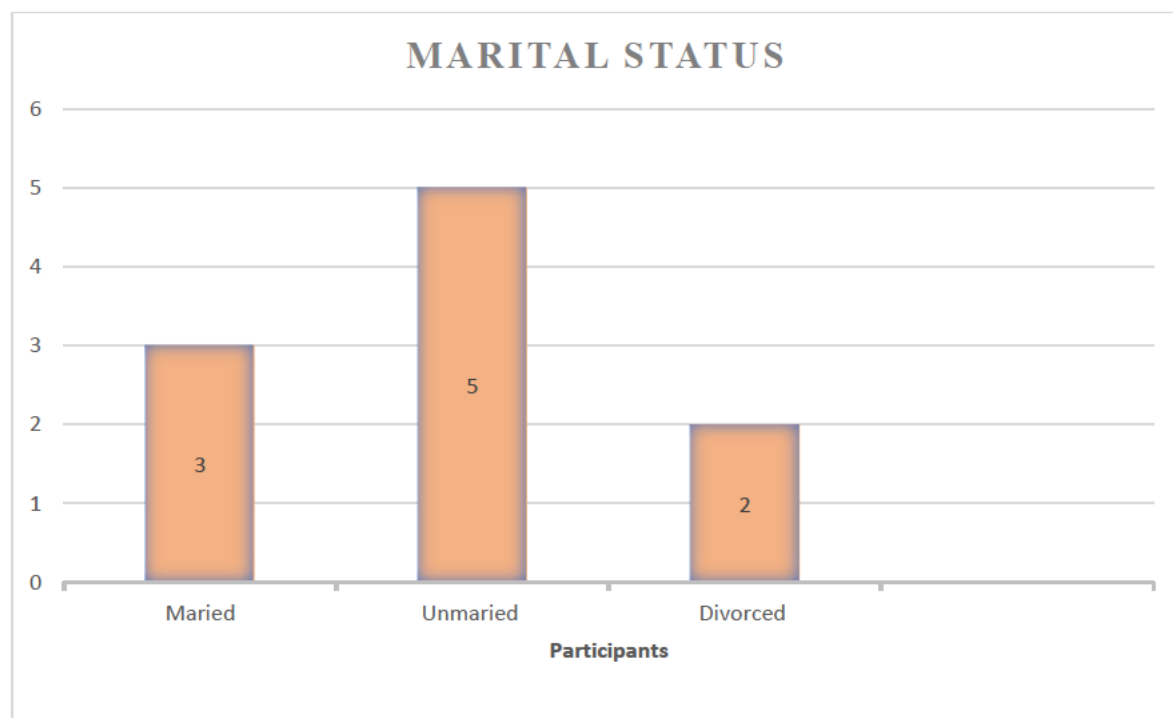
Figure 4. 2: Source: Author

The participants' age range is shown in Figure 4.2. The most number of participants' ranged between forty and forty-nine years as they received the biggest percentage, but all participants are between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. The findings are constructed from ten responses.

Age usage in reviewing data in conjunction with the appropriate interview questions, provides a more in-depth analysis of the results.

4.3.3 Marital status of the participants

Figure 4.3: Marital status of the participants



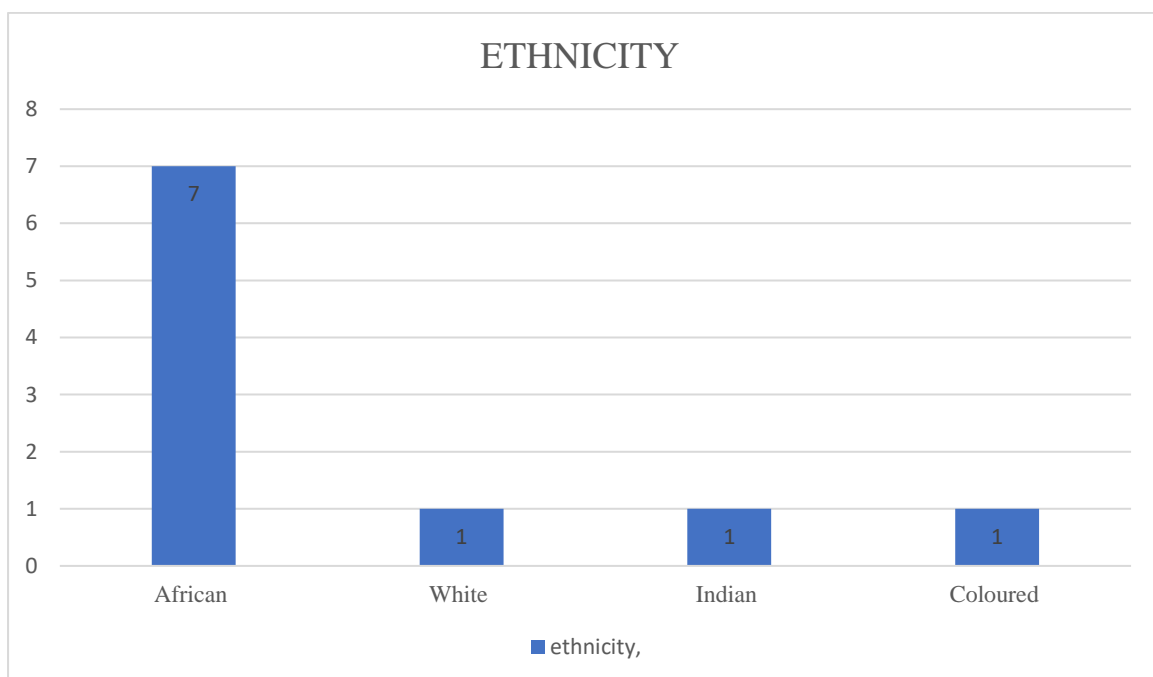
Source: Author

Marital status has a substantial influence on workplace flexibility. It is regarded as a valuable element because it is associated with and affects employee performance and several factors. As a result, participants' marital status might have a diverse influence on the research questions. Figure 4.3 of the study reveals that more unmarried participants than those who are married took part in the study. Studies have revealed that employees who belong to a family construct not comprised of children, or who are unmarried, can, nevertheless, also undergo a lack of

work-life balance and they should be considered when employing initiatives that endorse workplace flexibility.

