




The role of managers in employee assistance programmes: A case study

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SUMMARY

Title: The role of managers in employee assistance programmes: A case study

Key words: Employee well-being, organisational well-being, multidimensional well-being, manager, managerial role, managerial support, managerial behaviour, employee assistance programmes.

A key aim of this study was to understand the role managers play in the support and success of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) within the context of well-being. Through the approach of a case study with 13 participants within an identified organisation, the research study investigated the perceptions of managers, well-being subject matter experts as well as the review of supporting artefacts to better understand identified perceptions of the managerial role within the context of an EAP programme.

The research findings outline and identify specific aspects or categories of support needed for managers to fulfil their EAP role within the organisation. The criteria identified speak to the influence of the positive ‘manager-employee’ relationship, how informed managers should be of the holistic EAP service offering and importantly the strategic support role managers hold to communicate and share this knowledge accordingly. The research strongly identifies roles and responsibilities from an employee, manager and Human Resource practitioner perspective to ensure effectiveness of the EAP with regards to self and assisted referrals. The research findings also suggest support enablers the organisation should take accountability for and put in place to aid the manager to fulfil the identified EAP role within the context of holistic well-being. This engagement however, also including an understanding of socio, political and economic influences employees face that could further influence well-being support behaviours from a managerial approach perspective.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY OF RESEARCH

I, Chantelle Christine Blandin de Chalain, hereby confirm and declare that *The role of managers in employee assistance programmes: A case study*, is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this research study is that of the author and relevant literature references as shown in the literature reference list. I further declare that this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

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November 2019

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INTRODUCTION

This mini dissertation investigates the role of managers in an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) within the context of an organisational case study. The research study's aim is to investigate the managerial role from a well-being perspective, to identify the gap of what the critical managerial role could and should look like within organisations today under the banner of an EAP. The mini dissertation will use an article format according to the guidelines of South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP). This chapter outline presents the problem statement and key discussion of the general and specific research objectives stipulated and wanting to be achieved. The research method is also described providing further insight into the context of the research approach. The chapter further highlights an overview of the key chapters that are provided.

1.1 Problem Statement

Healthy organisations and employees who are considered well are fast becoming influential concepts in the development of the working environment (Matolo&Mukulu, 2016). Business communities are more aware of the importance of the concept of well-being and how, if not managed, it can have a negative impact on employees' productivity levels within the workplace (Hassard, Teoh, Visockaite, Dewe& Cox, 2018). Although well-being is a concept positioned through different lenses, it has been summarised to be a subjective reflection of an individuals life looking at not only the emotions that are felt or experienced, but activities individuals participate in that generates a general satisfaction of life, whether that of pleasure or pain (Sutton, Evans, David and Lawson, 2016). Well-being is also defined as more than just a state of happiness and emotions that are felt by an individual, but is described as a process and journey of developing as a person and or individual, being fulfilled and making an active contribution in communities (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). Through this lens of self-fulfilment and a desire for active happiness and personal development, the field of employee well-being has developed and evolved into a highly respected industry, integrating a multi-disciplinary service support offering to employees and organisations alike to ensure that the human capital of organisations is looked after (Kickbusch& Payne, 2003).

Organisations are encouraged, as highlighted in Sutton et al. (2016) to ensure that well-being initiatives form part of companies' good corporate practice, realising and recognising that employee well-being has an impact on the broader society. Work conducted by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) emphasises the need for the development of positive institutions, which could amongst other benefits, foster employees' well-being within the organisation. Employees are deemed the human capital in organisations that contribute to not only the success of performance but also to the sustainability of organisations (Araújo&Pestanab, 2017). From a South African perspective, according to 'Work Dynamics', a consulting house in South Africa, it was highlighted that South African employers recognise the benefits of investing in the well-being of their employees and further understand the impact that positive well-being engagements can have on the functioning of organisations and the bottom line, (Lekhelebana, June 13, 2016) as cited in Working Dynamics.

The support of leadership to drive and support the implementation of well-being offerings within organisations have become a key area for discussion (Human Resource Institute, 2013). Further research suggests that the support of leadership and human resource management regarding Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) speak strongly to the success of the programme within organisations to drive the agenda of well-being (Baptiste, 2008). An EAP is an intervention programme positioned to employees as a company benefit that serves to identify and help employees with challenges and/or problems the employee or family members may be facing daily (Taylor, 2018). These programmes have been introduced to organisations over many years and evolved in how they address performance impairing behaviours of employees, with a significant impact in performance and the competitiveness of an organisation (Hartwell, et al., 1996). EAPs are therefore typically viewed as "a programme intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of an individual employee using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the recognition and control of certain work -and non-work-related problems", Sieberhagen, Pienaar and Els (2011, p.14). Based on an Australian EAP service provider, an EAP programme is a confidential short-term counselling support service created to support an individual's overall emotional and mental well-being for employees and their family members (Optum, 2014).

The goal for an EAP is to:

- provide an alternative approach to disciplinary action for employees who are experiencing work performance challenges
- assist employees and their families with personal challenges
- assist companies to maintain a stable, well-functioning workforce and decrease companies' expenses caused by the loss of well-trained employees (Optum, 2014)

Studies conducted by the Human Resource Institute (2013), as published in the Wellness Leadership White Paper, identify that managers are critical in driving the benefits and narratives of employee well-being and acting as key role models / change agents to drive employee well-being engagement. Taylor (2018), positions the role of leadership or managers from a human element perspective to ensure programmes such as EAPs are positioned to staff members to provide support and resources for struggling employees. As discussed, managers are influential in driving the success of employee well-being in organisations. Historically, the role of a manager was identified in literature as a reactive support system to the EAP (Mazur & Mazur- Malek, 2016). Typically, the managerial involvement in the programme was and still is largely to identify the '*at risk*' or '*troubled employee*' and refer the employee to the EAP for professional counselling support (Matolo&Mukulu, 2016). The EAP would traditionally offer training to managers, to equip them with the necessary skills to identify employees who need psychosocial support and further allow the managers to clearly identify support boundaries from a managerial perspective (Kenny, 2014; ICAS, 2019. Emphasis was placed on the manager as the '*referring agent*' in an employee referral process, whether that be a formal or an informal referral of an employee to the EAP (Mazur & Mazure-Malek, 2016).

However, limited research guides the transition and or change of the managerial role from a well-being point of view as more than just the '*referring agent*'. The question beckons what the managerial role looks like in organisations under an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) banner in the world of work today.

Based on the above presented problem statement, the current study aims to answer the following questions:

1.2 Research Questions:

- How is the role of a manager conceptualised in literature from an EAP perspective?
- How managers, well-being specialists and or subject matter experts view the role of the manager within an EAP context?
- How organisational artefacts such as policies and EAP reports define and position the role of the manager within an organisation?

1.3 Expected Contribution of the study

1.3.1 Contribution for the individual

The benefit of the study would speak to generating awareness regarding the evolved role or influence the manager has within organisations to drive an employee well-being support from a managerial perspective.

1.3.2 Contribution for the organisation

The study would aim to further investigate and describe the important role managers play with regards to supporting and influencing employee well-being in the 21st century, and what supporting behaviours are ultimately deemed as key roles managers need to play to drive well-being within organisations. The study will further provide the identified organisation with company specific research related feedback to address key trends and themes extracted from the research conducted.

The study could further lend to introducing a shift in the perception of managerial well-being support as a change agent within organisations going forward.

1.3.3 Contribution to Industrial / Organisational literature

It has been identified that there is little information regarding how the role of manager has transformed and developed in supporting and driving employee well-being as a specific topic of literature within the South African context. This study could therefore assist to understand this literature gap in South Africa to aid the field of Industrial/Organisational Psychology from a managerial and employee well-being perspective.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

1.4.1 General objectives

The study aims to investigate the role of managers in Employee Assistance Programmes to support well-being offerings within the organisation.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives are:

- To conceptualise the role of managers from an EAP perspective within a South African context.
- To understand the current orientation of employee well-being and the critical role of a manager from an EAP perspective.
- To understand the view of the managerial role within an EAP from the orientation of a well-being specialists / subject matter expert.
- To understand the positioning and influence organisational artefacts such as policies and EAP reports define and position the role of manager within an organisation from an EAP perspective.

1.5 Research Design

1.5.1 Research Approach

Qualitative methods of research application are used in case studies. Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their

contexts using a variety of data sources to unpack the research topic at hand. It further explores the opportunity to study a topic or situation by narrowing down the research topic positioned (DeVos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2004). A key defining factor for case studies is the ability to use different sources of data to enhance data credibility. Data sources include but are not limited to, documentation, archives, interviews, physical artefacts, direct observations and/or participant observations. As discussed by Baxter and Jack, (2008) a case study approach should be positioned when wanting to address the following research questions:

- The focus of the proposed study is to unpack potential ‘why’ or ‘how questions
- The behaviour of participants in the study cannot be manipulated
- There is a key exploration of contextual conditions relevant to the study at hand
- The boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context

Due to the nature of the case study through a qualitative approach, and the company specific information that will be requested for the relevance of the study, the research will be conducted within the working environment of the researcher.

1.5.2 Research Method

1.5.2.1 Literature review

A complete literature review regarding the research topic will be conducted to gather information on the key research questions at hand. The literature review will aim to provide an overview of existing publications and current research available to further unpack the evolution of well-being in South Africa and unpack the role of manager or leader within this domain of research. A review of reading material and articles that have been published between 1979 and 2019 will be consulted to ensure that relevant and updated information is used. Electronic searches for material will be the primary source of review over a data base that consists of, but that is not limited to the North West University (NWU) data base, Ebscohost, American Psychological Association, Harvard Business Review, South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) and Google Scholar. Published text books and update web information will also be consulted to further supplement research findings.

1.5.2.2 Research setting

The research will be conducted within a financial sector organisation. The company identified for the case study currently has an EAP offering in place with the employee well-being benefit positioned to employees for several years within the company. The company has a dedicated well-being business unit of EAP Subject Matter Experts (SME) who form part of the EAP offering from a strategic delivery, support and engagement perspective. Data sources of information for this study will be made up of interviews that will be conducted with research participants, deemed, well-being SME's within the company, managerial staff as well as consultation of specific EAP company policy and EAP related well-being reports to unpack and gauge views regarding the changing role of managerial support regarding employee well-being in organisations.

Interviews will be conducted in quiet meeting rooms on the working premises of the managers and SME's to ensure minimal disruption to their daily operational tasks. Interviews will be conducted within the EAP unit of the organisation and or in meeting rooms that are easily accessible for the participants due to the size and location of the organisation and site offices. Prior inspection of meeting rooms will be conducted by the interviewer to ensure that each room provides adequate space, lighting and comfort for participants to feel comfortable within the research engagement.

