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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

RESEARCH TOPIC

**THE IMPACT OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS RELATED FACTORS ON
EMPLOYEES MENTAL HEALTH: CASE OF ZIM ALLOYS.**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to all Zimbabwean employees who are suffering as a consequence of occupational stress related factors due to prevailing economic situation. Keep up with the spirit of resilience and optimism. To my family, I appreciate your emotional and financial support.

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Special thanks to my supervisor Dr J MUTAMBARA for guiding me through and imparting knowledge on how to carry out this research. The researcher wishes to extend her gratitude to ZIMALLOYS employees for providing necessary information to the researcher. Above all, I thank the Almighty for the gift of life.

ABSTRACT

The research sought to explain the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. The research is guided by four research questions which aim to explore the impact of occupational stress related factors, manifestations of mental health problems, coping strategies used by employees and measures that can be taken to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors. The research was enriched with the transactional theory of stress and the person-environment fit model and relevant literature. A case study was used as a form of research design. Data was collected using the purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were administered to the established participants. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study established that employees are subjected to occupational stress related factors such as shift work, retrenchment, long working hours, poor working relations, disciplinary procedures, and accidents. The study established that mental health challenges manifest through loneliness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, alcohol/substance abuse and fatigue. It is the researcher's findings that adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies namely substance abuse, optimism, resilience, spirituality and avoidance were used. It is the researcher's findings that there are strategies that can be implemented to minimize the impact of occupational stress which include psychosocial support, effective communication, recreational facilities and effective salary administration. Conclusively, the research discovered challenges experienced by employees and recommendations such as establishment of mental health policies to cater for employees' mental health needs. The organization should have professionally trained psychologist to help employees with psychological problems.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DSM 5- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

EASH- European Agency for Safety and Health

ESAP-Economic Structural Adjustment Program PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

ILO-International Labour Organization

NIOSH- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

REM- Rapid Eye Movement

WHO- World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the preamble of the research and focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions and assumptions of the study. In addition, it outlines the delimitations and limitations of the study and the operational definition of key terms.

1.2 Background of the study

Occupational stress is the leading cause of occupational ill-health in the Ferrochrome mining sector. Occupational stress is the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them (Omolara,2008). Occupational stress has been a topic that has received increasing attention, in the area of occupational health, over the last three decades (Swanepoel, 1998). The Ferrochrome mining sector has become increasingly subject to fast changing forces like increased competition, the pressure of quality, innovation and an increase in the pace of doing business. These demands on employees grew equally dramatically and this created occupational stress within employees which affects their mental health.

In Zimbabwe the blame has been put on the prevailing economic situation and political turmoil. However, there are other underlying problems such as occupational stress which has a negative impact on the mental health of the employees. Occupational stress occurs from the interactions of the worker and the work environment. The discrepancy between the demands of a work environment and a worker's capability to carry out and complete such demands often leads to stress. Occupational stress occurs when there is discrepancy between the demands of workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete those demands (Borg & Riding (2011). In relation to Zimbabwe, (Nhundu, 1999) contends that research studies on work-related stress (are on the increase. In the European Union (EU), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EASH) (2008) states that nearly 25 percent workers are suffering from occupational stress and more than half of all work days lost can be linked to it. In the United Kingdom (UK), stress is the second major cause of work-related ill-health (Furnham, 2005). In South Africa, Jonas

(2001) argues that since the attainment of independence in 1994, the country's working conditions have been dynamic thereby instituting an experience of stress.

Occupational stress was once associated with senior positions but now it is acknowledged that it affects employees at all levels (Beheshtifar, Malikeh, Nazarian,&Rahele, 2013).In the Ferrochrome mining sector, the technical and production workforce is more susceptible to occupational stress because set production targets should be met which strains employees physically and mentally. When occupational stress becomes overwhelming, it may place so much impact on body and mind of the person. The employee may experience consequences such as physical and mental exhaustion, lack of concentration, loss of memory, mistake in judgment, self-physical exploitation, depression, frequent absenteeism, repetitive accidental injury, low productivity and greater work expense (Hill,2000).Physical consequences of occupational stress may manifest in form of fatigue,headache,upset stomach and sleep disturbances (Burns,Buttterworth & Ansley,2016).

Mental/emotional consequences of stress manifest through memory loss, depression, risk taking behaviors such as alcohol consumption. Mental strain is in form of psychosomatic changes such as headaches, fever and cold (Ford, Matthews, Wooldridge, Mshira, Karar & Strahan, 2014).Job strain and poorly functioning work environments are associated with the development of depressive symptoms (Theorell, Nyberg, Leineweber, Hanson, Oxenstierna &Westerlund, 2012).

Occupational stress in the Ferrochrome mining industry is mainly based on roles and relationships within the organization. The quality of relationships is the predictor of strain at work and the consequences are depression and anxiety. The increase in working pressure has an adverse impact on employees' mental health. The economic and employment benefits of the industry are well recognized giving little attention to the negative aspects of the Ferrochrome mining industry such as occupational stress. The suggestion that the Ferrochrome mining industry employees are more susceptible to occupational stress is justified through the pressure that is associated with mining. This puts a strain on relationships as well as mental and emotional health. Hazardous work conditions, geographic remoteness, shift work and long working hours

place employees at a high risk of psychological and emotional challenges (McPhedran & De Lo, 2013). In addition, employees' mental health concerns that occur as a result of their work include depression and stress (Mclean, 2012). Emotional isolation relating to poor relations within the workplace also affect employees in the mining industry (Iverson & Maguire, 2000)

1.3 Statement of the problem

Excessive occupational stress in short bursts, help individuals to stay alert and perform their best. However, prolonged stress has been considered "lethal" in some parts of the work environment, and is often associated with psychological and physical health (Wang, Liu & Wang, 2012). Stress is a normal response to the demands of work. It can be beneficial though excessive occupational stress can be damaging to one's mental health. Occupational stress can contribute to the development of anxiety and/or depression, and may cause an existing condition to worsen. Occupational stress also affects relationships and life outside work, can increase risk of injury, fatigue and burnout (Colligan, Thomas, Colligan & Higgins, 2006). Despite several steps taken by many organizations in order to improve employees' well being not many results have been achieved due to occupational stress related factors. Some of the factors which contribute to occupational stress include high workloads, job insecurity, long working hours, lack of proper resources, insufficient skills for the job, harassment, discrimination and fewer promotional opportunities (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002).

The Ferrochrome mining industry is considered as one of the most dangerous and hazardous industries and the need for effective and efficient occupational health and mental health policies are critical to promote good mental health within the mining industry. The high carbon ferrochrome production process is hazardous and poor safety procedures may results in harm and fatal accidents (Mutanda, 2014). This reveals that the ferrochrome mining industry exposes employees to occupational stress which has an impact on their mental health.

In addition to this, most Zimbabwean companies operate without full knowledge of the detrimental effects of occupational stress on employees' mental health. An organization may fail to achieve its goals of profit making if employees' mental health issues are not addressed. There is little adherence to the Mental health policies in the mining industries which exposes employees to high levels of occupational stress.

Despite the dangers and hazards present in the mining industry, only few studies have focused on how occupational stress related factors impact mental health within the workplace. ZIMALLOYS is a player in the ferrochrome mining industry which is characterized with excessive pressure in order to meet targets and maximize on profits. This exposes employees to occupational stress prompting the researcher to look into the impact of occupational stress factors on employees' mental health. However, the researcher can confirm that no study has been carried out to examine the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health at ZIMALLOYS in the Midlands Province. It was therefore fundamental to assess the impact of occupational stress related factors.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate and analyze the impact of occupational stress factors on employees' mental health in the Zimbabwean context. The study aims to create a working environment where employees are aware of possible occupational stressors, mental health challenges and how they can manage such occupational stressors in order to improve their well-being. The research study thus entailed examining the existed relationship between occupational stress and mental health.

1.5 Research questions

- What is the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health?
- What are the manifestations of various mental health challenges?
- What are the employees' mental health reduction/coping strategies?
- What measures can be taken to minimize the impact of occupational stress on employees' mental health?

1.6 Significance of the study

An investigation into the impact of occupational stress on employees' mental health is a prerequisite for organizations in the Ferrochrome mining industry. The study also enables employees to cope and manage occupational stress. In addition, the study lays the foundation for the formulation and implementation of mental health policies in the workplace.

1.6.1 Government

The research will help the government in formulating mental health policies which empower and employees in their respective jobs. Thus the government will recognise occupational stress as mental health problem which has adverse effects on employees. The research study is relevant as it would be expected to avail verifiable data to the Ministry of Labour and Employee Welfare concerning occupational stress. Such data and information would enable with the formulation and alteration of policies and practices in the labour sector, thus ultimately aid in improving employee welfare.

1.6.3 Academics

The study will be of significance to the academics since students will be able to understand the concept of occupational stress. The study is significant to the field of occupational and clinical psychology as it gives better understanding of occupational health and safety.

1.7 Assumptions of the study

This study made numerous assumptions pertaining to the study in its aim to address occupational stress factors. The study is based on the assumption that occupational stress is associated with the aversive or unpleasant emotional states that people experience as a consequence of their work. Occupational stress is typically associated with the negative feelings that employees have about their work (Jex, Beehr & Robert, 1990). Occupational stress accounts for the majority of work-related health claims such as depression. Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Research indicates that job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders (Sauter, Hurrell, Murphy & Levi, 1997). The study assumes that respondents are aware of the occupational stress related factors which affect their mental health.

1.8 Delimitations

This study was conducted at ZIMALLOYS where information was acquired pertaining the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. The study involved a total of 10 employees that were purposively selected. The researcher did her research project in fulfillment of a Diploma in Human Resources Management which made it easy to gain entrance

into the organization. The researcher has knowledge of the business operations which makes it easy for the research to get the required information.

1.9 Limitations

The time frame for this study was very limited. Due to the high level of confidentiality in the organizations not all sources relevant to this research could be accessed. However the researcher had to be persistent following research ethics until the information required was disclosed. The researcher faced a challenge of getting the permission to carry out the study as there were procedures one had to follow which takes long. However, to solve this issue the researcher started this process early.

A major limitation the researcher had projected to be experienced was in the form of failure by the respondents in comprehending some of the requirements and items presented on the interview schedule. This would have resulted in the participants not providing the research with relevant information. Ultimately, the researcher's potential of collecting relevant and reliable data would have been limited (Orodho, 2003). In dealing with the mentioned limitation, the researcher formulated and presented the interview schedule in a clear and simple format and used language that was easy to understand. In addition, the pre-test conducted on the data collection instrument was instrumental in determining the collection of relevant data and this further enabled the researcher to make amendments on the interview schedule with the aim of making the questions more understandable.

1.10 Definition of key terms

Occupational stress

Occupational stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a worker's job does not match his/her capabilities, resources or needs (NIOSH, 2005).

Stress

It is stress is a state of worry that arises from an actual or apparent demand that calls for a change in behavior (Lazarus, 2009).

Mental health

Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (World Health Organization, 2001).

Impact

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an impact is an action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another, a mark, effect or influence.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter served as the bedrock of the whole study. The chapter presented the background of the study and the statement of the problem which affirmed the need for carrying out the study. In addition, the purpose of the study as well as research objectives was also presented. The significance of the study which showed how the research would benefit several stakeholders in the occupational health and safety was presented. The chapter also highlighted the delimitations and limitations of the study and definition of key terms. The background of the study indicated that employees encountered occupational stress which adversely impacts their mental health. As such, there was need to address the occupational stress related factors which affect employees' mental health as very few studies have been conducted in this context in Zimbabwe. The next chapter would focus on the literature review backing the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview on the literature review on occupational stress factors and how they impact employees' mental health. Literature review is defined as the gathered previous information on certain area (Howitt & Cramer (2005). This chapter provides an account of the related literature on occupational stress with an emphasis on the mining sector as researched locally, regionally and internationally. Literature reviewed in this chapter is informed by the research objectives raised in the preceding chapter. In this study the literature review concentrates on occupational stress, occupational stress related factors, manifestations of mental health problems, coping strategies used by employees and the strategies used to minimize the impact of occupational stress. This chapter also focused on the relationship between occupational stress and mental health. The researcher made use of theories and models of stress to explain the phenomena.

2.2 What is occupational stress?

Since Seyle (1956) identified job stress as a reaction of an employee to an internal or external demand, the subsequent researchers had either similar or very different conceptions of it. French (1974) defined occupational stress as the consequence of an individual's ability or skills failing to coordinate with the job or the job environment. Margolis & Kroes (1974) viewed occupational stress as improper occupational pressure or burden which affects the psychological and physical condition of the worker.

Occupational stress is a form of responses that take place when employees are faced with job demands not corresponding to their abilities, knowledge or skills and which present challenges to their ability to contend or deal with the challenges (World Health Organization (WHO), 2007). Occupational stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope (WHO, 1986). The degree or level of work-related stress widely varies even in similar situations (WHO, 2003). Furthermore, a report produced by WHO (2007) states that close to 75 percent of the global labor force works in developing nations, but the majority of the developing countries fail to provide even the basic facilities to employees exposing them harmful workplace environments. In the developed nations, nearly 20 to 50 percent of employees are exposed to

harmful workplace conditions and according to WHO (2007), such kind of working environment fuels disease burden and injuries. The World Labour Report of 2008 further highlighted work-related stress as one of the most serious health issues of the 21st century while (WHO) referred to it as the ‘World Wide Epidemic’ (American Institute of Stress, 2008).

