

Love in the Office and Along the Corridors: Causes and Consequences: A Case Study of a Beverage Firm in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT This study sought to unravel the causes and consequences of workplace romantic relationships at a beverage firm in Harare, Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach to research was used. Interview guides were used to collect primary data from 20 shopfloor participants and 2 managers who acted as key informants. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants who took part in the study. The study has revealed a number of causes of workplace relationships. These included forced relationships by bosses taking advantage of their positions to solicit love from subordinates, dysfunctional marriages or relationships back home, desire to gain some favours from bosses. It has emerged from the study that workplace romantic relationships have some advantages such as uniting different departments and creating a joyous environment at the workplace. Results of the study indicated that these relationships can be more detrimental not only to the partners involved but to the entire organisation. The disadvantages of workplace relationships include conflict of interest, retarded professional growth, and failure to meet targets. The majority of participants were however against a strict policy that prohibits workplace relationships, but rather advocated for the individuals concerned to be as professional as possible when in such a relationship. Management has also been urged to be on the lookout to see to it that such relationships do not disturb the flowing nature of work.

INTRODUCTION

Employees spend an average of 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week and 160 hours a month at the workplace (Corser 2011; Borreli 2014; Wheatcroft 2016). This clearly indicates that workers in this context spend a significant portion of their waking time at the workplace. By so doing, employees naturally form meaningful social ties with fellow employees (Doll and Rosopa 2015). Although relationships at the workplace are discouraged by many employers (Doll and Rosopa 2015), an increase in the long day culture has made relationships at work more possible (Borreli 2014). Among these relationships are romantic intimate relationships between employees. Mhonderwa (2013) and Borreli (2014) also shared the same sentiments when they argued that romantic relationships are slowly but surely becoming a common feature in contemporary organisations as more employees become involved. As way back as in the mid-70s, according to Badford et al. (1975), the frequency of romantic relationships at the workplace were

bound to increase, and indeed, it has turned to be true. Forty to forty-seven percent of employees surveyed have reported to have been involved in workplace relationships at some point in their lives. According to Mhonderwa (2013), workplace relationship is when two individuals working for the same corporation engage in intimate or sexual relationship. Salvaggio et al. (2011) and Pierce (1998) defined workplace romance as when two individuals, from the same organisation develop a relationship with mutual attraction. Workplace related romantic relationships are capable of causing damages to morale as well as productivity at the workplace. Due to the usually (perceived) negative effects of these affairs, organisations are still not clear whether or not they should interfere in the romantic relationships of their employees (Doll and Rosopa 2015). In the event that they choose to interfere with these relationships, which department of the organisation should take responsibility of such issues and what kind of policies should be put in place if workplace related relationships do occur? If policies are not put in place, should

guidelines be incorporated in as far as handling such relationships is concerned? Many organisations are still trying to address these questions concerning workplace romantic relationships (Salvaggio et al. 2011).

Workplace relationships may take a number of forms. It may take a scenario whereby those who are involved would be employees at the same level. It is also possible for a supervisor to have a workplace relationship with his/her subordinate (Wheatcroft 2016). A workplace relationship could also involve an exploitative and cunning relationship between a boss and one of his female or male subordinates (Mhonderwa 2013).

Although romantic love affairs are a common feature in today's corporate organisations, ninety percent (90%) of organisations do not have written policies concerning such relationships (American Management Association 2003). The Society for Human Resource Management (2006) conducted a workplace romance poll and found out that seventy percent (70%) of organisations do not have policies regarding relationships at the workplace. About eighteen percent (18%) of employers have written policies that prohibits romantic relationships at the workplace while seven percent (7%) have verbal informal polices relating to these relationships.

Related Literature

Women in the Workplace

The emancipation of women in general and Zimbabwe in particular has seen a significant increase in the number of female employees. One of the most notable revolutions of the past fifty years has been the economic empowerment of females (Quast 2011).

However, the increase has also brought some new twists and turns in employment relationships. Quast (2011) also noted that the issue of work/personal life balance only became an issue after many women joined the workforce. Of interest in this study, Scribner (1989) stated that the introduction of women in the workplace has brought a consequence. Men and women can now meet; court, marry and at times, make love at the workplace as they execute their jobs. Relationships at the workplace are continuously being reconfigured.

Some of the relationships that form at the workplace are beneficial not only to the individuals concerned, but to the organisations as well. Workplace relationships may enhance productivity. However, in some cases, which are reported to be the most usual cases, romantic affairs at the workplace are detrimental, especially to the organisations involved (Scriber 1989).

Reasons for an Increase in Women Employees

Amount of time spend at work: Employees the world over and Zimbabwe in particular work and spend an average of 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week. According to Mhonderwa (2013), one of the reasons for workplace romantic relationships is the fact that employees spend most of their time at the workplace. Workplaces are therefore good breeding grounds for romantic relationships. Such relationships start as being mere friendships and they graduate to becoming strong intimate relationships. Employees at the workplace develop some common interests in each other due to the long hours they spend together in offices. This will usually end in blossoming romantic relationships among employees. In relation to the above, Murstein (1970) argued that corporate organisations are a closed field in that they provide routine interaction for a lengthy period of time, eventually, individuals within the organisation will start to discover the deeper attractive aspects of others.

World War II: World War II labour shortages have been cited as one of the reasons why there has been an influx of women in employment circles. Men who went to join the war created labour shortages. In the United States of America, a fictional character of Rosie the Riveter was used to lure females into the employment circles. It has been established that from 1940 to 1945, the number of females who joined the labour grew by fifty percent. Female employment in the military and military related industries grew by a margin of 462 percent (AllAboutHistory.org). Such a trend was also instrumental in changing cultural attitudes and beliefs, making it acceptable for middle class women to seek employment, an issue which was considered a taboo previously.

Rise of the Feminist Movement: The rise and strengthening of the feminist movements has also been cited as one of the forces which led to an increase in the number of female employees.

Feminist movements lobbied for equal rights as well as liberation for women. Betty Friedan, a women emancipation activist is on record for denouncing domestic slavery and discrimination.

Economic Necessity: Many women the world over are opting to work due to an increase in the cost of living. Working is now being considered an economic necessity in order to be in a position to support the family and supplement the household's income.

Passage of Equal Rights by Different Governments: Many governments have passed some legislation which argues that men and women are equal and it is a criminal offence in many jurisdictions for an organisation to discriminate women on the basis of gender.

Rise of the Service Sector Coupled with a Decline in the Manufacturing Sector: There has been a growth in the demand for female. In the past, muscle and physical strength has been in demand and it put males at an advantage. However, with the passage of time, brain power came on board and set both males and females at par in industries.

Reasons for Workplace Dating

According to Quinn (1977), affiliation has been cited as the basis of attraction. In a study to determine the motives for workplace romances, it has been established that individuals engage in these relationships basically for three reasons namely love, ego and job. Relationships that are job motivated were linked with organisational absence, whereas those that were love motivated were related to more positive attitudes (Quinn 1977).

In addition, Quinn (1977) noted that a number of factors are responsible for the formation of romantic relationships at the workplace. These factors are proximity, motives as well as characteristics of the work group/setting.

Borrelli (2014) noted that the stresses and strains associated with the work environment is one of the key factors that contribute to the establishment of romantic relationships at work. They share common challenges at work. They consult with each other almost on a daily basis and this may draw them closer to each other, especially when they are of opposite sexes. Styles (2013) also attributed the flourishing of romantic affairs at work to the enormous number of hours spent at work.

