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DECENT WORK, JOB SECURITY AND PERFORMANCE IN MANUFACTURING SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE ZIMBABWE

TERRENCE MASAMBA¹ THOMAS BRIGHTON BHEBHE² AND COLLEN KAJONGWE³

Abstract

Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) dominate both developed and developing economies in terms of employment creation and number of companies, yet their full potential remains untapped. The study is aimed at assessing the moderating role of decent work on job security and the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The study is guided by Positivism Research Philosophy. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative from 50 respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlations. It was established from the main study findings that there is a positive relationship between job security and performance of retail SMEs. Study findings show that job security plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of innovation and creativity within manufacturing SMEs. When employees feel secure in their positions, they are more likely to take risks, think outside the box and propose new ideas without fear of negative consequences. The study also reveals that decent work practices, including job security, have a positive impact on employee engagement. When employees feel secure in their jobs, they are more likely to be emotionally invested in their work and feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the organisation's goals. Engaged employees are known to be more productive, innovative and willing to contribute their discretionary effort, significantly enhancing the performance of SMEs. The study discovered that manufacturing SMEs that prioritise decent work practices, including job security, build a positive reputation as socially responsible employers. Such organisations tend to attract and retain quality talent, enjoy better relationships with stakeholders and gain a competitive advantage in the

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marketplace. This positive reputation can further enhance the performance of the SME. The recommendation proffered by the study is that government should provide the necessary support such as decent work policies that enhance manufacturing SMEs productivity.

Keywords: small business, job gratification, work sanctuary, innovation, productivity.

INTRODUCTION

Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have always been seen as crucial to Zimbabwe's economy and the country has taken steps to foster their growth and success, much like other African developed nations (Chada *et al.*, 2022). According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Quarterly Review (2019), the various policy papers, such as the Five-Year National Development Plan (2021-2025) and the Framework for Economic Reform (2021-2025), demonstrate the government's support for the SME sector. One of the objectives of the Economic Reform strategy is to increase economic efficiency by removing development barriers and supporting SMEs, as stated by the United Nations Development Programme (2022).

SMEs are in a unique situation due to the fact that most of their valued assets are intangible, consisting primarily of information. The most crucial component in obtaining a competitive advantage for SMEs is organisational knowledge. Makanyeza *et al.* (2022) argue that this problem is caused mainly by the rapid expansion of the factor and goods markets. More so than ever before, it is critical for small to medium enterprise businesses to maximise the use of their existing knowledge to compete with larger organisations which possess more resources (Manyati and Mutsau, 2019). Nevertheless, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 now acknowledges the importance of decent work for poverty reduction and advocates sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. It aims to strengthen economic development alongside inclusivity.

According to Pradhan and Hati (2022:3), the well-being of employees is the “physical, psychological and emotional health, comfort and happiness of employees”. It is, therefore, important to view job security in terms of good employee physical health, good employee psychological and emotional health and the presence of a comfortable and happy work life. Bennet *et al.*

(2017) view employee well-being as the availability of an adequate work environment that can provide employees with their physical needs and providing them with positive physical health as expressed by more than the absence of disease, but also the presence of enough energy and strength to meet environmental demands. It involves a healthy psychological state that includes the ability to act with some autonomy and self-direction in life and the opportunity to express talents. It also includes the ability to live a purposeful and meaningful life. However, employee job security can be affected by precarious employment, as it exposes workers to several physical, mental and social problems that impact negatively on their health and commitment to their work, temporary work and other types of precarious employment lead to depressive symptoms and even suicide (Quinlan, 2013). Employee job security also helps to improve productivity for individuals and the organisation and it is, therefore, important to improve employee well-being management as its absence in an organisation may lead to negative financial and non-financial consequences (Pradhan and Hati, 2022). It is, therefore, important for organisations to ensure that they provide decent work in light of the emergence of precarious work as this will help to ensure health and comfortable work life for their employees, thus improving the wellbeing of their employees.