According to (International Labor Organization (ILO), 2008), occupational stress affects all countries, all professions and all categories of workers. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (2008) defines occupational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. This view is strongly supported by the (International Labor Relations, 2008) who posits that all countries, both developed and underdeveloped, as well as all professions and categories of workers, are not immune to stress.

In the European Union (EU), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EASH) (2008) states that nearly 25 percent workers are suffering from occupational stress and more than half of all work days lost can be linked to it. In the United Kingdom (UK), stress is the second major cause of work-related ill-health (Furnham, 2005) and the number one cause of ill-health in the mining sector. Kaur (2011) added that in UK, 12.8 million working days were lost to anxiety, depression and stress between 2005 and 2005. In the EU, EASH (2008) further reports that in the year 2002, stress cost the economy an estimated 20 billion euros while NIOSH (2008) reveals that close to \$300 billion are channeled towards programs aimed at enabling to cope with stress in the United States of America (USA) only.

Occupational stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes (WHO, 1986). Because stress results from the complex interactions between large systems of interrelated variables, stress either be positive or negative. Not all stresses are negative. Some level of stress is necessary for development, motivation, changes for growth of the employees and the organization (Ellis, 2006).

Occupational stress is a perceived difference between the professional demands and a person’s ability to carry out those demands (Albrecht, 2011). It is important to note that not all stress is negative or bad. Agolla and Ongori (2008), argue that occupational stress is not necessarily

always harmful. Stress can be put into two categories distress and eustress. Eustress is favorable as it can result in positive effects such as employee motivation, maximization of products and innovation. In contrast, distress manifest when individuals perceive themselves as having no capacity to control a stressful event. Undesirable occupational stress is likely to result in unfavorable levels of wellbeing.

2.3 Occupational stress related factors

In general, occupational stress is caused by a mismatch between perceived effort and perceived reward, and/or a sense of low control in a job with high demands. Empirical studies by Agolla & Ongori (2008) have identified occupational stress factors such as shift work, long working hours, and work overload, accidents at work, long work hours, inappropriate working conditions and poor working relations.

2.3.1 Relationships at work

Poor working relations make employees more susceptible to occupational stress which affects their mental health. Sutherland & Cooper (2000) perceive poor-work relations, low levels of supportiveness and low attention in problem-solving within the organization as job stressors. Such working relations may lead to mental health problems such as loneliness. Loneliness is a psychological state that results from deficiencies in a person's social relationships (Peplan & Perlman, 1982). Bragg (1979) states that loneliness is negative emotional arousal. It is a distressing experience which is detrimental to psychological health and well being (Murphy & Kushpik, 1992). When the work environment is not adequately fulfilling social needs individuals display loneliness (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998). It is therefore clear that loneliness is a mental health problem that stems from stress as a result of poor work relations. Such a working environment might be considered as 'loneliness provoking factors' (de Jong-Gerveld, 1987). Workplace relationships provide companionship for individuals. However, most relationships are influenced by job characteristics such as hierarchical structure and seniority. The mining environment is concerned with meeting production targets, friendship at work is discouraged in order to regulate improper behavior and lower production (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). Poor relationships at work can lead to emotional isolation which takes a toll on employees' mental health. Loneliness reflects on communication problems in the workplace. Loneliness in a mining set up leads poor

concentration and cognition which exposes employees to hazards for example operating heavy machinery requires attention and concentration. This is a clear indication that poor relationships at work expose employees to mental health problems such as loneliness which makes them incapable of functioning well and performing daily duties.

2.3.2 Shift work

The worldwide workforce is engaged in shift work and the most common is the mining sector. It is considered necessary to ensure continuity of operations in the mining industry. Shift work is an arrangement of working hours that uses teams (shifts) of workers in order to extend hours of operation of the work environment beyond that of conventional office hours (Knutsson, 1989). Night shift is a frequent reason for the disruption of circadian rhythms causing significant alterations of sleep and biological function which affects the psychological well-being of employees (Burch, Yost, Johnson & Allen, 2005). Shift work disorder can increase the risk of mental health problems like depression. Shift work alters and the sleep alterations are included among the Circadian Rhythm Sleep-Wake Disorders of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Shift work can be a potential psychosocial stressor, anxiety and depression reflect the adverse effects of mental health from long shifts and may cause psychiatric morbidity (Barton, Spelton & Totterdell, 1995). Shift work also leads to the decrease in social well-being and happiness.

2.3.3 Long working hours

Mining is a physically demanding profession characterized with hard and dangerous working conditions which can cause mental strain. Mining shifts are lengthier which shows that employees are susceptible to occupational stress. Long working hours can cause a variety of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and fatigue (Knutsson, 1989). The Labor Relations Act stipulates that an employee should work for 8 hours per day and anything above the stated hours is considered as overtime which should be paid. The number of hours that an employee is obliged to work has a pervasive impact on their mental health. Excessive working hours have negative effects on employees' mental health including sleep disturbance, anxiety and depression (Baunai & Tamakashi, 2014). Sleep disturbance is associated with impairment in

an employees' quality of life. Mental health problems in the workplace have serious consequences not only for the individual but also for the productivity of the organization.

2.3.4 Retrenchments and layoffs.

The prevailing economic situation has seen many organizations retrenching their workforce in order to cut down on costs (Muller & Zahawi, 2007). The introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in led to economic struggles in Zimbabwe (Peek, 1995).ESAP brought vast retrenchments to employees which laid the blue print for occupational stress.Furthermore,the global economic recession in 2008/2009 together with political, social and economic problems resulted in ZIMALLOYS retrenching its workforce. The period of economic recession increased levels of occupational stress which inversely affect the remaining employees (Singh, 2010). Ferro Chrome trade led to losses in the industry as the costs continued to be above income. ZIMALLOYS has not been spared in this dilemma prompting it to institute retrenchment measures with little regard to its effects on employees' mental health. Retrenchment refers to cost and asset reductions in order to mitigate the conditions responsible for financial downturn (Robins & Pearce, 1992).Organizational downsizing in form of retrenchment has seen a number of people losing their jobs (Rheeder, 2009). ZIMALLOYS closed down furnaces as a downsizing strategy. Perceptions of being victims of downsizing evoke high levels of stress amongst survivor employees which can lead to depression and reduced motivation. These individuals suffer from post traumatic stress disorder such as high levels of psychological distress and fear. Employees who survive retrenchment live in fear of future retrenchment which leads to high levels of occupational stress and depression (Brockner, 1987). Retrenchment results in depression, psychological trauma, anxiety, fatigue, low morale and threatens the psychological contract (Noer, 1993).

2.3.5 Accidents at work

Accidents in the mining environment contribute to occupational mental health problems worldwide (NIOSH, 2008).The Occupational Safety and Health Act is a general law that applies in the mining and smelting industry. The aim of the act is to prevent occupational accidents and other physical or mental health problems related to the work environment. Operating of machinery in an environment that is characterize with occupational stress factors has a bearing in

causing occupational accidents (Liu,Haris,Weinberger & Serxner,2013).Occupational accidents result in changes in behavior ,quality of life and other psychological effects (ILO,2016).The industry in Zimbabwe experiences a high rate of accidents just like in the construction and manufacturing sector. Injuries at work may lead to mental health problems. The occurrence of accidents in the workplace exposes employees to occupational stress. Incidents of accidents may create a negative perception among the employees. The workplace becomes a danger zone for the employees. Accidents are also caused by psychological issues such as fatigue. Sources of fatigue include social stressors as well as psychological stresses (Taylor, 2000)

2.3.6 Disciplinary Procedures

A code of conduct is enforced in order to regulate employee behavior within the organization. It acts as a guideline on how employees should conduct themselves (Stinnet, 2011).A mining environment has a large number of workforce therefore disciplinary procedures should be put in place to control unwanted behaviors' disciplinary procedure is a comprehensive procedure written by an employer to encourage employees to follow rules and regulations (Human Resources Dictionary).Disciplinary procedures expose employees' to occupational stress in the sense that employees may live in fear of losing their jobs because of previous offences. For example if an employee has the final written warning, they are gripped with anxiety and sadness (Milbourn, 1996). This has a huge impact on their mental health because anxiety may lead to poor performance. There is no doubt that going through a disciplinary process causes a certain degree of stress and anxiety for the employee therefore disciplinary procedures should be considerate about employees' well-being (Assad,n.d). A poorly handled disciplinary procedure may cause psychiatric damage to employees for example unfair dismissal. Although disciplining an employee indicates that such behavior is unwanted, the way discipline is enforced could affect employees' behaviors and mental health (Stinnet, 2011). Disciplinary procedures may lead to increased concealment and anxiety. Anxiety destroys an employee's motivation and morale (Milbourn,1996).For example an employee charged with poor time keeping may try to conceal their presence to cover up for their lateness thereby creating a stressful shift which affect their day at work

2.3.7 Poor Remuneration packages

The major factor to cause occupational stress is lack of rewards and recognition (Cooper and Bright, 2001). If employees are not appreciated and supported they will be demotivated and have low morale and as a result they can experience occupational stress and poor mental health. Compensation impacts nearly everyone in organization and so the search for effective methods of pay is often a top priority in business. With recent economic recession, the interest in the variable incentive plans has been on the rise as more and more companies adopted performance related pay to cut on costs (EPWL,2010).Currently available studies show that pay based on performance has adverse impacts since it does not always produce the desired effects (Yeh,Cheng & Chen,2009).Performance-based pay systems thus have been proven to lead to greater pressure on performance evaluation,continuous monitoring of performance and more competitive work climate (Landy,1994,Shiron,Westman & Melamed,1999).This has a potential to substantially affect the employees psychological and physical health outcomes.

2.4 Mental health

Mental health is a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. The World Health Organization (2001) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. In this positive sense, mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community. The Health Education Authority (USA) defined mental health in 1997 as “the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to survive pain, disappointment and sadness”. It is a fundamental belief in our own and others’ dignity and worth.

Mental health is important for business and the 21st century has witnessed that positive mental health and well-being of employees becoming the backbone of the business. The mining industry is one of the most challenging working environment and experiences highest rates of mental health conditions among employees. There is evidence that long and irregular shift work can cause a variety of health problems including depression, anxiety and fatigue. There is more to

mental health than just being free of distress and other mental challenges. Mental health is the possession of attributes such as sense of purpose, positive relationships and continued growth (Ryff,1995).Psychological well being has strong implications for employees' health and happiness, economic productivity and the development of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety enhances good mental health (Chen,2009).

2.4.1 The relationship between Occupational Stress and Mental Health

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2001). Occupational stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a worker's job does not match his/her capabilities, resources or needs (NIOSH, 2005).As it can be seen, the definition makes use of the formulation "stresses of life", wherefore it seems reasonable to conclude that the concepts of Mental Health and occupational stress are linked to each other. Occupational stress, hence, is found to be a mental and physical condition that calls in a detrimental effect on the individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Comish & Swindle, 1994).This conclusion is also supported by findings from the literature, stating that stress is associated with poorer mental health (Stead, 2010 & Chan, 2009).

2.5 Manifestations of mental health problems

Mental health problems manifest in the form of depression, anxiety, loneliness, insomnia, eating disorders, alcohol/substance abuse and mental fatigue.

2.5.1 Loneliness

New research from Totaljobs found that three in five employees feel lonely at work. Loneliness and poor mental health affect many people regardless of their line of work. Feeling lonely and isolated can affect an individual's mental health. Loneliness is a psychological state that results from deficiencies in a person's social relationships (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).It is a distressing experience which is detrimental to psychological health and well being (Murphy & Kushpik, 1992).When the work environment is not adequately fulfilling social needs individuals display loneliness (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998).Loneliness is a negative emotional arousal (Bragg,1979).Most contemporary theorists agree that loneliness is a psychological state that

results from deficiencies in a person's social relationships, either qualitatively or quantitatively (Peplau & Perlman,1982). Therefore, loneliness as an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others (Rook,1984).This a reflection that various occupational stress related factors may cause employees to disengage themselves leading to feelings of loneliness.

2.5.2 Depression

The term depression was derived from the Latin verb *deprimere* "to press down".Major depression frequently co-occurs with other psychiatric problems .The 1990-92 National Comorbidity survey (US) reported that 51% of those with major depression also suffer from lifetime anxiety. Anxiety symptoms can have a major impact on the course of a depressive illness. American neuroendocrinologist Robert Sapolsky similarly argues that the relationship between stress, anxiety and depression could be measured and demonstrated biologically. Occupational stress negatively affects the quality of life and health, resulting in mental health problems such as depression (de Jonge, Bosma,Peter & Siegrist ,1987). The relationship between occupational stress and depression has been also previously reported (Kawakami, Haratani & Araki, 1992). Shift work is a psycho stressor, therefore depression reflects on the adverse effects of mental health due to long shifts(Barton, Spelton & Toterdell, 1995).Scientific evidence suggest that depression is much more disabling and is associated with high risk of substance abuse ,physical illness, suicide risk and social difficulties (Patten & Barbui,2004).