The Good Side of Intimate Relationships at the Workplace

Romantic love affairs at work have been found to provide a number of benefits not only to the individuals concerned, but to the work environment as well (Mainiero 1989). The Society for Human Resource Management (2006) found out that over the years, employees have become more open minded about relationships between their fellow workmates. It has emerged from the study that employees are of the opinion that workplace romantic relationships can in some cases be fruitful in an organisation because the involved parties can genuinely be sympathetic to the anxieties and concerns of one another's work life.

Workplace related romantic relationships have been found to energize workplace morale. Witnessing others falling in love has been argued to make other people feel positive. The attitudes of those involved in a romantic relationship are usually uplifted and they become happier people. Their happiness will usually positively affect their attitudes towards work and their co-workers. Co-workers who witness the development of this relationship are also positively, especially if they would have been involved in the establishment of the newly found relationship (Mainiero 1989).

Mainiero (1989) also noted that due to the fact that workplace romantic relationships are viewed in bad light, those involved are usually motivated to carry out their duties better and more efficiently with the sole aim of disproving the negativity associated with workplace romantic relationship. Those involved would not want to be considered distracted or unproductive as a result of their relationship status, so they are bound to apply more time and effort into their work in order to demonstrate the positive side of their relationship. In addition, being in love leads to a positive attitude which in turn motivate individuals involved to perform better in other realms of their lives such as work.

Having a positive attitude at work is also associated with creativity and innovation. Employees in a romantic relationship spend a lot of time together both within and outside their organisation. This gives them ample time to discuss issues relating to their work, thereby giving them an opportunity to discuss new approaches and techniques that may help them

complete their projects. They have time to brainstorm possible ways of getting their work done effectively and efficiently (Mainiero 1989).

Mainiero (1989) also noted that workplace related romantic relationships give an opportunity to become more open minded and the willingness to cooperate with each other to the individuals involved, thus they soften work related personality conflicts. Together with having more positive attitudes to work, individuals involved in workplace relationships are usually easier to work with due to the fact that they are more comfortable expressing their ideas as well as criticisms with their significant other. Such levels of behaviour change can result into more effective work groups, and with the passage of time, a more productive working environment in which open communication is a key aspect.

Workplace relationships are also known for improving teamwork, communication and cooperation. When two individuals from two different departments fall in love, it also opens channels for other members of these two different departments to start communicating with each other comfortably. Due to the two in love, the channels of communication become more open and accessible to the other members of the departments. Existing conflicts between departments are also bound to decrease, thus allowing the organisation to work more effectively as a whole (Mainiero 1989).

Challenges of Intimate Relationships at the Workplace

Mainiero (1989) argued that workplace romantic relationships have potential to cause a number of negative aspects to the couple as well to the organisation as a whole. Mhonderwa (2013) argued that romantic relationships may sound a noble thing on face value, but they are detrimental and pose some ethical challenges to the individuals concerned. These relationships are driven by different motives and whatever the motive, those who are involved must know the possible implications and challenges of their actions. The way these individuals behave as well as their attitudes may also be subject to their fellow workmate's position on office romances (Quinn 1977).

Workplace romantic relationships may threaten career advancement of those involved. These relationships may thwart one's aspirations

of ascending the organisational ladder. Some managers may view the development of workplace romantic relationships as unprofessional and a lack of sound judgement that may dissuade them from offering individuals involved any further opportunities within the organisation. Many employees in an organisation are of the opinion that workplace romantic relationships are detrimental to careers as they are jeopardised (Mainiero 1989).

Romantic relationships can be problematic if they are based on abuse of power by managers or some senior personnel in an organisation. Managers may force themselves on vulnerable usually female subordinates. Female employees are in this case threatened with such threats as losing their jobs. A good example is the famous 'carpet interview' practiced in some organisations whereby aspiring female employees have to offer their prospective managers sexual favours in order for them to land the positions.

Mhonderwa (2013) also noted that some female employees entice their superiors into relationships with the aim of securing favours such as promotions and some special assignments which are not enjoyed by the rest of the employees.

Just like any other relationship, romantic affairs at the workplace are punctuated with moments of exhilaration, joy, sorrow, conflict and heartbreaks. Conflicts in workplace romantic relationships are unavoidable. The greatest conflict in workplace relationships is when a supervisor is in a relationship with someone they directly supervise. The conflict will have an impact on the work performance. A conflict of interest arises in this case as the supervisor is caught between professional conduct and the desire to please his/her lover. Whenever a supervisor is bound to make some decisions, these decisions are more likely bound to be skewed in favour of his/her love, thus jeopardising the professional conduct. Such a move is bound to cause some turmoil in the organisations as other employees complain of favouritism and some form of unfair treatment. Productivity is also argued to fall under such circumstances (Corser 2011; Mhonderwa 2013).

It is also possible for conflict to emerge when a supervisor misreads gestures from a female subordinate. The female employee may actually be on a spree to market herself to the male boss through smiles and other related gestures. Her

efforts may be seen as irresistible by the supervisor or boss. In some cases, all these gestures could be personality driven. One could be naturally a cheerful person with no intentions of catching the eye of the supervisor in a romantic manner. Alternatively, they could be just trying to divert the boss's attention from some pending assignments which are due yet the employee is not yet done with them. In addition, some gestures could be trying to gain some favours on pending assignment, but without necessarily seeking any form of relationship with the boss. Under such a situation, the boss could be convinced that his subordinate is in love with him and asks her out. In such a case, the female subordinate may start to feel uncomfortable around him since the supervisor would have misunderstood her (Mhonderwa 2013).

Another form of conflict of interest was also highlighted by Mainiero (1989). These conflicts of interest are usually rife when the two individuals work in different departments. There is a possibility of these two discussing and disclosing important organisation information to each other and this may hurt either side when making important company decisions. Some organisations have policies that do not allow couples to work together and the aim is to avoid conflicts of interest in the hope of maintaining the organisation's integrity as well as protecting the couple's relationship. It is however important to note that some organisations do allow married couples to work together but guidelines are provided on what is ethical and what is not. Another conflict is possible when the involved individuals are married. Relationships under this kind of arrangement are detrimental not only to the partners' careers but to their marriages as well (Mhonderwa 2013).

Love at the workplace does not only affect the two involved, in one way or the other, some people can also get involved. For example, when the two 'love birds' enter an office and close the door behind them, speculation is high among employees that the two could be making love. In any case, the probability of these two kissing and cuddling is high when they are alone in office (Mhonderwa 2013). It is, however, argued that although an affair could be known in an organisation, those involved must make all effort to make sure they do not display their affection in the public.

According to Thompson (2007), the employer's hands are tied in as far as giving assign-

ments to two people who are in love is concerned. In his/her effort to make sure the two individuals who are in love do not get the same assignment, the number of assignments they can get may automatically dwindle.

Another challenge of dating a co-worker is when one or both partners may be married or is in a relationship outside of the workplace. This automatically becomes an adulterous relationship and co-workers aware of such an issue may become uncomfortable, viewing themselves as accomplices in the deceit (Holland 2004).