According to Autin *et al.* (2019) and Masamba *et al.* (2022), basic employee rights are an essential part of decent work and encompass the legal and moral underpinnings of all elements that lead to decent employment. The International Labour Organisation (2022) argues that workers have the right to an environment free from discrimination, forced employment, child labour and compelled association and the right to collective bargaining. To promote a positive work environment and address power imbalances in employment interactions, it is crucial to protect basic employee rights (Autin *et al.*, 2019). Principles like non-discrimination, trust, dignity, participation, freedom and procedural fairness are elements of workers' rights in the workplace (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). Workers who can use their rights as workers, including freedom from forced labour, non-discrimination and participation, report higher levels of happiness, according to Hipp *et al.* (2015). Because the legal framework is inadequate or has gaps in its interpretation or application, it allows for attempts to conceal the relationship while still determining the rights and responsibilities of the parties involved, this debate is crucial (Graeber, 2019; ILO, 2022).

There is global consensus that achieving decent work should be a priority for development initiatives and this is especially true of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (OECD, 2018). To reduce poverty and ensure sustainability, decent work is an important component of MDG1, which includes a target to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people", along with four measurable indicators (ILO, 2023). There should be further studies in relation to Zimbabwe's SME sector since they concern the quantity and quality of SME employment in terms of worker wages and informality.

The significance of social dialogue as a basis for decent employment in Germany was emphasized by Sypniewska (2016). It improved organisational cohesion, which, in turn, led to better working and welfare circumstances for male and female employees in small and medium retail enterprises. According to Ostermeir (2020), decent work has helped Germany's sustainable development. Earlier research has shown that SMEs employ around 40% of Canada's workforce (Mashavira *et al.*, 2019). Roy *et al.* (2018) argue that SMEs in China and India have played a pivotal role in propelling economic development, which has enhanced local marketplaces, generated employment opportunities and decreased poverty. In Belgium, according to Kellerberg (2019), workers' living conditions have significantly improved due to respectable employment. Businesses in Ireland have been thriving because of fair labour standards, which has reduced poverty (Holden *et al.*, 2016). Pollin (2020) cites European and Russian examples of successful labour regulations that guarantee workers' rights and basic workplace safety. Clark (YEAR) has called for the creation of good jobs as a key component of his policy agenda.

SMEs in the Netherlands are vital to the country's economic and social development (2016). Vosko (2018) claims that decent work in France has improved morality, created jobs, increased social security and sparked discussions amongst the general public, all while reducing brain drain. Manufacturing SMEs are vulnerable to the effects of poor employee wellness on company dedication and output, which threatens their long-term viability (Velho, 2019). Workers' happiness is impacted by how much their expectations and their actual work experiences differ, according to Bolivian research (McShane, 2016). Companies in African nations like Kenya prioritise the well-being of their employees by establishing an enjoyable and inclusive work environment (Ombimi, 2018). As a result, output is

increased. In addition, according to Gore and Uzhenyu (2017), many manufacturing SMEs, such as national employment councils, industry sectors and the National Social Security Authority, are still considering whether to implement the notion of decent work on a national level. Workers in South Africa appreciate a respectable workplace regardless of whether other parts of their jobs affect their health and longevity (De Beer *et al.*, 2014). Research by Nyamwanza (2014), Hayder (2021) and Kajongwe *et al.* (2021), indicates that SMEs in the retail industry are getting more and more competitive, trying to outdo one another by pooling their resources and increasing their footprint in different products and regions.

In Zimbabwe, the government, employers and trade unions have come together through the Decent Work Country Programme to address the lack of decent work opportunities. This is made possible through collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and the International Labour Organisation's 5th Generation 2022-2026. (ILO, 2022). When one person is sufficiently obedient to and dependent on another to sustain the contribution of respectable work, an employment link remains. In this way, a contract is formed between an employer and an employee, who is then bound by law to provide certain services to the employer (Ncube, 2017, Tokar and Kaut, 2018). The creation of the organisation to regulate the relationship between employers and employees is evidence of this, according to Samans *et al.* (2017) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2016). Several sector meetings of the ILO have found that decent employment is significantly associated with retail staff engagement and consumer loyalty (Mashavira *et al.*, 2019; ILO, 2022). Issues can arise when there are no meaningful consultations or honest dialogue and employees have pointed out that ambiguity can harm labour management relations and the enterprise's long-term sustainability.