2.5.3 Insomnia

Sleep quality can be a barometer of mental health and sleep disorders often coexist with anxiety, panic disorders and depression. It is rare to have a mental disorder without sleep problems. Sleep disorders are comorbid with many mental health issues and it is estimated that 40% of insomnia patients have a psychiatric condition (Kyle,Morgan & Espie,2010). Poor sleep is both a symptom and a cause of mental illness which makes it more difficult to cope with mental problems. Studies indicated that individuals with mental health disorders experiences demonstrate changes to their sleep architecture. A University of Michigan study indicate that often, the individual spends more time in the lighter, less restorative stages of sleep and less time in the critically important deep and Rapid Eye Movement (REM) stages. The REM stage of sleep provides the emotional and cognitive benefits of sleep. Insomniacs tend to suffer by getting less sleep and

spending insufficient time in the deeper parts of sleep (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2013).

2.5.4 Mental fatigue/Emotional exhaustion

Taylor (2000) indicated that sources of fatigue include psychological stresses and social stresses and problems at work. Experiencing daily stress is normal but over time chronic stress takes its toll on the body both emotionally and mentally. Mental fatigue is caused by prolonged periods of stress as a result of occupational stress related factors. Fatigue is a transient decrease in maximal cognitive performance resulting from prolonged periods of cognitive activity (Marcora, Staiano & Manning, 2009). This temporary inability to maintain optimal cognitive performance exposes employees to occupational stress because they cannot function well and deliver their duties as expected which brings out the discrepancy between the job environmental demands and the individual's capability.

2.5.5 Alcohol/Substance abuse

Occupational stress is a key risk factor in addiction, maintenance and relapse (Sinha & Jastreboff, 2013). Mental health issues and drug or alcohol abuse may get in the way of one's ability to function at work, maintain a stable home life, handle life's difficulties and relate to others (American Addiction Centers, 2015). Stressful life events combined with poor coping skills may impact the risk of addiction through increasing impulsive responding and self medication. Al'basi (2007) laid solid evidence for the link between occupational stress and motivation to abuse addictive substances. For instance, research studies show that individuals with job dissatisfaction also reported increased rates of addiction. The greater the number of occupational stressors an individual is exposed to the later chances of substance abuse (Keating, 2007). The self medication theory provides an explanation for the strong linkage between occupational stress and substance abuse. The theory suggests that an individual may use drugs to cope with tension associated with occupational stress or to relieve symptoms of anxiety and depression (Lovallo, 2013). Thus substance abuse functions as a means to regulate affect and soothe psychological distress. Stressed individuals are prone to give in to their impulses for example smoking, alcohol and prescription drug abuse as a way of coping with occupational stress (Grant, Donahue & Odlaug, 2011).

2.5.6 Anxiety

Individuals who do not perceive themselves to have a lot of control in their jobs are susceptible to developing clinical anxiety and depression as well as stress related medical conditions (DSM 5). Individuals with anxiety disorders experience occupational stress at a more acute level. This experience occurs at the hormonal level where cortisol -the body's stress hormone operates inversely with melatonin hormone responsible for inducing sleep (Marmot,2006). Anxiety disorders are therefore linked with sleep disorders such as insomnia and hyper insomnia. Furthermore, in anxiety disorders, the stimulus, external or internal produces a misappropriate anxiety that is the source of intense distress or significant impairment of functioning (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2013).

2.5.7 Eating disorders

Eating disorders are serious mental health disorders with significant morbidity and mortality (National Institute of Mental Health, 2015). Individuals preoccupied with occupational stress seek solace in food and become obsessed with food (Crow, Peterson, Swanson, Raymond, Specker, Eckert & Mitchell, 2009). Binge eating disorders which are characterized primarily by binge eating without the regular use of compensatory measures. Food is used as a way of coping with negative emotions and occupational stress (Papadopoulos, Ekborn, Brandt & Ekselius, 2008). Eating disorders can impact relationships with co workers and as well as functioning in the workplace (Wade, Keski-Rahkonen & Hudson, 2011).

2.6 Coping strategies used by employees

These are approaches that facilitate positive thoughts thereby lessening the problem (Finkelhor, 1990). In this case coping strategies plays a vital role in helping those who have traumatic feelings associated with the problem. Adaptive coping strategies are those which include problem solving techniques, seeking support from reliable people and having a sense of control over one's self whereas maladaptive coping strategies include denial and substance abuse, which may result in difficulties in life (Garmezy, 1993).

2.6.1 Resilience

It is a dynamic process that employees exhibit positive behavioural adaptation when they encounter significant adversity or trauma (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Psychological

resilience is an evolutionary advantage that most people employees use to manage occupational stress related factors. Resilience has been shown to be more than just the capacity of employees to cope well under occupational stress but also understood as both individual capacity to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well being (Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Otham, Kwong, Armstrong & Gilgun, 2007). Resilience is treated as an effective coping mechanism when employees are under occupational stress. Research indicated that resilience can be viewed as the phenomenon of recovery from a prolonged adversity or from an immediate danger of stress (Werner & Smith, 1982; Davidson, 2007). Zimbabwean employees showed resilience as a coping strategy because they have endured all the economic hardships.

2.6.2 Spirituality

Spirituality higher levels are argued to be associated with improvements associated with life satisfaction health related quality of life as well as the overall wellbeing in individuals (Cotton, 2006). The work environment in the prevailing economic situation is very stressful, thus the need for emotional stability, self awareness and stress management skills (Pienaar, 2007). Individuals react differently when they are faced with identical stressors (Louw & Viviers, 2010). The concept of spirituality and how an individual applies spirituality to cope more effectively with occupational stress is very much applicable in this study (Jacobs, 2011; Moos, 2002). Spirituality relates to the workplace as 'spirit of work' and entails becoming aware of your higher self, within which one seeks to be purposeful in life and work (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004). Connecting well with people is part of the need for self actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs which is a great facet of motivation (Theron, 2009). Spiritualism comprises interpersonal, physical emotional, mental characteristics (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004).

2.6.3 Optimism

It is the tendency to expect good things in future and is a mental attitude that heavily influences mental health and coping with everyday social and working life (Scheifer & Carver, 1985). Optimism influence mental and physical well being by promoting a healthy lifestyle as well as adaptive behaviors and cognitive processes associated with greater flexibility, problem solving capacity and a more efficient elaboration of negative information (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Positive correlations have been found between optimism and physical/mental well

being. Optimistic participants tend to have more frequently protective attitudes and are more resilient to stress (Peterson & Seligman, 1987). Optimists believe that positive events are more stable and frequent than negative ones. With reference to social cognition, optimism is a consequence of a cognitive underestimation of self bias (Chang & Sanna, 2001). Optimistic employees are of the conviction that positive events are more likely to occur (Weistener, 1984).

2.6.4 Alcohol/substance abuse

Alcohol/substance abuse is maladaptive coping strategy and has temporary benefits which are outweighed by the long term negative effects on health and relationships, poor decision making under the influence as well as increased dependency. Studies have shown how alcohol functions to slow down the central nervous system, creating feelings of relaxation (Marmot, 2006). The self medication theory indicated that individuals may use drugs to cope with tension associated with life stressors or to relieve symptoms of anxiety and depression. Thus, drug use functions as a means of regulating affect and soothe psychological distress. Grant, Donahue & Odlaug (2011) indicated that stressed individuals are prone to give in to their impulses (smoking, alcohol and prescription drugs) as a way of coping with daily stress.

2.6.5 Avoidance coping /isolation

Avoidance coping is a maladaptive coping mechanism which characterised by the effort to avoid dealing with a stressor (Zeidner & Endler, 1995). It includes modifying or eliminating the conditions that gave rise to the problem and changing perception of an experience in a way that neutralizes the problem (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). As a result of occupational stress employees totally maintain a strategic distance from others in social interaction situations while others reported that they avoid situation they view as having the capability of them encountering the stressor. Avoidance and isolation helps to manage negative attitudes/feelings associated with the occupational stress (Finkelhor, 1990). Research has shown that avoidance coping has beneficial outcomes (McCaul & Mallot, 1984). A study by Long and Haney relaxation techniques were equally successful at reducing anxiety and increasing feelings of self-efficacy (Long & Haney, 1988).

2.6.6 Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support helps to heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after a critical event such as occupational stress. Psychosocial support includes counselling, spiritual

and group support (Woodward, 2015). The provision of psychosocial support enables employees to face their day to day challenges and they are always encouraged to hope for the positive. Psychosocial support is essential to their wellbeing and has restorative effects which encourage employees to cope with occupational stress. Psychosocial support includes rebuilding and strengthening relationships which are vital for human development and this can be supported by the fact that the participants meet and share experiences (Woods & Hollis, 1999).

2.7 Strategies used to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors

2.7.1 Recreational facilities

It has been proposed that recreational activities are outlets of or expression of excess energy, channelling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfil individual needs (Yukic, 1970). A traditional view holds that work is supported by recreation, recreation being useful to “recharge the battery” so that work performance is improved, thus minimizing occupational stress. Individuals who participate in organised recreational activities enjoy better mental health, are more resilient against stresses of modern day living (Mental Health Promotion Plan, 1999). Participation in recreational activities is shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression (Marmot, 1999). Research findings also reported that participation in group recreation provides a sense of value, belonging and attachment (Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000).

2.7.2 Effective communication

Ineffective communication skills have detrimental consequences of psychological disturbances which contribute to everyday stress and burnout among the participants (Ogden, 2007). Assertive communication helps individuals to express themselves about issues that matter to them. Studies have shown that with the knowledge of how to properly communicate, the ability to communicate will become easier and result in less misunderstandings and frustrations which can contribute to occupational stress (Edelman, Kudzma & Mandle, 2014).

2.7.3 Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support help in minimising the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees’ mental health. Psychosocial support helps individuals to heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after a critical event (Woodward, 2015). Psychosocial support empowers employees and enables them to face their day to day challenges such as stress

as a result of work. Psychosocial support includes rebuilding and strengthening relationships which are vital for human development and this can be supported by the fact that the participants meet and share experiences (Woods & Hollis, 1999).

2.7.4 Psychological health and safety

A psychologically healthy and safe work environment is a workplace that promotes workers' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to the worker psychological health, including in negligent, reckless or intentional ways (The National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health, 2005). Provision of psychological health and safety minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors.

2.7.5 Compensation and rewards

Compensation is also a major motivator which aids in minimizing the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. Compensation is a strategy whereby one covers up consciously or unconsciously weaknesses, frustrations, desires or feelings of inadequacy or incompetence in one life area through the gratification or (drive towards) excellence in another area (Lasch, 1979). The stress of having an occupational injury can trigger anxiety or depression.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The study was informed using the Transactional Stress Model by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and the Person-Fit Environment Model of stress by French (1972). Both theories were important to this study as they offered important bedrock for the study of occupational stress.

2.8.1 Transactional Theory of Occupational Stress: Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

The transactional theory of occupational stress put more emphasis on psychological mechanisms of stress process such as employee cognitive evaluation of their working conditions. Transactional theories of stress suggests that strain occurs when environmental demands go beyond the person's ability to cope (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Stress is a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his/her resources and endangering his/her wellbeing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Occupational stress occurs when an employee's well being is threatened due to the interaction with the environment.

Thus, the term ‘transaction’ is derived from the interaction between the environment and the person. The transaction theory of stress is very applicable to the work environment and occupational stressors. Employees should evaluate the work environment, stressors and conditions to determine potential threats (Babatunde,2013).Thus occupational stress is a result of the interaction between an employee and the work environment (Lazarus,1995).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984), show that the transactional theory suggests that responses that an individual has are based on the individual’s interpretation of the stressor and interpretation of one’s ability to cope up with it. Coping refers to any effortful attempt to vary environmental circumstances or manage feeling regardless of outcome (Folkman,2011).The interaction is an ongoing process hence coping and stress levels change with time since the demands of the external environment and reactions of the employee change. Occupational stressors are viewed as either hindrances or challenges. Hindrances are characterized by adverse results and have a negative impact on employees’ well being. Challenges are associated with positive results such as opportunities and success (Cranford,Lepine & Rich,2010).Employees’ perceptions may differ depending on their evaluation and the availability of resources. In summary environmental demands in this context refer to pressure from stressors such as noise and heat levels which can result in serious occupational stress if not controlled. The transactional-theories of stress focuses on the person’s moving reactions and mental development related to their environment. These demands affect physical and psychological wellbeing and requiring action to restore balance (Lazarus & Cohen,1977).

