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Employee assistance programs (EAPs): tools for quality of work life

Abstract

With today's global challenges and workplace demands, organizations are compelled to institute effective intervention programs to improve the quality of work life of employees. This article aims to assess staff perceptions on the quality of work life of employees via Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). The study was conducted with a sample of 85 employees in a public sector organization. Data were collected using a pre-coded questionnaire that was self-developed. The analysis of data was conducted utilizing descriptive and inferential statistics, and hypotheses testing formed part of the study. The psychometric properties were assessed using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The study unfolded the impact that EAPs have on the quality of work life of employees. The article culminates with a discussion of recommendations and conclusions.

Keywords: quality of work life, employee assistance programs, engaged employees, high performance, organizational productivity, employee well-being.

JEL Classification: I31.

Introduction

The study aims to examine the effect of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) as valuable tools on the quality of work life (QWL) of employees in a public sector organization (municipality), in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The area under probe surfaces as a solution building approach in a time when organizations face daunting challenges of a consumerist society and by the dictates of the new boundaries set by the global environment. The study acknowledges the profound research of other scholars to set the pace for this study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics are utilized and the emerging results surface to deepen one's understanding of the instrumental aspect of EAPs on employees' QWL. This study emphasizes the benefits of EAPs in helping employees to be motivated, happy and productive, thereby escalating organizational performance. The study shows the porosity of the work environment and then culminates with a discussion of events, implications and conclusions.

1. Background on employee assistance programs

The establishment of EAPs emerged in the 1940s in the United States of America as an Occupational Alcoholism Program (OAP) which provided assistance to employees with alcohol-related issues, such as absenteeism and declining performance, amongst others (Daniels et al., 2005). EAPs assist employers with difficulties that employees face continuously. These programs deal with diverse matters relating to personal and emotion problems. The common problems are marital, physical illness,

stress and depression, amongst others. Furthermore, extrinsic and intrinsic factors, social factors and the organizational environment affect employees' quality of work life. Hence, EAPs are the key instruments for addressing employee well-being and for accomplishing the key organizational milestones of performance, productivity and end results. The benefits of these interventionary programs are cost-effective as they tackle the core reasons for poor performance. The results of the study open greater avenues for service organizations to take EAPs in a serious light in order to fuel their growth objectives.

2. Literature review

The stressful challenges of sophisticated technology, work and family life demands, long commutes, and the ever changing economy, amongst others, demand compelling changes to be made at the workplace. Hence, employees need to be accommodated for the sustenance of optimal workplace performance, productivity and business goals, including the maximization of quality and keeping low costs. A need exists for employees to create a balance with work and family as organizations in the public and private sectors need to value their employees. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), a valuable business strategy, provide many services to enhance overall organizational performance, including the assurance of quality and efficient service and customer satisfaction. Employees' feelings of satisfaction and happiness impact positively on their work environment. Furthermore, they have a sense of well-being which increases employee morale, job satisfaction, motivates employees and reduces staff turnover. According to Bunn (2010), EAPs are of importance to forward-thinking employers and these programs can help them to address the main reason for lost performance. An employer with an established EAP unit can offer, attract and improve talent more than employers without an EAP (Grobler

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et al., 2006). The goal is also to achieve engaged employees, high performance, organizational productivity and job satisfaction. The study was conducted in a public sector organization (municipality) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Other principles of EAPs entail mutual understanding between management and union; and also complementing the confidentiality of data; dealing with physical, emotional, matrimonial or domestic distress (Bar-Cohen, 2014); including legal or monetary problems; numerous addictions; issues of harassment; job-related strain or job conflict. Furthermore, companies need to take cognizance of reduced company costs, retaining valued employees, employees' behavioral well-being and resolving work-related problems.