4.3.4 The ethnic group of the participants

Figure 4.4: Ethnicity of the participants

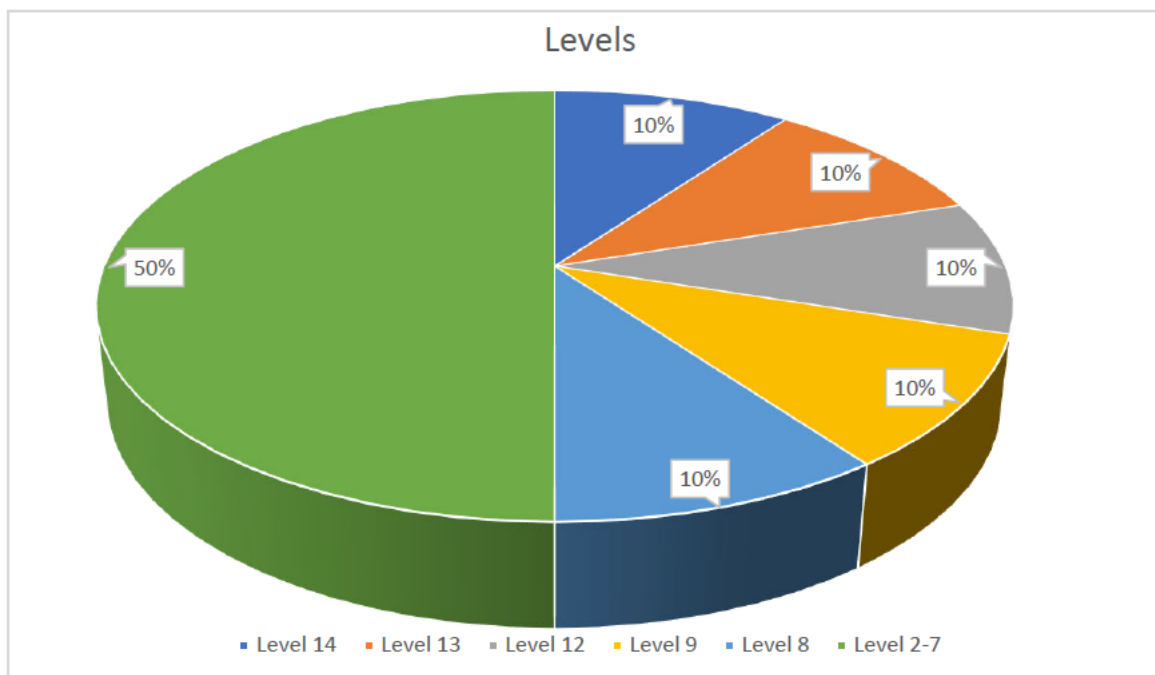


Source: Author

The researcher perceived that it was necessary to include different racial groups in the study. Serious ethical research implications normally result from the deficiency of diversity among research participants. In reference to this study, the majority of participants who took part in the research were African. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs recognises the designated groups guided by the Employment Equity Act of 1998 as there have been historical inequalities. The Employment Equity Act prohibits imbalanced discrimination in the workplace and guarantees that all employees obtain equal opportunity and treatment.

4.3.5 Classification of the participants

Figure 4.5: Classification of the participants



Source: Author

The researcher viewed it as imperative to select participants from different levels to get their views on the subject matter. Levels are classifications with various designations and salary rates that form a hierarchy within a Department. They are employed to maintain a reporting structure that allocates duties for daily operations. Based on Figure 4.5 of the study, Levels 2 to 7 comprised five participants while 10 per cent of the categories reflect the individual interviews with participants from different levels, emanating from Levels 8-14.

4.4 Presentation of data

The presentation of data was derived and generated from the interview guide, which is characterised into sub-topics. The discussion and analysis was evaluated, based on the following sub-topics:

4.4.1 Implementation of flexible conditions

The first question was based on the implementation of flexible conditions as follows:

As a Public Servant, do you think the implementation of flexible conditions will work in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

The researcher found that the majority of the participants agreed wholeheartedly when responding to the question by saying, “it will”, depending on the Directorate in which one serves. Participants mentioned that there are certain Directorates whose functions require employees to be in the office for a specific period of time, particularly those who are utilising the BAS and PERSAL systems, because these systems are not accessible outside the premises of the Department. However, they indicated that an alternative system could be implemented to allow such accessibility. The Focus Group shared similar views, however the majority agreed that if flexible conditions could be implemented, these would certainly work in the Department, with the proviso that it would depend on the nature of the work of the individual. Some of the group members suggested that measures should be put in place and that the necessary tools of the trade should be provided.

These responses are supported by Risesmart (online, 2021) who indicates that an organisation should make an effort and cautiously plan flexible work arrangements and thoroughly run through them before broadening the prospect to the whole organisation. A flexible workplace policy can be an exceptional asset to the belief in mobility and innovative work alternatives. This assertion is also supported by Trade Union Congress which states that the government should likewise acquire a flexible work policy plan and explains that flexible work should be able to contribute to constructing and supporting equality for workers, over and above which it should benefit local societies in terms of service delivery and the environment. Any specific flexible work strategy should also account for the effects of the growing trend in remote working. This is also supported by a draft policy framework of remote working, published in

terms of section 3(1) of the Public Service Act, 1994, which furnishes the Executive Authorities (EAs) with guidance to establish a Remote Working Policy designed for the particular needs of that department or entity. The framework intends to support the public sector to become a forward-planning entity in terms of working remotely, permitting public servants to work outside of their standard work environment, and, in the process, sustaining management control and accountability.

4.4.2 Motivation and improving the morale of employees

The question was based on the motivation and morale of the employees and required participants to give their honest opinions regarding to what extent flexible work arrangements affect motivation levels and employee morale.

In your opinion, do you consider that flexible working arrangements may motivate and improve the morale of the employees?

The study has revealed that flexible working arrangements do indeed motivate, as well as increase the morale of employees. According to the responses received from participants who were interviewed individually, it was revealed that all five participants agreed that flexible regulations within the Department would motivate employees. Participant 1 indicated that:

For those who can work flexible hours, it will undoubtedly motivate and improve [the] morale of those individuals, because there will be less stress in their home life, such as dropping off children at school, attending meetings with teachers, and attending doctor's appointments without completing any leave form.

Further to this, Participant 2 added:

As much as the utilisation of flexible conditions may motivate employees, it must be noted that flexibility comes with a responsibility citing that deliverables must be met to satisfy the objective of the service provided.

Participant 3 undoubtedly agreed, mentioning that:

It will have a positive impact and motivate the personnel in the Department citing that as long as the controls are in place such as weekly or monthly plans as per the APP.

Moreover, the participant added that this would encourage the employee to go the extra mile to the extent whereby the employee overachieves above what is expected.

The Group participants had mixed views in this regard.

Participant 1 from the group stated:

There's uncertainty in this but indicating that young generation can be very lazy. They can be given an opportunity to come late but still take advantage of not producing the expected outcomes because of laziness and if this is not dealt with, it will become an ongoing situation, this is indicating that those officials are still not motivated.

Participant 2 in the group also stated:

The implementation of flexible working conditions will not motivate me as an employee.

In this regard, the participant was unable to elaborate on the statement. However, Participant 3 held the opinion that:

These arrangements can perfectly function if strict measures are put in place and supervisors will supervise and monitor employees as expected and observe their work performance on a daily basis.

Participant 4 added:

If you are offered something with which you are unfamiliar with, you become motivated, but if you are familiar with the process, there's nothing that will trigger your morale.

Participant 5 indicated that:

As an employee you get used to the times and measures put in place, but if these conditions can be perfectly monitored for example working from home, it will assist employees who have families to take care of; this will definitely motivate employees.

Referring to responses received from participants in both the group and individual interviews, there is a clear indication that implementation of a flexible work programme contributes to personnel motivation in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Research outcomes confirm that there is a link between the execution of flexible working schedules and the level of staff members' motivation in the Department. Flexibility permits the employees to balance their responsibilities at work and their family matters. The data collected also show that implementation of flexible work arrangements may be of advantage to married employees. A positive employee morale primarily leads to increased productivity and proficiency in the workplace, as well as remarkable quality of work. Furthermore, positive company values will assist in attracting and maintaining the best talent and decreasing

employee turnover. The morale of the employees is much greater in a good and healthy working environment, which produces positive energy.