Challenges may also occur when a romantic relationship between two workmates hits a wall. This will have a negative impact on the operations of the organisation as well as other employees. Pierce (2000) is of the opinion that when an office relationship hit a brick wall, not only does it ruin the relationship between the two who were involved, but it can also erode any personal links that the employees had with their previous partner's department. Due to the fact that the employees will continuously see each other on a daily basis, the breakup may cause some negative feelings toward other people as well as a reminder of one's failures and social incompetence that could have led to the breakup.

Work related romantic relationships are usually known and easily discovered by the couple's co-workers. Once it becomes clear that the two individuals are in a relationship, it becomes difficult for their co-workers to treat them as individuals or as a team. It is usually a complication on the part of the co-workers in as far as how to react to the two is concerned. Co-workers are also confused on how to react to breakups which can lead to uncomfortable interactions as well as avoiding some forms of conversations. It is also possible for co-workers to use the couple's relationship to change the views of one of the individuals instead of directly approaching the person as an individual. In addition, an individual in a relationship can easily be misjudged due to the person s/he is going out with. For example, a manager may withhold a potential subordinate's promotion because s/he is in a relationship with someone who does not exemplify the required characteristics and these two are put in the same bracket (Pierce 2000).

Workplace relationships may also lead to a decline in work performance (Salavaggio 2011). Their relationship may have a negative impact

in the workplace due to distraction. Fellow co-workers can easily notice any decline in an individual's work because their workload is usually determined by their fellow workmates. Depending on the stage of the relationship, concentration levels may be negatively affected.

Co-workers' Reactions to Workplace Dating

A study was carried out by a team of researchers at DePaul University's College of Communication and the University of Texas aimed at assessing the factors that are responsible for co-worker's perception on workplace romantic relationships. The authors argued that the reason why they were interested in such a study was that workplace relationships were a common phenomenon yet a few studies had been conducted in that area (Cowan and Horan 2014).

According to Borreli (2014), the team of researchers found out that how co-workers respond to workplace romantic relationships is a function of three variables. These are: how they learned about the romance, their personal views of those involved in the romance and lastly, the company culture. If co-workers are personally told by the people involved, there is bound to be a more positive response unlike in the event whereby they discover of the affair through office gossip or if they were caught ready handed. Company culture also has a bearing on the way co-workers interpret workplace romantic relationships. Romantic relationships are easily acceptable in an environment where the company does not have official policies on these relationships. Workplace romantic relationships are considered inappropriate and unprofessional if the organisation has formal strict policies in place. Although office romantic relationships are still being negatively viewed, some researches have indicated that these may lead to marriages. It has been established that fourteen percent of couples who met at work end up in marriage (Styles 2013).

Possible Solutions to Workplace Relationships

Some authorities have it that work and romantic relationships must not coexist in the same place. However, in the event that these are found in the same place, the individuals concerned must make sure they do not engage in some unethical behaviours, they should actually avoid doing

wrong things while at work. The individuals' concerned must make sure all their actions are above board, remain professional and not interfere with their duties and responsibility (Mhonderwa 2013). Corser (2011) argued that romantic relationships must be completely avoided at the workplace. He argued that many organisations discourage intimate relationships at work since these are perceived to have a negative impact on productivity.

In order to control the possible effects of romantic relationships at the workplace, many organisations have put in place various policies that govern dating and relationships.

In some corporates, a romantic affair at the workplace is only tolerated when one of the romantic partners is to be transferred to another department. This is done to ensure that the relationship does not interfere with the flow of work. In other organisations, employees are obliged to declare their love (or their intention to marry) to the employer.

Knowles (2011) noted that romantic partners at the workplace must learn the art of keeping work and personal issues separate. Some authors however acknowledge that it is not easy to do so (Corser 2011). It is natural for couples in love to require some form of privacy and if the relationship is known in the organisation, arguments could be difficult to keep out of the workplace. Objectivity could also be affected by being on closed quarters such as offices. Corser (2011) continued by noting that individuals involved in workplace romantic relationships must maintain high levels of professionalism. These individuals are discouraged from sending emails with some love connotations. In any case, many organisations have strict guidelines concerning the use of emails. Involved individuals must maintain a professional approach to each other when at work. It is also not recommended for the two to call each other by nickname or pet names within the work premises. Such names should only be used after hours and outside the work premises.

In an effort to reduce the impact of romantic relationships at work, Knowles (2013) stressed that those in an affair must not forsake their workmates. It is indeed tempting for the two in love to spend every possible moment together at the workplace. They may want to be together during tea breaks and lunch hours. People in love at the workplace also try and find reasons

to see each other during the day. It is however important to guide against such tendencies. Other work colleagues must not be excluded from one's social circle. Maintaining these networks and contacts makes good business sense. In any organisation, at some point in time, one may realise that they need the next person so it is important to keep close to each and every member of the organisation as much as possible.

Romantic relationships at work can also be handled by being honest at the right time. It is rather thrilling and exciting to have a secret romantic affair at work. A complication is however likely to emerge when the affair comes to an end. Encountering one ex-lover everyday at the workplace poses some form of discomfort. In addition, the disturbances can also be felt by fellow workmates who should endure rude remarks and looks thrown to each other by the two who were once in love. However, if the relationship is not going anywhere, it is advisable not to publicise it (Knowles 2011).

Although workplace relationships have been argued to cause a lot of problems, a blanket ban may not adequately address the challenges posed. Each case must be dealt with separately. Those affairs that have some negative impact on work flows must be banished while those which do not impact on the work must be encouraged to grow under clear organisational guidance in order to avoid the possible negative effects (Mhonderwa 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on the methodology which was used in this study. The study employed qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry used in a number of academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences (Creswell 2005). Qualitative researchers aim at obtaining an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the corresponding reasons that govern such forms of behaviour. The focus of qualitative methodology is on the why and how, not just the aspects of what, where and when usually associated with quantitative research (Coolican 2008).

According to Lincoln (1994), qualitative research has some unique advantages. It is argued that qualitative research methodology is useful when an issue is too complicated to be addressed by a simple yes or no hypothesis.

In addition, it has been noted that qualitative research design is relatively much easier

both to plan and to carry out. It is also important and feasible when budgetary decisions have to be taken into consideration (Lincoln 1994). According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research methods do not depend much on the sample size as in quantitative research methodology. A case study, for example, may come up with meaningful results with a small number of participants.

It is, however, important to realise that qualitative research methodology has some inherent challenges. According to Cooper (2007), whilst this approach to research is not as time and resource consuming as in the quantitative approach, qualitative methods still need careful planning and thinking to make sure that the results arrived at are as accurate as possible.

Qualitative data cannot be analysed using mathematical or statistical techniques in the same comprehensive manner as in quantitative data. The application of figures is only meant to provide some guides to general trends. It is also important to mention that qualitative data is a lot more open to the researcher's personal opinion and judgement and because of that, it is argued that it can only ever provide observations rather than results (Cooper 2007). According to Cooper and Schindler (2008), qualitative research is in most cases unique and cannot be exactly recreated, meaning that it lacks the ability to be peer reviewed in the strict sense of the term.

In this case, workplace romantic relationships are triggered by different factors for different individuals. In addition, experiences of employees pertaining to workplace romantic relationships are very varied. Interpretations and effects of these relationships also differ from one person to the other. Qualitative research methodology was therefore considered the most ideal approach in this study due to the nature of the data being sought.

Sources of Data

The study made use of primary data. This was done in order to get responses directly from the participants themselves. It is of paramount importance to briefly explain the source of data and how it contributed to this study.