The construct of quality of work life relates to an employee's work related well-being, including employee satisfaction, physical and psychological health of workers and enhancing productivity of both workers and the organization. During the 1990s, there was an interest in the study of QWL and it has become of concern to an organization and its human resources in terms of job satisfaction and organizational performance (Sinha, 2012). According to Sirgy et al. (2001), QWL indicates the impact of the workplace on work life satisfaction, satisfaction in 'non-work life domains', and also satisfaction with overall life. The workplace experience of an employee and his/her QWL enhance health and the psychological well-being (Chan & Wyatt, 2007; Srivastava, 2007). It is a trust building environment between managers and workers. Work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities. It is conceptualized as a two way process entailing a consideration of both employees and employer's needs. Some scholars reflect on a hierarchical viewpoint on quality of work life with non-work domains, for example, life satisfaction (top of the hierarchy), job satisfaction (middle of the hierarchy) and more work-specific facets of pay, co-workers and supervisor (lower in the hierarchy) (Danna & Griffin, 1999, cited in Sinha, 2012).

Walton (1973) proposes the following as an ideal QWL programme with practices in eight critical areas:

- ◆ Adequate and fair compensation is fundamental to quality of work life.
- ◆ Investment must be made to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.
- ◆ The development of human capacities.
- ◆ Future opportunity for continued growth and security relating employees' careers.
- ◆ Social integration in the workplace.

- ◆ Constitutionalism that relates to norms that affect individual employees.
- ◆ Work and life space, with a balance between personal and professional life.
- ◆ The social relevance of work life, how work affects society (Walton, 1973).

With EAPs, the study reflects on several programs, such as the program for mentoring programs, physical working conditions, job redesign, employer/worker relationships and flexible work arrangements. In addition, mentoring programs, physical working conditions, job redesign, employer/worker relationships and flexible work arrangements constitute the EAPs dimensions for this study. Other emerging dimensions of QWL relate to job security, job satisfaction and competence development, amongst others (Sinha, 2012).

With job structure, the work environment can have an encouraging or discouraging effect on domestic life, whereas the traits of an employee's family condition can disturb the employee's approach towards his or her duties (Byron, 2005). Hence, a program for family support which accommodates flexible work schedules can assist workers to balance work and life, whereas a program for substance abuse helps employees with behavioral well-being, including drug and alcohol abuse, amongst others. With flexible work arrangements employees use time efficiently to schedule activities that suit his/her situation best (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003). Flexible work arrangements are advantageous for parents who need time to balance multiple roles (Sinha, 2012). Additionally, Desrochers, Hilton and Larwood (2005) indicate that flexible work arrangements can be disadvantageous too as they 'blur the boundaries' with family and work, hence, increasing work-family conflict. On the contrary, Cohen and Single (2001) emphasize that many organizations have indicated that flexible work arrangement helps their employees to overcome the problem of conflict between their work and their family. Interestingly, Sinha (2012) reflects on an enrichment approach whereby employees with no household members may have the need for flexible work arrangements. Telecommuting for employees who are single is 'presumably more efficient' with the assumption being that these employees have less family tasks that interfere (Sinha, 2012).

Job redesign is the restructuring of work elements which includes tasks, duties and responsibilities of a certain job in order to make it more encouraging and inspiring for employees (Alber, 2007). It also enhances the quality of work-life of employees. Job redesign raises the value of the position to the organization, reduces individual and organizational risk leading to better organizational efficiency and

improved outcomes from the staff (Cappelli, 2008). Job redesign studies have focused primarily on worker satisfaction and well-being; job redesign approaches for altered kinds of technologies and techniques; and the promotion of improved designed technologies and techniques.

In a study, prevention services delivered most often by EAPs to their client organizations (on a quarterly basis) were alcohol or other drug screening/training (40%), team building (32%), and depression screening (25%) (Bennett & Attridge, 2008). A program for stress related problem is important for addressing work-related stress which is a main reason for occupational ill health, low productivity and human error (Graveling, 2008). The resultant effect can be increased sickness, absenteeism, high staff turnover and possible increase in accidents. With stress-related problems performance may drop. Workplace stress, for example, extensive hours worked, toxic work environments, difficult relationships among co-workers and management, management bullying and harassment are associated with biological reactions that may lead to compromised health, cardiovascular disease or, in extreme cases, death. Furthermore, today's organizations require a counselling program for HIV/AIDS as it applies prevention and service strategies for men and women of reproductive age in a uniquely accessible and structured environment (Dollar & Kraay, 2001).