2.8.2 The Person-Environment Fit Model (P-E Fit): (Caplan, 1982)

Contemporary theories of stress such as Person- Environment Fit predict stress as a result of the disproportionate fit between employees’ attitudes and abilities and the workers’ demands of the job on one hand and the job and worker’s environment on the other (Edwards,Caplan & van Harrison,2000).As a result employees may experience psychological symptoms (for example sleep disturbances ,anxiety, panic attacks, restlessness) and physical symptoms (for example raised blood pressure, lowered immunity of stress) (Edwards,Caplan & van Harrison,2000).The person-environment fit is a reciprocal and ongoing process whereby employees shape their work environment and in return the environment shapes the employees (Rounds & Tracey,1990). The person-environment fit approach to stress has become widely accepted in occupational stress

researches (Eulberg, Weekley & Bhagat, 1988).The magnitude to which employees fit in their work environment provide significant outcomes such as stress. The model suggests that the reciprocal relationship between a person and their work environment is fundamental in influencing their mental health. The model attributes stress to lack of congruence between the characteristics of an employee and the work environment. This lack of congruency has detrimental effects which result in poor mental health (Mark & Smith,2004).Defense mechanisms, such as denial, reappraisal of needs, and coping, also operate in the model, to try and reduce subjective misfit (Mark and Smith, 2004).

2.9 Knowledge Gap

The gap on the strategies employed by European countries in determining occupational stress related factors with regard to African literature is still wide. This is so as the researcher observed that much of the literature from Asia and Europe has paid much of its attention on occupational stress related factors in a European context. The present literature fails to portray the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe particularly when considering that the country has experienced prolonged economic hardships and political upheavals which the present literature fails to account for. In addition, much of the findings presented in the present studies are therefore peculiar to Asia and Europe and as such, cannot be generalized to the rest of the world or other continents. The implication is that a stressor in the Asian and European context cannot be regarded as a stressor in the Zimbabwean or African context vice versa.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The review of related literature looked at the related literature on occupational stress, occupational stress related factors, manifestation of mental health problems, coping strategies used by employees and the potential strategies in minimizing the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. The transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the Person-Environment Fit model of stress (Caplan, 1982) were used to explain the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reveals how information was gathered through specific methods and procedures pertaining to the topic: The impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. This research methodology is aimed at proving the validity, authenticity, reliability and strengths of the results gathered from the study. It also justifies the choice of research method used. This chapter discusses the research approach which is the qualitative research design.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach is used in research whereby the researcher approaches the sample population. The research is phenomenological hence the researcher used qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach is flexible in the sense that participants' responses do not influence or determine how and which question researchers ask next (Denzin, 2000). Qualitative research approach is usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality (Neumann, 2007). The researcher is interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding occupational stress factors. Qualitative research approach gives the participants chance to explain their life experiences with freedom. It is used to structure the research, to show how all the major parts of the research project- the samples or groups and methods of assignment work together to try to address the central research questions.

3.3. Research Design

A research design is an efficient and orderly approach conducted in the collection of data so as to obtain information from those data (Saunders, 1996). A case study was used as a form of research design since the researcher is going to deal with a small group of participants. A case study is a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole (Hamel, 1993). In this case the target population for the study was made up of the total population of 10 employees from the Production department who experienced high levels of occupational stress because of the demands of their jobs. The subjects were purposively selected by virtue of the characteristics of their work for example shift work, long working hours and the working conditions at large.

3.4. Target Population

A target population is part of a population targeted for the research (Lancaster, 2005). A sample is part of a population (Lancaster, 2005). It is generally chosen so that it reflects the characteristics of the population, so that by carefully analyzing we can learn about the wider population. A sample population is the total collection of elements which we intend to make inferences (Palys & Atchison, 2008). In this case the population sample is made up of employees from the Production Department where there is excessive workload and exposure to hazardous working environments. The subjects under study are exposed to occupational stress related factors. Organizational stress is depicted through behavior change such as lateness and absenteeism, employees' disciplinary records also expose effects of occupational stress.

Inclusion criteria, along with exclusion criteria, make up the selection or eligibility criteria used to rule in or out the target population for a research study. Inclusion criteria should respond to the scientific objective of the study and are critical to accomplish it (Palys & Atchison, 2008). Inclusion criteria are a set of predefined characteristics used to identify subjects who will be included in a research study. Subjects were selected by virtue of experience and knowledge. The target population in this case is the plant operators whose work is characterized by pressure and the need to meet targets. Proper selection of inclusion criteria will optimize the external and internal validity of the study, improve its feasibility, lower its costs, and minimize ethical concerns, specifically, good selection criteria will ensure the homogeneity of the sample population (Salkind, 2010). Exclusion criteria are those characteristics that disqualify prospective subjects from inclusion in the study. Inclusion and exclusion criteria may include factors such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, type and stage of disease, the subject's previous treatment history. In this case, the researcher included plant operators who are prone to excessive pressure and excluded office workers who are not directly affected by the need to meet targets.

3.5. Sample and sampling techniques

The researcher used the non probability sampling technique in form of purposive sampling. Non probability sampling represents a group of sampling techniques that helped the researcher to select units from a population of interest (Yin, 2014). The procedures used to select units for inclusion in a sample are much easier, quicker and cheaper (Straus & Cobin, 1990). Purposive/judgmental sampling is choosing deliberately an informant basing on the qualities and

features they possess (Bernard, Pelito, Werner, Boster, Romney, Johnson, Ember & Kosakoff, 1986). The participants were selected purposively to investigate perspectives by experience to the exposure of occupational stress. The aim is to focus on particular features of a population of interest which enables the researcher to answer research questions. The researcher used her own judgment about which respondents to choose and picked those who best meet the purpose of the study.

A purposive sample is the selection of subjects based on the researcher's judgment without randomizing. Purposive sampling focuses on particular characteristics of a population of interest which enables the researcher to answer research questions (Becker, 1998). It is a representative of the population of interest without sampling randomly (ILO, 2009). Purposive sampling is more representative as compared to random sampling when a small population is selected (Palys, 2008) for example targeting the plant operators. However there is bias due to its basis on personal judgment. Bias is reduced through the characteristics of the sampling technique which includes representativeness (Palys & Atchison, 2008). The researcher sets out what should be known and how to find the subjects to provide information by virtue of their experience and knowledge (Bernard, 2002, Lewis & Shepard, 2006). There is no cap on the number of subjects of a purposive sample as long as the information is gathered (Bernard, 2002).

3.6 Research instruments

3.6.1 Interview

Qualitative interviews are the main method used in the study to obtain employees' perspectives on the research questions related to the impact of occupational stress on their mental health. Interviews will be carried out in order to get employees' perspectives on occupational stress factors. An interview is effective in gathering information because direct contact reveals a lot of information which is useful for the study. Interviews are oral questions asked by the interviewer and an oral response is given by the respondent (Creswell, 2009). Interviews are useful for gaining insight and context into a topic. Allows respondents to describe what is important to them. In order to reduce interviews susceptibility to semi structured interviews will be used for flexibility and spontaneity.

Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to probe and expand the subject's responses (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level (Kvale, 1996). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information on the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health.

3.6.2 Interview guide

An interview guide can be helpful in conducting semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2008). An interview guide approach involves developing five open-ended interview questions, each of which is focused on one aspect of the research topic. Qualitative interviews offer a means of collecting in-depth information about the research topic so there is need to limit the number of questions to enable participants to have time to talk about the topic at length, without feeling rushed. The research interview guide is designed and laid out in of five sections which are section A, B, C and D. Section A contains demographic information which includes age, gender and occupation. Section B addresses the first research question which seeks to find the impact of occupational stress related factors that impact employees' mental health. C focuses on the mental health challenges faced by employees and how they manifest. D focuses on the coping strategies which were used to minimize occupational stress.

3.6.3 Validity and reliability of the research instrument

The validity of the research instrument was determined by giving the interview schedule to the supervisor who made corrections and suggestions which were taken into consideration while producing the final draft of the interview schedule. Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures which it is supposed to measure (American Educational Research Association, 2011). The result was that the instrument measures what it claims to measure and was therefore rendered adequate for the study. The responses of interviewees were answering the questions. Reliability is the overall consistence of a measure (Ritter, 2010). The reliability of the instrument was established a pilot study before it was adopted. The instrument was administered twice with an interval of two weeks to the same respondents.

3.7 Data collection procedures

When collecting data, there is need to seek permission from the responsible authorities at the organization. The researcher initially got authority from Midlands State University's Psychology department to collect data on the research topic. The researcher will address participants about the study and its purpose so as to conform to research ethics. The researcher will then administer in-depth interviews to each participant while taking notes of the interview. The researcher will apply open ended questions during interview sessions so as to explore the employees' perspectives on the impact occupational stress factors on employees' mental health. The research will be carried out with strict observance of the research ethics. The researcher intends to use a shut, calm room in order to upgrade security and privacy of the research participants as well as to promote effective data gathering without interferences.

3.8 Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher used thematic data analysis which involves analysing data by themes because it goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a texts and moves on to identify implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Guest & MacQueen,2012). Thematic analysis is inductive in nature meaning that the data are not based on the researcher's judgments, (Pope, 1999).Thematic data analysis is a method rather than a methodology (Braun & Clark, 2006).It is not tied to a specific epistemological or theoretical framework which makes it flexible method.The advantages of using thematic data analysis is that it makes use of both inductive and deductive methodologies (Hayes, 1997).Thematic analysis aims to identify themes or patterns in the data. A good thematic analysis interprets data and makes sense of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013).Mark and Yardley (2004) suggested the thematic data analysis as the most appropriate for studies that seek to discover using interpretations. Braun & Clarke (2006) established a six phase guide used for thematic data analysis which is illustrated below.

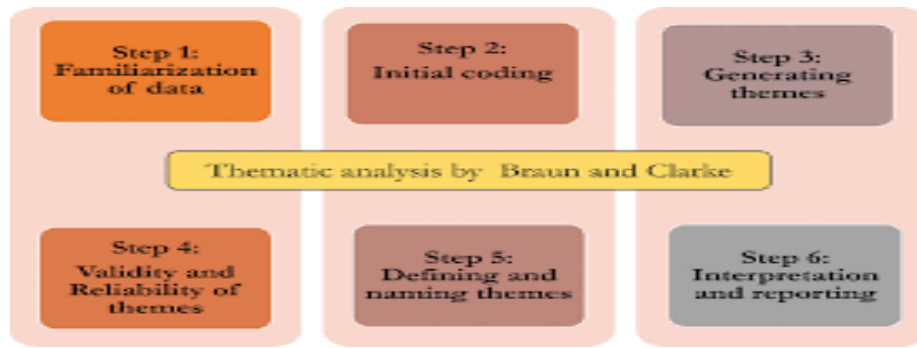


Fig 1: Braun & Clarke's six phase framework for thematic analysis

The initial step in qualitative analysis is reading the transcripts which provide an overview of the data. This is particularly useful with the first few transcripts or notes, where he/she is still trying to get a feel for the data. The second is identifying themes; this is when you start looking in detail at the data to start identifying themes, summaries of what is going on in the study. In the margins of each transcript or set of notes, start to note what the interviewee is referring to. The third stage is developing a coding scheme; these initial themes can now be gathered together to begin to develop a coding scheme (Boyatzis, 1998). Lastly, coding the data, it is to start applying these codes to the whole set of data, by either writing codes on the margins of transcripts or notes. Additional quotes which fall under the identified themes are included.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research involve conforming to accepted professional practices (Bailey, 1994). The researcher ensured that she followed social research ethics. Ethical considerations are moral values that the researcher must consider when dealing with research subjects. Ethics refer to the principles that guide people in their way of life, their values and expectations (Dessler, 2004). Ethics must be considered so as to avoid infringing the rights of research participants.

3.9.1 Confidentiality

All data was used confidentially and the researcher ensured anonymity in presenting the findings. The study will be used for academic purposes only. Hence information from this study is kept in confidence. Participants were assigned numbers from 1-10 to protect the respondents' identities.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

The researcher in adhering to the informed consent ethics ensured participants were aware of the purpose of the study and why they were chosen for the research. Informed consent was practiced, only those participants who consented contributed in the research and they signed consent forms first to declare their willingness to participate in the research. The researcher also sought permission from the organization's authorities to carry out the research. The researcher assured the participants that the information will be used for academic purposes only. The researcher articulates to the participants that there was no material or monetary gain by being involved in the research, but the document can be used for policies and procedures to improve employees' well-being within the organization.

3.9.3 Integrity and professionalism

The researcher used clear and proper channels to get permission from the organization to conduct the research by seeking permission from the Human resources Department. Also the researcher asked the participants to participate willingly and informed them of the right to withdraw where they see it necessary.

3.9.4 Anonymity

Interviews were carried out in such a way that no identity related information was collected. The interview schedule was designed in such a way that it conceals the identity of the respondent. Therefore no names, addresses, emails or phone numbers of participants was presented.