1.5.2.3 Sampling

The process to select individuals to participate in a research study is referred to as sampling, (Gravetter&Forzano 2003). Individuals will be identified through referral selection across the researcher's current working network. Therefore, purposive sampling, a main technique of non-probability sampling, will be used as a method to select participants based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study (Etikan, Musa, &Alkassim, 2016). In the case of this proposed study, access to the individuals who will participate in the sample group will be accessed through a working relationship already established within the working environment of the researcher. The sample participants will be identified according to the criteria of active association with the working environment identified as well as involvement with the organisations established EAP.

The criteria for the sample pool of participants will be defined according to the following characteristics:

- **Line Managers** within the identified organisation – a manager is defined as an individual who is responsible for controlling or administering support to an organisation or team to achieve desired organisational goals (Kotter, 2000). For the study, individuals who are deemed managers within the organisation will have to have a team / employee report directly to them as managers with a minimum of 3-5 years' experience within the organisation.
- **Well-being Subject Matter Experts (SME)** within the identified organisation – an individual is deemed an SME based on their knowledge over a specific domain or topic within their related field as a job or skill (Reh, 2018). For the study, Employee and Organisational well-being experts working within the field of employee and organisational well-being will be deemed an SME to support the key aims of the research questions. SMEs identified need to have a minimum of 5 years' experience within the organisation with a qualification in Human Sciences and supporting qualifications in Employee Assistance Programmes and or well-being training.

Conflict of interest from a researcher perspective will be addressed by the researcher by ensuring key characteristics that need to be considered and upheld to create the research sample group, are adhered to. Further conflict of interest will be addressed by the review of the sign-off of information gathered by each research participant to ensure accuracy of data collected to avoid research bias.

1.5.2.4 Data collection methods

The key aim of the study is to investigate and better understand the role of managers within the context of an EAP. Data will be collected through the facilitation of interviews from two different data sources and a review of supporting EAP artefacts to gain further insight into the research questions proposed.

Interviews is a common form of data collection within Qualitative research studies and take on the form of semi-structured, lightly structured or in-depth interviews (Jamshed, 2014). For the case study, a semi-structured interview process will be facilitated by the researcher. The interview will consist of set questions, as previously highlighted, that will be carefully worded and arranged to ensure that each respondent is taken through the same sequence of questions to facilitate the same experience of open dialogue and engagement.

Participants will be purposively selected through subjective sampling based on specific characteristics as previously highlighted. Participants will be contacted via email to explain the research objectives and process of the research initiative. Should participants want to participate in the study written permission and consent forms will be provided to each participant via email prior to the research commencing and will be returned to the researcher using the same electronic platform.

Interviews with participants will be scheduled through electronic diary invitations. Availability of participants will be pre-discussed telephonically and confirmed via Outlook Scheduling Assistant to ensure confirmed availability for the scheduled interview sessions. Interviews with participants will be conducted to last for 45 minutes to 1 hour in duration for each session. The interview will focus on each participant's experience regarding the organisational Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Employee Wellbeing Programme (EWP) offered through the organisation. The perception of the role of manager will also be discussed within this field of work. Questions to be positioned to the relevant participant pool are as follows:

Interview questions proposed for managers:

- What is the current experience / perception of the EAP from a managerial perspective?
- What do managers consider as critical EAP roles / functions?

Interview questions proposed for EAP specialist / SME's:

- What do EAP specialists / SMEs consider as critical roles / functions of managers within an EAP offering to employees?
- What according to the EAP specialist / SME is the status of managerial engagement of the EAP within the organisation currently?
 - What contributing factors could be identified enablers of this managerial engagement?
 - What contributing factors could be identified as barriers of this managerial engagement?

Supporting artefacts, if relevant will also be reviewed alongside the interviews conducted with line managers and EAP subject matter experts. Information received from artefacts will be included in the thematic analysis research process to further identify key themes and patterns in the data received, if relevant. The aim is to therefore ensure that feedback collected across the data sources provided will accurately address the key research objectives identified.

Artefacts will take the form of EAP organisational policies which are readily available within the company for review as well as EAP organisational reports that will form part of the research study artefacts for use of reference for thematic analysis purposes. SME support regarding the interpretation of EAP policy and EAP reports will be positioned for accurate understanding of the artefacts provided.

Artefacts that will be considered as critical sources of information are as follows:

- **Employee Assistance Programme Policy:** An EAP policy is a supporting document that provides a framework and guidelines to an organisation on how the manager / employer manages employee behaviour and incapacity within the work place to create an environment that fosters and promotes the well-being of employees. The policy further outlines the scope of support services offered through the EAP and how the employee can utilise the EAP according to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA, 2015).

- **Employee Assistance Records / Reports:** The EAP service offering provides detailed reports on utilisation of the support programme to identify and outline key trends and behaviours. EAP reports are positioned to managers / leadership to create awareness regarding employee and organisational well-being from a proactive and reactive support perspective supporting the service offerings provided by the EAP provider through the Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS, 2019). Reports provide a high-level overview of information from an organisational utilisation and trend perspective and do not contain confidential information or specific information of individuals.

Information contained in the EAP report is outlined but not limited to the following:

- Organisational EAP service utilisation versus benchmarked organisations within the same sector
- Key EAP trends identified through utilisation of the organisation
- Managerial referral utilisation rates and themes
- Intervention and support utilisation rates and themes
- Proactive proposed EAP interventions for managerial awareness based on the utilisation trends received

1.5.2.5 Recording of data

With the permission of the respondents, interview notes will be captured as well as audio taped and transcribed verbatim using Otter AI or similar. Otter AI, is an application that allows for speech to text transcription. This process of data collection will aim to ensure accurate capturing and interpretation of the interview feedback/results. Data capturing, and recording will continue until saturation is evident in themes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Information gathered during this process will be saved, password protected, back-up copies will be made on external devices and stored on safe premises to safeguard the confidentiality of feedback throughout the research process. Process notes per interview will be shared with each participant to ensure an accurate capturing of interview data and reviewing of the research artefacts.

1.5.2.6 Data analysis

Once the data has been collected the researcher needs to analyse the data to extract and better understand emerging themes from the information obtained to ensure accuracy of the data collected. Thematic analysis is a type of analysis that is used to analyse data in order to identify themes or patterns of information that relate to the data collected (Ibrahim, 2012). Thematic analysis will be applied as the primary source of data analysis as this form of analysis assists in identifying key patterns and/or themes within a qualitative data set (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The data obtained through interviews will focus on gathering respondents' experiences, opinions, knowledge and understanding of employee well-being and aim to understand their perception of the role of manager within the study area. The artefacts collected throughout the research process will also be analysed from a thematic perspective focusing on key aspects such as how and for whom the document is / was created, the key purpose of the document positioned, and what information is included and not included in the document(s) from a review perspective (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). It is however noted that when analysing documents as artefacts, the analysis should be conducted and reviewed alongside other data sources collected, such as the interviews in this research study.

Manual thematic analysis will be conducted for analysing and coding of the data to examine the presence of repetition and theme emergence of specific words and phrases used by the sample group. Repetition of data is also known as data saturation. Data saturation speaks to the event at which no additional themes are found from reviewing of successive data in relation to a specific category that has been identified (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014). Research will continue until data saturation occurs through engagement with participants and supporting artefacts. If themes do not emerge from the data collected, additional interviews and supporting artefacts should be consulted to gather enough information for data saturation and thematic purposes.

1.5.2.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

To ensure the quality of data obtained through the research process, key checks and processes will be put in place to safeguard the quality of information obtained as per the key qualitative features of a case study.

Quality from a case study process perspective: As previously highlighted by Baxter and Jack, (2008) the research from a case study perspective will address specific questions to further aid the quality of the data obtained so that the research participant behaviour cannot be manipulated through the case study process and to ensure that key contextual conditions are relevant to the research topic.

Quality from a data gathering perspective: The analysis process highlighted will ensure that all data will be checked and cleaned to ensure accurate interpretation has taken place of the data gathered. Process notes of clean data will be provided to each research participant to ensure the correctness of data captured and reinforce trustworthiness of the information provided for thematic analysis purposes. The process of participant sign-off will further aid to the avoidance of conflict of interest from a researcher perspective employed by the identified organisation. All data gathered through the research process will be saved through password protected functionality and saved on research devices(s) that are password protected, to ensure that research gathered and confirmed by participants is safeguarded for analysis purposes as previously highlighted.

1.5.2.8 Reporting

The researcher will follow the guidelines for writing a qualitative manuscript as set out by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP).

Feedback of results will be provided to supporting participants by means of one on one feedback sessions as per diary availability. A meeting, if approved, with the subject matter experts as a working group within the employee assistance well-being department of the organisation, will also be arranged to provide a holistic view of feedback and results of company specific research findings in a PowerPoint presentation format.

1.5.2.9 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration forms the corner stone of any research activity and is a guiding principle according to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). With the study relying on involvement of participants to share their experiences, perceptions and

thoughts regarding the study topic at hand, it is imperative that research participants are aware of their rights and that individuals will be safeguarded throughout the research process.

Participants of the study will be identified based on their role within organisations from an EAP perspective, allocating participants to categories of manager and or well-being SME. Participants will be engaged via email and telephonically to unpack the objectives of the study and what the study would hope to achieve through the research process. A key focus around informed consent and what this means within a research process will be discussed with participants. A consent form, as discussed will be provided to each participant outlining the voluntary nature of the research process and informing them that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participant discussions will be held regarding the following aspects (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004):

- key discussions outlining the respect of autonomy and partial anonymity of the individual throughout the research process
- the importance and practice of confidentiality of the participant throughout the research process and the safeguarding of the participants' rights
- the rights of the participant throughout the process and that the participant can withdraw from the research process at any time
- the importance that no harm or risks will come to the participants during the research process
- the highlighted benefit of the study will be shared with the participants and how the research could potentially benefit the individual and or industry
- reinforcement of how data will be handled will be shared with participants as per the informed consent process. It is the duty of the researcher to ensure that information gathered during this process will be saved, password protected, backed up on external devices and stored to safeguard the confidentiality of feedback throughout the research process. Only the researcher will have access to these records alongside the research supervisor and the ethics committee, should records be requested for ethical purposes.