Typical working conditions that employees encounter include physical factors and getting along with work colleagues. Temperature, humidity, ventilation, illumination, and noise can have a significant impact on worker performance in terms of productivity, quality of output, and accidents. Most government organizations have decent workplace environments so that work performance is not affected (Chandrasekar, 2011). With the implementation of work-life balance practices employees are benefitting by managing multiple responsibilities. With flexibility, one can manage family and other commitments become easier, in addition to being part of a supportive workplace that values and trusts staff (Dex & Smith, 2002).

QWL can be measured by the feelings that employees have toward their jobs, colleagues, and companies. This ignites a chain effect leading to an organization's growth and profits, ultimately. To improve this, companies are emphasizing cordial employee relations and adopting a human resource strategy that values employees as organizational stakeholders. Additionally, Johnsrud (2002) opines that satisfaction, commitment and a productive work force will eventually lead to the overall effectiveness of an organization.

EAP are designed to reflect on specific matters and for this reason organizations may consider outsourcing of this function in order to have control over their organization and to be competitive especially, when focus is on maximizing organizational efficiency and reducing absenteeism and lost time. With quality of work life, Nadler and Lawler (1983) reflect on the importance of the outcomes for people in that quality of work life does not cause people to work better, but how work can cause people to experience a more satisfactory work life.

3. Methodology

The objectives of the study are:

- ◆ To conduct an exploratory analysis of the literature in order to identify the critical constructs of Employee Assistance Programs and quality of work life.
- ◆ To determine employee perceptions regarding EAPs and quality of work life.
- ◆ To examine the effect of Employee Assistance Programs on the quality of work life of employees.
- ◆ To determine whether the constructs of Employee Assistance Programs and the constructs of quality of work life influence the key dimensions of the study.

The population and sample comprised 85 employees in a public sector organization, in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. Subjects were drawn using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportionate representation from the strata of the designated groups of interest. In terms of the composition, 3.5% of the sample consisted of managers, 11.8% were supervisors and 84.7% were employees.

For data collection, a self-developed questionnaire was utilized. The two sections of the questionnaire were divided as Sections A and B. Section A was the biographical data and Section B comprised 50 items relating to the sub-dimensions of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and quality of work life. The items in Section B were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree/nor disagree (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). The 50 items in the questionnaire were related to the constructs of the study. Pilot testing was conducted which confirmed that the measuring instrument (questionnaire) was appropriate.

Factor Analysis was utilized to assess the validity of the questionnaire. A principal component analysis was used to extract factors. Items with loadings > 0.4 were taken as significant and when items were significantly loaded on more than one factor only

that with the highest value was selected. In terms of the sub-dimensions of EAPs (Section B), five factors were extracted from the factor loading matrix. Factor 1 related to program for substance abuse and accounted for 24.04% of the total variance, Factor 2 related to programmes for stress-related problem and accounted for 14.77% of the total variance, Factor 3 related to counselling programme for HIV/AIDS and accounted for 10.05% of the total variance, Factor 4 related to programme on personal issues and accounted for 8.02% of the variance, and Factor 5 related to programme for family support and accounted for 7.02% of the total variance. The reliability of the questionnaire relating to the sub-dimensions of EAPs was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (Alpha = 0.837). The alpha coefficient indicates a very high level of internal consistency of the items and a high degree of reliability.

In terms of the sub-dimensions of quality of work life (Section B), five factors were extracted from the factor loading matrix. Factor 1 related to employer/worker relationship and accounted for 29.63% of the total variance, Factor 2 related to mentoring programs and accounted for 16.35% of the total variance, Factor 3 related to physical working conditions and accounted for 9.41% of the total variance, Factor 4 related to flexible working arrangements and accounted for 9.03% of the total variance, and Factor 5 related to job redesign and accounted for 7.17% of the total variance. The reliability of the questionnaire relating to the sub-dimensions of quality of work life was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (Alpha = 0.889).