Primary Data

Cooper and Schindler (2008) argued that primary data is fresh data which is gathered specifically for the research under study.

In this study, data was obtained from the interviews which were conducted with employees employed by a beverage firm in Harare, Zimbabwe. The majority of these participants were shopfloor workers while the remaining few were managers. Managers were interviewed as key informants.

The type of data collected from the participants was specific to the study and the data provided was new and applicable to the study under investigation. This data was gathered for the first time in relation to the study being undertaken. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect this primary data. Research objectives and questions were used in the construction of the items of the instruments.

Data Collection Techniques

As already mentioned, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with both the shopfloor workers and the managers who were in this case considered as key informants. The key informant interview schedule was structured in such a manner as to capture the issues which the researcher had not considered important which had been raised in the interviews with the shopfloor employees. In addition, managers were interviewed as key informants with the aim of verifying and validating the information which was provided by the shopfloor employees who were interviewed first. Explained below are semi-structured interviews, as a data collection technique.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. According to Fischer (2005), an interview is a face to face role situation in which the interviewer asks the participant a set of questions designed to obtain answers of importance to the research. A semi-structured interview is flexible, giving room for new questions to be brought up during the interview session as a result of what the interviewee says. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer generally has a framework of themes to be explored (Mathew and Ross 2010).

According to Fischer (2005), semi-structured interviews are conducted with an open framework, allowing for focused, conversational, two way kind of communication. These types of interviews can be used both to give as well as to

receive information. Unlike in questionnaires, where comprehensive questions are designed in advance, semi-structured interviews start with more general questions or topics. Relevant topics are identified at the beginning and the possible relationships between these topics and some other issues. These will then become the fundamental basis for more specific questions which do not necessarily need to be prepared ahead of time (Henning 2005). Not all questions are phrased and framed in advance as is the case with questionnaires. Most of the questions are created during the course of the interview, giving both the interviewer and the participant being interviewed the flexibility to probe for further clarification on issues being discussed.

In this study, two different but similar interview guides were constructed. The first guide was used with the shopfloor employees while the other guide was used with managers who acted as key informants.

According to Scott and Wild (2002), flexibility is one of the most fundamental characteristics of an interview, allowing new questions to be brought up during the course of the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. As already mentioned, the interviewer generally has a framework of themes that needs to be explored. According to Cohen (2001), a semi-structured interview as a way of collecting data is a systematic and goal oriented process which promotes organised communication between the researcher and interviewee. Semi-structured interviews help to develop some focus and they give a frame within which the researcher can discuss their ideas, allow detailed information on a particular issue, allow study of one concept and also provides structural relationships to concepts (Cooper and Schindler 2008).

According to Sax et al. (2009), it is basically beneficial for interviewers to have an interview guide prepared before the actual interview is conducted. An interview guide is an informal grouping of topics and questions that can be asked by the interviewer in different ways to different participants. Interview guides are important as they help researchers focus an interview on the topics at hand without necessarily constraining them to a particular format. This freedom and flexibility can help interviewers to tailor their questions to the interview context and / or situation, as well as to the people they are interviewing.

According to Creswell (2005), semi-structured interviews are advantageous in that they are less intrusive to the participants as they encourage two way communication. Those being interviewed are given an opportunity to ask the researcher some questions. In this way, asking questions can act as an extension tool.

It is, however, important to note that semi-structured interviews do have some weaknesses. The most common drawback of using interviews is the potential of asking leading questions. It is also possible in interviews for interviewers to repeat questions which would have already been addressed by the participants. Researchers may also fail to listen closely to the responses being offered by the participants. It is also possible for researchers to fail to probe where necessary. Some researchers using interviews may also fail to judge the answers; they may also ask vague or insensitive questions. It is important to note that concepts that are not related to the interview's focus may not be captured and found (Boyle 1994). There is a tendency among many researchers to ignore or postpone until towards the end of the interview issues that are not necessarily fitting with the discussion but that might be very important. Human memory is however highly fragile and these memories can fade away depending on the duration of the interview (Badelley 1999).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used in getting responses from both the shop-floor employees and the key informants who in this case were managers. The study was conducted having in mind the possible limitations of semi-structured interviews at the same time taking advantages of the advantages inherent in the use of this method of collecting data such as the ability to probe.

Semi-structured interviews make use of interview guides. Interview guides help researchers focus an interview on the topics at hand without necessarily constraining them to a particular format. This freedom can be advantageous to researchers since they are able to tailor-make their questions to the interview context or situation as well as to the people they would be interviewing (Lindlof and Taylor 2002). In relation to the study, the use of semi-structured interviews was of advantage as it accommodated the different perspectives of different employees on the issue of workplace romantic relationships. These different opinions gave rise

to different perceived effects of such relationships. Semi-structured interviews were seen to be the most appropriate tool of getting the best level of information from respondents. In addition, the interviewer was free to choose or re-structure the items on the interview guide in order to accommodate differences emerging from one participant to the next.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are qualitative, in depth interviews with participants who are strategically positioned to know a lot in detail about the issue under study (Mathew and Ross 2010). These interviews aim at gathering information from a wide range of individuals, including community leaders, professionals or residents who have firsthand knowledge about the study area. These experts, with their much needed knowledge and understanding are in a position to provide insight on the scope and nature of problems and provide possible recommendations for solutions (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

In addition, key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who are fully aware of what is going on, in this case, workplace romantic relationships. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from these experts, who have distinct knowledge and understanding of a particular field, who can provide insight on the nature of challenges and provide recommendations and solutions (Cohen 2001). In this particular study, the researcher conducted two key informant interviews which were drawn from the human resource departments as well as from the organisation's Chief Executive Officer.

In key informant interviews, the advantage is that experts are given an opportunity to explain the phenomenon under discussion, in this case, individuals who deal with the issue of workplace romantic relationships and its effects were taken on board. These key informants, especially the human resource director is usually in touch with workplace related romantic affairs as s/he is, for example responsible for grievance handling from the other possibly affected work-mates and transfers in the event that the affair is negatively affecting productivity. The HR director is also responsible for initiating some possible guiding principles that can be used in governing romantic relationships at work.

Triangulation

The study employed more than a single source of data collection, namely semi-structured interviews conducted with shopfloor employees and key informants drawn from the organisations top management. Technically, this approach is known as triangulation. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates a room for the validation of data through cross verification from more than one source. In particular, triangulation refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin 2006). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), the purpose of triangulation in qualitative research is to strengthen the credibility and validity of the results obtained by the researcher.

Study Population

Burns and Grove (2001) defined population as a group who do share common traits or attributes of interest to the researcher. The specification of the population to which the enquiry is addressed has some effects on the decisions made by researchers, both about sampling and resources allocated to the study. The population of the study comprised of employees at a particular beverage firm in Harare. Top management also constituted part of the study population.

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

Sampling is that part of statistical practice concerned with the selection of a sub-set of individual observations within a population of individuals intended to yield some knowledge about the concerned population, especially for the purposes of making predictions based on statistical inferences (Smith 2003).

According to Ader et al. (2008), researchers rarely survey the entire population for two reasons, that is, prohibitive costs and the fact that the population is dynamic in that the individuals making up the population may change over time.

Sampling has three main advantages. These are, reduced costs, data collection process is faster and since the data set is smaller, it is possible to ensure homogeneity and to improve the accuracy and quality of the data (Bernard 2004).