Further to the responses received, it was discovered that not all employees regard flexible conditions as motivational and increasing morale among employees. Participant 1 - in the group session indicated that:

[The] young[er] generation is lazy, there are those who still need supervision because of the manner in which they conduct themselves.

According to Kloefkorn (2014), who quoted Bill Gates, diverse individuals work in different ways. Personnel who seem to be lazy may solely be working in a more non-concrete manner. He suggested that as a substitute for handing them tasks to check off a to-do list, employers should try to offer them tasks that require them to think. This will permit them to place more thought into their work and may evolve in an innovative resolution. This may possibly be far more beneficial eventually than having them attempt to follow a set template to achieve a task. He went on to mention that most employers have no understanding of, nor do they take into account the notion that every person has his/her specific production period. Some officials are more creative in the morning but utterly inadequate in the afternoon, or *vice versa*. Consequently, permitting employees to work within their productivity period by establishing flexible hours will benefit not only the employee, but also the organisation's effectiveness.

4.4.3 Controlling the issue of absenteeism within the Department

The statement of the problem of the study revealed that there are common issues that government departments in South Africa deal with, which include punctuality, frequent requests for time off, a lack of commitment, absenteeism and inadequate management of employees' wellbeing. These issues are related to work-life balance and can have a negative impact on employees' performance. The study has established that flexible working arrangements has been identified as a tool to control absenteeism in the department. The question was directed as follows:

Will the introduction of flexible conditions curb the issue of absenteeism within the Department?

In reference to the responses received from the selected employees, the majority of the respondents responded positively to the question, while very few disagreed that flexible arrangements could curb the issue of absenteeism. Those participants who did voice disagreement from the individual interviews responded to the question by stating that: Participant 1:

I do not believe that flexible arrangements will reduce absenteeism because we have the option of taking a couple of hours from leave, which is helpful especially if you want to attend school meetings for your child or see a doctor, and that could be used instead of taking the entire day.

The participant went on to say that even if flexibility is implemented, employees will continue to be absent.

In agreement with that statement, Participant 2 stated that:

If officials in the Department have personal issues, formal leave should be utilised, managers should allow employees to take leave and have an understanding of their employees in terms of personal issues.

Participant 3 responded that:

Yes, citing that there would be low absenteeism because when employees request time off, it is simply because they have pressing matters to attend to, but if flexible arrangements are used, you can arrange with your supervisor rather than taking leave.

The participant added further that:

Both the employer and the employee will benefit because the employee will feel valued and put in extra effort, which will increase productivity.

Furthermore, the participant stated that the Department has a very mature workforce that is well-directed and takes their work seriously.

In response to the question, the focus group responded in a variety of ways. Despite the fact that the respondents' perspectives on this issue varied, it was evident that some of them were

uncertain at the beginning of the interview process about their responses concerning whether flexible arrangements would curb absenteeism.

Participant 2 from the focus group felt that:

Once these arrangements are put into place, absenteeism would drop and the number of leave requests will decline.

Participant 5 concurred that:

Employees who take leave are commonly doing so to resolve their personal issues, such as the urgent need to visit the bank.

The respondent added that the system of flexible schedules would balance employees' personal needs and work commitments, which would eradicate the need to take leave.

In agreement, Participant 4 mentioned that:

Some of the Senior Managers within the Department are already employing the system by coming in late, then leave the place of work earlier than specified time.

Additionally, the participant stated that if this is applicable to management, it must also apply to lower level employees.

Participant 1 from the focus group disagreed with Participants 2 and 5 saying:

Although you have personal matters to attend to, but those issues should not control your work commitments.

In addition to this, the participant revealed that, as an employee, you need to separate personal issues and work commitments, should you want to take leave, that should be considered a full day's leave.

She further mentioned that, just because one has an allowance of flexibility for a particular period it shouldn't be used for personal gain as this would make employees become lazy.

The findings have revealed that employees' absenteeism in the workplace is caused by a range of factors that are related to operational as well as personal issues, irrespective of the size of the organisation. Absenteeism is prompted by factors such as, shortage of commitment, low morale and insufficient incentives, among other things (Petersen, 2019). In support of this statement Tomar (2014) pointed out that when personnel feel undervalued by their employers, they become demotivated, which typically leads to frequent non-attendance at the office.

The study also discovered that domestic matters are associated with employees' absence. The participants asserted that their daily lives at work are negatively impacted by domestic problems. According to the literature where some research supports the discoveries of the existing study, managing work and personal responsibilities is a challenge for workforces globally. Studies by Toffoletti et al. (2016) discovered that it was difficult to measure work-life balance objectively. Personal circumstances had an impact on perception, creating a balance that reflected each person's priorities.

4.4.4 Service delivery

The enquiry was associated with service delivery; the focus was to observe the effects of service delivery under flexible environments. The question was as follows:

Will the service delivery be affected under flexible conditions?

In view of the above, Participant 5 from the individual interviews, responded as follows:

If there are systems in place to allow availability of employees and all resources that are allocated for that particular function, and extensive communication between the supervisor and employees, service delivery would be positively affected, but in the absence of these tools, the delivery of services will be negatively affected.

Participant 4 held a similar opinion:

The Department of COGTA is not service-based [in a way] that calls [for] employees to be on site on a daily basis, for example, [like the] Department of Home Affairs. Therefore, the person requiring the service can be assisted using available resources like emails.

The respondent added that if it's a matter that calls for one to be in the office, arrangements could be made to ensure that the particular service is delivered effectively and efficiently.

The findings from the focus group interviews regarding the issue of the service delivery question unanimously agreed that the availability and the provision of the tools of the trade was the main factor for the successful implementation of flexible arrangements in the workplace. However, one participant indicated that poor communication could be a negative

factor that would affect the delivery of services. In response to this, it was collectively agreed that before such a system was implemented, major efforts should be undertaken to make sure that service delivery was not negatively impacted under flexible settings, and that managers should at all times lead and exercise their roles whenever uncertainty about the future existed. The notion of managers providing crucial support is proposed by Gilson et al (2014) who assert that the executive of the organisation is expected to be available at all times to offer alternatives for any matters that might arise at work, and that a change in the nature or method of work was consistent with such roleplay.

Studies have frequently questioned whether flexibility and productivity are able to coexist, whether flexibility has an effect on employee effectiveness as well as employee innovation. The research has revealed that flexibility has a substantial effect on how an organisation attracts, employs, and reserves top talent. According to Regus's (2013) survey, 75 per cent of businesspeople reached a decision that flexible working settings increase productivity. As employees are the most valuable resource, any service provider or production organisation that disregards consideration of the needs of employees' welfare in its strategy is not likely to succeed in retaining the significance of a talented pool of employees.

Other studies (Regus, 2013; Gilson et al., 2014) have indicated that supervisors have a duty to assess employees based on the end results and deliverables, rather than time actually spent at their desks. No matter the method, or circumstances, their performance has to be ruled by the end result. If a manager carries out consistent performance assessments and institute defined performance agreements with deliverables, scheduled timelines and end results, his/her subordinates will be observant of what is expected of them and how their work performance contributes to and aligns with the organisational strategic goals.

4.4.5 Department supporting flexible working arrangements

The researcher examined different views from the participants as to whether they perceive the department to support flexibility settings, as this status currently appears uncertain. The question was posed as follows:

“Is the Department of COGTA supportive of flexible working arrangements?”