The alpha coefficient indicates a very high level of internal consistency of the items and a high degree of reliability.

The questionnaires were administered by a coordinator assigned by a manager in the target organization. Data were collected over two months, hence, allowing time for those employees who were not office-based. Anonymity and confidentiality was assured. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized to evaluate the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The data were captured using Excel and processed with Symstat.

4. Statistical analysis and results

Hypothesis 1: There exist significant intercorrelations amongst the dimensions and sub-dimensions of employee assistance programs.

Hypothesis 2: There exist significant intercorrelations amongst the dimensions and subdimensions of quality of work life.

Hypothesis 3: The dimensions and sub-dimensions of employee assistance programs significantly account for the variance in determining employee assistance programs in this organization.

Hypothesis 4: The dimensions and sub-dimensions of the quality of work life significantly account for the variance in determining the quality of work life of employees.

Employees were expected to respond to the items relating to EAPs and quality of work life using the 5 point Likert scale, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics: key dimensions of EAPs and quality of work life

Dimension	Mean	95% Confidence interval		Variance	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
		Lower bound	Upper bound				
Employee assistance programs							
Program for stress related problems	2.995	2.862	3.129	0.385	0.6203	1.80	5.00
Counseling program for HIV/AIDS	2.960	2.829	3.091	0.366	0.6054	1.60	5.00
Program for substance abuse	3.506	3.366	3.646	0.422	0.6500	1.80	5.00
Program for family support	3.080	2.972	3.188	0.250	0.4997	1.40	5.00
Program on personal issues	2.859	2.736	2.982	0.326	0.5706	1.40	5.00
Quality of work life							
Mentoring programs	2.656	2.493	2.820	0.574	0.7576	1.00	5.00
Employer/worker relationships	2.807	2.629	2.985	0.684	0.8272	1.00	5.00
Physical working conditions	2.666	2.512	2.820	0.511	0.7147	1.00	5.00
Job redesign	3.021	2.915	3.127	0.242	0.4919	1.40	5.00
Flexible work arrangements	3.468	3.321	3.616	0.467	0.6835	2.00	5.00

Table 1 indicates that the dimensions relating to EAPs and quality of work life are occurring at varying degrees. Based on mean analyses, the attainment of the dimensions of employee

assistance programmes is indicated in descending order:

- ◆ Program for substance abuse (mean = 3.506)
- ◆ Program for family support (mean = 3.080)

- ◆ Program for stress-related problems (mean = 2.995)
- ◆ Counseling program for HIV/AIDS (mean = 2.960)
- ◆ Program on personal issues (mean = 2.859).

The results indicate that for each of the dimensions there is a room for improvement as evidenced when the mean score value is compared against a maximum attainable score of 5. This implies that the program for substance abuse requires the least amount of attention as opposed to the program on personal issues which requires the greatest attention in this organization. Hence, employee perceptions of the program for substance abuse in this organization are fairly high as little improvement is required in this area. Little improvement is also required with the program for family support; and, certainly, very little improvement is needed for the programme for stress-related problems and for HIV/AIDS.

Likewise, based on mean analyses, the attainment of the dimensions of quality of work life is indicated in descending order as follows:

- ◆ Flexible working arrangements (mean = 3.468).
- ◆ Job redesign (mean = 3.021).
- ◆ Employer/worker relationships (mean = 2.807).
- ◆ Physical working conditions (mean = 2.666).
- ◆ Mentoring programs (mean = 2.656).

Clearly, for each of the dimensions there is a room for improvement. The sub-dimensions of flexible working arrangements and job redesign require the least amount of attention as opposed to the mentoring programs, physical working conditions and employer/worker relationships where greater attention is required.

The discussions focus on the five dimensions of Employee Assistance Programs (program on personal issues, program for family support, program for substance abuse, program for stress-related problems and counselling program for HIV/AIDS) and the sub-dimensions of quality of work life (mentoring programs, physical working conditions, job redesign, employer/worker relationships, and flexible work arrangements).