Guiding principles as cited in the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), will be reinforced throughout the research process. These principles speak to the ethical considerations regarding beneficence and non-maleficence to ensure that the researcher seeks to achieve the greatest good in the research with no harm to the participant. Furthermore, the cognizance to be shown by the researcher to act with fidelity, responsibility and professionalism throughout the research process, safeguarding the rights of the participants. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), further describes the need for the researcher to act with integrity by showcasing professionalism and behaviour relating to honesty, accuracy and truthfulness ensuring that no practice of intentional misrepresentation of data and incorrect facts are filtered into the research study. Justice as an additional principle unpacks the need to ensure that every participant is treated fairly and that no research bias will lead to unjust practices of the research process. Lastly and importantly, to furthermore ensure that participants' rights and dignity are reinforced through the research process and that the welfare of participants and their individual rights are protected.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

- a. Chapter 1: Introduction.
- b. Chapter 2: Research article.
- c. Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the problem statement, research questions, expected contribution of the study from an individual, organisation and literature perspective, as well as outlined the key research objectives. The research design used in this study within the approach of a case study was explained, followed by an overview of the chapters to follow.

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CHAPTER 2

2.1 Research Article

Orientation: Understanding the critical role managers play in the support and success of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) within the context of well-being.

Research purpose: The purpose and aim of the research study is to investigate the managerial role within the context of an Employee Assistance Programme to identify the gap of what the managerial role could and should look like within an EAP.

Motivation for the study: This study was motivated by the gap identified in literature to fully understand the role of managers outside the typical pre-defined role of a formal or informal referral agent. The study further echoes a need to understand the support managers can offer to influence the success of the organisational programmes and to determine key enablers or barriers thereof.

Research design, approach and method: A qualitative research design was utilised with a sample of 13 research participants. A case study of a specific organisation was used as a key point of reference. The group consisted of 6 well-being subject matter experts and 7 managers in a pre-selected organisation. An interview was conducted with a subject matter expert to further explain the supporting artefacts associated with the identified well-being topic. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews and the review of well-being supporting organisational artefacts.

Main findings: From the results it is evident that there is a clear criterion of support needed from a managerial, organisational and an EAP programme perspective that defines the success of the managerial role with regards to the EAP service offering. The managerial role is that of not only a referral agent, but a key support anchor in the programme with regards to manager / employee rapport building, strategic alignment of the EAP offering and the training and communication thereof to employees. The role further has the ability to demonstrate overt behaviours to support the employee proactively versus reactive referral support. Subject Matter Experts (SME) identify the managerial role as a key driver of the success of the EAP programme within an organisation with clear support avenues needed for the manager to understand not only the need for the self-care of employees and themselves,

but the influential socio, political and economic impact people in South Africa face as an additional facilitator to support integrated well-being of employees within the organisation.

Practical implications: The insights gained from the research conducted can support the organisation to develop wellness support initiatives to enable managers and internal EAP programmes to enhance the current EAP service offering. The research findings speak to bespoke areas of criteria managers need to be equipped with to support employees from an EAP context. The research further provides rich value driven recommendations from the sample group on gaps identified that can be addressed to further enhance and improve the EAP offering going forward.

Contribution/value add: Within literature the role of manager as a referral agent is clearly defined to support EAP offerings within the organisation. The role of manager in the study is aligned to literature, but further reinforces the critical role managers play from a proactive humanised referral perspective to enhance the engagement of the EAP programme. The research outlines and identifies specific aspects or categories of support needed for managers to fulfil this role within the organisation. The research further strongly identifies support measures the organisation need to put in place to aid the manager to fulfil the role of manager within the context of holistic well-being as well as from a socio, political and economic support perspective within the South African context.

Key words: Employee well-being, organisational well-being, multidimensional well-being, manager, managerial role, managerial support, managerial behaviour, employee assistance programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and Occupational Support Programmes have been in existence abroad from the early 1940's (Rajin, 2012). The first influence of well-being-related support was identified in the early 1800's where concerns around alcohol consumption rose dramatically over this industrial period. Some organisations identified the need to manage problems that were created by alcohol-impaired workers through the implementation of counselling and support groups which proved to be influential (Rorabaugh, 1979). EAPs

however, only emerged in South Africa in the early 1980's at the Chamber of Mines in South Africa, (Sieberhagen, 2011; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). These programmes were implemented with a key perception that the well-being programme was put in place for alcoholic employees only. However, through the evolution of EAPs, well-being has had a shift from a one-dimensional support view to a multi-dimensional view of well-being. McGillivray (2016), reinforces well-being as a multi-dimensional approach identifying key well-being factors that should focus on social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional well-being as key drivers of successful individual well-being. Ardel (1985), as cited in Sieberhagen, Pienaar, and Els (2011, p.14), further supports well-being as a multi-dimensional view, stating that well-being is a “conscious and deliberate approach to an advanced state of physical, psychological and spiritual health”. Research, therefore, supports and includes an integration of a multi-dimensional view of well-being as a key component of how well-being is defined and positioned in the 21st century from an employee well-being perspective.

When applying the multi-dimensional view of well-being to EAPs, the service offering focuses on broader issues affecting employee productivity by managing aspects relating to not only substance abuse problems but also to HIV counselling, critical incident support, disability challenges, workplace trauma, work and family problems, preventative and managed healthcare support, financial well-being, legal well-being, absenteeism management, proactive health care education, under a counselling and employee supportive framework (Rakepa, 2012). Literature highlights that a holistic service offering is inclusive of not only relationship issues or concerns, but also look at any other legal, financial or personal challenges an individual might face that could affect or ultimately impact on job performance, Jacobson (2010). Therefore, the influence of an EAP is undoubtedly perceived as a safety net to support employees when needed, to reinforce optimal functioning and facilitate overall health management under an integrated banner of holistic well-being, (Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS), 2019).

It has been highlighted that a key perception across organisations is that the more support an employee experiences from within an organisation, the more likely he/she can engage in high levels of holistic well-being (Sieberhagen, 2011; Hoert, Herd, & Hambrick, 2018). Business

communities are becoming more aware of the importance of the concept of well-being and how, if not managed, it can have a negative impact on employee's productivity levels and staff related costs to organisations overall (Kenny, 2014). The value of the implementation of an EAP programme has grown significantly with a study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) Health Research Institution in 2014, showcasing that among the Fortune 50 companies, 38 had invested in employee healthcare (Walsh, 2015). Emphasis has been placed on initiating programmes in organisations that will improve employee well-being both from a physical and psychological perspective (South African Medical Association, 2016). EAPs are proving to have a direct influence on the bottom line of organisations and showcasing value in driving employee morale, a boost in productive behaviour and benefit towards increasing resilience (Khol, 2016).

The EAP professional body, Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa (EAPA - SA) has highlighted the influence that well-being programmes have within organisations. Some benefits highlighted have touched on the ability to use an EAP as a strategic tool to not only develop employees but to further assist in the retention of employees by proactively allocating support interventions where and if needed. The cost reduction and benefit associated from absenteeism management as well as an increase in productivity, directly speak to the bottom line of organisations. Programmes further assist in the relief of psychosocial life management and include a holistic approach to ensure the service is offered not only to the employee but also to their direct family members to improve overall work performance (Raijn, 2012).

2.1.1 The Role of Manager from an Employee Well-being Perspective

Literature speaks to the managerial role regarding well-being programmes from a strategic support perspective, echoing the need for managers to not only support EAPs but to be committed to the programme (Human Resource Institute, 2011; Forbes, 2013). Research further unpacks the role of middle and upper management to act as change agents within organisations to not only support but assist in embedding Health Promotion Programmes within their organisations (Justesen, Eskerod, Christensen&Sjøgaard, 2017). A study conducted in Poland reviewed workplace well-being under a banner of 'Unlocking the Power

of Company Caring', (Everyday Health Inc. & Global Well-being Institute, 2016). This study emphasised the role of manager and leader being positive role models needing to focus on more of what the employee deems as support under a well-being banner. Another study conducted in South Africa, further places emphasis on the importance of leadership in supporting well-being (South African Public Services Commission report, 2016).

With further studies conducted by the Public Services Commission, it was highlighted that EAPs' effectiveness and level of implementation within an organisation correlated directly with the commitment of leadership within the organisation identified. According to research conducted by the Human Resource Institute (2011), as published in the Wellness Leadership White Paper, leaders are critical in driving the benefits and story of employee well-being and acting as key role models to drive employee well-being engagement. The paper further echoes the need for leadership to drive multi-dimensional well-being models within organisations as well as ensure that well-being programmes add culture change strategies to the organisational vision of the company to drive new and healthy behavioural outcomes.

The Wellness Leadership White Paper refers to six (6) aspects to consider when developing/transforming well-being leadership (Allen, 2011) to drive employee well-being within organisations. These aspects touched on leadership behaviours that highlight the need for managers to create a well-being business case and drive awareness within organisations. It further speaks to the need for managers to encourage employees to drive well-being from a champion's perspective to invigorate energy and well-being support across business (Amaya, Mazurek Melnyk, Buffington & Battista, 2017). It appeals to managers to enable the implementation of well-being programmes to ensure relevant support structures are in place to drive effectiveness of programme utilisation and business delivery as an output. It discusses the importance of creating an environment that fosters and develops positivistic strength-based approaches to build on employees' strengths and skills to foster ongoing well-being. Lastly, the literature reinforces the importance of leadership to drive well-being from a data driven and analytical perspective to make key informed decisions about their employees and organisational strategies (Akesk, 2018). Therefore, the effectiveness of EAPs depend on top management for involvement, support, setting of clear goals, aims and objectives,

effective communication and clear measurement and evaluation of support measures (Mazur & Mazur-Matek, 2016).

As per the literature review, the role of the manager that previously focused on referral agent support only, has moved into a strategic role, allocating the manager as a critical pillar in the support, success, implementation and utilisation of well-being support initiatives in organisations based on literature and findings.

2.2 Research objectives:

2.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the role of managers in Employee Assistance Programmes in supporting well-being initiatives within the organisation.

2.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives were:

- To conceptualise the role of managers from an EAP perspective within a South African context.
- To understand the current orientation of employee well-being and the role of a manager from an EAP perspective.
- To understand the view of the managerial role within an EAP from the orientation of a well-being specialist / subject matter expert.
- To understand the positioning and influence organisational artefacts such as policies and EAP reports define and position the role of manager within an organisation from an EAP perspective.

2.3 Research Design

2.3.1 Research Approach

Due to the nature of the case study, qualitative methods of research application were used. A qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts using a variety of data sources to unpack the research topic at hand. A key defining factor for the use of a case study approach in this study was the ability to use different sources of data to enhance data credibility. Data sources included but were not limited to, organisational documentation, supporting policies, interviews and training material artefacts. Data sources are ultimately seen as a supporting piece of work that contributes towards the researcher's overall research topic at hand, Baxter and Jack, (2008). Baxter and Jack, (2008) emphasised the need for a case study approach when wanting to address research questions relating to understanding the potential 'why' or 'how' questions associated to the research topic at hand or when the boundaries between the research phenomenon and context are not clear. It is further typically used to study and explore contextual conditions relevant to the proposed research study or to ensure that behaviour of participants in the study cannot be manipulated. Therefore, a case study through a qualitative approach was applied for the proposed research question.