3.10 Chapter summary

Basically this chapter dwells much on how information was gathered in fulfillment of the research. This chapter focused on the research design, research methodology, target population sample and sampling techniques, research instrument, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations used in the study. This chapter also elaborated on how the researcher came up with the research findings to be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The researcher presents data which was gathered, giving an in depth analysis and interpretation. The data collected was presented in relation to the research questions which guided the research namely, what is the impact of occupational related factors on employees' mental health, what are the manifestations of various mental health problems, what are the employees' mental health reduction strategies and what measures can be taken to minimize the impact of occupational stress. Findings from the research are presented in accordance to the noted themes. Themes help to unravel experiences of occupational stress on employees' mental health. The themes help to explain how the research participants cope with their problems.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

A total number of 10 plant operators participated in the study and were named in the order in which they were interviewed, that is, participant 1 up to 10 and their identity was concealed. Inorder to enhance flexibility and expand the participants' responses, the researcher conducted semi structured in-depth interviews.

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	Term of service
1	50	M	Assistant feeder	18
2	35	M	Plant operator	9
3	33	M	Plant operator	8
4	25	M	Plant operator	4
5	35	M	Plant operator	7
6	65	M	Plant operator	25
7	40	M	Plant operator	10
8	28	M	Plant operator	5
9	24	M	Plant operator	3
10	34	M	Plant operator	6

Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of participants

4.3 Results

The research results are presented in themes and subthemes. The themes are congruent with the research questions of the study. The themes shall be presented in the following order

1. What are the occupational stress related factors that impact employees' mental health?
2. What are the manifestations of mental health problems?
3. What are the coping strategies used by employees?
4. What are the strategies that can be used to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health?

4.4 Theme 1: Occupational stress related factors

This research question seeks to understand the occupational stress related factors that affect employees' mental health. Participants reported that occupational stress related factors have adverse effects on their mental health. Occupational stress related factors include shift work, retrenchments/layoffs, long working hours, relationships at work, disciplinary procedures, accidents and health and safety as shown in the table below

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 1: The impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shift work• Retrenchment and layoffs• Long working hours• Relationships at work• Disciplinary procedures• Poor health and safety procedures

Table 4.2: Theme 1 and subthemes

4.4.1 Sub Theme 1: Shift work

Participants reported that the impact of shift work has negative effects on their mental health. The participants reported that shift work affects them physically, mentally and emotionally. They went on to explain that there is no work-life balance since they spend most of their time at work.

Participants also reported that long shifts reduce their social well being and happiness. They indicated how shift work affects their sleep patterns.

“.....I do not have enough time to rest because the shifts are so long. I cannot adjust to sleeping during the day so will start another shift while I am fatigued and sleepy.....”
(Participant 1)

“.....I have adjusted to shift work but it is causing physical and mental strain. There are no transport provisions, you have to find our way home after the shift which is a risk on our safety because there are vicious snakes and robbers.....”(Participant 2)

“.....I personally do not like shift work because while others are waking up you will be sleeping.If the shift is not busy we sleep on the floor and the fact that you are sleeping while staying alert disturbs the natural process of sleep.....”(Participant 3)

The research findings show that the participants are adversely affected by how that shift work which also affects their mental health because their sleep pattern is disturbed as well as their social well-being.

4.4.2 Sub Theme 2: Long working hours

From the research findings, participants indicated that they are exposed to long working hours and excessive pressure inorder to meet deadlines. They are obliged to work for longer hours which cause mental strain. Participants complained of back pain, depression and sleep disturbances.

“.....The time that I spend at work is so overwhelming (participant showed a pale face), working long shifts is stressful.....” (Participant 3)

“.....I cannot remember the last time I had enough sleep because of long working hours. I always feel weak and tired to an extent that I have to force myself to work so that I fend for my family.....”(Participant 8)

“.....I spend 8 hours in the heat which has a psychological impact in the sense that heat creates fatigue and affects cognition.....” (Participant 9)

“.....I have no choice but to come to work because if we stay at home who will fend for the family (Participant 2)

The research findings indicate how long work hours expose employees to mental strain and fatigue. There is no work-life balance since participants spend most of the time at work. There is little time spent with the family, hence the need for affiliation is limited.

4.4.3 Sub Theme 3: Retrenchments and rotational leave

Participants reported that downsizing resulted in some individuals losing their jobs. They also reported that the thought of losing their jobs affects them because they will no longer be able to fend for their families. More participants reported that jobs are hard to come by considering the high unemployment rate in Zimbabwe. Below are the narratives showing how retrenchment affects the employees' mental health.

“.....I am afraid to lose my job because the economy is not improving. If other employees lost their jobs I will suffer the same fate.....” (Participant 5)

“.....I think a lot about my future, my happiness has been taken away.....” (Participant 4)

“.....I live in fear each and every day which creates restlessness at work and my life in general.....”(Participant 6).

“.....I do not feel secure about my job. I can become jobless in a blink of an eye. There was a time where people were put on rotational leave. For example in a month one would come for two weeks and get paid for those two weeks.....” (Participant 7)

From the research findings participants do not have job security because they live in fear and uncertainty. Participants indicated that they are demotivated and they develop mental health issues such as anxiety.

4.4.4 Sub Theme 4: Relationships at work

Participants reported that relations at work are not conducive at times. Poor communication channels affect how they relate to each other. Social belongingness is not enforced at the workplace. The focus is on the primary goal of meeting production targets.

“.....Friendship at work is discouraged because such relationships are considered as hindrances to production..... (Participant 10)

“.....I isolate myself so that I don't get charged with insubordination because you get in trouble for associating during work hours. Our supervisors are not allowed to be friend us to an extent that you cannot even share a cigarette.....”(Participant 1)

“.....If you try to raise an issue concerning work, it is regarded as insubordination (Participant 3-lowered his voice to avoid being heard).

“.....There is poor communication and any unjustifiable complaints can lead to a transfer to the mines in Mutorashanga where it is difficult to survive because the family is left behind.....” (Participant 5)

The research findings indicated that poor relationships at work result in psychological problems such as isolation and loneliness. Participants work as instruments of getting the job done not as instruments of the process which affects relationships between the employees and their superiors.

4.4.5 Sub Theme 5: Disciplinary Procedures

Occupational stress can be precipitated by the code of conduct at the workplace. Disciplinary procedures are meant to regulate behavior. However, unsystematic procedures may yield negative results which affects employees' well being. If not properly handled disciplinary procedures may cause psychiatric damage to employees.

“.....The disciplinary procedures can be tiresome (participant frowned).I was charged for poor time keeping twice and given a final written warning and I live in fear of dismissal because of the offense I committed. Even if I am early at work I always feel uncomfortable and unease.....” (Participants 5)

“.....The hearing process is challenging because the HR people make you feel like you are going to lose your job. Being given the last chance in life brings fear and anxiety.....”
(Participant 9)

“.....Disciplinary procedures regulate our behavior at work but at the same time they precipitate occupational stress. There was a time when I was charged and given 6 months probation period. It was a difficult time for me because I could not even talk at work due to the fear that I would commit another offence. I would keep a calendar to countdown the days so that the offence can be lifted.....” (Participant 6)

From the research findings, participants indicated that results show that disciplinary procedures affect employees' mental health as they are always gripped with fear and anxiety. The way disciplinary procedures are handled has a negative impact on employees' mental health. They are ripped off their confidence and optimism is reduced.

4.4.6 Sub Theme 6: Poor Health and Safety procedures

Participants reported that their safety is at stake due to limited resources. The work environment requires them to put on protective clothing but there are no provisions for such equipment. There is no protection to potential hazards.

“.....It's been 3 years since I got new safety shoes and last got a work suit in June 2015. As you can see some are wearing gumboots which are not safe (participant emphasized by peeling off the top layer of the old shoe). They cannot compare us with them because their safety shoes do not wear out like ours since they spend most of the time in their office.....” (Participant 5)

“.....Safety meetings are carried out but they cannot walk the talk. The Safety and Health department is there but they are not helping us. If you get injured it is regarded as negligence yet they do not see other contributing factors such as poor safety precautions. This makes us susceptible to accidents in the workplace and creates anxiety because of the fear of e a victim of accidents.....” (Participants 10)

“.....The clinic does not provide any assistance and I wonder why they are still opening it because they do not have the except for panados (participant 3 laughed).

“.....The environment is dirty but we eat in these rooms, the tables are not cleaned (participant pointed at the table).These days there are cases of cholera and typhoid but there is no concern about our health.....(Participant 2)

“.....We have no ambulance to cater for emergency situations (participant paused and looked worried).A workmate was injured with a sprained ankle, could not walk and was bleeding, we had to carry him with a lorry.....” (Participant 1)

The research findings indicated that poor health and safety procedures in the workplace contribute largely to occupational stress. Accidents also affect employees’ mental health because they create a negative perception which causes anxiety when working without proper protective equipment.

4.4.7 Sub Theme 7: Poor Remuneration

From the research findings, money is the major reason why people go to work. Employees provide their services and they expect rewards in return. If this psychological contract is breached both parties suffer. Participants reported that they are not receiving their salaries on time and some adjustments on the salaries are not communicated.

“.....Pay is based on production levels, however there are some factors beyond our control. For example if the market is not doing well due to price fluctuations, our salaries are affected.....”(Participant 2)

“.....There are delays in payment, we receive the money on the 60th day of the calendar (participant added some humor).The basis of payment is not fair, they receive more than us yet we are the ones producing.....” (Participant 4)

“.....Management implemented the pro rata system where pay is determined by productivity. There are some factors beyond our control which are obstacles to production but still management fail to recognize that. For example if a machine breaks down it might take two weeks to get it fixed and that is time lost which also means that productivity is lost as well.....”(Participant 9)

“.....There was a time when people received \$90 as full salary. How can one cope with responsibilities such as rent, food and school fees.....?” (Participant 6).

The research findings indicated that poor remuneration has adverse effects on employees’ mental health because without money our needs are not met. Participants reported that they cannot cope well in the society since they are unable to meet their day to day needs. Failure to meet needs lead to mental health problems such as depression.

4.5 Theme 2: Manifestations of mental health problems

The research question seeks to understand how mental health problems as a result of occupational stress related problems manifest. The participants reported the following; loneliness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, alcohol/substance abuse and mental fatigue as mental health problems as shown in the table below

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 2: Manifestations of mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness • Depression • Anxiety • Insomnia • Eating disorders • Alcohol/substance abuse • Mental fatigue

Table 4.3: Theme 2 and subthemes

4.5.1 Subtheme 1: Loneliness

From the research findings, participants indicated that loneliness manifests as a coping strategy to occupational stress. Friendships at work are discouraged because they are claimed to reduce productivity. Lack of social belongingness and psychosocial support lead to isolation.

“.....It is difficult to interact at work because it is claimed to reduce productivity.....”
(Participant 1)

“.....The hierarchy of the organization makes it difficult for us to communicate and share problems and ideas.....” *(Participant 3)*

“.....There is lack of recreational facilities which enable us to mix and mingle at a non work environment because the company is trying to cut costs and maximize on profits.....”
(Participant 4)

The research findings indicated that mental health problems manifest in form of loneliness which is a psychological state that results from deficiencies in a person’s social relationships. Participants also indicated that the need to belongingness is not achieved.

4.5.2 Subtheme 2: Depression

From the research findings, participants indicated that they suffer from depression due to frustration and pessimism. The findings also indicated that depression is a notable mental health challenge experienced as a result of occupational stress related factors. Participants reported severe symptoms of depression such as difficulty in concentration, poor memory and sleep problems (early morning awakening or over sleeping).

“.....The pressure at my workplace is too much to handle. I find it difficult to sleep at home, sometimes I wake up early or sleep a lot.....” (Participant 9)

“.....It is difficult to cope with and remember tasks. Focusing on a task is difficult because I always feel fatigued.....” (Participant 7)

“.....Production is the centre of the business characterized with meeting set targets, working under such pressure leads to depression because of physical and mental strain....” (Participant 10)

From the research findings participants indicated that depression affects is a result of the pressure at work in order to meet set targets. Participants indicated signs of depression through poor memory, difficulty in concentration and sleep problems.

4.5.3 Subtheme 3: Anxiety

Participants indicated that anxiety affects their daily activities. Panic disorders and post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) were reported. Participants live in fear of losing their jobs. They also reported that past events such as retrenchments affects them psychologically. Accidents also create feelings of fear among employees.

“.....I am afraid of losing my job because I know of people who used to work here that were retrenched and are living miserable lives. The fear of suffering the same fate eats me up (participant looked worried with fear written all over their face).If the boss calls me to his office I panic and my heart beats fast.....” (Participant 8)

“.....We eat our lunch while standing so that if the boss shows up anytime you can respond and go back to work. There is no time to relax and chat as workmates.....”(Participant 9)

“.....If an accident occurs the investigation procedures are so tiresome. Investigation is done inorder to look into the occurrence of the mishappenings..... (Participant 2)

“.....Once you are held liable for your own mishappenings you become the supervisor’s target. He will monitor your every move at work..... (Participant 5)

From the research findings, participants reported that they are exposed to anxiety due to investigations procedures.The above results show how anxiety manifests amongst the participants which affect their psychological well being.

4.5.4 Subtheme 4: Insomnia

From the research findings,participants reported cases of failure to fall asleep.Insomnia is a common sleep disorder whereby an individual is unable to sleep, day time sleepiness and chronic circadian rhythm disorders.