Judging from the responses received at the individual interviews, there were mixed opinions, even though the absolute majority of respondents disagreed that the Department supported flexible conditions. Participant 5 indicated as follows:

I don't see the Department in support of working arrangements [or] even in the near future adopting these arrangements.

The participant further stated, “*Flexibility, it's between the employee and the supervisor, those arrangements are made privately, but at an organisational level we cannot say we've got a policy that has been adopted to allow that flexibility*”.

In support, Participant 3 added:

The Department of COGTA is currently not supporting flexible conditions and that is very concerning. However, during the Covid-19 restrictions we were forced to come back to work before time while the conditions were not allowing [this] in terms of provisions issued by [the] Minister of Labour. Somehow those provisions issued were contravened with, that clearly confirms that the Department of COGTA is not supportive of flexible conditions.

Participant 1 mentioned that:

There was a supporting system used during the Covid-19 pandemic and it went very well which proved that we can do it. But again, it all comes back to the nature of your job and access to tools of [the] trade. Those who had tools were able to be flexible during the Covid-19 [period], were able to come and go which enabled them to carry on with service delivery, be able to respond to queries and address matters, so I think we could be able to adopt it at a certain level.

All focus group participants collectively revealed that the Department is not in support of any flexible arrangement plans. All group members in accord specified that they are frequently reminded of their status as junior staff members when requesting time off, and they further stated that, as employees, they view their supervisors as bullies.

While the group participants expressed their views indicating their supervisors' behaviour, the University of Mary Washington indicated that workplace bullying which is the recurrent undesirable treatment of an individual by another person in a workplace, may be viewed as irrational and inadequate office practice. It is considered as an action which shames and offends an employee publicly, perhaps even in the presence of clients and customers.

One of the employment frameworks, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of South Africa of 1997 (BCEA) provides directives that organisations must establish working periods in agreement with the Code of Good Practice, taking into consideration employees' necessity for family, health condition, and safety. Compacted working weeks and, if incorporated in a mutual agreement, an average of hours over four months, is one example of adequate work scheduled arrangements.

4.4.6 The balance between work and personal commitments

The purpose of the question was primarily to gather participants' views in terms of balancing their personal and professional responsibilities, because research has shown that many people still struggle to strike a healthy work-life balance. The question was phrased as follows:

“Will a flexible work schedule benefit you in balancing your work and personal commitments?”

In view of the above, the focus group cooperatively agreed that flexible working schedules would be of benefit and would definitely close the gap between work and personal engagements. According to Participant 5:

This will without a doubt greatly assist me to balance work and personal commitments, because I will be able to carry out my responsibilities and take care of my personal matters simultaneously without being penalized or asked to take leave.

Participant 2 added:

Yes, knowing that I will have time to spend with my family, will motivate me to even work harder."

During the course of the individual interviews, it was observed that the majority of participants were in agreement, citing that, on a personal level, these arrangements would definitely balance work as well as personal commitments. Participant 3 had the following to say:

Personally, it definitely will, because as an individual I know how to prioritise and given the opportunity to have flexibility executed, I would have a perfectly balanced life. Why? Because I'm able to distinguish work time and personal time. I am a student and an employee concurrently, so imagine that I'm working from home, that will give me the opportunity to attend [to]my work, my other personal stuff. I would undoubtedly benefit and balance my work/personal commitment[s].

The researcher detected uncertainty from Participant 2 who answered this question, pointing out that:

Maybe someday, but not really, I think we know our working time and we try to schedule whatever possible activities we have in line with our working times, so yes, sometime[s] we do have our personal commitments, but, as I mentioned, we can take hours from our leave, therefore, I feel we can have our balanced work life.

Participant 4 had this to say:

It would indeed, having [a] flexible working schedule to plan your week would assist greatly to plan and manage time to produce deliverables and for me to actually take care and be home for my family.

Participant 1 concurred, agreeing as follows:

It might not work for me personally, but I do believe that it will work for staff who have children at a younger age. I also believe that remote working would be fabulous for those who can, especially parents with children. I know, as having been a mother through my public service career, your biggest challenge is school holidays, when [it] is a case of we don't know who will look after our children. I think that it would benefit our young families and bring peace to those officials who stress about [their] children.

The views above are supported by Delecta (2011) who mentioned that matters related to family responsibility demands, such as child support, time, family roles, personal engagements, like education and support to be given to the spouse, were identified as the demands of family life which had a major impact on life balance. Another study also indicated that issues that required more family responsibilities such as marriages, parenthood, and caring for elderly relatives at home, have an impact on work-life balance. People who are directly impacted by this, occasionally have to risk their careers by reducing their work hours, which could be stressful for them. According to Grobler and de Bruyn (2011), strategies for work-life balance, for instance, flexibility work practices, family-friendly morals, work and personal life measures, and substitute work patterns, have been endorsed as effective techniques to develop employees' work-life balance.

In conclusion, the findings have revealed that most of the participants felt they would benefit as employees from the implementation of flexible working arrangements. It was further pointed

out that a number of needs could be fulfilled, including spending time with family, especially children, as well as advancing education.

4.4.7 Motivation and specific management style

The following question was related to motivation leading to a certain style of management. The purpose of the researcher was to gain an understanding from the views of the participants in terms of what drives them as employees to wake up and make the decision to go to work. Further to this, the researcher was trying to achieve insight into motivation, management style and decision-making. The question was posed as follows:

“Do you feel motivated going to work each day and, if so, what motivates you? Do you also believe that a specific management style could be a barrier to allowing flexibility arrangements in your Directorate?”

According to the participants’ points of view, regarding this question from the focus group members, the researcher received unanimously undisputed responses during the interview period. All five participants mentioned that ‘yes’, they felt motivated going to work every day. Responding to the question, participants from the focus group answered the question as follows: Participant 1:

For, me personally, I feel motivated to come to work every day because that’s where I spend most of my time and this has propelled me to reach a point of acceptance. Actually, I enjoy waking up in the morning and com[ing] to work rather than being at home or work[ing] from home.

Participant 3 added:

I also enjoy coming to work every day, reason being I get along with my supervisor, we understand each other.

Participant 2 indicated:

Yes, I feel motivated each and every day because as an employee I’m still learning most of the things; I’m still in a process of developing certain skills as I’m in a learning process. This will benefit me after all.

The participant added, *“I get my stipend every month that will assist me to take care of myself and my family, that [is] really pushing me to wake up every day and come to work”.*

Participant 4 said:

In a way I would say, there's a motivation aspect especially from our section because our supervisor is engaging and consulting us requesting our views about a certain situation before a decision is taken.

Participant 5 stated:

I do feel motivated to come to work every day, because I have a responsibility to that. Also, even though the government sector is too strict and [is] still using [a] bureaucratic management style and still believe[s] in [the]old ways of doing things and [does]not permit the functionality of flexible working condition[s], but yes, I'm still motivated to come to work every day.

The following were responses received from individual interviews and it was noted that these responses were similar to those from the focus group participants where Participant 4 from the individual interviews cited that:

Yes, I feel motivated. Beside the fact that I have no choice I have to come to work, but for me it's an internal motivation that you push for yourself. I believe that for you to have beautiful crops you have to work your land, whether the land is rocky or not, but you have to sort it out.

In agreement with this response, Participant 1 from the individual interviews mentioned:

I do very much feel motivated to come to work every day, I believe public service is a calling, it is very said at the moment that people see it as a job, a good job, but I believe that government is a good and fair employer.