2.4 Research Method

2.4.1 Literature Review

A complete literature review regarding the research topic was conducted to gather information on the key research questions at hand. The literature review's key aim was to provide an overview of existing publications and current research available to further unpack the evolution of well-being in South Africa and unpack the role of manager within this domain of research. Electronic searches for material was the primary source of review over a data base that consisted of but was not limited to the North West University (NWU) data base, Ebscohost, American Psychological Association (APA), Harvard Business Review, South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) and Google Scholar. Published text books and updated web information were also consulted to further supplement research findings.

2.5 Research Setting

The research study was conducted on the working premises of the organisation identified for the case study. Interviews were administered in quiet, clean meeting rooms with adequate lighting and air conditioning. The researcher ensured that the meeting rooms had comfortable chairs and tables and that the necessary recording equipment was set up prior to the research interviews starting. Interviews were prepopulated in participant diaries prior to the interviews to ensure convenience of participants' schedules to participate as well as to ensure minimal disruption to daily operational tasks.

2.6 Research Sampling

The process to select individuals to participate in a research study is referred to as sampling, (Gravetter&Forzano, 2003). Individuals were identified through referral selection across the researcher's current working network. Therefore, purposive sampling, a main technique of non-probability sampling, was used as a method to select participants based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study (Etikan, Musa, &Alkassim, 2016). In the case of this proposed study, access to the individuals who participated in the sample group were accessed through working relationships already established within the working environment of the researcher. The sample participants were identified according to the criteria of active association with the working environment identified as well as involvement with the organisation's established EAP. Conflict of interest from a researcher perspective was addressed by the researcher by ensuring key characteristics that needed to be considered and upheld to create the research sample group were adhered to from a sample group perspective. Further conflict of interest was addressed by the review of the sign-off of information gathered by each research participant to ensure accuracy of data collected in order to avoid research bias.

The criteria for the sample pool of participants were defined accordingly to the following characteristics:

- **Line Managers** within the identified organisation – a manager is defined as an individual who is responsible for controlling or administering support to an organisation or team to achieve desired organisational goals (Kotter, 2000). For the study, individuals who are deemed managers within the organisation will have to have a team / employee report directly to him / her to support with a minimum of 3-5 years' experience within the organisation.
- **Well-being Subject Matter Experts (SME)** within the identified organisation – an individual is deemed an SME based on their knowledge over a specific domain or topic within their related field as a job or skill (Reh, 2018). For the study, Employee and Organisational well-being experts working within the field of employee and organisational well-being will be deemed an SME to support the key aims of the research questions. SMEs identified need to have a minimum of 5 years' experience within the organisation with a qualification in Human Sciences and supporting qualifications in Employee Assistance Programmes and / or well-being training.

The quantity of the sourced sample group consisted of 5 SME's and a 6th SME who assisted with the critical unpacking of the supporting organisational well-being artefacts. Interviews were conducted with 6 managers. 7 managers were contacted and 1 manager withdrew from the interview process. Therefore, the sample group consisted of 13 participants ($n=13$). Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics for the research participants.

Table 1: Characteristics of research participants (n=13)

<u>Item:</u>	<u>Category:</u>	<u>Frequency:</u>	<u>Percentage:</u>
Gender	Male	3	23%
	Female	10	77%
Race	Black African	3	23%
	White	6	46%
	Coloured	1	8%
	Indian	3	23%
Tenure	0-3 years	1	8%

4-6 years	5	38%
<7 years	7	54%

Table 1 above indicates that there was a total of 13 ($n=13$) research participants who participated in this research project. The sample group was divided by gender with a percentage allocation of 77% females and 23% males who participated in this study. Most of the sample group represented a White race demographic of 46% with a split of 23% for Black African as well as an additional 23% for Indian participants. The coloured demographic was made up of 8%. Tenure lastly, was represented within the sample group of 8% holding a (0-3) year tenure. An additional 38% of the sample held a (4-6) years tenure and lastly 54% of the same group has had more than (>7) years' experience.

2.7 Data Collection Methods

The key aim of the study is to investigate and better understand the role of managers within the context of an EAP. Data were recorded through the facilitation of interviews from two different sets of research participants as well as a review of supporting EAP artefacts to gain further insight into the research questions proposed.

Interviews is a common form of data collection within Qualitative research studies and take on the form of semi-structured, lightly structured or in-depth interviews (Jamshed, 2014). For the case study, a semi-structured interview process was facilitated by the researcher. The interviews consisted of set questions, that were carefully worded and arranged to ensure that each respondent was taken through the same sequence of questions to facilitate the same experience of open dialogue and engagement. Participants were contacted via email to explain the research objectives and process of the research initiative. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were provided with signed permission from the organisation to conduct the research, the ethical clearance letter from the North West University (NWU) ethics committee, as well as participant consent forms via email prior to commencement of the research. Interviews with participants were scheduled by means of electronic diary invitations. Availability of participants was pre-discussed telephonically and confirmed via Outlook Scheduling Assistant to ensure confirmed availability for the scheduled interview sessions. Interviews with participants were conducted for a period of 30 -40 minutes focusing on the key research questions and EAP perception from each participant.

2.7.1 Questions positioned to the relevant participant pool were as follows:

Interview questions to managers:

- What is the current experience / perception of the EAP from a managerial perspective?
- What do managers consider as critical EAP roles / functions?

2.7.2 Interview questions to EAP specialists / SME's:

- What do EAP specialists / SMEs consider as critical roles / functions of managers within an EAP offering to employees?
- What according to the EAP specialist / SME is the status of managerial engagement of the EAP within the organisation currently?
- What contributing factors could be identified enablers of this managerial engagement?
- What contributing factors could be identified as barriers of this managerial engagement?

Supporting artefacts in the form of an EAP report, EWP related organisational policies as well as EWP organisational well-being training for managers. Artefacts were reviewed alongside the interviews conducted with line managers and EAP subject matter experts as additional sources of well-being related information. Information received from artefacts were included in the thematic analysis research process to further identify key themes and patterns in the data received, if relevant. The aim was to therefore ensure that feedback collected across the data sources provided would accurately address the key research objectives identified.

Artefacts that were reviewed as critical sources of information are as follows:

- Substance Abuse Policy; including a managerial check list to determine behavioural support needed
- HIV / AIDS Workplace Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy

- Occupational Injuries and Disabilities
- Well-being Managerial Training manual
- EAP internal reporting

What was noted from the research conducted is that the organisation did not have a dedicated EAP / EWP policy internally. The organisation uses supporting policies as listed above, to offer the well-being related support to managers and employees from a situational perspective. A dedicated SME from a respective business unit within the organisation provided clarity on each of the policies and EAP reporting to contextualise the artefacts' information correctly.

2.8 Recording of Data

Prior to the interview commencing, each participant had time to discuss the consent form with the researcher and to highlight any challenges, questions or concerns regarding the research study proposed. The researcher allocated time to discuss each consent form line item as well as to emphasise how the data would be recorded and stored from a confidentiality and ethical perspective with each participant. Otter AI was used as the recording device to record and verbatim transcribe the interview session(s) conducted. The process notes were saved in a Microsoft PDF format and the voice recordings were saved in an audio file directly from the programme. All data collected during the research project were saved password protected on the laptop of the researcher. All process notes and supporting artefacts were destroyed with the successful transcribing and coding of data for the intended research project.

2.9 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that is used to analyse data to identify themes or patterns of information that relate to the data collected (Ibrahim, 2012).

Thematic analysis was applied as the primary source of data analysis which assists in identifying key patterns and or themes within a qualitative data set (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Manual coding of data using Microsoft Excel was used to conduct the thematic analysis and coding of the data to examine the presence of repetition and theme emergence of specific words and phrases used by the sample group and artefacts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Repetition of data is also known as data saturation. Data saturation speaks to the event at which no additional themes are found from reviewing of successive data in relation to a specific category that has been identified (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014).

Research across the participant pool of 13 research participants' interviews was finalised with a clear sense of data saturation from the interview questions conducted. Additionally, the artefacts collected throughout the research process were analysed from a thematic perspective focusing on key aspects such as how and for whom the document is / was created, the key purpose of the document positioned, and what information is included and not included in the document(s) from a well-being perspective (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

2.10 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

To ensure the quality of data obtained through the research process, key checks and processes were put in place to safeguard the quality of information obtained as per the key qualitative features of a case study:

- *Quality from a case study process perspective:* Honouring a case study approach, all information obtained from a data quality perspective is always used to address specific research questions at hand, Baxter and Jack, (2008).
- *Quality from a data gathering perspective:* The analysis process positioned in the research ensured that all data was checked and cleaned to ensure accurate interpretation of the aspects of the data gathered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004).
- *Process notes:* Process notes of clean data were provided to each research participant to ensure the correctness of data captured and reinforce trustworthiness of the information provided for thematic analysis purposes.
- *Addressing conflict of interest:* The process of participant sign-off will further aid to the avoidance of conflict of interest from a researcher perspective working at the identified organisation.

- *Confidentiality of data obtained:* All data gathered through the research process was saved through password protected functionality and saved on password protected research devices(s) to ensure that researched gathered and confirmed by participants is safeguarded for analysis purposes as previously highlighted.

2.11 Reporting

The researcher followed the guidelines for writing a qualitative manuscript as set out by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP).

Feedback of results was provided to engaging participants in a meeting for Line Managers and a separate meeting for Subject Matter Experts as working groups. Feedback was provided in a PowerPoint format highlighting the purpose of the research, the research process and engagement as well as critical themes, sub themes and recommendations to the organisation.

2.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval for the allocated research study was received from the North-West University's Economic Management Sciences Research Committee. A letter of ethical clearance was received with an ethics reference allocation of (NWU-00756-19-A4). The study was further deemed as a minimal risk study. Prior to research commencing it was imperative that each research participant was provided with a completed and signed off letter from the organisation granting permission for the case study to commence. The ethical clearance letter was also provided to each research participant to ensure that participants were aware of the academic ethical process and permission granted to continue with the minimal risk study.

Consent forms were tailored to address the specific research need identified by the research project. Consent forms were circulated to each research participant prior to the study and explained in further detail before the research interview process commenced to ensure that all queries and concerns were addressed by the research participant. Written consent was obtained from all research participants prior to the commencement of the data collection

process. Data obtained were treated with confidentiality and safe guarded accordingly to ensure that the rights of the research participants were upheld.

2.13 Findings

The results of the qualitative interviews will be discussed in this section under specific headings.