“.....I find it difficult to sleep at night and have to come to work. I become sleepy during the day which affects my performance and productivity at work. How do I sleep well when I know that I have to meet challenging deadlines at work.....” (Participant 4)

“..... Night shifts disturb my sleep patterns, staying awake the whole night is difficult and sleep will never be compensated so it becomes a cycle.....”Participant 7)

“.....I do not like the night shift because it causes mental fatigue which results in failure to sleep. The night shift requires one to be alert in case of emergency, so I sleep partially.....(Participant 8)

From the research findings psychological stress results in insomnia which affects employees at work. Shift work disturbs sleeping patterns which leads to cases of insomnia. This reduces performance and competency at work.

4.5.5 Subtheme 5: Eating disorders

Participants reported that when they are stressed they take it out on the food. Irregular eating habits either excessive eating or inadequate eating may cause weight disorders such as obesity and anorexia nervosa respectively.

“.....I usually eat a lot when I am under pressure. As you can see I am now having sadza. I am not hungry but just feel I should eat for the sake of eating.....” (Participant 10).

“.....I lose my appetite when I am at work, the temperatures are too high and the nature of our work reduces appetite.....” (Participant 4)

“.....I have not eaten since morning because how do I enjoy the food with high temperatures and the heat from the furnace. I usually take fluids to avoid dehydration.....” (Participant 1)

Research findings indicated that mental health problems manifest in form of eating disorders in order to cope with occupational stress. Participants indicated irregularities in their eating patterns as a result of work stress. Participants indicated excess or little consumption of food. This affects their psychological well being because irregular eating patterns affect physical and mental health because food enables human beings to function well.

4.5.6 Subtheme 6: Alcohol/substance abuse

Research findings indicated that alcohol/substance abuse is one of the most common mental health problems. Participants reported that excessive pressure at work lures them to alcohol and substance abuse. One participant reported how he drinks to cope with work and also use drugs to boost energy and morale.

“.....Alcohol and drugs keep us going because you forget about other problems. I take some before coming to work to boost my energy and not to think or care much and forget about my problems (participant showed a smiling face) which reflects that they find happiness and relief in such substances.....” (Participant 4)

“.....At times I fail to cope with the pressures and demands of the job, so intoxicating myself helps a lot. The breathalyzer has not been working for a number of years so no one will detect that we are intoxicated. It is not safe for us to work under the influence of alcohol and drugs but for the sake of expediency.....” (Participant 7)

The above narration shows that alcohol/substance abuse is a mental health problem that is precipitated by occupational stress.

4.5.7 Subtheme 7: Mental fatigue

Participants reported a feeling of mental strain. Mental fatigue is a decrease in the cognitive performance. It is risky to operate heavy machinery when one is suffering from fatigue because certain tasks require concentration and attention.

“.....I always feel tired even when starting a new shift on a new day. I cannot cope well when I am tired.....” (Participant 6)

“.....Concentration and attention on tasks becomes poor on tasks due to excessive mental strain.....” (Participant 7)

From the research findings, participants indicated that mental fatigue is inevitable because the brain is always at work. Mental fatigue has negative effects on employees’ mental and physical health and severe cases lead to depression.

4.6 Theme 3: Coping strategies used by employees

From the research findings, participants indicated several coping strategies they implemented in order to deal with occupational stress so as to reduce its impact on their mental health. The coping strategies that emerged include social support, isolation, alcohol/substance abuse, hostility or aggression, counseling and denial as shown in the table below

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 3: Coping strategies used by employees to cope with occupational stress related factors which affect their mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol/substance abuse • Psychosocial support • Isolation • Hostility/Aggression • Counselling • Optimism • Resilience • Spirituality

Table 4.4: Theme 3 and subthemes

4.6.1 Subtheme 1: Alcohol/substance abuse

From the research findings, participants indicated that they cope with occupational stress through alcohol and other intoxicating substances. Participants reported that it makes them feel calm and forget about other problems.

“.....When I knock off I usually pass by the beer hall and drink all my problems away. It is not a permanent solution but it makes me feel good and happy.....” (Participant 4)

“....If I do not drink I will end up abusing my wife by beating her for nothing...” (Participant 2)

“.....It’s just that alcohol is not allowed at work would love to drink and forget about work stresses.....” (Participant 7)

From the research findings, participants indicated that they use alcohol and other intoxicating substance to deal with occupational stress. This affects their mental health because alcohol abuse may lead to addictions and alcohol dependence syndrome.

4.6.2 Subtheme 2: Psychosocial support

Participants indicated how they engage in social activities in order to cope with occupational stress. Social belongingness enables employees to cope with occupational stress.

“.....The soccer ground is on for rental which means that we have to source for our own recreational activities. After work I go for snooker (pool) with my friends and refresh after a long day.....” (Participant 3)

“.....Betting on soccer games also enables us to shift focus on other problems. Soccer fanatics make bets.....” (Participant 4)

“.....Discussing on soccer games for example the UEFA Champions league is on, we spend time watching European soccer even local football teams.....”(Participant 5)

From the research findings, participants indicated that engaging in recreational activities and forming social groups are the gateways to good mental health. Participants indicated that a supportive social environment is good for their wellbeing and it distracts them from their problems. Participants also indicated that such social groups enabled them to mix and mingle, share problems and possible solutions, hence promoting positive living.

4.6.3 Subtheme 3: Isolation

Participants indicated that they isolate themselves in order to cope with occupational stress related factors. Participants reported that they spend time alone reflecting on their performance and benefits at work.

“.....I enjoy spending time alone because it allows me to be at peace....” (Participant 8)

“....These people do not have time for my problems so I see it fit to be on my own at times enjoying nature.....”(Participant 9)

“.....Pulling myself away from others has helped me because we do not share similar problems because what might seem as a big problem to me, might be something minor to the other person.....”(Participant 10)

4.6.4 Subtheme 4: Positive Aggression

From the research findings, participants indicated that expressing their anger makes them feel a lot better because it yields positive result for example transferring anger into task completion.

“.....I transfer my hostility to the work, I feel more powerful and energetic for example I am able to lift heavy equipment when I am angry.....” (Participant 1)

“.....I believe being aggressive does not only mean violence. I keep up conversations when I am aggressive because I can provide all the answers. The speed at which I perform tasks increases because of the energy from hostile situations.....” (Participant 3)

“....I am more efficient when I am angry because I channel all the energy to my work.Occupying myself enables me to deal with aggressive behaviours.Above all, I hide behind my work and I am very effective that way.....” (Participant 5)

The research findings indicated that participants use aggression in a positive way by accomplishing their goals. This reduces conflict within the work environment, promoting positive living.

4.6.5 Subtheme 5: Counseling

Participants indicated that counseling enables them to cope with stress through sharing problems with fellow workmates. Participant reported that talking to someone about our problems helps a lot.

“.....I used to conceal my problems at work until I realized I was not helping myself. If I encounter a problem at work I believe in sharing because you will always find someone who came across that similar problem....” (Participant 2)

“.....A problem shared is half solved for example if the relationship with my boss is not healthy I can seek advice on how to handle such problems.....” (Participant 5)

From the research findings, participants indicated that counseling or talk therapy is a positive coping strategy which enables employees to cope with occupational stress. Participant indicated that counseling is offered by elderly co workers who act as paraprofessionals.

4.5.6 Subtheme 6: Optimism

Participants indicated that they are positive about the future and the success of the organization as a whole. Participants reported that they believe the economy will turn around for the better in the long run and they are willing to hold on to their jobs.

“.....Nothing lasts forever, it will all come to pass, we just have to focus on the positive work hard and improve the economy.....” (Participant 4)

“.....I think stress is inevitable so we have to cope with the demands of stress and the work environment. He went on to say “Hatingarasemberekonekufirwa” which means that we cannot give up because of adversities.....” (Participant 5)

“.....I am a very old man and my retirement time has passed but I only come to work so that I get my pension. If I stay at home, these people will forget about my pension. So I come to work hoping that one day I will get my pension.....” (Participant 6).

The research findings indicate that the participants are motivated to live positively by being optimistic about achieving their goals in life despite of occupational stress. The participants are motivated by the need for self actualization and hope for a better future.

4.6.7 Subtheme 7: Resilience

Participants reported that the industry is suffering which exposes them to occupational stress and they have been through all the hardships. Participants reported that downsizing due to inflation and economic decline exposed them to occupational stress.

“.....We have seen it all, retrenchments and layoffs but here we are, still surviving.....” (Participant 7)

“.....Shift work is difficult to cope with but at the end of the day we report to work without failure. It is difficult to cope with shift work because there is no transport so we have to find our way home. Adjusting to the weather patterns is difficult especially in the rain season, we knock off when there are heavy rains which put out health at risk but we survive all the hardships and continue with our work.....” (Participant 8)

“.....It is the survival of the fittest, after all money talks and the bible says Muchadyacheziya. So we come to work so that we can fend for the family. What we are getting here is better than nothing.....” (Participant 9)

The research findings indicated that participants can endure all the hardships and are very resilient. Participants are very hopeful for a better tomorrow which promotes individual well being because acceptance is therapeutic.

4.6.8 Sub theme 8: Spirituality

Spirituality as a coping strategy emerged as one of the major coping strategies of participants and prayer was the dominating strategy.

“.....Prayer is the key to all problems. Prayer may not solve recurring problems but it keeps us going and guides us through.....” (Participant 3)

“..... It is important to have that spiritual connection with God when facing such adversities....” (Participant 4”

“.....I realized that crying over my problems does not solve anything hence whenever I face challenges I pray to God who is the source of life.....”(Participant 5)

The research findings indicate that the participants have a strong belief in God. The results indicate that religion being an aspect of culture it enhances the psychological wellbeing of individuals hence prayer is significant to the well being of participants.

4.7 Theme 4: Strategies to minimize the impact of occupation stress related factors on employees' mental health.

From the research findings, participants indicated several strategies that can be implemented in order to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors on their mental health. Participants showed an appreciation that occupational stress is inevitable but suggested that there are ways to minimize it. The strategies that emerged include effective communication, provision of safety clothing, psychosocial support, recreational facilities and counseling services as shown in the table below

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 4 Strategies to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of protective equipment • Effective communication • Employee welfare department • Psychosocial support • Paying salaries on time • Recreational facilities

Table 4.5: Theme 4 and subthemes

4.7.1 Subtheme 1: Provision of protective equipment

From the research findings, participants suggested that poor protective clothing endangers their health and safety. Therefore there is need for management to consider employees' safety at work.

“.....It is management’s obligation to provide enough protective clothing to ensure a safe working environment. This also helps in reducing the occurrence of accidents in the workplace.....” (Participant 1)

“... We are using worn out protective clothing which compromises our safety....”(Participant 2)

“.....The SHE department should walk the talk through revising safety procedures so as to improve employees’ welfare. They advocate for safety so they have to make sure that safety comes first for all...” (Participant 3)

From the research findings, participants indicated that working under safe conditions is a great facet of positive physical and mental health. Participants also indicated that safe working conditions eliminate working under the influence of fear and anxiety.

4.7.2 Subtheme 2: Effective Communication

Participants indicated that proper channels of communication should be used. Decisions should be communicated to everyone.

“Management should communicate and make its intentions known. If communication is enforced relationships are healthier.....”(Participant 3)

“.....Transparency is good so that we all become aware of what is going on within the organisation. For example if there are salary adjustments we should all be aware of the adjustments so that we plan for the future.....” (Participant 4)

“.....The Workers’ Committee as representatives of the employees should address our issues and make sure possible solutions are drawn.....”(Participant 5)

“....Team work should be encouraged so as to eliminate divisions within the committee so as to share the same goal.....” (Participant 3)

“.....Communication improves working relations which promotes positive mental health. Nothing is refreshing as a conducive working environment.....” (Participant 6)

From the research findings, participants indicated that effective communication is important because it gives them a sense of belongingness and they feel accepted within the organisation. Participants also indicated that communication of decisions boosts their morale promoting positive living and satisfaction.

4.7.3 Subtheme 3: Employee Welfare Department

From the research findings, participants indicated that there is need to set up a welfare department to cater for employees’ needs.

“.....The Human Resources Department cannot handle all problems....” (Participant 2)

“....The economy is not doing well but a welfare department that caters for the psychological problems of the employee is of paramount importance.....” (Participant 5)

“.....Knowing that there is a service department for employees’ welfare creates feelings of relief which may reduce mental health problems such as depression.....” (Participant 4)

Participants indicated that a welfare department that caters for their psychological needs is a prerequisite because the Human resources department may fail to cater for their emotional needs. Participants also indicated that such a department will cater for their mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

4.7.4 Subtheme 4: Psychosocial support

The participants indicated that psychosocial support would enable to function well, mentally, physically and emotionally. They indicated that frequently attending support groups where they are taught about various aspects so as to manage psychological problems such as occupational stress and depression.

“..... Support groups will enable us to manage our psychological problems and come up with solutions.....” (Participant 3)

“.....support group sessions provide information, knowledge and empower everyone to o cope with psychological problems” (Participant 4)

“.....A problem shared is half solved therefore professional empathy is required so as to help employees cope with problems. For example misunderstandings within the workplace may result in sour relations. Individuals may intentionally harm each other especially in work environments that are hazardous.