The expansion of various forms of labour over the past few decades has made it increasingly difficult to establish the existence of an employment connection. There is much debate going on about how to prove its existence and how different kinds of work are changing this idea (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016; Ncube *et al.*, 2019). International human rights frameworks have rules ensuring decent employment and the United Nations has formally acknowledged investors' commitment to protect human rights (OECD, 2014; ILO, 2022). According to Mashavira *et al.* (2019) and Duffy (2020), investors are increasingly concerned about the importance of decent labour

due to regulatory pressure, increasing demands for corporate transparency and shifting beneficiary interests caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation in stewardship initiatives, engagement with policy-makers, value chain investments and advocacy for improved corporate governance transparency can all contribute to the manufacturing sector's SMEs in Zimbabwe getting closer to the decent work agenda outlined by the ILO for 2030 (Mashavira *et al.*, 2019' ILO, 2022). By enhancing sustainability and the well-being of employees in Zimbabwean manufacturing establishments, this development seeks to create a wealthy and empowered upper-middle-income society by 2030 (NDS1, 2021).

According to Finscope (2022), national labour market institutions and employment legislation have a significant impact on working conditions in the retail sector of SMEs. Chada *et al.* (2022) and the ILO (2022) and both praise Zimbabwe's manufacturing SMEs for their risk reduction efforts in areas including governance, labour relations and supporting stable supply chains. More operational efficiency, less reputational risk and a healthier, more productive staff are all outcomes that can be achieved when enterprises adhere to minimal standards for decent work (Decent Work Country Programme for Zimbabwe 2021-2025). Even though the SME sector has the ability to provide employment opportunities, the jobs that are produced do not meet the standards that SMEs workers want in terms of security and dignity (Gukurume, 2018). Particularly, according to several academics, workers at Zimbabwe's manufacturing SME businesses are occasionally compelled to perform unpaid overtime, a practice that is compared to modern-day slavery (Majukwa, 2019). According to the Finscope Survey (2022), many young adults with bachelor's and master's degrees work in manufacturing SMEs as cashiers, store owners, housekeepers and waiters and waitresses. Determining what defines decent work in the Zimbabwean context and how it impacts the performance and sustainability of Zimbabwe's SMEs manufacturing sector demands conceptualising and evaluating decent work practices in Zimbabwe. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the moderating role of decent work, job security and the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Mashonaland West Province.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lack of job security caused by failure to provide decent work conditions remains a challenge to sustain performance of SMEs in Mashonaland West

Province. However, high prevalence of economic growth contributes to economic and social development. The quality of growth is also important and includes the composition of growth, the spread and distribution and the degree of sustainability and, therefore, it is important to understand various factors responsible for quality growth and the sustainability of SMEs (Manuere *et al.*, 2018). The important economic contribution of SMEs has aroused significant interest from both international organisations and academic researchers, whose goals include using national policies to generate growth in the SME sector. The sustainability of SMEs is considered an essential ingredient for long-term success, since the failure of having a culture of sustainability is seen as a source of competitive disadvantage (Eccles, 2012). Zimbabwe SMEs industry is not sustainable and productive as envisioned by SDGs, especially SDG 1 (end of poverty), SDG 8 (promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work) and SDG 9 (improve sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation), all of which are not easily realised. Sixty percent (60%) of SMEs fail in the first year of establishment, while 25% within the first three years and the remaining 15% are likely to survive (ZEDCO, 2022). There is a critical information vacuum about decent work practices in Zimbabwe's thriving manufacturing SME sector, which has far-reaching consequences for employee health and the country's economic growth. To help close this gap and create a more fair and sustainable future for Zimbabwe's SMEs, technology is acting as a powerful catalyst in driving research activities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To assess the moderating effects of decent work on job security and performance of SMEs manufacturing sector of Mashonaland West Province Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is guided by the Positivism Research Philosophy. One staged sampling approach was used, that is probability sampling. A Raosoft calculator was used to determine the sample size. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from 50 SMEs respondents that were registered with Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) in Mashonaland West Province. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlations. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability was used in this study to test validity and reliability of data instruments. The study observed ethics at each stage of conducting this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which forms the basis of the employee well-being discussion and was developed by Deci and Ryan (2000). It is a theory on human motivation, personality development and well-being (*ibid.*). The SDT assumes that people are naturally working towards growth and self-organisation. It is also based on the assumption that individuals are continuously interacting with their social environment to satisfy their needs and in the same way responding to the social environment in a way that either supports or thwarts need satisfaction (Legult, 2017) and of which the precarious working environment may thwart their need satisfaction endeavours, thereby affecting their performance and well-being. The SDT also describes the impact of the social and cultural context in helping to achieve or thwart people's basic psychological needs which are perceived sense of self direction, performance and well-being (*ibid.*). It is, therefore, important to observe that the existence of precarious work experiences in the absence of moderator variables might lead to individual employees being unable to achieve their psychological needs in the form of self-direction, performance and well-being. Thus, according to the SDT, employees will perform well and display optimal wellbeing in an environment where their inherent tendencies are appreciated and encouraged (Broeck, Vansteenkiste and De Witte, 2008). Thus an organisation that can provide decent work, will enable its employees to perform well and display exceptional well-being.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