2.13.1 Managerial findings:

The following table is a summary of the qualitative feedback received from managers during the interview process.

Table 2: Research Objectives: Managerial perceptions of the EAP

Theme:	Sub Theme:	Response:
Programme Engagement	Overall programme perception	“it seems to be as in when needed by the employee.” (Participant 1)
		“It’s a good programme” / “Good that staff can go and talk to someone.” (Participant 2)
		““works for the people who are taking it seriously.” (Participant 4)
		“did a referral - employee didn’t feel they get the support.” (Participant 3)
		“To be honest, I haven't personally engaged with the program.” (Participant 1)
		“So, I haven't used it myself.” (Participant 3)
Awareness and Communication	Comfort and ease of service of use – telephonic versus face to face Communication across different platforms regarding	“Telephonic engagement is not always comfortable. Telephonic process is not as human as you want it to be.” (Participant 6)
		“More face to face engagement regarding ICAS and the support. Telephonic support is awkward in the open office space.” (Participant 5)
		“it’s kind of a mixed bag, it’s not spoken about enough”. It’s not out there enough, you hear about ICAS, and it’s got a big negative perception”. Focus

	the service offering to the organisation and employees	is just about going to gym, wellness in its totality - holistic wellness does not come through.” (Participant 5)
	Training and Awareness	“No banners on floor of telephone numbers available - Managers will have the necessary details and or electronic portal perspective details are there. From a physical perspective the service offering is not marketed.” (Participant 1)
	Label of programme stigma	“asking for help comes across as shameful. As managers we should be killing that stigma. Maybe by ourselves being vulnerable.” (Participant 5) “Sometimes people are ashamed of using the facilities available to them.” (Participant 6)
Trust Concerns	Lack of trust confidentiality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee to Manager relationship • Urban to non-urban areas 	“Lack of trust in HR - referral was made to HR.” (Participant 5) “confidentiality issues not about information being leaked from a program itself it's about me as a manager; I might discuss it with another manager, they think that the manager is going to discuss their challenge with other managers, and then eventually that issue will come out.” (Participant 4) “Confidentiality often is a concern for staff” “staff don’t always feel comfortable to use these services” “concern that the well-being support will be punitive, reinforces the stereotype.” (Participant 6) “concern regarding confidentiality in smaller towns versus the city.” (Participant 7)
The Manager as an enabler of the EAP process	Managerial responsibility to ensure adequate support and resources to utilise the offering optimally	“walk the walk and not just walk the talk to understand the service offering.” (Participant 5)
	Programme utilisation is driven through quantifiable data to support performance and	“Links to the reason of absenteeism.” (Participant 7) “measure employee behaviour and changes to showcase impact. Regular interventions need to be tracked before and after – we need to measure

		work-related challenges		something.” (Participant 3)
Managerial Care	Self-	Managers referral utilisation of service offering	self- and the	<p>“asking for help comes across as shameful. As managers we should be killing that stigma. Maybe ourselves, being vulnerable.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“I have used the service positively, for myself and for my family (Participant 6)</p> <p>“to be honest I haven’t personally engaged with the service offering “(Participant 2)</p> <p>“managers need to care; they need to put the work in themselves” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“so i haven’t used it myself” (Participant 3)</p>
Employee Self-care		Employees to utilise the service offering for own support – assisted verse non assisted referral		“it depends on the individuals themselves if they are going there for the right reasons, so if you go in there knowing that you are going to get help from it.” (Participant 4)

Table 2 research findings summary:

The above table provides insight into the managerial view or key perceptions of the EAP programme. The EAP service offering within the selected organisation encompasses the confidential outsourced counselling offering to the organisation and employees that is available through a selected EAP provider. The EWP programme offering encompasses mental, performance and physical wellness awareness support and advisory services to managers and employees, including training and communication support where needed to provide support to employees, teams and the organisation at large.

Overall managers are comfortable with the service offerings provided to them and staff. Some managers have used the service offering and personally and or through an employee referral process and found the offering useful. Many managers however are concerned regarding the awareness, communication and general marketing of the service offering to employees within the organisation. Managers feel that the service offering is an important

benefit and value add to staff members, but not enough is done within the organisation to promote the service offering or create visibility around the full scope of support available to employees through a lens of well-being. Some managers echoed the use of the utilisation reports and data / wellness trends to equip them as managers to better understand and manage their employees. Currently visibility of these reports is not being cascaded to lower levels of management within the organisation.

The stigma regarding the offering from a mental health perspective and lack of trust in confidentiality is a perceived contributor of lower engagement levels of the programme, according to managers. The lack of trust is not in the counselling provider but in the referral agents within the organisation to support with assisted referrals into the EAP programme. Managers perceive the role of Human Resources (HR) to be a supportive enabler of this process within teams and the organisation and do not feel supported in this regard. Some managers felt it was the sole responsibility of HR to be the referral agent if an employee should need relevant assistance.

**Table 2: Research Objectives: Key enablers of the EAP Programme -
A managerial perspective**

Theme:	Sub Theme:	Response:
Managerial responsibility	Human connection versus managerial functional support	“Managers want to ensure that they can add value to the wellness programme as a line manager if the employee is looking for help.” (Participant 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building rapport • Building trust 	“Don’t act like a boss when dealing with employees, focus on the management / leadership style positioned within the team. Be part of the team, don’t see yourself as being a management. Just be part of them, do what they do.” (Participant 3)
		“be available, take time to check in with staff.” (Participant 4)
		“need to be vulnerable as a manager with the team to build trust and drive the human element, engage on a personal level and support each other.” (participant 5)

		<p>“get to know your staff - take time to understand and listen to staff.” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“being the first point of contact, they should be able to notice any kind of well-being related changes happening to employees, as well as having employees feel comfortable enough to start the process with the management.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“Managers need to care, they need to put the work in themselves, but that also needs to be driven down to them at the same time. They need to feel that they've got the support.” (Participant 5)</p>
Awareness and communication	Training and engagement	<p>“the understanding of how the wellness works resides with the manager to find out what is available.” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“Need for more verbal engagement regarding the service offering to mitigate the stigma around it.” (participant 4)</p> <p>“time is a constraint to review information in the internet - make flyers available to read it on the way home.” Participant 4)</p> <p>“need for managerial training - more workshops needed” / “barrier is information or lack of information and lack of knowledge, it is often seen as the fluffy stuff versus a business imperative.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“Wellness day worked well. We need more fun stuff. Make it a little more exciting.” (Participant 6)</p>
	Perception of the EAP offering: Urban versus non-urban areas	<p>“smaller regions also have different resources in regions.” (Participant 7)</p>
Clarity of ownership of the referral EAP process	HR versus managerial role and responsibility	<p>“In HR currently there is a little bit of a gap. It seems like if they will assist to a certain point, and then they will kind of pull back. And you have to constantly ask, Can I do this? Or how do I do this, or they will slip in when I think that matters may be more serious.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“HR should be driving the offering - managers need to trust HR to support the employees should there be</p>

		issues.” (Participant 6)
Employee responsibility / accountability	Employee self-care and engagement	“it’s up to the employee to pick up their hand. So ultimately, you can’t force someone to take help.” (Participant 1) “employee needs to take responsibility of the service offering that is available to them.” (Participant 6)
Managing organisational demand versus the human element	Managerial approach to people and operational delivery	“as line managers we are so focused on work related issues that we put our staff aside. If you do not make time for them, you won’t know the real issues.” (Participant 2) “there are organisational demands or environmental challenges like strikes, but we are still expected to be at work, there are risks associated and we forget about the human element.” (Participant 5)

Table 3 research findings summary:

The abovetable provides insight into the key enabler’s managers perceive as critical success factors to enable the wellbeing programme available to managers and employees alike.

First and foremost, managers reinforced a need for leadership to showcase behaviours of care, trust and humanised engagement when working with employees. Managers acknowledged a key need for leadership to take responsibility of taking time to build trusting and caring rapport with staff members so that employees feel comfortable to engage with managers should personal challenges start to impact on their working performance of if employee support is needed.

Managers also spoke ofthe perception that work, business results and delivery are more important than employees and employee’s well-being related needs. Employees spoke of political factors that have made it challenging and dangerous to be at work at times, yet, managers keep staff at the offices during times of political action and only send staff home when situations escalate, potentially at the risk of the safety of the employee. Managers recommended a culture shift of “*people come first*” that needs to be evident from a leadership perspective to cultivate a culture of trust, support and humanised engagement.

Managers echoed a need for communication, awareness training and development to fully understand the well-being service offering that is available to them and to employees. Managers highlighted that initiatives such as wellness days create positive awareness, but

only take place annually. Managers want to be empowered to engage with staff members from a place of knowledge and potentially personal experience with the service offering to understand the full value add of the service available. Some managers highlighted the value of having sight of the EAP / EWP organisational report trends to understand how they can better manage their teams and employees. Most manager did not know there was a report available. Lack of knowledge, training and communication is a critical gap for managers.

An area of concern regarding roles and responsibility was evident in the findings. Managers feel strongly that Human Resources (HR) need to play more of a support role with regards to the assisted and non-assisted referrals. Managers perceive the referral process as the role of the HR business partner more so than that of the manager. This theme could be due to lack of training or awareness of the service offering and the role that managers can play when supporting an employee with a well-being related matter.

2.13.2 Research Objectives: Subject Matter Expert (SME) perceptions of the EAP.

The following table is a summary of the qualitative feedback received from Subject Matter Experts (SME) during the interview process.