The research made use of two sampling techniques, namely stratified sampling and purposive sampling. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), stratified sampling is a method for obtaining and establishment of a greater degree of representativeness. Stratified sampling reduces probable sampling error by making sure a study population is divided into homogenous groups or categories.

The ultimate function of stratification is therefore to organise the population into homogenous subsets (with heterogeneity between subsets) and to select the appropriate number of participants from each (Babbie and Mouton 2001). In this study, employees were stratified according to department. The organisation basically had four main departments namely, finance, human resources, marketing and production. Five participants were drawn from each of these departments to ensure that each category was well represented in the sample. Purposive sampling was employed to sample individual participants from their respective departments. Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgemental sampling. The selection is conducted based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The participants are actually selected because of some distinct and unique characteristics (Cresswell 2005). In purposive sampling, the investigator chooses the sample based on who they think would be suitable for the research study. This is used mainly when there is a limited number of people that have knowledge in the field being investigated (Henning 2005). In purposive sampling, researchers sample with a purpose in mind. In most cases, they would be having one or more specific predetermined group(s) they would be looking for.

One of the first aspects researchers do in purposive sampling is that they vet participants to establish whether they meet the required criteria of the sample (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Purposive sampling can be advantageous where the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is of less significance. Using a purposive sample, a researcher is likely to get the opinions of their target population (Coolican 2008). The researcher used his own discretion to choose the participants. Employees who have been with organisation for at least three years were given preferences since these were assumed to have had adequate exposure to the issue under study.

In this case, the study's main participants were drawn from the organisation's shopfloor employees who constituted the bulk part of the sample. In this category, the researcher interviewed 20 participants. Purposive sampling was also used to interview the two key informants who took part in the study, the human resource director and the chief executive officer. These were considered strategically positioned to know a lot about the causes and the effects of romantic relationships at the workplace. In addition, they were chosen since they have the power to make decisions at policy level to curb the possible negative effects of workplace romantic relationships.

The Data Collection Procedure

The researchers approached the organisation and asked for permission to conduct this study. The researchers took their time to explain the essence of the study as well as its relevance to the organisation. Upon receiving permission, the researchers went ahead to select their shopfloor participants with the help of the human resource department. Chosen participants were interviewed using an interview guide. Issues which the researchers may not have incorporated into the interview guide for the shopfloor workers that would have emerged was incorporated into the interview guide for key informants. After interviewing shopfloor employees who were the main participants, the researchers took on board the key informants. On average each interview took an average of 15 minutes.

All the ethical issues such as informed consent, freedom from coercion and confidentiality were observed. After all the interviews were conducted, the researcher thanked management of the organisation as well as participants who had taken part in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis which is a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method within many social science disciplines. In this study, it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Thematic analysis entails the location in relation to other qualitative methods that search for themes or patterns and in

relation to different epistemological and ontological positions. It provides the researcher to advocate that thematic analysis is a useful and flexible method for qualitative research in and beyond the social sciences (Braun and Clarke 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of Results

Biographical Information

Twenty-two participants took part in the study. Of these, 20 were shopfloor employees while the remaining 2 were key informants. Fourteen (70%) were males while females constituted the remaining six (30%) of the participants. Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of the shopfloor employees who participated in the study.

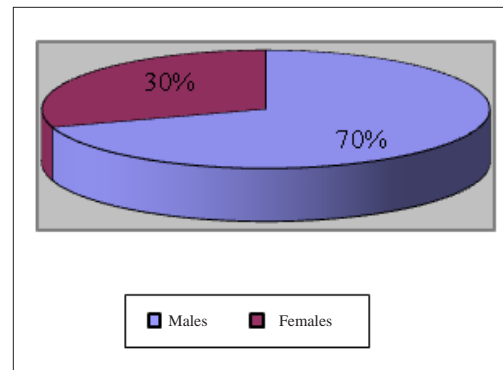


Fig. 1. Gender of the participants

Although a lot has been said about the economic emancipation of women the world over, many organisations in Zimbabwe are still dominated by male employees (Quast 2011). Cultural beliefs and restraints are still in one way or the other still hampering the full involvement of women in formal employment. Most of them are still confined to the domestic sphere and if they decide to engage in some economic activities, they usually conduct some meagre informal businesses, just to supplement their husband's incomes. The number of women in formal employment is however steadily increasing. Both key informants were males. This clearly indicates that it is not usually easy for women to climb up the

organisational ladder. Powerful offices in organisations are usually associated with men.

Many people in Zimbabwe and in many developing countries are entering employment at a much younger age than before. This has been attributed to the importance being attached to education by the parents in this day and age. Prioritising education has led to many children entering into grade one earlier than yester generations. Children will then complete their education earlier. On the other hand, many children are getting employed early due to the fact that their parents are finding it difficult to pay for their fees as they proceed with education. This has been attributed to the economic meltdown which has characterised Zimbabwe for more than a decade. Seventy-five percent of the shop-floor workers who were interviewed were less than 35 years of age while the remaining twenty-five percent were above 35 years of age. The key informants were both in their early fifty's. It is highly likely that they had been with the organisation for years and they climbed up the organisational ladder with the passage of time.

Causes of Workplace Romantic Relationships

Workplace related relationships are caused and maintained by a number of factors. Most of these forces have been cited by the respondents. Table 1 clearly depicts the reasons which were cited by the participants.

The employee community has been getting younger and younger in many organisations. The majority of these join organisations at a tender age. A significant number of these are either in their late teens or in their early twenties at the time they join organisations as employees. Although they would have joined an organisation to offer their labour in return for money, the unmarried are also presented with an opportunity

to find love. They are at work yet they are single and possibly searching. Social ties will start to strengthen, starting as friends and with the passage of time, graduating into romantic relationships.

Thirteen participants highlighted that being employed at a tender age was the main reason why employees fall in love at work. The majority of these employees as reflected by the biographical information of age were 35 years or below. Both key informants concurred with the majority of participants on the issue of employees joining the workforce at a much tender age than in the past. One of the key participants had to say

“Young men and women are getting employed and there is a challenge of them falling in love at the workplace, especially if they are not married. Most of our workers come before marriage and a lot of them in one way or the other, fall in love with a fellow employee. Some are employed at 18 years and you would wonder if they meet at work at that age.”

Fourteen participants indicated that time spent at work was one of the leading causes of workplace romantic relationships. Participant 8 had this to say

“I spend 8 hours with my fellow employees at work on a normal day, and if I take overtime and weekend assignments, the hours become even more, yet I only spend an hour or two with my boyfriend. I cannot be with him during the night so I have to see him before sunset if I am to see him. Relationships at work can strengthen due to continuous exposure to each other.”

The key informants also highlighted the issue of a lot of time spent at the work as one of the leading factors to the development of romantic relationships at work. One key informant however argued that if people are busy with their work, then they would not have much time for relationships. It is however important to note that work can exist in a social environment. In

Table 1: Reasons for workplace romantic relationships

<i>Reason for workplace romantic relationship</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Employment of young single people	P1, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20
Time spent at work	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P16, P17, P19, P20
Unsatisfying relationships with spouses/partners outside the organisation	P4, P11, P16, P19
Taken advantage of by bosses	P3, P5, P6, P10, P12, P15, P18, P19
Buying favours (such as promotions) through loving bosses	P3, P4, P6, P7, P11, P13, P20
Common workplace related challenges	P7, P9, P15

any case, work is punctuated by some social episodes. It is these social episodes that are very important in the development of workplace related romantic affairs.