CONCEPT OF DECENT WORK (DW)

Job creation, guaranteeing rights at work, expanding social protection and promoting social dialogue are the four interrelated pillars that decent work (DW) is distinguished by, according to Standing (2016) and the ILO (2022). To ensure that everyone who wants to work has a fair chance to do so, it is imperative that all governments and lawmakers collaborate to create jobs (Yan *et al.*, 2016). Holden *et al.* (2017) describe characteristics of DW from a psychological perspective: not having to work one's brain, heart or bones; having enough time off to relax and unwind; having company values that complement personal and community values; being fairly compensated; and having access to sufficient medical care. Vosko (2018) emphasizes the potential for building DW components that may be additive in character, in

institutional options that make the most of their mutual support, the DW framework model hopes to improve evaluation and monitoring.

RIGHTS AT WORK

All aspects of DW are based on the legal and ethical framework of rights at work. Their goal is to make sure that all workers have a voice, are represented and have a stake in the workplace so that they can feel dignity, freedom, fairness, appropriate compensation, social security and representation (Pouyaud, 2016; Ncube, 2021; Chada *et al.*, 2022). A historical tradition with strong philosophical, theological and legal underpinnings, provides rise to human rights, of which rights at work are a subset. Several different schools of thought have proposed different explanations for human rights, including those based on nature, on the supernatural and divine ordination of human beings, on humanistic philosophical principles. To fully realise their right to DW, workers must be able to freely associate and recognise their rights to collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour and non-discrimination in the workplace (Kadungure, 2016). Maintaining fundamental employee rights is critical for fostering a positive work environment and redressing power imbalances in the employment relationship.

EMPLOYMENT CREATION

A crucial component of DW, according to Simon (2019), is the development of jobs and the growth of entrepreneurs. Employment is defined by Wistow *et al.* (2016) as including all forms of labour, among which temporary, permanent and casual jobs. Employment provides a foundation for human dignity, employee pleasure and a sense of worker involvement, which helps to foment democracy, because wealth is earned, collected and distributed through labour (Kallerberg, 2019). According to Timming (2016) and Taylor (2017), good employment practices involve both the creation of jobs and the provision of employees with suitable occupations. To help the unemployed and the poor, this part calls for growth and development that creates jobs (Kallerberg, 2019).

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Societal protection nets exist to safeguard individuals and communities from a wide range of risks and dangers. Among these are issues related to health, maternity care, accidents, unemployment, poverty, severe economic volatility, natural catastrophes and armed conflicts (ILO, 2019). Orphans,

abandoned children, pregnant women, widows, the elderly, the crippled and single mothers are among the most vulnerable populations that should be the focus of any effective social protection programme (Muchichwa, 2019). Several additional ILO conventions, such as the Medical Care and Sick Benefits Convention (No. 130 of 1969) and the Employment Promotion and Protection from Employment Convention (No. 168 of 1988), uphold social protection as a principle. The ILO (2022) backs countries in their efforts to ensure that all citizens have access to enough social protection and stresses the need for policies that do just that. Health and financial stability are hallmarks of social security, particularly important in times of old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, workplace injuries, pregnancy or the death of a breadwinner (Smith, 2016). Mpedi (2016) argues that better social protection mechanisms in the workplace would both keep workers safe and encourage them to go above and beyond,

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Everyone involved in decision-making can have their say and be heard through social dialogue. As a result, they are better able to advocate for themselves, express their worries and priorities and negotiate and discuss social and economic policy with public authorities and other players in the production system (LEDRIZ, 2010; Sachikonye *et al.*, 2018; ILO, 2022). It helps to level the playing field in terms of bargaining power in the marketplace and provides voice to the economy's less powerful players. Therefore, social dialogue has the potential to play a pivotal role in both participatory and representational democracies. During the past 25 years, the importance of the jobless, women in the workforce, part-timers, casual workers and the self-employed, has grown in most countries, including Zimbabwe (Ncube, 2017). Unions and employer groups negotiate collective bargaining terms and conditions within the traditional framework of industrial relations. Under some circumstances, the government should step in to help negotiate a better arrangement or to avoid the economic harm that strikes and lockouts do.