Table 3: Qualitative feedback: Overall Programme Perceptions - Subject Matter Expert findings

Theme:	Sub Theme:	Response:
Awareness, communication & education	Training & awareness through different platforms	“enablers’ courageous conversation and the eyeball to eyeball discussion - one on one discussion” / “training of the line manager in terms of how to engage number one.” (Participant 1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial Workshops • Electronic access to information 	“there’s a push on early intervention, and it does mean that managers are actively engaging and accessing support for their staff.” (Participant 2)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onsite well-being facilities • Managerial Training 	“running the manager training quite regularly.” (Participant 3)
	‘identifying the	“Need for managers / immense need and a hunger for line managers to understand how to deal with these

	<p>at-risk employee'</p>	<p>things ...aren't always simple answers to wellness related issues.'" (Participant 1)</p> <p>"Looking at the provider to support the employee in such a way to give them or provide them with tools to manage their day to day challenges." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"Awareness of support avenues: Training and information that lives on the internet "we bring it to you." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"line managers struggle with a courageous conversation. In other words, sitting down with an employee listening to or hearing what the underlying issues are and then how to respond and how not to respond to certain things. So, managers are appointed without being sufficiently skilled in that environment." (Participant 1)</p> <p>"Manager need to be au fait with the offering of the organisation." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"Average manager is ill equipped for strong challenges in the EAP space." (Participant 5)</p> <p>"But does that mean that all managers just need to be trained as counsellors? No, not at all. They simply need to be trained to be able to sit and listen. Stand and read that situation. Create a space for managers to become comfortable when dealing with the 'snot entrane' (snot and tears)." (Participant 1)</p>
	<p>Strategic business partnering for utilisation engagement</p>	<p>"I think that that creation of the model has been instrumental in the shift because it's been owned predominantly by business and HR, and we think it is a very, very, very strong partnership, which we haven't had before. I think it's starting to have a really meaningful impact." (Participant 2)</p> <p>"Co-creation of a framework which pushed the importance of ownership." (Participant 2)</p>
<p>Manager enablers / areas of responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Performance Management • Managerial self-care 	<p>"People issues do not remain top of mind. People are not prompted to look at the internet to look or read up about the offering. Bring people issues into meetings and stand ups." (Participant 4)</p>

- Manager-employee rapport (the human element) “To know that performance management in itself has a very strong wellness component. Managers struggle with how to manage performance. Focus is on functional management and not people management.” (Participant 1)

““I think I’m broken already” – ‘my loyalty is to the game’ -ignorance of the warning signs that we are not coping” / “ideally, we also want greater wisdom in our managers. And having said that, they’re probably the first to need the support and the additional love and care we’re pushing to our employees, because they are as much at the receiving end of organizational challenges as the employees.” (Participant 5)

“Role of a line manager is critical - line managers actually are the people that make what we do work without the buy in of a line manager.” (Participant 3)

“First and foremost, managers are the primary source of support to their employees. I think that, while an EAP is helpful in terms of getting the professional support an EAP is not a substitute for one on one engagement, knowing your employee.” (Participant 4)

“if you think about a culture of psychological safety, one of the things that you need your leaders to be able to do is to be very aware of themselves and how they’re presenting at work. This is very positive for me. Also, a manager who practices self-care is likely to encourage those who work for them to practice self-care.” (Participant 2)

Managerial Derailers

- Training “Lack of training.” (Participant 1)
 - Demands and Capacity “Time and capacity.” (Participant 2)
 - Legislation “awareness and education about what’s available to them (managers).” (Participant 3)
- “Ignorance - not knowing the basics - dependency on HR to do that.” (Participant 5)
- “EAP is not a substitute for knowing your employee - have a relationship with your employee.” (Participant 4)

Organisational demands versus Organisational responsibility		<p>“Please, can you just care? Can you invest some time to care? They (line managers) are saying themselves that they don't have time to invest in this stuff.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“Organisational output versus people. Time capacity is a challenge.” (Participant 4)</p>
Leadership Shift		<p>“Create an environment with less of a need on managers for coping - challenging the label of managers and employees.” (Participant 5)</p>
Socio, Political, Economic & Psychosocial factors	Role of manager Impact on employee	<p>“social, political factors, psychosocial factors or play a role, and everyone, each employee interprets that or presents themselves with their own narrative around those dimensions into the workplace.” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“Fear of retribution - I think South Africa's have got a very frightening employment legislation framework. I think managers are very unprotected. I think employees' rights are held in more esteem than managers' and in that way, managers are frightened of being seen to be a manager.” (Participant 2)</p>
Employee Responsibility / Accountability		<p>“Co-creation of a framework which pushed the importance of ownership to the individual for their own well-being, to the line managers to support people on their journey as a human capital community to facilitate that.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“People love the wellness conversation. Create a safe space – it doesn't always have to be a manager. It is not always the managers responsibility to create that space. ‘it's an outdated expectation that my manager should have a parent role to me.’” (Participant 5)</p>

Table 4 research findings summary:

The abovetable provides insights into how the Subject Matter Experts (SME's) perceive the wellbeing offering within the organisation. SME's overall perceive the service offering available to staff and the organisation as a strategic people support tool. SME's have highlighted that the offering is starting to gain positive traction within the organisation with an increase in utilisation. SME's perceive strongly, and in alignment with management, that a

key role and responsibility of managers within the well-being programme is to be a proactive to support staff. SME's reinforced a need for managers to be empowered, skilled and equipped to identify 'at risk' employees as well as a need for managers to have the ability to have 'crucial conversations' with staff as a critical enabler of their managerial responsibility. Managers need to be authentic, present and practice rapport building skills that allow staff to feel cared for and supported within a world of work that is operationally orientated. However, with ongoing organisational demands, lack of capacity and time, SME's feel strongly that managers need to practice the mindfulness of self-care before they can be support agents to their own teams.

SME's highlighted a critical need for managers to attend trainings and proactively familiarise themselves with the support offering available to managers and staff alike through the different platforms and mediums made available in the organisation. A need to tailor this support for different regions was highlighted verse an umbrella approach.

Managers also have the responsibility alongside employees to understand the pressured socio, economic and political factors employees are faced with, within a South African and cultural context, in order for organisations to successfully shift the well-being related narrative in the world of work today.

2.13. Review of Research Artefacts.

The following table is a summary of the artefacts reviewed in conjunction with the interviews conducted to further reinforce or identify critical themes in the interview process.

Table 4: Supporting Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) artefacts reviewed:

Artefact name:	Key Theme highlighted:
HIV / AIDS Workplace Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference made to the EAP programme for support • Reference made to the outline of the high-level support offering • "Employee Well-being Programme: These programs deal with situations such as substance abuse, marital problems, family troubles, stress and domestic violence, as well as health education and disease

	prevention”
Sexual Harassment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reference made to the EAP & EWP in the policy, however presentation slides supporting the policy for the HR and managerial community mention the support for the well-being programme.
Substance Abuse Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key support outlining the support of the EAP & EWP programme to the manager providing a detailed process explanation of the self-referral process and managerial referral process • Assessment support / tick box support assessment to support managers through the suspected substance abuse in the workplace
Occupational Injuries & Disabilities Disciplinary Code and Procedures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference made to the outline of the high-level support offering from a contact details perspective • Reference made to the managerial support role to coach and support the employee from a performance development perspective • No reference to the EAP offering noted
Managerial Well-being Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed overview of the managerial role from a referral perspective • Detailed overview of the psychosocial support role of the manager in the workplace • Detailed over of the EAP & EWP support offering and contact details
EAP utilisation quarterly report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline or programme engagement • Outline of well-being engagement trends from an EAP perspective • Overview of the top 10 organisational issues presented in the period of review • Impact of presenting issues on work performance • Overview of managerial trends • Recommendations and way forward

Table 5 research findings summary:

The abovetable provides a high-level overview of supporting artefacts that were reviewed to better understand the role of manager within the wellbeing programme of the organisation.

Key supporting artefacts that lends itself as a direct support tool to managers to understand their role and responsibility from a well-being related perspective is that of the ‘Managerial

Well-being Training’ and the ‘Substance Abuse Policy’. These two artefacts provide a wealth of information and step by step support for managers on how to support the ‘*at risk*’ employee within the organisation. The other supporting documents speak to performance and social related factors that could influence well-being but with little reference on how to manage these situations within the organisation as a manager through the EAP / EWP programme.

2.14 Discussion

The general objective and aim of the study were to investigate the managerial role within the context of an Employee Assistance Programme to identify the gap of what the critical managerial role could and should look like within an EAP. A case study of a specific organisation was used as a key point of reference.

The *first objective* of the study was to conceptualise the role of managers from an EAP perspective within a South African context. The role of the manager within an EAP is often and most typically viewed as a referral agent within an Employee Assistance Programme (Kenny, 2014). The role of manager with regards to the success of an EAP, is discussed to be that of a strategic support role as an influential factor in organisations today (Hoert, Herd & Hambrick, 2018). Literature reinforces how leadership demonstrates the ability to strongly influence employee well-being when engagement is perceived as positive (Huo, Boxall & Cheung, 2018). Literature further suggests that managers are not only seen as the referral agent for reactive EAP support, but instead today are viewed as first line of support for employees to encourage EAP dialogue, EAP communication and awareness generation within the organisation (Van Zyl, D., October, 31 2019).

The *second objective* of the study was to understand the current orientation of employee well-being and the critical role of a manager from an EAP perspective. The research conducted showcased an understanding amongst leadership of the critical role managers hold within the engagement of a successful EAP programme. Based on literature review conducted and the research findings, it is evident that the role of manager is not just a reactive referral agent or a

business support of the programme offering, but that of manager who should offer functional and humanised support to the employee through engagements prior to the referral process as highlighted in the literature review (Allen, 2011). The managerial support role is that of a proactive nature to build rapport and create an environment of safety and support for the employee. It is through a working environment and ‘manager – employee’ relationship that fosters trust and safety, that the manager can then proactively identify the ‘at risk’ employee from a performance and support perspective (Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS), 2019).

Emerging themes highlighted from the qualitative interviews conducted from a managerial perspective were the following key areas:

- Managers have a responsibility as an enabler of the EAP to ensure that they have the necessary information, training and awareness regarding the EAP service offerings, what it entails and how they can support their employees through the EAP support lens.
- Managers have a critical role to understand their responsibility to blend a balance in managing work delivery and demands and still instil the human element in their daily interactions with staff. The key aim of this approach is to build strong rapport with employees to cultivate a relationship of trust and care.
- Managers have a critical role in the EAP programme to foster trust and confidentiality within daily interactions, for employees to trust the perception of the EAP programme. If managers breach confidentiality, employees are likely to not utilise the EAP service / support offering to avoid victimisation.
- The impact of trust and confidentiality; if not put in place, the implications this can have on the EAP programme offering.
- A need for managers to utilise the EAP offering from a self-care perspective and to be supported and cared for by the senior leadership within the organisation.
- A need for managers to understand their role and the role of Human Resources (HR) from a managerial support perspective when supporting employees in the workplace.

- A driver for employees to take personal accountability to proactively engage with the EAP service offering and to understand that the sole responsibility does not sit with the manager only.
- An outlying theme: The lens that the EAP programme is viewed through and the overall experience of the offering and resources available based in the urban as opposed to the non-urban areas can also distort the managers' and employees' view or experience of the EAP.