When assessing employee perceptions on employee assistance programs, it was found that the program for substance abuse which had the highest mean value was the first of the five dimensions. Against a maximum attainable score of 5.00, the program for substance abuse (mean = 3.506) reflects that the least amount of attention is needed in comparison to the other dimensions. A supporting view of Matthias (2000) is that substance abuse programs can serve as a valuable and economical aftercare resource that can benefit many employees in maintaining abstinence

from drugs and alcohol after they complete drug abuse treatment. The program for family support surfaced as second in this study. This program for family support (mean = 3.080) reflects that perceptions are high with the role of this program although little attention needs to be paid. A similar view of Vanderbilt Health and Wellness (2014) is that family problems can impact the workplace by affecting the employee's focus, health and productivity issues. The program for stress related problems was third in the study. Although this program (mean = 2.995) is evident in this organization, little attention is needed.

Social support may have a direct effect on well-being and it appears to act as a buffer between stressors and well-being (Seers et al., 1983).

In this study, the program for HIV/AIDS surfaced as fourth. This indicates that respondents consider this program in a negative light in this organization. When compared against a maximum attainable score of 5, the program for HIV/AIDS (mean = 2.960) requires some attention. A similar view of the Public Service Commission (2006) is that the potential impact on HIV/AIDS creates heavy burdens for workplace problems which are overcome by the implementation of counselling programs on HIV/AIDS. When assessing employee perceptions about the program on personal issues, it was found that this program was fifth. This program (mean = 2.859) requires the greatest attention in comparison to the other dimensions. This finding correlates with the view that the implementation of personal programs is a benefit for the physical and emotional well-being of employees (Arthur, 2010).

In this study, when assessing employee perceptions on quality of work life, it was found that flexible work arrangements surfaced as the first dimension. Hence, flexible work arrangements are clearly evident in this organization. Against a maximum attainable score of 5.00, flexible work arrangements (mean = 3.468) reflect that the least amount of attention is needed in comparison to the other dimensions in this study. A similar view of Holmes (2010) is that the Global Financial Crisis had a range of flexible work arrangements, including integrated work/life strategy that allowed them to build on the trust and commitment of employees and improvement in managing their resources throughout difficult times. Furthermore, with job redesign, it was found that this dimension was second in this study. Respondents perceptions show that there is evidence of redesign in this organization. With job redesign (mean = 3.021) little attention is needed. A similar view of Champion and Thayer (2011) is that the success of utilizing job design methods as a worker motivation technique increases job performance.

With employer/worker relationships, it was found that this dimension was third of the five dimensions. It is clear that employer/worker relationship (mean = 2.807) is moderate in this organization and some attention is required in this area. The findings correlate with Josephson’s (2014) view that employees should always be treated with respect and it is the company’s obligation to make sure that individual managers do not abuse their power or mistreat their subordinates.

In this study, physical working condition surfaces as the fourth dimension. With physical working conditions (mean = 2.666) employees are content but the organization needs to pay attention in this area.

Pillay and Terblanche (2012) make reference to undesirable working conditions at the mines that led to alcohol/drug problems and/or mental illnesses. Furthermore, mentoring programs surfaced as the fifth dimension in this study. With mentoring programs (mean = 2.656) the greatest level of attention is needed in comparison to the other dimensions as the quality of work life of employees is a critical factor in any organization and employees need mentoring and coaching continuously. A similar view of Zachary (2007) is that mentoring is essential in today’s competitive business environment as it combines desire for connection with the power of learning for employees.

Table 2. Intercorrelations: sub-dimensions of employee assistance programs (N = 85)

Dimensions	Program for stress related problems	Counseling program for HIV/AIDS	Program for substance abuse	Program for family support	Program personal issues
Program for stress related problems	1				
Counseling program for HIV/AIDS	0.593 0.000**	1			
Program for substance abuse	0.383 0.000**	0.377 0.000**	1		
Program for family support	0.416 0.000**	0.399 0.000**	0.315 0.003**	1	
Program on personal issues	0.610 0.000**	0.328 0.002**	0.499 0.000**	0.533 0.000**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2 indicates that the sub-dimensions of employee assistance programs significantly correlate with each other at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 1 may be accepted. The implication is that an improvement in any one dimension will have the

potential to impact all other sub-dimensions thereby, achieving the effect of employee assistance programs in this organization. The improvement of all the sub-dimensions will contribute to the impact of employee assistance programs in this organization.