The respondent further stated that, *"In my personal experience I've always been treated fairly, if you work hard you get acknowledged, my motivation is people that we help and I absolutely love my job in HR"*.

Participant 3 responded citing that:

Me being a Director, I feel committed to my staff and COGTA as a whole. Yes, I feel motivated to come to work every day, even in the days where I'm not feeling well and I know my staff needs me I come to work, so I actually enjoy what I'm doing and I'm motivated.

The participant added, *“It is important to have a certain style of management which it shouldn’t be one way where you become a bully, you should be able to listen to your staff in order to be a good manager”*.

According to the Management Study Guide (Online, January 2023), an individual is able to achieve goals with the backing of motivation, an attribute that is goal-oriented. It inspires someone to put in a lot of determination to achieve his/her goals. To influence motivation, a leader needs to possess proper leadership abilities; however, motivation does not have a certain plan. A full understanding in terms of what motivates individuals is crucial for a good leader. One must have an awareness of the fundamental requirements of employees. Leadership is employed as a resource for encouraging others.

4.4.8 Restructuring of working times

The researcher intended to examine the effects of directly involving an employee in restructuring flexible working times with management, and how this would have an impact on their relationship, as well as their performance. The question was structured as follows:

“Would you prefer to be involved in structuring your working times?”

All five (5) focus group participants responded positively, saying, “definitely yes”. Participant-1 said:

There’s no doubt about that, you and your supervisor would agree concurrently instead of drafting your own schedule and still had to take it for approval by the supervisor.

Participant 5 agreed, saying:

I would prefer to be involved in the process of structuring my working times so that we both have an agreement on which times as an employee I’m comfortable with and assist me to provide advice at the same time, rather than the supervisor decide on my behalf.

Participant 4 concurred with the other participants:

You must be able to talk one language with your supervisor.

Individual respondents undeniably agreed that they should be involved in structuring working times, and Participant 3 had this to say:

Yes, I would greatly appreciate that opportunity to be involved in restructuring my working hours because I know my times where I best perform. Sometimes after lunch

you become lazy, therefore, allowing the personal involvement in structuring would reveal the best performance, because you would be selecting the times where you are at [your] best to perform your duties.

Participant 5 declared:

Obviously I would be more than welcome to be involved as a manager looking at flexibility of the employees, looking at flexible hours for the benefit of employees in the organisation which would also be a benefit in a long run I would definitely be very much involved and would appreciate that kind of policy development process.

The results of the interviews with participants revealed that employees who were provided with preferences in deciding on and utilising their work arrangement flexibility independently, were more likely to execute their tasks to their best ability than those who did not. Gilson et al. (2014) recommend that if employees are aware of their organisation's obligations, they will probably plan their lives accordingly. Moreover, Sears and Galambos (1992) established that work programme inflexibility and more critically, work hours, can contribute to a negative spill-over influence for employees. Employees who have control over work arrangements, identifiably demonstrate an improved engagement, dedication, retention and job satisfaction (Muchiti and Gachunga, 2015).

4.5 Analysis

Cairn (2013) examined the effects of flexible work arrangements in the context of Maslow's motivational theory, whereby Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) are seen as benefits that fall in the lower level of the hierarchy under security. The exclusion of the benefit of flexible work arrangements from the lower level of Maslow's Hierarchy, may not have an impact on employee performance. However, if FWAs were part of a higher need on the hierarchy such as self-actualisation, the removal of the benefit of FWAs from this level of Maslow's would have depended on an employee's motivation and individual capabilities. In other words, depending on where FWAs are placed on Maslow's Hierarchy, the impact of their absence will be diverse.

The Hertzberg's two-factor theory, Self-Determination theory, Spill-over theory, Vroom's theory and the Border and boundary theories are also contributors to the study of flexible work-

life balance by detailing how dissimilar stages of work-life integration affect wellbeing and exploring how people establish and cross work-life limitations.

4.6 Conclusion

The interaction with employees of different ranks uncovered a broad overview of their judgement, unveiling findings and an analysis that was examined and investigated. According to the findings, the call for flexible work strategy is of interest to the majority of employees of all ages in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, since flexibility in the workplace provides for a work-life balance that is essential to everybody. The findings also indicate agreement with previous research findings confirming that the work environment affects employee motivation and engagement. This means that a flexible work environment improves employee motivation and engagement at all levels within a department. In the next chapter, the research objectives are argued, recommendations are proposed and the research study is finalised.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the analysis of data collected as well as discussing the findings from the selected sample. This chapter presents the results, makes recommendations to be implemented by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, as well as presenting the conclusion of the study.

5.2 Identified objectives of the study

The study aimed at exploring and observing the effect of flexible working conditions in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, regardless of the fact that there has been little research on the subject from the perspective of the South African Public Sector and also a lack of policy framework. The goal is to fill any gaps and perceive whether flexible working conditions could aid in to reducing absenteeism. The study intended to probe the following objectives in order to drive and support research aims:

- To examine the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs;
- To analyse whether flexibility in working conditions will have a positive impact on work, family life and influence and increase job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs;
- To evaluate whether the introduction of flexible working condition will reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs; and
- To investigate the elements to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will flexibility in working conditions have a positive impact on work, family life and influence and increase job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- To what extent will the introduction of flexible working condition reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?
- What elements need to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

5.4 Significant findings of the proposed research objectives

Observing the effects of flexible working arrangements in the workplace is the main aim of this study. The research findings of the study discovered that flexible environments within the Department are crucial for both the organisation and its officials. Employees prominently value departments that are supportive of flexibility, because this helps them juggle work and personal obligations. The following objectives of the study have made revelations that need to be absorbed and applied by the authorities in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

- *To examine the correlation between flexible working arrangements, work-life balance and motivation in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Objective 1)*

Findings from the research, as well as the examination of Objective One, revealed that implementing a flexible environment will not only motivate employees in the Department, but will also significantly contribute to balancing work and life engagements, enhancing employees' willingness to come to work on a daily basis. Furthermore, from the responses received, it is undeniable that employees' commitment and motivation are mostly influenced by the workplace atmosphere. This implies that a more conducive work environment increases

employees' engagement and motivation. Moreover, the linkage between the working environment and employee engagement can be arbitrated by official motivation. Both employee engagement and motivation are positively affected by flexible work arrangements. This suggests that if the Department implements flexible working hours, employee engagement and motivation will increase. The relationship between flexible working hours and employee engagement is mediated by employee motivations, hence the correlation is more visible when all of these aspects are present.

The research findings have, moreover, discovered that, regardless of the fact that flexible work arrangements are entirely acknowledged as beneficial to the employers and employees, they have not yet been implemented effectively in the South African public sector. As a result, it is crucial to introduce various flexible arrangements, particularly in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, to restore work and life balance for the benefit of staff performance, which ultimately benefits employees as well as the employer. Participants in this study have revealed that management should aim to make work-life programs available by adopting a flexible work environment to allow employees to effectively maintain personal and work lives as distinct matters. This permits employees in the department to adjust their plans, allowing them to administer individual undertakings like pick-ups and drop-offs of children from schools, as well as being able to attend classes to further their education, to suggest but a few examples.

