



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

CHALLENGES OF HIV AND AIDS EXPERIENCED BY WORKING WOMEN: THE ROLE AND RESPONSE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Keitumetse 'Tumi' Gladys Jantjie

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PRETORIA



DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree: Doctor Philosophiae (D.Phil) in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

.....

Date:

KEITUMETSE GLADYS JANTJIE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all strong women who are living with HIV and AIDS and all those loved ones who have died due to HIV and AIDS.

Specially dedicated to the two South African women living with HIV for more than 15 years Masias Mercy Makhalemele and Florence Ngobeni-Lee, who have inspired this study. These two women are living positively with HIV and their stories are available through the internet. (Cullian, 2000:1, Jacobs, 2000:1).



www.health-e.org.za



www.myhero.com

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SUMMARY

THE CHALLENGES OF HIV AND AIDS EXPERIENCED BY WORKING WOMEN: THE ROLE AND RESPONSE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

Within the socio-economic sphere, the development of women in the workplace is hindered by the dynamics of health and wellness issues such as HIV and AIDS, their gender dispositions and their social struggles around balancing work and family life.

Furthermore, the impact of HIV and AIDS on business has become a priority agenda to address skills attrition and absenteeism. The UN declaration of Commitment (UNAIDS, June: 2001) which prioritizes the needs of women and children, is one of the interventions as a global effort to address the millennium development goals. Through this study, the researcher had investigated, in particular, whether there are difficulties experienced by working women infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, the study investigated the role of EAP in respect of these difficulties. The study is divided into two parts: one that is exploratory in nature in which a qualitative research approach was applied through semi-structured interviews whilst the other was quantitative research in which the survey research design used a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The following conclusions were made from both the qualitative and quantitative data collected:

- Working women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS have difficulties in the work place due to HIV and AIDS.
- EAP is supporting working women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.
- There is a need for more resources to support EAP to be involved in strategic decision and business risk management.
- The business has put in place measures to manage HIV and AIDS in the workplace through HIV policy formulation and establishment of HIV and AIDS programmes.

It made sense for this research to present a picture regarding the extent of women participation in the world of work at a global level and efforts that the workplace have put in place to integrate women. Firstly the investigation defined HIV and AIDS and the intrinsic dynamics of HIV and gender. It then probed the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the workplace in terms of the impact on the business with focus on women and the difficulties they experience as HIV infected and affected women. This was the focus of this part of the study. Secondly, the role of EAP in general was investigated, with the focus on the impact of EAP with regards to HIV and AIDS and working women.

The goal of the research study was defined as:

To explore and describe the role of EAP in addressing the difficulties experienced by working women, resulting from the impact of HIV and AIDS.

The research question and sub-questions were formulated to give the study focus. The questions included:

- What role, if any, does EAP play in supporting HIV infected and affected women in the workplace?
- What is the perceived role of EAP in supporting HIV infected and affected women?
- What is the perceived role of HIV infected women with regard to the effectiveness of EAP related to HIV and AIDS in the workplace?
- What are the difficulties of running a functional EAP service in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- What are the feelings of HIV and AIDS infected and affected women in their workplace?

The study identified the type of research as applied research. Two phases of the study were carried to understand the challenges of working women with HIV and AIDS faced and the response of EAP. The first was a qualitative study, exploratory in nature, which focused on a sample of women who were either infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. This part of the study aimed to understand their perceptions and experiences of the challenges they faced at work. Furthermore it aimed to understand how they experience and interface with EAP. In the qualitative study, the aim was to understand the role and response EAP has made in South Africa particularly in relation to HIV and AIDS but with specific focus on working women. A case study research design was followed to gather data regarding attitudes, perception and experiences directly from respondents in their natural environment. The aim was to understand and interpret the meaning they give in relation to EAP in their workplace.

A non-probability sampling method was used for the qualitative study. In this part of the study, a purposive sampling strategy was used and data was collected through semi-structured interviews of a sample of 24 working women (12 HIV infected and 12 affected by HIV and AIDS).

The exploratory research findings confirmed that women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS do have difficulties in the workplace due to HIV and AIDS. The difficulties included psychological, financial and time lost due to HIV and AIDS. It further confirmed that the extent of the difficulties leave women with mental health issues and hopeless feelings, in some cases suicidal. The difficulties were further intensified by the perception that stigma is the key barrier to disclosure and business intervention strategies. All women had used EAP and found it useful during their difficulties. However, they found the role of EAP as positively evident at an individual level to address women's needs in counselling, however at a company level women did not think EAP was addressing their needs to impact business changes.

In the quantitative part of the study, a non-probability sampling method was used based on convenient sampling. There was however a replacement sample used based on a target sampling method for spoilt questionnaires. The quantitative part of the study confirmed the perceptions of the women that were affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. The quantitative study indicated that women were using EAP for HIV and AIDS counselling. The services of EAP that the women used assisted them with issues related to mental health difficulties, especially for depression and bereavement. In addition EAP practitioners were offering practical help such as home visits and referral to other services. The results further indicated a need for more resources to make strategic input and leadership involvement at a business level.

The goal of the study and study objectives were achieved and are presented together with detailed recommendations in the research report.



KEY WORDS

HIV and AIDS

EAP

EAP models

Business

Strategies

Gender

Working women

Troubled employee

Prevention

Care

Pandemic

GLOSSARY

HIV	Human Immune Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CD4	A glycoprotein expressed on the surface of T helper cells
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
SABCOHA	South African Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS
GBC	Global Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS
HEARD	Health Economics and HIV and AIDS Research Division
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprises



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