Table 3. Intercorrelations: dimension of quality of work life (N = 85)

Dimensions	Mentoring programs	Employer/worker relationship	Physical working conditions	Job redesign	Flexible working arrangements
Mentoring programs	1				
Employer/worker relationship	0.651 0.000**	1			
Physical working conditions	0.692 0.000**	0.706 0.000**	1		
Job redesign	0.54 0.623**	0.71 0.520**	0.106 0.334**	1	
Flexible working arrangements	0.161 0.141**	0.085 0.441**	0.043 0.698**	0.581 0.000**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3 indicates that there exist significant intercorrelations amongst the sub-dimensions of quality of work life at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 2 may be accepted. The implication is that an improvement in any one dimension will have the potential to impact all other

sub dimensions thereby, impacting on the quality of work life in this organization. The combined improvement of all the dimensions will have a spiralling effect and contribute to the impact on the quality of work life of employees in this organization.

Table 4. Multiple regression: dimensions and sub-dimensions of employee assistance programs

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std error of the estimate
1.	0.784 ^a	0.614	0.609	0.27343
2.	0.905	0.819	0.815	0.18842
3.	0.968	0.938	0.935	0.11132
4.	0.982	0.965	0.963	0.08412
5.	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.00000
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	
	B	Std error	Beta	P
Program for stress related problems	0.200	0.000	0.284	0.000
Program for substance abuse	0.200	0.000	0.297	0.000
Program for family support	0.200	0.000	0.228	0.000
Counseling program for HIV/AIDS	0.200	0.000	0.277	0.000
Program on personal issues	0.200	0.000	0.261	0.000

Table 4 indicates that the sub-dimensions of the program for stress-related problems, counselling program for HIV/AIDS, program for substance abuse, program for family support and program on personal issues account for 100 % of the variance (Adjusted R square = 1.000) in determining the effect of employee assistance programs. Hence, Hypothesis 3 may be accepted. However, each of these sub-dimensions have

varying degrees of impact on EAPs which in descending level of impact, based on Beta values, are as follows: program for substance abuse (Beta = 0.297), program for stress-related problems (Beta = 0.284), counselling program for HIV/AIDS (Beta = 0.277), program on personal issues (Beta = 0.261) and program for family support (Beta = 228).

Table 5. Multiple regression: dimensions and sub-dimensions of quality of work life

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std error of the estimate
1.	0.823 ^a	0.678	0.674	0.26571
2.	0.912	0.832	0.828	0.19281
3.	0.960	0.921	0.918	0.13287
4.	0.980	0.961	0.959	0.09401
5.	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.00000
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	
	B	Std error	Beta	P
Physical working conditions	0.200	0.000	0.307	0.000
Job redesign	0.200	0.000	0.211	0.000
Employer/worker relationships	0.200	0.000	0.356	0.000
Flexible working arrangements	0.200	0.000	0.294	0.000
Mentoring programs	0.200	0.000	0.326	0.000

Table 5 indicates that the sub-dimensions of physical working conditions, job redesign, employer/worker relationships, flexible working arrangements and mentoring programs account for 100 % of the variance (Adjusted R square = 1.000) in determining employees quality of work life. Hence, Hypothesis 4 may be accepted.

However, each of these sub-dimensions have varying degrees of impact quality of work life which in descending level of impact, based on Beta values, are as follows: employer/worker relationships (Beta = 0.356) mentoring programs (Beta = 0.326), physical working conditions (Beta = 0.307), flexible working arrangements (Beta = 0.294) and job redesign (Beta = 0.211).

The reliability of Section B of the questionnaire relating to the core factors of EAPs and quality of work life was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for EAPs and quality of work life reflected 0.837 and 0.889, respectively. This indicates that items for both EAPs and quality of work life have internal consistency and are very reliable.