People are generally social animals and they want to be loved, either socially or intimately. Individuals could be in love with their partners or spouses who are not in the organisation. Challenges may erupt when the existing affair with an outsider is not satisfying and someone in the organisation seems 'caring'. It then becomes tempting for one to replace the one outside with the one inside for a satisfying relationship. Four participants highlighted that unsatisfying relationships are contributing factors in the establishment of workplace romantic affairs. They argued that having someone who cares at work strengthens the potential for the two to eventually fall in love, especially if their respective spouses/partners are considered uncaring. In the Zimbabwean culture, it is not recommended for one to practice infidelity, especially the married. Those who do so try their level best to have some clandestine relationships. Although they would be having some socially unsanctioned relationships, they still want to sound morally upright, hence all the effort to hide a relationship. One of the key informants narrated how at some point in time one's husband came and threatened to kill someone whom he accused of being in love with his wife. It is alleged that the police had to be called in to rescue the situation. Although the other key informant admitted that such affairs were possible, he argued that they were rather remote since the Zimbabwean married are known to uphold their morals. He indicated that issues of infidelity at work were more applicable to the unmarried than the married.

Eight of the respondents indicated that relationships by force were a common feature of the organisation. They indicated that some senior personnel take advantage of their positions to force, especially females, into relationships. One female participant had this to say;

"Saying no to their request will never go unpunished. One may lose their job or may simply be framed of something they would not have done."

One of the key informant however denied that such practices were rampant at the organisation. He indicated that such cases were rare as the senior office bearers were mature people

who were tried and tested. Managers according to the Labour Act do represent the interest of the employer and it makes sense for managers to defend the reputation of the organisation and its leaders.

Seven participants indicated that some female employees do engage in some deliberate efforts to lure male bosses, expecting some favours thereafter. The study has it that these affairs were also common at the workplace. It was found out from the study that some females are cunning and present themselves to the bosses for love.

Findings reveal that five of the seven participants however denied that a female's smiles and caring attitude can easily be misinterpreted by a manager to mean she is inviting him for a romantic relationship. Participant 13 had to say;

"We have seen women acting in such a manner as to attract their bosses. The way they walk, talk and some even bring some food from home to give to their married bosses. If one trick fails, they will bring on board another one."

They argued that a decent female employee must keep her social distance from fellow male employees. They argued that if a female behaves in that manner towards her senior male boss, definitely she would be having something up her sleeve.

Common challenges have been cited as one of the factors that may lead to the emergence of workplace romantic relationships. Three of the participants indicated that some form of common persecution and adversary drew males and females together to an extent that they may end up falling in love with each other. Key informants however dispelled this argument arguing that no amount of adversary can force together people who never had feelings for each other. They argued that such couples would just be looking around for reasons to justify their unethical behaviours at work.

Benefits of Workplace Romantic Relationships

A number of benefits emanating from workplace romantic relationships have been cited. The benefits brought on board by the participants were increased motivation to come to work early and to leave late, joyous mood at work, completing tasks well on time as well as bringing different departments together. Figure 2 de-

picts the benefits of romantic relationships at the workplace as presented by the participants.

It is natural for people in love to enjoy spending lots and lots of time together. Individuals who are not married or who are married to outsiders and who are in love with a workmate can easily turn their workplace into a love nest. They will turn to have another reason to come to work, that is, to see each other, in addition to the obvious reason of working. The more time one spends at work, the more time they have to see each other. Sixteen shopfloor participants indicated that being in love at the workplace will make workers spend more time at work. In essence, the pair is bound to come to work early and leave the workplace late than most of the workers. It is however important to note that being at work and doing work are two different things. Individuals could be at the workplace but doing nothing at all that contributes to the well being of the organisation. All they may want is roof upon their heads to express their love to each other. Both key informants alluded to the fact that those who are implicated to be involved in romantic relationships at work are the usual early birds and they leave office rather late. One key informant had to say;

“Those in love spent virtually the whole day in office, some of them are even together in of-

fice during lunch hours. Some come to work early and leave office a bit late, pretending to be doing some work related duties yet they would be seeing each other in offices. We are now strict with time, when time is up, everyone should leave office, unless they have a solid reason to be left behind, or have a blessing from their immediate supervisor.”

In this case, it has been confirmed that employees in love would want to spend most of their time together and the best place to do so would be in office. It has been noted that in many instances, the time they spend at work does not actually tally with their achievements in as far as work related assignments are concerned.

Thirteen participants indicated that love at the workplace was instrumental in making those involved happy all day long, even if the environment at the workplace is bad. Participant 9 argued;

“Love at the workplace is so sweet to an extent that those involved do not have time to focus on the ill-treatment of the employees by the employer, all they see is love and love and love.”

One of the key informants concurred with the argument by these shopfloor employees. It emerged from the key informant that although

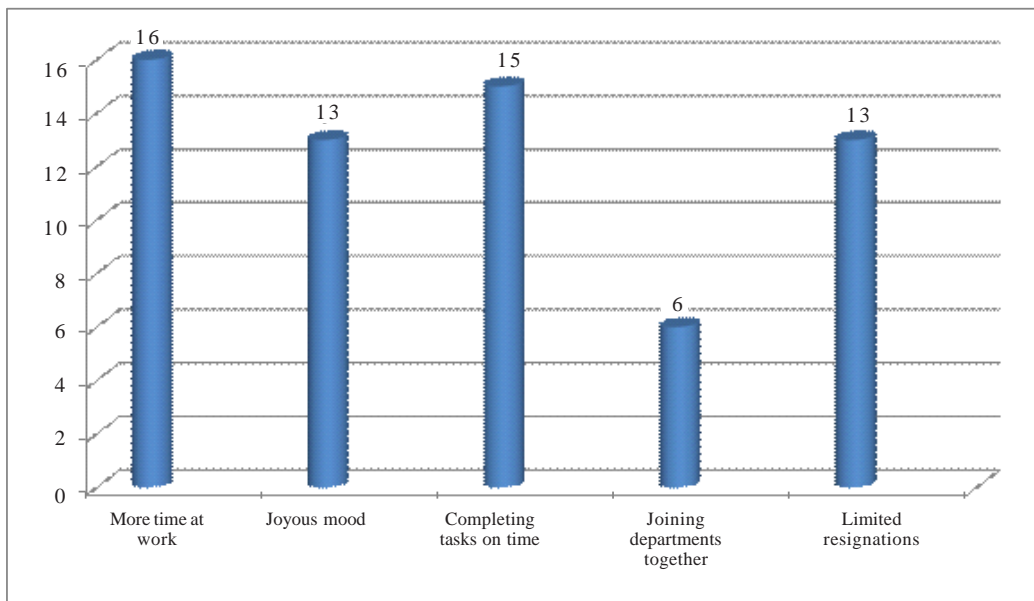


Fig. 2. Benefits of work related love

people in love are always putting on a smiling face, they are difficult to work with, especially when these are coming from the same department.