THE EFFECTS OF JOB SECURITY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMES MANUFACTURING SECTOR OF ZIMBABWE

Employee motivation, work contentment and organisational success are all greatly impacted by job security. Due to the country's economic uncertainty, many SMEs in Zimbabwe have faced serious of employment insecurity. Job security is a key component in employee retention and overall organisational

effectiveness, according to a study by Chirisa and Dube (2015). The study discovered that workers' motivation, contentment on the job and productivity were all negatively impacted by job uncertainty. People are more invested and productive in their work for companies that provide them with a solid guarantee of employment. Job security has a favourable correlation with employee engagement and organisational commitment, according to another study by Mukwarami *et al.* (2017). The study also discovered that employees' well-being and job satisfaction are negatively impacted by job uncertainty which, in turn, undermines the performance of the organisation.

Workers can count on staying put in their positions for the foreseeable future, free from the threat of abrupt layoffs. Workers are more invested in their task and produce better results when they feel safe doing so (Badza *et al.*, 2020). Ensuring job security is crucial for employees since it motivates them to perform better in their roles, in turn boosting the overall productivity of the organisation (Hanifa, 2015). Additionally, job security has a major influence in enhancing workplace performance and the development of high-quality outputs. The correlation between job stability and performance was positively evaluated in several research carried out a few decades ago. Workers are more willing to put in long hours and achieve organisational goals when they feel confident and secure in their jobs (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2014). On top of that, there is a clear relationship between workers' performance and their job stability.

Employees are more invested in the company and their work when they know their jobs are secure and that can lead to increased productivity. Much research conducted in that decade (Blustein *et al.*, 2019) asserts that work instability reduces employee performance, and vice versa, in an organisational environment, despite references stating that no relationship exists between employee job insecurity and performance. Additional research has shown that workers who feel secure in their jobs are more invested in the success of their company (Chada *et al.*, 2022). Workers are less likely to put in extra effort for the company when they believe their jobs are insecure and unappreciated. When workers feel safe in their jobs, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging to the company.

According to Masamba *et al.* (2022), when workers have job security, they are more invested in their work. Workers' expectations on job security differ depending on their position within the organisation (Majumber, 2012; Yu, 2020). Older workers and those in supervisory positions worry more about keeping their jobs than younger workers and those in lower positions (*ibid.*). However, job stability has a favourable effect on employees' level of engagement in their work regardless of their position in the organisation. Employee job security is contingent upon management's initiative to raise engagement levels, according to the studies' guiding principles. A small number of studies have discovered a favourable correlation between job stability and psychological commitment and have also noted that engagement and psychological commitment are not synonymous. Employees' perceptions of job stability have a favourable impact on their engagement with the organisation's work, according to other experts (Kajongwe, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2021). There is evidence that shows the opposite relationship between work uncertainty and psychological commitment among employees.

The impact of employee engagement on SMEs performance has recently been the subject of research (Hoole and Bonnema, 2016). Researchers have shown that when employees have positive experiences at work, it leads to higher levels of engagement (Duffy *et al.*, 2017; Chada *et al.*, 2022; Mashavira *et al.*, 2020). Workers are more likely to give their all to their jobs when they are in an ideal work environment and their employment satisfies their basic needs, their social networks and their sense of societal purpose (Duffy *et al.*, 2017). Energy, commitment and total immersion are the three pillars of conventional wisdom about what it means to be engaged in one's work. According to Gwatsvaira and Mtisi (2016), an engaged worker is one who is eager to put in their time and effort, who demonstrates a strong sense of dedication and perseverance and who is physically and mentally present in the workplace. To keep their employees as a competitive advantage in the modern business environment, companies must monitor employee engagement levels on the job.