Participants' views revealed that flexible work arrangements definitely encourage employee retention, commitment, job satisfaction, motivation and delivery of service. The findings indicated that workplace flexibility has a definite positive effect that motivates individuals to improve their focus on their tasks, increases contentment, stimulates officials to enhance service provision, has a positive impact on work, as well as personal life management, increases the quality of services and encourages reliability in the department. This is a reflection of the correlation between workplace flexibility, work and life, as well as motivation. Participants have indicated that the Department's authorities should earnestly contemplate these arrangements, given that the majority of time is spent at work, rather than at home. As indicated by Barack Obama, attracting and absorbing more effective and engaged employees utilising

flexible workplace policies, is not only good for business or economy, on the other hand it is worthy for our families and our future too (The White House Report, 2010).

- ***To analyse whether flexibility in working conditions will have a positive impact on work, family life and influence and increase job satisfaction of public employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Objective 2).***

Outcomes of the research and the evaluation of Objective Two revealed that any organisation that values staff personnel and has an understanding of the significance of flexible provisions, will benefit in terms of employee devotion and determination. As specified in Chapter One of the study, that employees are the backbone of the organisation, this is an indication that employees are always the main concern and the core of everything the public service does. The provision of a workplace that is secure, optimistic, flexible, and diversified indicates that the Department will be able to secure the future of a strong public service.

Employees now prefer to work for government departments which offer flexible work schedules. This is according to both the research findings and the literature review. Flexible work provisions benefit employees in terms of performance and career satisfaction because they assure a work-life balance. As indicated in the study, employees of all ages are drawn to flexible arrangements because these agree with the essential work-life balance. According to Stroup et al. (2016) those employers who advocate for the acceptance of flexible work arrangements indicate that they effectively ensure greater employee retention, achievement, higher performance and productivity.

The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should play its part in remodelling recruitment procedures to make provision for work-life balance frameworks. Flexible work arrangements are perceived to be the solution for balancing work and life, and are, in fact, an asset of human resource management, if employed in combination with decent workplace practices which will improve work performance and increase delivery of services.

According to research studies, executing flexible working adjustments helps with the balancing of the responsibilities of work and family life. It needs to be considered that children and elderly people need parental or nursing attention to maintain a secure, healthy, and conducive standard

of living. Coming from different backgrounds or upbringings has an effect on employees' work experiences as individuals. When employees are given the flexibility to sort out their family responsibilities, they become motivated and productive in the workplace. Flexible working periods, according to researchers, greatly influence job fulfilment, motivation, and employee commitment.

Flexible arrangements in the workplace have a substantial correlation with work-life balance and job satisfaction. When these arrangements are introduced, the balance between work and life can be achieved which means there is less unnecessary pressure, time to focus on both aspects, and an employee will be motivated to accomplish the expected delivery of services ensuring job fulfilment. Different authors have placed emphasis on the role of managers to minimise work-life conflicts, because they can schedule work-hour arrangements flexibly. Employees can work fewer hours, or rather take time off if their determinations are prioritised.

- ***To what extent will the introduction of flexible working condition reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Objective 3).***

There is a correlation between Objective Three and interview question three. The analysis that the study has revealed is that absenteeism is one of the greatest underlying factors that affect Departmental goals. Participants have revealed that they would be less likely to be absent if flexible work provisions were made available to them, furthermore, it is an indication that they would be more satisfied with their current employer, were these arrangements to be offered, which guarantees an improved performance. The majority undoubtedly agreed that absenteeism would be reduced and the delivery of service would improve under flexible work provisions.

Even though the issue of absenteeism has been discovered to be one of the major problems in South African institutions, during the engagement with the participants, it was further revealed that elements such as personal issues, the non-existence of flexibility, demotivation, ill-treatment by managers, have all been identified as contributing factors to employee absenteeism. These factors were discovered to occasionally instil feelings of being underrated and unappreciated. Some participants made admissions, stating that they had called in sick because they felt too emotionally drained to come to work. These same employees also stated that if their employer had offered flexible work arrangements, they would have been less likely to be absent.

A small number of participants indicated that implementing flexible conditions would not reduce absenteeism because government employees have been provided with various types of leave as discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) of this research. It must also be stated that there are employees who frequently absent themselves due to laziness and come up with lame excuses for their absence. This is a critical issue that needs be controlled as efficiently as possible and should be dealt with by supervisors in the Department as employees are likely to involve Trade unions. In addition, other research findings have established that flexible settings can also be risky, particularly when employees do not decide on them willingly or freely. These arrangements should not be forced on any employee but should be made available on an optional basis.

To reduce workplace conflict, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs must take a closer look at the needs of the employees and deal with all forms of absenteeism fairly and attentively. The implementation of flexible arrangements can be utilised as a strategy to curb the issue of absenteeism in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs as viewed by the participants. Baeza, Gonzalez and Wang (2018) state that employees' absence in the workplace and reasons for remaining, can be anticipated by their level of job satisfaction; how people feel about their jobs. This is commonly their work approach which will reveal their job satisfaction, which not only reflects on their overall opinion of their wellbeing as employees, but also on their relationship to essential outcomes of their workplace.

- *Investigate the elements to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Objective 4)*

The findings and the evaluation of the last objective revealed that in order to switch from simply consuming to advanced human resources, the authentic human resource management (HRM) must be reformed to take account of long-term development, reinforcement, and renewal of human resources. As a result, strategic human resources is perceived as a continuation of sustainable HRM, offering a fresh viewpoint on human resource administration. A typical job is becoming increasingly relevant as a result of the labour market's ongoing changes, particularly in the present. Promoting the law of flexibility in the workplace is turning into a hot topic, a requirement for employment, and a motivating factor for the Department of Co-

operative Governance and Traditional Affairs employees. For flexibility programmes to be endorsed, the following need to be considered:

- Formal policy regulations

As indicated in Chapter One of the research, the Public Service lacks formal policies to endorse flexible working arrangements in South African government institutions. The absence of prescribed documentation outlining procedures, plans, or regulations can permit loopholes for misinterpretation and misunderstanding. A turn-around strategy would be to develop and disseminate government guidelines concerning the categories of flexible work provisions that are available. Although it is believed that South Africa has remarkable and well-written public policies, the country's application of those policies commonly leads to worthless outcomes. It is imperative that the Department embark on policy formulation that will support flexible arrangements. The researcher has learnt that some government departments in the Western Cape Province have endorsed and remained working from home even after the lifting of Covid-19 rulings. These departments have designed their own way of working and have implemented stringent approaches guided by their own policies. The system has worked so well that the executive authorities have decided to continue with the work system which was adopted due to regulations emanating from Covid-19 rulings.

- Monitoring system

As a result, the Department's execution of these methods requires planning and the development of flexible measures, while observing the objectivity and equity principles outlined in the provisional policy. Some of the participants in this research specified that the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate should take responsibility as a Directorate to monitor and assess outcomes. Participants suggested that the employees' service system should be well established to allow employees and supervisors to carry out a range of online duties in the case of work-from-home arrangements. Administration of this task could be monitored and constantly managed by making appropriate management information readily available on a daily basis. This would increase proficiency and eradicate unnecessary malfunctions, decreasing time-consuming manual processes.

It is necessary to set up a monitoring system to evaluate the results of employee performance in order to determine how well the employer and employee are progressing toward achieving their shared goals. In order to track performance, basic reporting criteria must also be made clear to staff upfront. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs

should gain from flexible work arrangements by seeing an improvement in service delivery, staff retention, and absence rates.