“.....Guidance and counseling sessions will help us a lot. If only the Hr department could provide such sessions for us because it will help us a great deal and heal broken relations.....” (Participant 5)

From the research findings, the participants indicated that psychosocial groups enable them to face their daily challenges. Participants revealed that a human being has social needs. In order to function well in the society recreational facilities should be provided. Participants indicated that psychosocial support enables them to ease their burdens. This may evoke suppressed thoughts which enable an individual to heal mentally, emotionally and physically. Suicidal thoughts may be eliminated through psychosocial support

4.7.5 Subtheme 5: Paying salaries on time

Participants indicated that getting their salaries on time will help them cope with daily life demands so as to reduce the impact of occupational stress on employees' mental health.

“.....Despite the financial challenges, the organisation should show remorse and prioritise employees with critical needs. For example when one needs an advance to attend to personal issues.....” (Participant 5)

“..... If only they could keep an up to date calendar on our salaries. It will enable us to live in peace for example we receive our salaries on the 45th day of the month (participant laughed)....”
(Participant 7)

4.7.6 Subtheme 6: Recreational facilities

Participants indicated that interaction on a social level enables them to cope and distract them from mental health issues and occupational stress.

“.....All work no play, makes Jack a dull boy. The company should provide entertainment at a non-work environment. For example a company football team, Christmas parties.....”
(Participant 7)

“.....Mixing and mingling enables employees to ease their burdens thereby creating positive mental health. This also improves working relations and employees are able to relate with their superiors.....” (Participant 8)

From the research findings, sense of belongingness enables positive mental health because it eliminates mental health problems such as loneliness and isolation.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Data obtained from research participants was presented, interpreted and analysed in this chapter. Themes that were drawn from research participants were briefly explained and analysed. This chapter analysed, interpreted and presented data pertaining to occupational stress related factors , mental health problems ,coping strategies used by employees and possible ways to minimise the impact of occupational stress related factors. Research findings were analysed and interpreted within the confines of the purpose of the research. Research findings revealed that employees are subjected to occupational stress, poor remuneration being the major player, employees suffers from mental health challenges as a consequence of the exposure to occupational stress. The chapter also revealed that employees incorporate a number of coping strategies such as social belongingness, optimism, resilience and counselling. The chapter explicitly revealed that there are various measures which can be implemented in order to minimise the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees’ mental health.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the discussions of the research findings. The research findings shall be discussed with reference to the theoretical framework as well as other researches that have been carried out. The research findings are discussed according to the research questions. The discussions addresses the occupational stress related factors and the mental health problems faced by employees, the coping strategies as well as the strategies used to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors. The conclusions as well as the recommendation will be provided in this chapter.

5.2 The impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health

The research findings showed a number of occupational stress related factors that affects employees' mental health. Occupational stress related factors include shift work, retrenchments/layoffs, long working hours, relationships at work, disciplinary procedures, poor health and safety procedures. The participants indicated how these factors impact their mental health.

From the research findings the participants indicated that shift work had adverse effects on their mental health. The participants reported that shift work affects them physically, mentally and emotionally. Participants indicated how shift work affects their sleep patterns. Shift work is a frequent reason for the disruption of circadian rhythms causing significant alterations of sleep and biological function which affects the psychological well being of employees (Burch, Yost, Johnson & Allen, 2005). From the research findings, participants also highlighted that there is no work-life balance since they spend most of their time at work. Shift work has been found to reduce social well being and happiness. Shift work disorder can increase the risk of mental health problems like depression. Shift work can be a potential psychosocial stressor, anxiety and depression reflect the adverse effects of mental health from long shifts and may cause psychiatric morbidity (Barton, Spelton & Toterdell, 1995).

From the research findings poor relationships at work emerged as the other occupational stress related factor which affects their mental health. The participants indicated that relations at work are not conducive at times because of poor communication channels affect how they relate to

each other. The Person-Environment fit mode of stress suggests that the reciprocal relationship between a person and their work environment is fundamental in influencing their mental health. Poor-work relations are characterized by low levels of supportiveness and low attention in problem-solving within the organization as job stressors (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000). From the research findings such working relations may lead to mental health problems such as loneliness. Participants indicated that poor relationships at work can lead to emotional isolation which takes a toll on employees' mental health. Social belongingness is not enforced at the workplace since the primary goal is meeting set production targets. Friendship at work is discouraged in order to regulate improper behavior and lower production (Berman, West & Richter, 2002).

The research findings have proven that downsizing strategies such as retrenchments and layoffs resulted in some individuals losing their jobs. From the research findings participants indicated perceptions of being victims of downsizing evoked high levels of stress amongst survivor employees which caused depression and reduced motivation. Participants suffer from post traumatic stress disorder such as high levels of psychological distress and fear. Employees who survive retrenchment live in fear of future retrenchment which leads to high levels of occupational stress and depression (Brockner, 1987). Participants also indicated that the thought of losing their jobs affects them because they will no longer be able to fend for their families. Retrenchment results in depression, psychological trauma, anxiety, fatigue, low morale and threatens the psychological contract (Noer, 1993).

From the research findings, long working hours emerged as one of the occupational stress related factors that affect employees' mental health. Participants indicated that they are obliged to work for longer hours which cause mental strain. This is supported by the Transactional theory of stress which indicated that strain occurs when environmental demands go beyond the person's ability to cope (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Participants complained of back pain, depression and sleep disturbances. Long working hours can cause a variety of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and fatigue. The number of hours that an employee is obliged to work has a pervasive impact on their mental health. These findings are supported by the transactional theory of stress by Lazarus Folkman (1980). Excessive working hours have negative effects on employees' mental health including sleep disturbance, anxiety and depression (Baunai & Tamakashi, 2014).

Disciplinary procedures were reported as one of the major occupational stress related factors that have adverse effects on employees' mental health. From the research findings, a poorly handled disciplinary procedure may cause psychiatric damage to employees for example unfair dismissal. Although disciplining an employee indicates that such behavior is unwanted, the way discipline is enforced could affect employees' behaviors and mental health (Stinnet, 2011). Participants also indicated that disciplinary procedures may lead to increased concealment and anxiety which destroys an employee's motivation and morale (Milbourn, 1996).

The research findings also indicated that poor remuneration is also a major occupational stress related factor which negatively affects employees' mental health. The major factor to cause occupational stress is lack of rewards and recognition (Cooper and Bright, 2001). The research findings indicated that if employees are not appreciated and supported they will be demotivated and have low morale and as a result they can experience occupational stress and poor mental health. Transactional theories of occupational stress put more emphasis on psychological mechanisms of stress process such as employee cognitive evaluation of their working conditions. The research findings showed that participants evaluated their working conditions and their rewards and they indicated a discrepancy between the two variables.

Participants also reported that poor health and safety procedures as one of the occupational stress related factors that affect employees' mental health. Participants reported that their safety is at stake due to limited resources. Research findings also indicated that working under such conditions evokes negatives perceptions thereby creating anxiety and fear. The work environment requires them protective clothing yet there are no provisions for such equipment which exposes employees to potential hazards.

5.3 Manifestations of mental health problems

The research findings indicated several manifestations of mental health problems which include loneliness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, eating disorders, alcohol/substance abuse and mental fatigue. Participants indicated how these mental health challenges manifest in their daily lives.

From the research findings the participants indicated that loneliness is one of the common manifestations of mental health problems. Participants reported that they endure loneliness due

to poor interpersonal relationships which makes them more susceptible to occupational stress. Companionship is a social context which is responsible for determining and guiding the identity of people, perception, aspirations and conduct (Geifand,1984).Research findings indicated that loneliness is a negative emotional arousal (Bragg, 1979).Participants also indicated that relationships at work are influenced by seniority which leads to emotional isolation. Research by (Peplau & Peplau, 1982) indicated that loneliness is a psychological state that results from deficiencies in a person's social relationships. Participants also indicated that the work environment has failed to adequately fulfill their social needs.

Research findings also indicated that depression is also another mental health problem that manifests as a result of occupational stress related factors. Depression is a notable psychological problem experienced by employees as a result of occupational stress related factors and it is evidenced by loss of appetite and disturbed sleeping patterns.From the research findings, participants indicated that they suffer from depression due to frustration and pessimism. Poor remuneration was found to be the major cause of depression. The findings also indicated that depression is a notable mental health challenge experienced as a result of occupational stress related factors. Participants reported severe symptoms of depression such as difficulty in concentration, poor memory and sleep problems (early morning awakening or over sleeping).Research findings also indicated that shift work is a psycho stressor, therefore depression reflects on the adverse effects of mental health due to long shifts (Barton, Spelton & Toterdell, 1995).

The research findings showed that participants are affected by anxiety and fear. From the research findings panic disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) were reported. Participants live in fear of losing their jobs also reported that past events such as retrenchments affects them psychologically. Participants indicated that accidents occurrence create feelings of anxiety when executing a task. The occurrence of accidents in the workplace exposes employees to occupational stress. Incidents of accidents created a negative perception among the employees. Participants reported that workplace becomes a danger zone for the employees. Research findings indicate that employees who survived retrenchment live in fear of future retrenchment which leads to high levels of occupational stress and depression (Brockner, 1987). Retrenchment results in psychological trauma, anxiety, fatigue and low morale (Noer, 1993).

Research findings also indicated that participants suffer from fatigue and emotional exhaustion. Participants reported that they feel emotionally worn out and drained as a result of accumulated occupational stress. Taylor (2000) indicated that sources of fatigue include psychological stresses and social stresses and problems at work. Participants reported that they have to control over what happens in their lives and they are trapped in such a scenario. Participants further reported lack of energy, poor sleep and decreased motivation and found it difficult to overcome emotional exhaustion and fatigue. Participants indicated that emotional exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness and lack of life in purpose can be overwhelming.

Research findings indicated that sleep quality can be a barometer of mental health and sleep disorders often coexist with anxiety, panic disorders and depression. Sleep disorders are comorbid with many mental health issues and it is estimated that 40% of insomnia patients have a psychiatric condition. Participants reported that sleep is not restorative, they wake up still feeling tired, whether from working frequently during the night, falling asleep too late or waking too early. Studies indicated that individuals with mental health disorders experiences demonstrate changes to their sleep architecture. A University of Michigan study indicate that often, the individual spends more time in the lighter, less restorative stages of sleep and less time in the critically important deep and REM stages. The REM stage of sleep provides the emotional and cognitive benefits of sleep. Participants reported emotional imbalance, failure to regulate emotions and make good judgments.

Research findings indicated that mental health issues and drug or alcohol abuse may get in the way of one's ability to function at work, maintain a stable home life, handle life's difficulties and relate to others (American Addiction Centers, 2015). Research has proven that when alcohol or substance abuse increases, mental health problems usually increase too. According to the reports published in the journal of the American Medical Association, roughly 50% of individuals with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse. Participants reported that excessive pressure at work lures them to alcohol and substance abuse. One participant reported how he drinks to cope with occupational stress and also use drugs to boost energy and morale. People often abuse alcohol or drugs to ease the symptoms of an undiagnosed mental disorder, to cope with difficult emotions or to temporarily change their mood (Saisan, Smith, Robinson & Segal,

2018). Research findings also indicated that substance abuse and mental health disorders such as depression are closely linked.

Recent research on eating disorders supports the proposition that these are serious mental health disorders with significant morbidity and mortality (National Institute of Mental Health, 2015). Findings from the research indicate that individuals struggling with eating disorders become obsessed with food (Crow, Peterson, Swanson, Raymond, Specker, Eckert & Mitchell, 2009). Participants indicated binge eating disorders which are characterized primarily by binge eating without the regular use of compensatory measures. Participants indicated that they use food as a way of coping with negative emotions and occupational stress. Research findings reported that eating disorders can impact relationships with co workers and as well as functioning in the workplace (Wade, Keski-Rahkonen & Hudson, 2011).

5.4 Coping strategies used by employees

From the research findings, participants indicated several coping strategies they implemented in order to deal with occupational stress so as to reduce its impact on their mental health. The coping strategies that emerged include optimism, spirituality, resilience, social support, isolation/avoidance, alcohol/substance abuse, hostility or aggression and counseling.

Findings from this research study showed that avoidance and isolation were used as a way of coping with occupational stress related factors. Participants indicated how they isolate engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms to avoid dealing with occupational stress. Research has indicated that alternatives to avoidance coping include modifying or eliminating the conditions that gave rise to the problem and changing perception of an experience in a way that neutralizes the problem (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Others reported that they totally maintain a strategic distance from others in social interaction situations while others reported that they avoid situation they view as having the capability of them encountering the stressor. Avoidance and isolation helps to manage negative attitudes/feelings associated with the occupational stress (Finkelhor, 1990). Research has shown that avoidance coping has beneficial outcomes (McCaul & Mallot, 1984). A study by Long and Haney relaxation techniques were equally successful at reducing anxiety and increasing feelings of self-efficacy (Long & Haney, 1988).