To maintain an engaged workforce, businesses should provide safe working conditions, including a stable wage, social protection and opportunities for social discourse (ILO, 2022). It follows that there must be a connection between engaging in acceptable labour and feeling engaged in one's job. The European setting has seen a greater amount of academic study on decent

employment and job engagement. In developing nations like Zimbabwe, the concept of decent labour differs slightly from that in the industrialised nations (Ijalla, 2019). Ijalla (*ibid.*) conducted research in Ghana within an African culture, the study aiming to examine the connection between decent employment and job engagement. The results were consistent across contexts, demonstrating that a great work environment significantly affects job engagement, regardless of whether it is in a European or African setting. To save money, businesses should thoroughly investigate employee turnover and turnover intent (the probability that an employee will resign from their position). The way a person feels about their job is essentially reflected in it. Employees' intentions to leave their current position are a good barometer of how they feel about their jobs (Memon *et al.*, 2014; Mashavira *et al.*, 2019). Observing how working conditions define workers' inclinations to depart is crucial. When people are unhappy with their pay arrangements, it leads to turnover intentions. This provides more evidence that good work is associated with plans to leave an organisation. A worker will naturally look for better opportunities if they are underpaid for decent labour. Employees' job security could be impacted by several working circumstances, as highlighted by work conditions. According to Jiménez *et al.* (2017), a positive work environment affects both employee retention and job satisfaction. When employees are unhappy and irritated on the job, their productivity takes a nosedive (Guan and Frenkel, 2019).

Workplace conditions are associated with higher productivity, according to Bashir *et al.* (2020). Managers of SMEs have a responsibility to foster an environment where their employees can thrive and feel comfortable to increase productivity. Workers will be happier and more productive if their workplaces are appealing (Yuen *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, to increase employee engagement, managers of SMEs should give their staff more say in important company decisions. The onus is now on managers of these enterprises to motivate their staff to actively participate in completing tasks to boost productivity and performance on the job. This is because engaged workers produce better results for their employers. Occupational stress has long been a cause for anxiety regarding job security among employees in small to medium firms (Masamba *et al.*, 2022).

RESULTS

The questionnaires were completed by 42 respondents selected in this study, constituting 84% response rate. The objective of the study was to assess the moderating effects of decent work on job security and performance of SMEs manufacturing sector of Mashonaland West Province Zimbabwe.

MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

In this study, descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were utilised to present a comprehensive overview of the sample data. The data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." In examining the mean score values and standard deviation (SD) values, insights were gained into both the level of agreement among respondents and the variability in their responses.

DECENT WORK DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The study aimed to investigate whether manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland West Province have implemented decent work standards. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of questions pertaining to these practices. Summary statistics, including mean, SD and maybe frequency distributions, are shown in Table 1, containing the results of the data analysis. Insights into how participants perceive decent work practices in the retail SMEs sector are provided by these summary data. This information is crucial for understanding how these practices may affect the overall work environment and performance of firms in the province.

Table 1: Decent work descriptive statistics in Mashonaland West Province (*Primary Data, 2024*)

Items	Mean	SD
Promoting jobs, innovation and entrepreneurship	4.516	0.615
Guaranteeing rights at work	4.669	0.638
Extending social protection	4.529	0.702
Promoting social dialogue	4.678	0.615
Promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers in precarious employment	4.570	0.627
Promoting local culture and products	4.583	0.688
Prohibition of child labour	4.589	0.706
Equal pay for work of equal value	4.656	0.651

Mean scores for the variable "decent work" range from 4.516 to 4.678, as shown in Table 1, which provides a comprehensive summary of the descriptive data. Based on the responses, it appears that the retail SMEs in Mashonaland West have implemented decent work practices. Most respondents agreed with all the criteria used to measure this. The low standard deviation scores (0.615 to 0.706) show that there is little variation in the answers, meaning that everyone agrees. The results show that most participants agree that the SMEs have respectable work practices.

SMEs are dedicated to supporting economic growth and providing opportunities for their employees and the society at large. This is demonstrated via their support of job creation, innovation and entrepreneurship. Their goals include maintaining a competitive edge, propelling advancement and contributing to the local economy's general development through fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Fair treatment of employees and protection of workers' rights are cornerstones of decent work practices, that aim to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all (Sheehan, 2014). Reasonable working hours, fair wages and the ability to organise into unions are all part of this, that provides workers a say in how their jobs are run. Providing more social protection is also important since it shows that SMEs care about their employees' safety and welfare. Companies that care about their workers' futures invest in them by offering social protections like health insurance and pension plans, among other perks. Dependable with the recommendations made by Karedza and Govender (2020), an open and communicative work culture promotes social conversation by encouraging employees to openly express their opinions and ideas. This kind of setting is great for teamwork because it encourages open communication, builds trust between supervisors and employees and makes it easy to provide and receive helpful criticism.