In this study, respondents' views on the program for substance abuse indicate that organizations need to address this issue continuously as this affects employees' quality of work life, performance and productivity. Organizations must provide timeous communications and reflect on policy to remind employees of the existence of this program and to

prevent absenteeism. This contributes to recovery and a positive life/working life. Byars and Rule (2003) opine that alcoholism does not discriminate against any particular social or economic class; this disease is likely to victimize the middle manager and the assembly-line worker. With regard to the program for family support, consideration must be given to providing services to employees and family members with the aim that employee performance is not affected negatively. Managerial staff needs to ensure that this program provides coping strategies for employees.

The program for stress-related problems needs to be a top priority and be addressed continuously as employees face various stress-related problems on a continuous basis. Hence, companies can have fewer unplanned employee absences, and employees can focus more on their jobs. Organizations must take note of the intensity of this program. The counselling program for HIV/AIDS is a national priority and managers need to ensure that policies and procedures are aligned with the HIV/AIDS strategic plan. A full staff complement is important for this program as proper consultation is essential. According to Taylor (2000), due to the social and organizational ramifications of AIDS, a proactive organizational policy that addresses the rights of AIDS victims and the training of co-workers is of utmost importance. Organizations need to assure confidentiality on personal matters. Thus, a program for personal issues can improve the work life of employees so that they are productive and efficient.

With regard to flexible work arrangements, organizations need to take cognizance of this in order to facilitate work-life balance and reduce the work pressure of valued employees. Flexible working hours provide a true alternative work schedule for employees who may follow different schedules work each day of the work week (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). This prevents employee turnover, absenteeism and tardiness which is an advantage for both the employee and the employer.

In this study, respondents view on job redesign may be attributed to the fact that employees may embrace the idea that jobs are tailored for employees' preferences and for job enrichment. Managers are expected to ensure that job rotation and job enrichment does occur so that the job is rewarding, enriching and employees are motivated to feel a sense of accomplishment. With regard to employer/worker relationships, organizations need to ensure that mutual understanding is properly maintained. Both employers and workers place a high value on wellness and quality of work life. This relationship is essential for organizational outcomes. Fostering a collaborative work environment with employers and

workers is a core ingredient in any organization that focuses on strategic objectives. Respondents' perceptions of the physical working conditions show that by addressing employees' needs, the resultant effect will have a significant impact on business outcomes and employee retention. Adequate provision of the essential resources, such as equipment and material, is an additional factor that contributes to effectiveness and efficiency. In this study, respondents' view relating to mentoring programs may be attributed to the fact that the program is new in the organization, with few mentors. The organization needs to ensure that employees are aware of the existence of such programs, with trained staff coaching and mentoring employees. Serious consideration of this program with effective mentoring practices is needed for upward mobility, as well as for personal well-being.

Conclusions

Scholars have identified numerous areas of EAPs. This study takes cognizance of the core programs for HIV/AIDS, stress-related problems, substance abuse, family support and personal issues which is rife in any organization which is committed to strategic initiatives and for employees to hone their competitive skills. By instituting these programs, high level of work commitment increases and absenteeism minimizes, amongst others. These programmes which improve the quality of work life of employees are the building blocks for any organization that considers customer satisfaction and service delivery at the helm of its operations.

Globally, employees' quality of work life is of major concern and today's organizations strive to be economically viable and competitive with the aim of projecting a positive image. Managers need to take a proactive stance and create an awareness of EAPs organization-wide whether it is a service-organization or a production-organization. Retaining valued employees are critical and EAPs, a core organizational ingredient, can address employees problems. Organizational focus is to take care of their valued assets, that is, employees and their well-being. The utilization of EAPs balances and improves the quality of work life of employees so that they are immersed with work activities and have a satisfactory work life that is fulfilling. It would be advantageous for organizations to assess the performance of employees before and after they have engaged with the EAPs, in order to determine their quality of work life. Progressive organizations need to fulfil employees' needs in a healthy work environment and for the long-term so that organizations have dedicated and committed employees in the twenty-first century.

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