Spirituality emerged as a major coping strategy for the participants. Participants reported that for them to deal effectively with their situation they pray to God who is the source of life. Prayer is a source of solace and inner strength (Kelly, 2004) and is associated with healing (Koenig,1997). The research findings indicate that when utilising spirituality to various degrees in their workplace, participants displayed adaptive coping capabilities. Participants also indicated that their purpose in work and life, their connection to a spiritual source and the fruits of spirituality are informed by their spiritual and religious foundation. Participants argued to consider spirituality as a coping strategy so as to reframe their lives as well as bringing a sense of meaning as well as purpose in their lives. Spirituality higher levels are argued to be associated with improvements associated with life satisfaction health related quality of life as well as the overall wellbeing (Cotton, 2006).

The research findings also showed that optimism is another coping mechanism used by employees in dealing with occupational stress. There is evidence that optimistic individuals present higher quality of life as compared to the pessimists. Research findings also indicated that optimism influence mental and physical well being by promoting a healthy lifestyle as well as adaptive behaviors and cognitive processes associated with greater flexibility, problem solving capacity and a more efficient elaboration of negative information (Scheier & Carver, 1985).Positive correlations have been found between optimism and physical/mental well being. Optimistic participants tend to have more frequently protective attitudes and are more resilient to stress (Peterson & Seligman, 1987).

Resilience also emerged as another coping strategy used by employees in dealing with occupational stress. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary and individuals commonly demonstrate resilience. One example is the response of many Zimbabweans to the prevailing economic hardships and their efforts to rebuild their lives. Research indicated that the road to resilience is characterised with emotional distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common in individuals who have suffered major adversity in their lives (Masten,2009).Participants indicated that they have managed to work through challenges by using personal resources, strength and other positive capacities of psychological capital such as hope, optimism and self efficacy. Research has indicated that resilience is also positively associated with happiness (Lopez & Synder, 2009).

The participants indicated that they received psychosocial support. Psychosocial support helps individuals to heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after a critical event. Psychosocial support includes counselling, spiritual and group support (Woodward, 2015). From the findings the participants reported that with the provision of psychosocial support to them they are able to face their day to day challenges and they are always encouraged to hope for the positive. The participants indicated that they are satisfied with the support from peers. The participants reported that they are satisfied by the support thus pointing to the fact that psychosocial support is essential to their wellbeing. Psychosocial support includes rebuilding and strengthening relationships which are vital for human development and this can be supported by the fact that the participants meet and share experiences (Woods & Hollis, 1999).

Alcohol/substance abuse emerged as another coping strategy used by participants. Research findings indicated that alcohol abuse and dependence can often arise from the use of alcohol as a coping mechanism. Participants indicated that they consume alcohol as a way to unwind after a stressful day at work and drown their sorrows. Research findings also indicated that alcohol has temporary benefits which are outweighed by the long term negative effects on health and relationships, poor decision making under the influence as well as increased dependency. Studies have shown how alcohol functions to slow down the central nervous system, creating feelings of relaxation (Marmot, 2006). The self medication theory indicated that individuals may use drugs to cope with tension associated with life stressors or to relieve symptoms of anxiety and depression. Thus, drug use functions as a means of regulating affect and soothe psychological distress. Grant, Donahue & Odlaug (2011) indicated that stressed individuals are prone to give in to their impulses (smoking, alcohol and prescription drugs) as a way of coping with daily stress.

5.5 Strategies to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors

From the research findings, participants indicated several strategies that can be used to minimize the impact of occupational stress on their mental health. The strategies that emerged include psychosocial support, effective communication, recreational facilities, proper salary administration and establishment of a welfare department.

The participants suggested that psychosocial support can help in minimising the impact of occupational stress related factors. Psychosocial support helps individuals to heal the psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after a critical event (Woodward, 2015).

From the findings the participants reported that with the psychosocial support will empower and enable them to face their day to day challenges. The participants reported that psychosocial support is essential to their wellbeing. Psychosocial support includes rebuilding and strengthening relationships which are vital for human development and this can be supported by the fact that the participants meet and share experiences (Woods & Hollis, 1999).

Participants indicated that the provision for recreational facilities can be implemented to as to minimize occupational stress. It has been proposed that recreational activities are outlets of or expression of excess energy, channelling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfil individual needs (Yukic, 1970). A traditional view holds that work is supported by recreation, recreation being useful to “recharge the battery” so that work performance is improved, thus minimizing occupational stress. Individuals who participate in organised recreational activities enjoy better mental health, are more resilient against stresses of modern day living (Mental Health Promotion Plan, 1999). Participation in recreational activities is shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression (Marmot, 1999). Research findings also reported that participation in group recreation provides a sense of value, belonging and attachment (Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000).

Effective communication also emerged as a potential strategy in minimising the impact of occupational stress on employees’ mental health. Ineffective communication skills have detrimental consequences of psychological disturbances which contribute to everyday stress and burnout among the participants (Ogden, 2007). Participants indicated that being unable to communicate their needs, concerns and frustrations create occupational stress. Findings from the research also indicated that assertive communication helps individuals to express themselves about issues that matter to them. Participants indicated that they feel in control of the situation hence reducing occupational stress. Research also indicated that with the knowledge of how to properly communicate, the ability to communicate will become easier and result in less misunderstandings and frustrations which can contribute to occupational stress (Edelman, Kudzma & Mandle, 2014).

Provision of psychological health and safety also emerged as a strategy to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors. Participants indicated that the working environment is not safe for them. Research finding indicated that a psychologically healthy and work environment is needed. A psychologically healthy and safe work environment is a workplace that promotes

workers' psychological well being and actively works to prevent harm to the worker psychological health, including in negligent, reckless or intentional ways (The National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health, 2005).

An employee welfare department was highlighted as a prerequisite in minimising occupational stress. Research findings indicated that in order to keep employees mentally and physically healthy certain services and benefits must be provided (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2008). Participants reported that the quality of well beings a reliable measure of the health of the organisation as a whole. Participants indicated that if employee welfare facilities are provided, they are motivated which boosts their self esteem and their ability to function well in a society.

Participants indicated that compensation is also a major strategy in minimizing the impact of occupational stress. Research indicates that compensation is a strategy whereby one covers up consciously or unconsciously weaknesses, frustrations, desires or feelings of inadequacy or incompetence in one life area through the gratification or (drive towards) excellence in another area (Lasch, 1979). The stress of having an occupational injury can trigger anxiety or depression.

5.6 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the research:

The results from the research findings showed the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health. The research findings showed a number of occupational stress related factors that affects employees' mental health. Occupational stress related factors include shift work, retrenchments/layoffs, long working hours, relationships at work, disciplinary procedures, poor health and safety procedures. Occupational stress related factors contribute to the development of anxiety and/or depression, and may cause an existing condition to worsen. Occupational stress also affects relationships and life outside work, can increase risk of injury, fatigue and burnout. The results indicated that occupational stress related factors affect employees in their daily life which causes mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, fatigue and loneliness.

The results from the research findings indicated how mental health problems manifest as a result of occupational stress related factors. The results indicated that mental health problems include loneliness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, alcohol/substance abuse and mental fatigue. These

mental health problems are precipitated by occupational stress related factors. Results also indicated that mental health problems may occur simultaneously which takes a huge strain on an individual for example depression and anxiety can manifest at the same time and this has a serious adverse impact on individuals' mental health.

The coping strategies used by employees in dealing with the impact of occupational stress have proven that they can endure the adverse effects of occupational stress related factors. The coping strategies include avoidance/isolation, spirituality, optimism, resilience, psychosocial support and alcohol/ substance abuse. Participants showed that they are positive and optimistic about life and they hope for the better. Spirituality was indicated by the participants as their coping strategy and they indicated that God is their source of life. Spirituality is associated with improvements associated with life satisfaction health related quality of life as well as the overall wellbeing. Participants demonstrated resilience because they have survived all the trauma and adversities. Participants indicated that they have managed to work through challenges by using personal resources, strength and other positive capacities of psychological capital such as hope, optimism and self-efficacy.

From the research findings, participants indicated several strategies that can be used to minimize the impact of occupational stress on their mental health. The strategies that emerged include psychosocial support, effective communication, recreational facilities, proper salary administration and establishment of a welfare department. Psychosocial support includes rebuilding and strengthening relationships which are vital for human development and this can be supported by the fact that the participants meet and share experiences. Research findings also reported that participation in group recreation provides a sense of value, belonging and attachment. Participants indicated that if employee welfare facilities are provided, they are motivated which boosts their self-esteem and their ability to function well in a society.

5.7 Limitations

- Due to the fear of exposing an unhealthy psychological environment, the researcher had difficulties in acquiring clear information. Hence the researcher had to build a relationship of trust with the participants.
- Talking about occupational stress evoked repressed thoughts about the participants' present situation and some of them became emotionally charged.

- The researcher also noted that she could also have included female employees so as to explore more on their stressors in a male dominated work environment.
- The time to conduct interviews was limited as the researcher had to meet the participants during their working hours when they were preoccupied with work.

5.8 Recommendations

From the research on the account of the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health, the recommendations are that;

- The Government should implement mental health policies to deal with occupational stress and other mental health problems.
- There is need for the implementation of the Mental Health Act and strict adherence to the Act.
- Professionally trained psychologist within the organisation should help employees with psychological problems
- There is need to help employees facing mental health challenges to use adaptive behaviors to cope with occupational stress related factors. This will help them maintain psychological, mental and emotional wellbeing. For example shunning alcohol/substance abuse as a coping strategy
- Organizational policies and procedures should be communicated to employees
- Psychosocial support and recreational facilities should be implemented to promote social belongingness, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

5.9 Chapter summary

This chapter gave a discussion of the results of the research study. These findings of the research were compared with the findings of previous researches on the subject matter. The discussion showed some issues that came up which are unique to this study as they are not evident in previous researches. Conclusions and recommendations of the research study were also drawn in this chapter and revealed the occupational stress related factors, manifestations of mental health problems, the nature of coping strategies and several ways to minimize the impact of occupational stress related factors on employees' mental health.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

My name is Faith Makubaza and I am a student in the Department of Psychology at the Midlands State University studying for a Bachelor of Social Science Honors Degree in Psychology. I am carrying out a study on ‘*The impact occupational stress related factors on employees’ mental health*’. I am kindly asking you to assist me in carrying out my research by taking part in my interview as respondents. Your responses will be treated with confidentiality and will ONLY be used for academic purpose.

SECTION A: Biographical Data

Age :

Gender :

Occupation :

Section B: What do you understand by occupational stress?

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Do you suffer any occupational stress? Explain why so in your context?

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Are you ever exposed to the dangers of occupational stress?

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Can you suggest any causes of occupational stress?

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What is the indication that you suffer from occupational stress at this organization?

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Section C: What do you understand by mental health?

Do you think that occupational stress affects the mental health of an employee?

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What would you say are the indicators of the effects of occupational stress on employees' mental health?

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Do you have a health and occupational safety committee at this workplace?

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Section D: What are the coping mechanisms that workers use to deal with occupational stress?

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What would you recommend as strategies to minimize effects of occupational stress on employees' mental health?

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APPENDIX B: LETTER FROM MSU



APPENDIX C: LETTER FROM ZIMALLOYS

ZIMBABWE ALLOYS CHROME (PVT) LTD

P.O. Box 530 GWERU
Tel: +263 (0) 54 224134/5
Fax: +263 (0) 54 222515
Reg no: 3308/2009
VAT no: 10094332



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that Faith Makubaza, Reg No R162165Q conducted her project research with Zimbabwe Alloys Limited titled, **The impact of occupational stress related factors on Employees' mental health**. She administered her interviews on the week ending 21 September 2018.

We hope that the information and data impacted and gathered will contribute significantly towards the completion of her degree program.

Should you require further information and clarification, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

ZIMBABWE ALLOYS CHROME
(PVT) LTD
Yours Faithfully
2018-09-21
DEPARTMENT:
SIGNATURE:

C WATADZA (MR)
SENIOR HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

1809 Bristol Road, Heavy Industrial Site, Gweru, Zimbabwe

Directors: F. Swartz (Chairman), F. Dzindziris (CEO), H. Peters (Executive),
A. Ndlovu, W. Dushoff, U. Gumbo, U. Gumbo, U. Gumbo, de Graaf (Alternate)

APPENDIX D: AUDIT SHEET

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISOR-STUDENT AUDIT SHEET

DATE	TOPIC DISCUSSED	COMMENT	STUDENT'S SIGNATURE	SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE
12/02/18	PROPOSAL	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
			<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
10/05/18	PROPOSAL	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
13/07/18	PROPOSAL	APPROVED	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
21/08/18	CHAPTER 1-3	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
14/09/18	CHAPTER 1-3	APPROVED	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
18/09/18	RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	APPROVED	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
28/09/18	CHAPTER 4	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
			<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
11/10/18	CHAPTER 4	APPROVED	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
11/10/18	CHAPTER 5	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
22/10/18	FIRST DRAFT	REWORK	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
01/11/18	FIRST DRAFT	PROCEED	<i>Alza</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
02/11/18	FINAL DRAFT			

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE.....*Alza*.....

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE.....*[Signature]*.....