Work related romance is usually viewed negatively by many, especially management. Even those involved are usually aware of the reasons why it is not easily accepted. One of the obvious reasons why workplace romantic relationships are not encouraged is their potential negative impact on the discharge of one's duties at work. In order to counter such arguments, those involved may want to work even harder. They could be afraid of some kind of reprimand, a transfer or anything that may affect their relationship. Fifteen of the respondents indicated that those involved in workplace relationships may be more committed to meet their deadlines unlike the period they were not in love. The reasons provided varied from respondent to respondent. Some argued that the reason for timely completion of tasks was due to the fact that those involved wanted more time together, so the early they complete their tasks, the more time they will have with each other without the bosses following them. Some attributed this to a need to silence critics of workplace romantic relationships including workmates and management. Key informants indicated that, although at times the two involved in a workplace relationship perform well, in most cases, their work is affected. One had to say:

"Although they finish their work on time or ahead of time, in most cases, they produce shoddy work and inferior work; they rush to submit incomplete and poorly done work. In some cases, I will end redoing the work I would have assigned to some of these people."

Managers are employed to ensure quality and they can pick the slightest possible decline in the expected quality. The reported decline in quality of work produced by workplace romantic partners could be due to the fact that managers may be too strict to those involved and would like to prove a point that workplace relationships are counterproductive. Under such a circumstance, managers may exaggerate the partners' mistakes and poor performance. Under performance on a single task may easily be generalised or blown out of proportion to justify the negative effects associated with workplace romantic relationship.

Six of the respondents indicated that departments can be united by two people who would

have fallen in love. However, one of the key informants saw it from the perspective of an affair which would have collapsed. He argued that the effects of a collapsed relationship on two different departments can be thorough. He had to say:

"The majority of these do not eventually marry, their effects are more thorough when the affair hits the rocks. Departments will start to throw nasty words to each other to the detriment of the organisation."

Being in a position to see beyond corners is one of the most required characteristics of managers. Managers must not necessarily focus on the here and now as in the workplace relationship, rather, they must see events from the 'what if' perspective. In this case, they should focus more on what may happen in the event that the affair dries up.

Resigning from work while one is in a workplace romantic relationship automatically means exposing the affair to negative effects. It may also mean reducing the amount of time the two could be seeing each other. It then goes without saying that if co-workers are in love, chances of any one of them voluntarily resigning are very slim. Reduced chances of resigning are highly connected to the high motivation of employees in love as well as the enhanced desire for the two to be together for longer periods of time at work, hence, as already, mentioned, they come to work early and try to leave offices late. Reasons for not resigning could however be linked to the poor economic performance of the country. Unemployment rates are very high and on average, no one is prepared to resign, regardless of them in love or not. Thirteen workforce participants indicated that even under the difficult circumstances, those in love are highly unlikely to resign voluntarily. From the managers' perspective, it is not about not resigning but what one do at work. One may work for decades yet contributing almost nothing to the well being of the organisation.

Challenges Related to Workplace Love

Findings have revealed a number of challenges that are associated with workplace romantic relationships. Table 2 depicts challenges of these romantic relationships.

It has emerged from the study that when a manager or someone with an influential position in an organisation dates their subordinates, there are bound to be some biases in decision making

Table 2: Challenges of workplace romantic relationships

<i>Workplace love challenge</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Unwarranted favours when bosses are involved	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20
Absconding of tasks	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19
Effects on career advancement	P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, P11, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20
Conflict of interest	P2, P3, P5, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20
Married partners' spouses coming to work to cause havoc	P12, P14, P16, P19, P20
Inability to separate work and social issues	P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P19, P20

process on the part of the manager. Fourteen participants indicated that undeserved favours are usually the norm when a boss is in love with a junior. Most of these argued that no proper selection is done for someone to be promoted. Participant 10 had to say

"Someone may rise up within a very short period of time from being a no one to be a powerful force in an organisation."

Both key informants argued that their organisation is very professional and follows the laid down rules and regulations. They argued that they are professionals who can separate issues. Whoever gets a new position or is asked to go and represent the organisation somewhere or for training surely deserves that. They argued that hard labour should be rewarded. Although they could be saying the truth, there is a probability that it could be an issue of impression management, especially to an outsider.

Findings have established that being in love, especially with a senior member of an organisation or a manager may neutralise their ability to supervise and see to it that tasks are diligently carried out by their subordinates. Giving professional guidance to a lover may become very difficult for a manager. Being strict with work may also be a challenge. Thirteen participants indicated that junior employees in love with some managers have a tendency of absconding duty and in most cases, they go unpunished.

Twelve of the participants highlighted that workplace relationship indeed negatively affects one's career advancement, especially the junior member in a relationship. Participant 19 had to say:

"Most of them benefit from such love affairs and they do not mind remaining stagnant career wise because they would be enjoying ben-

efits of those with a lot of qualifications yet they do not have much."

One of the key informants however indicated that people are different, some are motivated to acquire more and more qualifications while others are content with where they are. These differences were attributed to individual differences.

The study has established that some of the people who engage in workplace relationships are actually married, having their spouses outside the organisation and when these spouses suspect anything, they may come to the workplace and be violent. Five participants indicated that although it has never happened at their workplace, they have heard of such issues in other organisations and theirs could not be an exception forever. Key informants highlighted that such an event has never occurred at their workplace but did not rule out the potential of this happening in the future.

Possible Solutions to Work Related Romantic Relationships

The study has revealed that workplace relationships have more problems than advantages in an organisation. Sixteen of the participants indicated that workplace romantic relationships must not be barred by an organisational policy; rather, efforts must be directed at teaching employees on how to handle these affairs.

Four of the participants highlighted that it was noble for a company to have a policy that prohibits workplace relationships. They argued that workplace relationships are detrimental to the well being of an organisation and the employer must completely have a policy at best which prohibits and at worst which makes it an

offense not to declare their relationship to management so that management can take the precautionary measure such as transferring one of them. In line with the latter, one of the key informants indicated that management must take full responsibility on workplace related relationships and those involved must be ready for any management decision such as a transfer of one of them. He, however, noted that a complete ban would be extreme.

DISCUSSION

Causes of Workplace Romantic Relationships

Findings have revealed that the majority of employees were single and young, making them more vulnerable to workplace romantic relationships. The relationships may start simply as friendship and develops further to be a romantic affair. This goes along with the notion by Murstein (1970) who argued that friendship is just but the beginning of workplace romantic relationships. He further stated that the workplace is more of a closed system, an environment which is conducive for continuous, repetitive social interactions. These interactions are the building blocks for friendships which will eventually make way to workplace romantic relationships.

Findings have established that spending a significant number of hours at work is one of the reasons for the flourishing romantic relationships at the workplace. In line with this theme, Mhonderwa (2013), Styles (2013) and Murstein (1970) argued that employees spend a lot of their waking hours at work. Affiliation, as noted by Quinn (1970) links the notion of time spend at work to the notion of affiliation. Due to the continuous exposure to the same people over time, strong bonds of affiliation will start to develop and these will lead to the establishment of workplace romantic relationships. Since a lot of time is spent at the workplace, it is natural for someone to seek affiliation in such a place. The need to express love and be loved and appreciated may easily turn romantic at the workplace.

It has also emerged from the study that some bosses in organisations can actually take advantage of their subordinates. Although male bosses are the usual culprits, one cannot rule out sexual harassment from female bosses to their male subordinates. According to Mhonderwa (2013), some bosses may sexually exploit their

subordinates. They threaten them with dismissals, transfers or demotions if they refuse his/her intimate advances. Due to the current high unemployment rate in Zimbabwe, some females (at times males) will feel they do not have much of an option but to 'fall in love' with their superiors in order to protect their employment. An issue of 'carpet interview' has also been cited by Mhonderwa (2013) and has also been cited by some participants. For one to get employment, they should give in to the demands of their to-be bosses. They should agree to 'love' their bosses.