Furthermore, the decent work practices construct underwent a thorough reliability evaluation that included six separate components. To fully grasp the results of this reliability analysis, Table 2 summarises the findings of the decent work practices dimension's reliability in great detail.

Table 2: Reliability results for Decent work practices (*Primary Data, 2024*)

Cronbach's Alpha		Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items		N of Items	
0.955		0.955		8	
Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Promoting jobs, innovation and entrepreneurship	27.0064	41.706	.807	.659	.951
Guaranteeing rights at work	27.0987	41.885	.838	.725	.949
Extending social protection	27.0955	41.997	.811	.694	.950
Promoting social dialogue	27.0191	41.514	.838	.753	.949
Promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers in precarious employment	27.0573	41.792	.829	.700	.949
Promoting local culture and products	27.1146	41.891	.838	.758	.949
Prohibition of child labour	27.0541	41.042	.834	.732	.949
Equal pay for work of equal value	27.0860	40.673	.857	.779	.948

Each item's significant contribution to the overall Cronbach's alpha value, an amazing 0.955, is highlighted by the item-total statistics, as shown in Table 2. Every single item had a corrected item-total correlation that was above the acceptable criterion of 0.300, ranging from 0.807 to 0.857. Consistent with the recommendations made by Pallant (2016), this indicates that these items skilfully measure a single component. Additional evidence supporting the construct's validity was provided by the items' squared multiple correlations that varied from 0.659 to 0.779.

THE EFFECT OF JOB SECURITY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMES MANUFACTURING SECTOR OF MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE

JOB SECURITY DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The study included several questions regarding job security to determine how job security affects the performance of small to medium enterprise

retail businesses in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. Table 3 displays the summary statistics, that include metrics like mean and SD, derived from the analysis of the collected data.

Table 1.3: Job security descriptive statistics (*Primary Data, 2024*)

Items	Mean	SD
Reduces labour turnover.	4.484	0.599
Cultivates positive work environment/culture and retention.	4.640	0.620
Promotes positive image of the organisation.	4.548	0.682
Promotes flexibility and agility in adapting to changing market conditions and technologies.	4.602	0.648
Promotes organisational citizenship and engagement.	4.608	0.606
When employees feel that their jobs are secure, they may become complacent and less motivated to perform at their best.	4.576	0.656
Retail SMEs that prioritise job security may be less likely to invest in innovation and research that can limit ability to stay competitive in the long run.	4.522	0.660

For the variable "job security", the descriptive statistics using mean and SD are summarised in Table 3. With mean ratings ranging from 4.522 to 4.640, it appears that most respondents are in accord on job security. A consistent degree of agreement among participants is reflected by the low SD values (range from 0.599 to 0.682), indicating limited variability in replies. As the mean scores and low range in the SD values show, there is a high level of agreement among participants on their beliefs of job security.

Job security is one of the important dimensions being studied and to do it properly, seven important criteria were under close consideration. To guarantee the precision and consistency of the assessment, each of these components was subjected to an exhaustive reliability test. Table 4 is a concise summary of the results of the reliability test on the job security dimension.

Table 4: Reliability results for job security

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items		N of Items		
0.948	0.948		7		
Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Reduces labour turnover.	23.287	33.438	0.867	0.780	0.936
Cultivates positive work environment/culture and retention.	23.338	33.458	0.826	0.714	0.939
Promotes positive image of the organisation.	23.274	33.171	0.864	0.758	0.936
Promotes flexibility and agility in adapting to changing market conditions and technologies.	23.315	33.367	0.828	0.687	0.939
Promotes organisational citizenship and engagement.	23.229	33.110	0.844	0.729	0.938
When employees feel that their jobs are secure, they may become complacent and less motivated to perform at their best.	23.239	34.189	0.788	0.637	0.942
Retail SMEs that prioritise job security may be less likely to invest in innovation and research that can limit ability to stay competitive in the long run.	23.312	33.487	0.753	0.579	0.946

The seven-item job security variable was reliability-tested extensively, and the results showed a strong Cronbach's alpha of 0.948 even when all seven items were kept. Strong alignment between these items and the overarching concept was indicated by adjusted item-total correlation values for each item, which comfortably exceeded the stated criterion of 0.300. In addition, all items' squared multiple correlations were greater than 0.30, strongly suggesting that the job security variable is reliable and consistent (Masamba *et al.*, 2023).