- Educating management

The Department still has managers who subscribe to an old school of thought. It is critical to emphasise that this management style is not limited to senior managers. Junior managers who were nurtured in this style of management commonly tend to follow in the footsteps of those who mentored them. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that some managers still cling to this style as the best way to function. Therefore, it is imperative to introduce short courses to educate managers who are willing to adapt to changing times by upskilling, introducing different types of courses and making these available for all levels of management, as well as ensuring that it is mandatory to attend. The Human Capital Directorate exists within the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and is responsible for providing training needs for all levels within the Department. This is mandatory and in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 which declares that public servants must be trained and developed.

For the duration of the engagement with participants in the interview session, the researcher discovered that, during most of the interview questions, participants constantly made references to the type of a supervisor or manager they reported to. When making a crucial decision for management, it is critical to consider the views and needs of the employees. Decision-making that involves both employee and the manager is required for effective team management in flexible work environments; flexible work will not function well under micro-managers who have not been exposed to training and development, since changing times demand constant training to keep up with new information and trends. Programmes should be implemented to help employees perform well under flexibility conditions. A basic education for all managers should be started with, followed by the same for employees after which work can continue to improve skills over time.

- Tools of the trade

The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs ought to aim for the best foundation of guidelines and procedures in its management and operations on a constant basis. It is crucial to utilise comprehensive and innovative communication technology to support and improve the provision of services of the Departmental strategic business units. It is on this basis that the implementation of flexible arrangements should have access to trade tools to improve service delivery. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has permitted innovative techniques for categorising work, which results in far greater flexibility concerning when and where responsibilities are fulfilled. Public and private organisations are transforming from a consistent, bureaucratic work method to a new flexible work standard. Providing support services that permit off-site operations, flexible working hours, an ICT sub-structure, mobile connectivity and other relevant tools should be reviewed in aiming at efficient provision of service.

The interview process with the participants revealed that the authorities should provide the tools of the trade for the effective implementation of flexible schedules. It was discovered that, during the lockdown emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, the tools of the trade were provided to some employees; and it must be noted that the Department is at present furnishing tools such as cell phones and laptops to all Senior Management Services (SMS) members and respective individuals. This is why they are able to work from home. Further to this, one of the participants pointed out that if this method can work for senior managers, it could easily be implemented without glitches for other employees. The topic of a system that is accessible outside of working premises was raised, with the suggestion that the department should consider implementing a system that is available at all times outside of the Department or, alternatively, permit access to the PERSAL System, which will be monitored at all times.

- Performance management system

The Public Service Regulations in the Republic of South Africa of 1999 and 2001 necessitate the executive authority from the respective department to institute a system designed for performance management and development for personnel in their departments. The regulations are set out as a prime directive to departments in terms of expanding and effecting the

departmental performance management system, guidelines and practices that are in line with well-defined standards and values.

When flexible working arrangements are reinforced and executed, authorities in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should assess the employee's performance agreement in line with the set performance management framework. The standardisation of working arrangements should be validated, changes made to duties should be revised; anticipated outputs must be properly communicated and working arrangements must be adhered to. An effective method for flexible working arrangements calls for trust and openness between the employees and managers.

Participants in this research have stated that for the successful implementation of flexible arrangement, the authorities governing Department Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should implement stringent methods to monitor performance under these conditions. The intention is to constantly mend deficiencies, which are anticipated to be tackled by the ongoing practice of monitoring, and to improve the public service.

5.5 Recommendations

The recommendations will be separated into two parts thereby enhancing flexible working conditions in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs currently and in the future:

5.5.1 Recommendations emanating from the findings of the current study

- The state and organisations both have to be aware of the positive effects of flexibility work arrangements. Changes to the South African labour law framework have to be implemented regarding the implementation of flexibility of work mostly for the employees in the public sector. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is encouraged to execute strategies to improve job fulfilment and work-life balance through flexible work arrangements as part of a reward system, which will not only benefit the employees of the Department but will also increase delivery of services.
- The authorities in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should engage more with employees and take into consideration their feelings, as during

the engagement with participants. The researcher discovered that the expressions by the respondents gave the idea that they were describing their individual job satisfaction. Generally, this has revealed that flexible work arrangements are strongly interconnected with employees' job fulfilment, providing them with distinctive advantages, since their contentment in the workplace is likely to be affected by work-life struggles because they are often 'loaded with household involvement.

- A formal work planning procedure must be put in place between the management and the employee to certify continuity as well as non-disruption of the rendering of services, and to give employees the ability to self-manage and perform their work without restrictions. The interaction with the participants has identified that they prefer flexible schedules which include being permitted to arrive late, leave work earlier than the normal time, which is usually 16h00, as well as to work from home when necessary. For directorates that are considered as essential, alternative options should be introduced including being given half-days off on Fridays and working from home when the need arises.
- It is recommended that the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs should initiate and restructure their Human Resources, which will include amending recruitment policies in order to endorse flexible schedules. Such flexibility, when incorporated with quality operational practices in the Department, could develop the basis of human resource management, bringing about an improved quality of work performance and a higher rate of delivery of services. Most significantly, bureaucratic changes are required in the South African public sector, as family-friendly policies should be adopted to ensure the effective implementation of flexibility practices. The stereotyped management which perceives employees as a tool should be challenged, and management should move to a new philosophy in which caring and being compassionate are collective responsibilities. Although this must commence at home, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs must progress into effecting more family-friendly policies that value employees.
- It is fundamentally crucial that the management of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs review their work plans on a regular basis to avoid circumstances whereby employees are not performing their expected duties as required. As indicated by some of the participants, drastic measures should be implemented to

make sure tasks are performed and completed, Monitoring and Evaluation systems and even the Directorate should be involved.

- Authorities in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs must consider that employees are also affected by the various challenges of their family backgrounds. It is well known that some employees play critical roles at home; caring for siblings in the place of absent parents can affect both your mental, physical, work, and life wellbeing. Work and life are extremely difficult to manage at the same time. The employment of flexible schedules would ease the challenges faced by employees and bring about a balance in life between work and personal commitments.
- One participant raised an issue of laziness, indicating that the suggested flexibility arrangements might not work because employees are lazy. However, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 (BCEA) requires an employer to furnish an employee with approved employment prescripts that contain rules and regulations in writing on the first days of the assumption of duties when beginning employment with the organisation. This is to confirm reliability between the employer and the employee for the purpose of safeguarding the employee alongside the employer, or *vice versa* in the event of differences over work issues. Subsequently, it is standard to enter an agreement in the form of an employment contract with the employee, which will obligate him/her to abide by the organisation's disciplinary codes. A full binding contract has the benefit of being signed by both parties, making it lawfully mandatory. This is regularly the core of an employment relationship.

5..5.2 Future recommendations

- It is suggested that further investigation ought to be piloted in the public sector. There is a shortage of researched evidence on flexible working schedules in the South African public service departments. Advance research should be regulated and conducted in distinct departments throughout the country, both nationally and provincially, to gain different views and approaches concerning flexible work arrangements. Research in several fields can assist researchers to apprehend where the ultimate need for flexible work arrangements exists.

- Flexible conditions in the workplace frameworks and policies must be well established and developed on an ongoing basis in order to be accurately implemented. This will document a better understanding of the views of all parties implicated, mainly employees, as well as the challenges and benefits of flexi-time implementation. Policies for flexible arrangements have been implemented in many countries around the world, but only a few private companies have employed them in South Africa.