Indeed, managers and some senior personnel of an organisation may impose their love on weaker organisational members. It is however crucial to highlight that as noted by Mhonderwa (2013), some employees, especially females, may actually go out of their way to attract the boss's attention. The main reason for such an effort is to attract some benefits from the superior. Such benefits may include chances of promotion, being recommended for possible workshops and seminars as well as receiving lighter duties in relation to other fellow employees. This type of love is similar to the one above whereby a boss uses his power to force himself on females. In both cases, the move is initiated for some selfish reasons. The study has indicated that these affairs were also common at the workplace. It has emerged from the study that some females are cunning and make themselves available to the bosses for love. This tally with the notion presented by Mhonderwa (2013) who noted that females may intentionally make an effort to attract male bosses in order to gain some favours from these bosses.

Mhonderwa (2013), however, stressed that there are times when women's natural components of their personalities such as smiling and caring can be misinterpreted by a male boss. Both the key informants agreed that some female employees, including managers, have a tendency to try to lure them for love. Although they indicated that some may actually be swept away, they argued that in most cases, managers show some resilience and maturity in handling such issues.

Another important theme that emerged from the study was common challenges at the workplace resulting into emergence of some social bonds. Borreli (2014) had noted that workers are exposed to the same challenges, both the work

environment and the managing type exhibited by some managers. Common trials and tribulations at work draw both females and males together. They spend a lot of time together trying to figure out how they can circumvent their challenges. They feel for each other and sympathise with each other. By so doing, they may end up forging a strong alliance against their common challenges. These ties may result in a romantic relationship at work.

Benefits of Workplace Romantic Relationships

Love on its own brings a joyous mood to those involved. The joyous mood of the pair can also be expressed at the workplace. Even when faced with turbulent times at work, those in love may not easily be affected as they have all reasons to remain happy. Happy employees are easy to deal with and they are a pleasure to work with. Mainiero (1989) noted that happy employees are more productive, motivated and innovative than those who are not happy. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (2006) and Mainiero (1989), when fellow workers have been actively involved in the establishment of the affair and approve of the relationship, the joyous mood goes beyond the two to cover the co-workers. Co-workers are happy to see their effort bearing fruits.

It is usually seen in many organisations that departments although they are called upon to work together for the betterment of the entire organisation, they actually compete and some subtle barriers characterise the relationships of the members. When two employees from two different departments come together in romantic relationship, the two departments can also come together. The two can be considered a bridge between the two departments, especially, when the two departments are approving of the relationship. Interaction between these two departments is enhanced due to the presence of the love birds (Mainiero 1989). It is however a different scenario when the co-workers are not approving of the relationship. The differences between the two departments can be exacerbated by the two falling in love.

Challenges Related to Workplace Love

Findings have revealed that workplace romantic relationships may lead to some getting

some underserved favours, especially from their bosses whom they would be in love with. These may include recommending one for a training and development course paid for by the organisation, some undeserved promotions among other favours (Mainiero 1989; Mhonderwa 2013). These favours are usually noted by co-workers. Failure to separate professional and social issues was cited as the major limitations of those who engage in workplace relationships. When the love eventually fades away, the one who has been receiving unjustified benefits suddenly becomes exposed and almost everyone in the organisation may want to fix him/her.

Findings have it that it is difficult for managers to adequately supervise a subordinate they would be in love with. This confirms the argument by Corser (2011) and Mhonderwa (2013) who said that there is a conflict of interest when a manager dates a subordinate. However, it has also emerged that each manager has his/her own boss and is also managed, so if their subordinates are not doing work, it can easily be picked up by the manager's manager. They argued that managers in most cases can separate issues.

Findings have established that those who benefit from workplace relationships are reluctant to improve or advance their careers. Career advancement can be thwarted by workplace romantic relationships. Partners involved may focus more on their relationship at the expense of their careers. This has been noted by Mainiero (1989) who noted that careers of those in workplace relationship are disturbed as a lot of energy is directed to the affair at the expense of personal development. In cases whereby a manager is in love with an employee, the employee could be getting a lot of benefits they do not actually deserve and they may lack the motivation to upgrade themselves (Mainiero 1989; Mhonderwa 2013).

The married can also be involved in workplace relationships outside their marriages. The driving factors for infidelity could be any one of those already highlighted. According to Mhonderwa (2013) in the event that the spouses receive the news that their loved ones are cheating on them with a workmate, it may take just a short time before they come to the workplace with an intention to embarrass. Such events may tarnish the name of the organisation for it may be witnessed by outsiders.

Possible Solutions to Work Related Romantic Relationships

Findings have established that banning workplace romance may not be the best move. In line with Mhonderwa (2013), participants argued that completely banning workplace relationships is unfair as some of these relationships ends in marriages. To an extent, key informants also echoed the similar sentiments when they noted that it is unAfrican to have such a policy at work. They however emphasised that employees must have self control and avoid falling in love with a workmate. They argued that employees must be guided by their personal morals and ethical standards instead of waiting for an organisational policy. One of the key informants went further to say that in the event that they fall in love; it is up to the two to make sure they behave well and separate professional issues from their social issues. This goes hand in hand with Knowles (2011) who emphasised that employees in love must watch out for mistakes emanating from their relationships.

The issue of completely banning romantic relationships at the workplace is in line with the argument presented by Corser (2011) who indicated that organisations are better off when they ban these relationships. This might have some implications as employees may have some other ways of making sure they are not caught.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study has revealed that workplace romantic relationships are common in Zimbabwe and there is no policy in many organisations to curb the occurrence of these affairs. Workplace relationships are a result of a number of factors as evidenced by this study. Some enter into the relationship for some selfish motives and some genuinely enter into these relationships. In some cases, employees are coerced into these affairs by their superiors. The study has established that many of the workplace related relationships do not end up in marriage, after a while, they fade off. This is in clear contrast to the notion raised by some previous studies which indicate that many relationships that start at the workplace end in marriages. It has also emerged that in some cases, these relationship occur between bosses and their subordinates and may cause a lot of turmoil as some

employees will tend to enjoy some unwarranted benefits such as promotions. Results have shown that although workplace romantic relationships may sound good, the effects on both the organisation and the two involved could be thorough and detrimental. The advantages of these relationships are outweighed by the disadvantages. The majority of participants highlighted that there must be no blanket policies that ban workplace romantic relationships, but the honours is on those involved to be professional in their conduct and avoid exposing the organisation and other co-workers to suffer because of their relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Relevant Stakeholders

- Employees must, all things being equal avoid workplace romantic relationships as these may have negative impact on other employees, productivity as well as on themselves in the event that the affair comes to an end.
- Employers must take a proactive role whereby they conduct some workshops on the challenges of workplace romantic relationships as well as on handling such relationships in the event that they take place.
- Managers must lead by example by avoiding workplace romantic relationships.

Recommendations for Future Studies

- Future research could also focus on other organisations where employees live together in compounds such as mining and farming industries.
- Researchers may also conduct a baseline survey on the level of performance of those engaging in workplace romantic relationships before and during the affair to establish any changes in performance which can be attributed to the relationship.

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