Managers highlighted the conscious need to have a good understanding of the EAP service offering to empower themselves and staff members to utilise the offering optimally. Managers echoed a need for more marketing, communication, training and visibility of the EAP offering to them as managers and the employees. Most managers understood the need to foster an environment of safety and care to employees within the organisation, by authentically reinforcing the human element within teams to instil and cultivate a culture where the employee trusts the manager from a personal engagement perspective to openly share concerns from a personal well-being frame of reference. The lack of trust and or impact of the breakdown of trust was highlighted as a key theme in the qualitative interviews and the impact that this can have on the stigma of the EAP offering within the organisation. What was however evident from a managerial point of view, was the ambiguity of who holds the overall responsibility of the EAP from an employee support perspective within the organisation. Some managers strongly felt that the role of support and ownership needed to be driven from a Human Resource (HR) perspective within the organisation and not by the direct line managers themselves. When the role of manager was unpacked from an organisational perspective under the banner of an Employee Assistance Programme, it was evident in the literature provided and supporting organisational artefacts, that the direct manager is the custodian of this relationship and referral process and that HR is there to support managers from a programme engagement perspective when and if needed. HR further supported line managers if severe performance management related matters arose from the well-being issues or concerns identified or raised.

A clear gap was identified by the researcher during the qualitative interviews regarding these organisational roles and responsibilities that are not fully understood by the managers. When exploring the role and responsibilities from a global perspective in comparison to an Austrian EAP provider (Optum, 2015) it is evident that managers are responsible for EAP referral, people support and development across a variety of psychosocial support avenues. It is therefore best practice of the manager to be directly involved in the referral process and EAP programme. The organisational artefacts reviewed in the qualitative research echo this sentiment but are possibly not positioned or reinforced adequately within the organisation.

The *third objective* of the research was to further understand the view of the managerial role within an EAP from the orientation of a well-being specialist's / subject matter expert. SME participants in the qualitative interviews, showcased a strong need for managers to be the first line of support for employees within the working environment to assist, support and refer employees from an EAP perspective.

Emerging themes highlighted from the qualitative interviews conducted from a SME perspective were the following key areas:

- A need for managers to be knowledgeable, familiar and comfortable with the EAP service offering
- Managers to support, care and guide employees through a lens of care and self-care for employees and self. This aspect reinforcing the need for the functional versus people support role within organisations
- Managers who need the insight to identify 'at risk' employee behaviours, have crucial conversations proactively with employees and support 'at risk' employees through the EAP as a referral and support champion
- Influence and impact on the holistic support of employees and pressures on managers to understand the impact of socio, economic, political and psychosocial workplace impact
- The need for the organisation to provide management with training and support to facilitate this role internally on behalf of and in partnership with the SME network

- Providing managers with the tools, skills and training to support staff from an EAP perspective on behalf of and in partnership with the SME network
- EAP success hinging on the need for Leadership and Senior Leadership buy in
- The critical role and impact of organisational and job demands on managers to manage delivery and results whilst still being mindful of people and the human element within organisations to maintain and develop a relationship with an employee
- The critical roles managers play to create a sense of employee care, support and trust within the organisation
- The need for managerial self-care and reinforcement of psychological safety for the manager and employee
- Theme outlier: Question the status quo of managers being a key support to employees versus employees creating the safety and support networks within their own teams and structures and take personal accountability for their wellness and needs.

Based on the qualitative interviews conducted it was evident that the role of the manager from an EAP perspective is strongly aligned to literature. According to Bruce (1990), as cited in Kenny (2014), the three (3) key responsibilities of managers within an EAP are to understand the overall positioning and functioning of an EAP within their respective organisations; to be knowledgeable regarding the full service offering to employees as a key psychosocial support platform and to understand the critical role as a referral agent for employees to the EAP. Managers therefore understanding the overall programme and strategic intent of the programme is of the utmost importance (Berry & Baun, 2010). Based on the emerging themes from the SME interviews it is evident that the role of manager first and foremost is to have the relevant and necessary knowledge regarding the service offering and also to be equipped with the necessary skills to engage with employees from a holistic well-being perspective when and if needed. What was evident in the interviews between the SME's and managers alike is the critical need for the managers, as first line of support to employees, to build and foster positive, caring and trustworthy working relationships. Managers are viewed as the relationship support custodians of the EAP to drive the strategic well-being organisational agenda in partnership with the well-being SME's and Human Resource (HR) community. It is through this partnered approach that a key increase in EAP

utilisation and managerial self-referrals can be seen in relation to the EAP interview feedback and supporting organisational artefacts reviewed through this case study.

The organisation understands its role in supporting and equipping leadership to encourage the utilisation of the EAP, by proactively engaging with line managers from a training, electronic portal and communication perspective. What is evident however, is that there is still a gap between managers, employees and the EAP organisational community to ensure clear alignment of the service offering, trainings and guidance available to them. This therefore reinforces a gap within the uptake, support and utilisation of the offering of employees and managers alike.

The view of the holistic integrated well-being model, which is strongly reinforced in literature, was also highlighted in the SME interviews. Employers are seeing the value of ensuring that employees are physically, mentally and spiritually healthy, with the aim of reinforcing optimal organisational behaviour through a holistic well-being lens (Dale & Burrell, 2014). A key differentiator in the interviews was the emphasis on social economic and political factors that further impact the well-being of our individuals in South Africa and within the South African work context (Hardijzer, C., personal communication, October, 30, 2019). This created a further complexity for managers within the working environment to understand the impact of an integrated well-being paradigm within the world of work in our country.

An outlying theme, yet impactful, was interest in the current way the EAP viewed the manager and employee relationship or support engagement. The interview challenged the thinking of the employee in finding safety, trust and care in the organisation in avenues outside of the managerial network or direct line manager organogram, to foster independent well-being support. The thinking was highlighted in interviews to draw a correlation with potential new ways of work and non-traditional engagement models that could perhaps change the way the manager-employee EAP literature defines how the managerial support role is currently viewed. The primary role of the manager within an EAP however, remains the management of employees and their work performance (EAPA, 2015; ICAS, 2019).

The *fourth objective* of the study was to understand the positioning and influence of organisational artefacts such as policies and EAP reports that are used to define and position the role of manager within an organisation from an EAP perspective. In support to the case study, artefacts were reviewed that integrate the EAP offering into governing policies, reports and training material to deduce if further themes could be deduced from the material in conjunction with the interviews conducted. As highlighted by Baxter and Jack (2008), case studies provide the researcher with the ability to use different data sources to validate the data credibility of the information reviewed.

Five (5) organisational policies were reviewed alongside managerial employee well-being training, developed specifically for the organisation. A high level EAP utilisation report was also reviewed to determine if further trends can be verified in the material.

The policies in the organisation draw a high-level contact reference to the internal programme offered through the employee assistance network, however, the only artefact that outlines specific managerial support from a managerial support and referral perspective is the Substance Abuse Policy (FirstRand Substance Abuse Policy, 2014). The organisation does not have a dedicated EAP policy in place. The organisation does conduct regular training sessions with the Human Resources (HR) and managerial community to highlight and reinforce the support offering at hand and have identified a need for other platforms to be engaged to reach the broader managerial network for training purposes. This, however, reinforces the need for managerial training and awareness creation to take place.

The managerial training echoes literature and key support needed within the organisation for managers to be equipped to identify the ‘at risk’ employees from a support perspective. This training reinforces the critical interview themes for managers to participate and engage in managerial training, awareness, as well as self-care support. The training material further reinforces the role of manager from a referral perspective and provides awareness to the manager on how to conduct a self and or managerial referral process to support employees.

The organisational EAP utilisation report themes showcase the top five (5) nature of issues or challenges addressed, present issues associated to stress, relationship issues, (personal issues), organisational issues, a need for information and resources as well as a need for personal development, Independent Counselling Services (ICAS, 2019). The emerging themes from this representation showcase an increase in the EAP utilisation overall in comparison to the previous review period. The report also highlights a direct increase in the managerial utilisation specifically, which could further emphasise the self-referral of managers as discussed in the Subject Matter Expert (SME) interviews. The need for ‘information and resources’ as represented as a top presenting problem reinforces the need for EAP information to be shared with the organisation regarding the EAP service offering.

2.15 Practical Implications

This research study aimed to investigate the managerial role from a well-being perspective within the context of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of managers within Employee Assistance Programmes. The insights gained from the research conducted can support the organisation to develop wellness support initiatives to enable managers and internal EAP programmes to enhance the current EAP service offering. The research findings speak to bespoke areas of criteria support managers need to be equipped to support employees from an EAP perspective. The research further provides rich value driven recommendations from the sample group on gaps identified that can be addressed to further enhance and improve the EAP offering going forward.

2.16 Conclusion

Within literature the role of manager as a referral agent is clearly defined to support EAP offerings within the organisation. The role of manager in the study is aligned to literature, but further reinforces the critical role managers play from a proactive humanised referral perspective to enhance the engagement of the EAP programme. The research outlines and identifies specific aspects or categories of support needed for managers to fulfil this role within the organisation. Managers, through exposed and relevant EAP training can proactively use skills acquired to support the at-risk employees within the workplace. A foundation of successful EAP engagement however is based on a need for managers to

participate not only in their functional support role but people support role that drives a humanised working engagement. The research strongly identifies support measures the organisation need to put in place to aid the manager to fulfil the role of manager within the context of holistic well-being. This support however, further includes a reference to socio, political and economic support perspectives to guide the challenges our managers face within a South African well-being context.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of conclusions as per the study conducted, according to the specific research objectives. The chapter further elaborates on the research limitations identified, followed by key recommendations for the organisation and for future research purposes.

3.1 Conclusions

The general objective and aim of the study were to investigate the role of managers in Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). The study aimed to understand the role managers could and should play within the context of employee well-being. The study identified four objectives. The study identified four objectives. The *first objective* of the study was to conceptualise the role of managers from an EAP perspective within a South African context. The role of manager with regards to the success of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), is suggested to be underpinned by the support of leadership as an influential factor in organisations today (Hoert, Herd & Hambrick, 2018). Managers are not only seen as the referral agent for reactive EAP support, but instead today are viewed as the first line of support for employees based on the manager – employee relationship to encourage well-being driven dialogue and engagement (Van Zyl, D, personal communication, October 31, 2019). Therefore, as previously highlighted, the effectiveness of EAPs within literature, depends on managements involvement from not only an awareness and support perspective but that of a strategic enabler to define and set EAP goals and objectives, reinforce communication amongst employees and the organisation (Mazur & Mazur-Malek, 2016).

The *second objective* of the study was to understand the current orientation of employee well-being and the critical role of a manager from an EAP perspective. Employee well-being programmes are positioned as a strategic imperative for organisations to address performance management challenges and offer the necessary support to the employee where needed. Well-being programmes have become a necessity in organisation that has a direct impact on the bottom line of the organisation (Kunte, 2016). These programmes however being supported and governed by health promoting leadership that reinforces the manager – employee relationship to

foster positive working relationships and environments that support well-being (Jiménez, Winkler & Dunkl, 2017).