5.6 Conclusion

The research findings have revealed that there were no previous studies done in the South African Public Sector on the subject of adopting flexibility conditions in the workplace. Piloting this research in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has revealed that furnishing staff personnel with flexibility not only motivates them, but ensures a better quality of work-life balance as well as reducing absenteeism and increasing the quality provision of service at all employee levels, as they attain a higher fulfilment and a better balance between work and life. Self-discipline and authenticity concerning daily effort would not only impart moral ethics to future generations but would also profit the economy of the country in the long run.

In conclusion, the difficulties of effectively executing working flexibility arrangements falls on employers, policymakers, as well as employees, as this affects them directly. The executive authority in the Department should take into consideration that employees value flexibility and perceive it as a significant motivator. The findings indicate that provision of flexibility to employees in the Department could benefit and support their emotional status at work, along with their relationship with the Department, as staff members become more reliable and committed. Subsequently, they can be effortlessly retained which would cut costs incurred by recruiting new employees. Consequently, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, as a whole, is recommended to value and recognise employees' diligence. Appeals should be subjectively considered against the effect on service delivery. Organisational necessities should be provided to allow for their accessibility so that alternative measures can be successfully implemented. This consists of restructuring roles and developing a job share procedure to support these requests.

This study aimed at exploring an under-researched area in the literature which came to the fore during the Covid-19 regulations by investigating the viability of and the potential advantages of adopting flexible working arrangements in the public service through a case study of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The study concludes that, although it would be advantageous to broaden the scope of such studies to include other provinces and other departments, the implementation of flexible working arrangements in a sector known for its adherence to old-school methods has the potential to breathe new life into the public sector, rendering it more efficient and attracting employees to join its talent pool.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Gatekeepers Letter



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DIRECTORATE

Private Bag 42078, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Nelson Building, 330 Langenhale Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Tel: 031 294 1751 Fax: 031 95 0620

POLICY AND RESEARCH

To whom it may concern

Masters in Public Administration student: Ms Ruth, B. Shandu

This is to confirm that the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in KwaZulu-Natal was approached by Ms Ruth, B. Shandu (student number: 220024926) from UKZN to request permission to conduct a research study titled: "Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the work place: A case of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance". The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse whether flexibility in working conditions will adjust work, family life influence and increase job satisfaction of public employees.
- Analyse whether the introduction of flexible working condition will reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision.
- Investigate and examine elements to be taken into consideration to endorse more flexible working programmes for employees in the Department?

Permission is hereby granted for the study to be undertaken provided that:

- The study relates to Cogta and is undertaken in line with the methodology described within the proposal submitted to the Department prior to granting of this permission.
- The role of the Department in this study will not incur any costs whatsoever or carry any obligations to release information it deems confidential and classified.
- The student must furnish the Department with an electronic copy of their final research report once the University has passed it.
- The student will be expected as and when requested to share through a presentation, the key findings of the study with the Department.
- Employees identified to partake in the study have rights to withdraw from participating in the study at any stage and any information shared by them should be handled with confidentiality and without prejudice.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr T. Tubane

Head of Department

Signature: _____

Date: 4/10/22

APPENDIX 2: Ethical Clearance



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

25 November 2022

Ruth Bhekekile Shandu (220024926)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear RB Shandu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004981/2022
Project title: Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the work place: A case of KwaZulu-Natal
Department of Co-operative Governance
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 November 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 25 November 2023.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Postal Address: Private Bag 354001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howand College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 3: Interview Schedule

Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the work place: A case of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance

Instructions for the interview:

- You are requested to answer all the questions carefully and honestly.
- Your responses will be treated confidentially and will be valuable to the study.
- Your name will not appear on the interview questionnaire
- You are allowed to decline at anytime

Q. 1

As a Public Servant, do you think the implementation of Flexible Conditions will work in the Department of COGTA?

Q. 2

In your opinion, do you consider flexible working arrangements may certainly motivate and improve the moral of the employees?

Q.3

Will the introduction of Flexible conditions curb the issue of absenteeism within the Department?

Q.4

Will the service delivery be affected under flexible conditions?

Q.5

Is the COGTA Department supportive of flexible working arrangements?

Q.6

Will a flexible work schedule benefit you to balance your work and personal commitments?

Q.7

Do you feel motivated going to work each day and if so what motivates you, do you also believe, a specific management style could be a barrier to allow flexibility arrangement in your Directorate?

Q.8

Would you prefer to be involved in structuring your working times?

APPENDIX 4: Informed Consent

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Date: 28/10/2022

Greeting COGTA Official

My name is **Ruth B. Shandu (220024926)** from the Department of CoGTA, Pietermaritzburg currently furthering my studies at University of KwaZulu Natal studying towards Master of Public Administration (MPA) and my contact number is: 07203213106 and ruth.shandu@kzncogta.gov.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research in *“Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the work place: A case of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance”*. The aim and purpose of this research is to:

- Assess whether flexibility in working conditions will adjust work, family life influence and increase job satisfaction of public employees.
- Evaluate whether the introduction of flexible working condition will reduce the level of absenteeism and increase service provision.
- Analyse benefits of promoting flexible working environment within the Department and how this can affect the behaviour of employees’ work-life balance

The study is expected to enrol 10 participants, which entails one focus group with five officials and five individual interviews from different Directorates within the Department of CoGTA in Pietermaritzburg. It will involve the following procedures:

- ✓ The name will not be revealed to others.
- ✓ Will not be forced to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time.

The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be between 10- 15 minutes. The study is not funded by any institution.

The participation in this research is voluntary; participants may withdraw participation at any point and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment. There are no risks involved, the study will provide no direct benefits to participants, it is intending to contribute to the discourse of flexibility in the workplace so as to balance work and life experiences, by assisting the employer in understanding work and home-life balance challenges for both male and female employees. There are no appropriate alternative procedures and treatment that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

There are no potential risks involved, the participation will be facilitated at the comfort of their offices and if the participant is absent, the interview can be done through zoom meeting. This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher on mobile phone: 0720323106 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT for CoGTA Official

I have been informed about the study entitled (*Analyzing the effects of flexible working conditions in the work place: A case of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance*) by Ruth Shandu.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

APPENDIX 5: Language Editor



A collaboration under the Wordweavers umbrella
CK Reg. No. 2006/156780/23

Contact Catherine on [info@editatwordweavers](mailto:info@editatwordweavers.co.za) (www.editatwordweavers.co.za)

12 June 2023

Letter Confirming Editing

This letter serves to confirm that Catherine Eberle, a member of the editing team of the above collaboration, EditatWordweavers, received and edited the Master's dissertation titled *Analysing the effects of flexible working conditions in the workplace: A case of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-operative Governance* by Ruth B Shandu.

The document was edited in MS Word Track Changes with corrections inserted in the comments section and queries and suggestions annotated. The researcher was obliged to accept or reject changes made and address queries. The editor was informed that Harvard referencing style was required.

The edited document, together with a report commenting on errors or issues in the edit were returned to the researcher for action with particular focus on referencing. The editor notes that the Appendices did not form part of the editing process.

The editing process addresses grammar, spelling, language usage, syntax, tense and punctuation. Comments are made regarding referencing; inappropriate headings and labelling, layout, design and formatting.

Kind regards


Catherine Eberle (Team Leader)