SAMPLE ADEQUACY TESTS

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) were used as statistical tools to evaluate the data's suitability for factor

analysis and the sample's appropriateness. To better understand the data set and its suitability for further analysis, researchers should run these tests. This is especially true when trying to uncover hidden dimensions or components within the variables of interest. To derive meaningful inferences from the data and to ensure that the subsequent factor analysis is conducted on a firm foundation, these statistical assessments are necessary. The study looked at several important factors to determine how SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe, progressed when it came to decent work standards and how it affected their performance.

Table 5: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) (*Primary Data, 2024*)

Job Security		
KMO		0.781
BTS	Approx. Chi-Square	438.587
	Df	21
	Sig.	0.000
SMEs Performance		
KMO		0.766
BTS	Approx. Chi-Square	410.167
	Df	15
	Sig.	0.000
Decent Work		
KMO		0.847
BTS	Approx. Chi-Square	699.634
	Df	28
	Sig.	0.000

Job Security (0.781), manufacturing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) performance (0.766) and Decent Work (0.847) are all factors whose KMO values are displayed in Table 5. The sample size is large enough to perform meaningful analyses, such as factor analysis, with the given data, since all of these values are more than the suggested cut-off of 0.5. This result provides more evidence that the data are suitable for component analysis by confirming the existence of linear combinations and sufficient correlation among variables (Manyati and Mutsau, 2019). Findings in Table 5 point to a significant association between the variables, suggesting that SEM and factorability analyses are good fits for the correlation matrix.

Table 6: SEM path coefficients.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	SE	T statistic	P-values	Decision
H1	JS --> PF	0.230	0.028	8.224	<0.001	Supported

It is evident that job security is a significant and influential factor in predicting performance among SMEs in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector. The connection between job security and performance outcomes of retail SMEs is supported by a strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.230$, $t = 8.224$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the important role that job security plays in shaping these outcomes. The findings suggest that improving job security is a key factor in promoting better performance in Zimbabwe's SMEs in the manufacturing industry as supported by Chada *et al.* (2022).

DISCUSSION

Inference to literature, a key component in lowering labour turnover is job security. When workers believe their jobs are secure, they are more likely to remain dedicated and loyal to the company. Blustein *et al.* (2019a) support that job security promotes a pleasant work atmosphere and company culture, which, in turn, increases employee happiness and retention rates. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of job stability in fostering a good perception of the organisation as supported by Mashavira *et al.* (2019). The company's image and its ability to recruit talented individuals are both enhanced when workers feel their employment is secure. The evidence reveals that a company's ability to respond quickly and nimbly to shifting market conditions and technology developments is positively correlated with employees' level of job security. Consistent with recommendations by Ferraro *et al.* (2018), when workers have job satisfaction, they are more likely to be receptive to new information and willing to adapt to changes in the market, helping businesses to remain competitive. The possible downside of an unhealthy obsession with job security must be considered, however. The study recognises that employees may get complacent and less motivated to give their best work in an overly secure work environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A strong correlation exists between the level of job security and the performance of small to medium enterprise manufacturing businesses. Job security is crucial for fostering a favourable perception of the organisation. Employees having a perception of job security has a favourable impact on

the company's reputation and can attract highly talented individuals in the labour market. Giving workers a guarantee of employment makes them feel more invested in the company and their work. When workers are content in their roles, they are more likely to put their hearts into their work and show initiative, boosting productivity. Employee morale, attrition rates and tasks, rather than job insecurity emphasis, are all positively affected by this characteristic, making it distinctive. Ribeiro (2018) also supports that decent work is essential for retail SMEs to increase employee wellness and overall performance.

The study suggests the fostering of a collaborative work atmosphere where team members feel at ease working together and sharing their skills. SMEs should promote cross-functional collaboration involving personnel from various departments working together on projects and activities. This can result in innovative problem-solving and enhanced decision-making. The Decent Work Practice Framework Model should be adopted and implemented by the Zimbabwean government, through the Ministry of Women Affairs, Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development, to accomplish the objectives of NDS 1, SDG 8 and the Vision 2030 target roadmap.

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