Through the research conducted, participants echoed the need for managers to take time to get to know their employees, showcase humanised leadership behaviour and build a rapport of trust and care. The manager – employee relationship is an influential corner stone for the success of an EAP programme (Milner et al. 2013). Managers have a responsibility to build trust and confidentiality within daily interactions for employees to trust their manager, organisation and the EAP programme benefit. If managers breach confidentiality and break the trust of the employee, employees are most likely to not utilise the EAP service for fear of victimisation and ethical conduct by leadership (Wallis. K., September 23, 2019). The study highlighted a need for this behaviour as a critical corner stone for EAP's to be truly effective. It was raised as the organisational responsibility to ensure that manager have the necessary training and communication to be empowered to drive the EAP dialogue amongst employees. Through the empowerment of managerial rapport building skills and the EAP knowledge transfer, managers will be equipped to identify the '*at risk*' employee to proactively support the employee within the working environment. However, the managerial responsibility to ensure the EAP service offering information is cascaded and available to employees is as equally important. Managers need to ensure that employees are themselves empowered to understand the benefit of the EAP as well as the benefits of the service offering and how it can be used from a self and family referral perspective. This will support the need for employees to take responsibility for their own well-being within organisations and assist in mitigating the stigma or label of the EAP programme within the organisation and amongst employees.

Participants however, echoed the responsibility of the referral process and understanding of the EAP service offering to not be the sole responsibility of the manager, but to instead also include the employees taking responsibility for their own well-being with the organisation. An area of uncertainty was highlighted when looking at the role and responsibility of the manager and that of the Human Resource (HR) practitioner. A perception was strongly held amongst most of the managers that the referral process was the responsibility of HR within the organisation. This thinking was not aligned to that of the Subject Matter Expert (SME) group who reinforced the

ownership of the process and well-being to be that of the manager and employee from a self-referral perspective. The HR role providing a support role of the EAP to a manager if a manager should need the guidance from an employee referral perspective.

A concern raised by managers was the reality of the responsibility on leadership to drive the delivery of strategic business objectives whilst still being responsible for the 'people care' component within work. Managers highlighted high pressure environments with work delivery that needs attention and often takes precedence over people support orientated engagements. However, according to Bus Association Victoria (2015), the manager is at the forefront of creating healthy workplace environments with people at the centre of engagement. Managers are responsible for the embedding of policies and supporting procedures that outline the workplace support programmes offered. This therefore reinforcing the need for managerial self-care. According to Michael (2018), self-care is the practice of conscious and deliberate effort to ensure an individual look after their mental, emotional and physical health. Therefore, self-care is seen as a conscious act to take care of themselves to improve their quality of life as an individual (Lichner, Halachová,&Lovas, 2018). Managerial self-care initiatives were highlighted to ensure managerial well-being to support leadership to manage organisational and people responsibilities. Participants spoke of managers needing to not only utilise the EAP offering to engage with employees from an area of personal EAP engagement, but to also look after themselves as individuals. As stated, managers are under extreme pressure to focus on workplace delivery and demands that the well-being of their employees and self is not prioritised. Managers need to focus on their own self-care in order to support care offered to their employees.

The importance of training, allocation of resources and the accessibility of the service offering is a further accountable area of support for the manager. A need for ongoing communication that not only drives awareness, but also includes employees in ongoing consultation to review workplace practices to improve well-being and safety at work is another key function of the manager. Therefore, in alignment with literature and the interview participant feedback, the role of manager is highlighted as a critical EAP support function (Optum, 2015). Managers however, needing to integrate a balanced approach of support of business and employees alike.

Lastly an outlier in the research theme from a managerial perspective, but of importance, is the EAP programme perceptions in the urban verse non-urban areas. The perception of the EAP programme and the responsibility of the manager is perceived to be different in smaller non-urban areas verse that of urban areas / cities. Non-urban areas have fewer resources of counsellors and support options available under the EAP banner, therefore potentially perpetuating the stigma with regards to the EAP service offering amongst employees. A discussion regarding the role of manager and or leadership styles of managers in urban verse non-urban areas was also highlighted for review. The difference in leadership styles were mentioned to be more autocratic and conservative in nature in non-urban areas, verse that of leadership or managerial engagement in the cities. This awareness in thinking could also influence the engagement or potential utilisation of the EAP offering when looking at the role of manager in an urban verse non-urban context.

The *third objective* of the research was to further understand the view of the managerial role within an EAP from the orientation of a well-being specialists / subject matter expert. A strong thematic correlation can be seen between the managerial perspective and that of the SME participant group. The need for the organisation to empower managers with the relevant tools, training, communication and awareness was a strategic theme highlighted across both participant groups as a core necessity of the managerial support function. It is of strategic importance that senior leadership and management understand and buy into the strategic value-add of the EAP to create a culture of well-being and engagement. Managers need to be enabled to support staff through an EAP journey in partnership with internal business EAP support avenues, by co-creating an environment of understanding, care, trust and safety. Participants highlighted the responsibility of the employee from an EAP self-referral perspective as did the managerial participant group, however SME's reinforced the role of manager remaining a critical corner stone to drive optimal success of the service offering to support staff proactively. SME's echoed the importance of managerial self-care and support in highly stressed corporate environment. The need for managers to access and tap into relevant support structures is of the utmost importance if the organisation wants thriving employees. As discussed by Van der Walt (2018, p.1) "...thriving employees demonstrate 16% better performance and are 15% less prone to burnout than their peers, 32% of thriving employees had higher levels of organisational

commitment, and 46% of such employees reported job satisfaction”. It can therefore be seen that the well-being of an organisation and its employees, irrespective of level, has a direct impact on the productivity and well-being of a company.

Thematic outliers, but of influence, is the challenging role managers face in the South African climate today. Not only do managers need to understand the importance of the holistic psychosocial support factors that could influence an employee from a well-being perspective (Sieberhagen, Pienaar, & Els, 2011), but also need to understand the impact of socio political factors and associated challenges employees experience on a daily basis. South Africa specifically looking at impact across different areas relating to education, health, water and sanitation, macro-economic policy and political influence and the influence this has on our economy at large (Pillay, 2001). This discussion point being raised as a thematic outlier, but as a critical research aspect when looking at organisational well-being and the support offered to managers and employees in its totality.

Lastly the role of manager was challenged completely from a traditional verse non-traditional point of view by questioning the status quo of manager and their role within a well-being framework. The question was posed to understand if the model should be reviewed to adapt to ‘new ways of work’ when looking at the world of digitisation and flexible working arrangements. Do employees still need managers? Or do employees tap into support networks across an organisation through different platforms to drive their personal well-being agenda? This frame of thinking, even though being an outlier, does support the thinking across the managerial and SME participant pool for employees to take responsibility for their own well-being related needs.

The *fourth objective* of the study was to understand the positioning and influence organisational artefacts such as policies and EAP reports are used to define and position the role of manager within an organisation from an EAP perspective. In support to the case study, artefacts were reviewed that integrate the EAP offering into governing policies, reports and training material to deduce if further themes could be deduced from the material in conjunction with the interviews conducted. As highlighted by Baxter and Jack (2008), case studies provide the researcher the

ability to use different data sources to validate the data credibility of the information reviewed. Artefacts that stood out from a managerial support perspective was that of Substance Abuse policies as well as the internal well-being programme training material for managers. These artefacts provided very specific detail, checklists and guidelines to the manager on how to self-assess the 'at risk' behaviour of an employee from a substance abuse as well as general performance management perspective. The artefacts provided behavioural indicators that could assist a manager to proactively support and refer an employee. The artefacts further provided information regarding the EAP programme and the referral option available to managers for employees.

3.2 Limitations of the Research

A point of limitation was identified when conducting the research project. It was noted that managers within the organisation who had over 20 years of experience, and who suitably met the participant interview criteria, had little knowledge with regards to the EAP offering within the organisation in its totality. A managerial candidate who had been with the company for more than 25 years declined the interview a day before the scheduled session, as the participant felt ill-equipped to add value to the research project. It would have been useful to compare constructs of years of service from the sample group to knowledge and awareness regarding the EAP, to potentially identify a generational impact on the communication gap that could influence the role of manager from an EAP perspective.

3.3. Recommendations

Suggested recommendations as highlighted below can be positioned to the organisation for identified EAP support. Recommendations also further look at the research study conducted to facilitate thought for future research with regards to the managerial role within an EAP context.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation

Based on the research study, key findings have showcased a need for potential recommendations that could be of value to the organisation.

It could be suggested to the organisation to ensure that adequate training, awareness and communication is positioned to not only the managerial staff within the organisation but also to create awareness amongst employees directly. The frequency of face to face engagement blended with digital support offerings and information would be a useful starting point to generate further awareness regarding the EAP and EWP within the identified organisation. This could further assist in the self-referral process of manager and employees directly.

It can further be suggested that the organisation align all performance and behaviour related policies to the EAP where and if needed for consistency purposes. The development of a specific governing EAP and Employee Wellbeing Programme (EWP) policy would be of value to the organisation to provide a framework that integrates all other supporting policies / artefacts from a governance and employee programme engagement perspective (EAPA, 2015).

The distribution of EAP utilisation reports and key trends with senior leadership which is in turn cascaded to managers and employees to understand the importance and influence of psychosocial support and the benefit positioned within the organisation. This could further minimise the stigma attached to the service offering and create visibility for the offering and strategic value add and intent it provides to the organisation.

Managers should be provided with the necessary skills, tools and training to understand the importance of psychosocial support as well as humanised authentic interpersonal relationships to foster and create working environments that are safe, trusting and safe to reinforce the need for psychological safety.

The importance of roles and responsibility of the self and assisted referral process to remove the expectation and reliance on Human Resource within organisations to be the custodian of the EAP relationship when a referral process is positioned, should be clarified.

3.3.2 Recommendations for future research

Critical areas of additional research were identified to further support the research topic at hand. As previously discussed, research provides rich literature regarding the impact of an integrated well-being model when using the EAP. However, based on the research study it is evident that in the South African context, we do not only look at the bio-, psycho-, social or spiritual model of well-being, but that further socio-economic and political factors are reviewed to understand the stressors and challenges employees are faced with in totality in South Africa. This could further provide insight into the managerial role in the context of a South African EAP and how this might differ from that of programmes with a different socio-economic climate.

An additional research avenue could further explore the generational gap within organisations to understand the managerial perception regarding the EAP. The research could aim to understand how managers, based on years of service / tenure, view and understand their role regarding the EAP and the influential factors supporting their awareness or the lack thereof.

A research view could also be taken to understand the managerial role from an urban as opposed to a non-urban perspective and how the difference in location, based on interaction, resources and training available, could influence the engagement of an EAP.

Lastly, research could lend itself to the age of digitisation and flexible working arrangements and how this typically could influence the traditional EAP utilisation / engagement model as it currently stands today.

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