

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES OF CORPORATE
CLIENTS OF AN EXTERNAL EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMME (EAP) SERVICE PROVIDER**

by

Nevania Naidoo

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SUPERVISOR: Prof. L.S. Terblanche

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Abstract

This study explores monitoring and evaluation as a critical element in the success of any EAP. This forms part of Standard 27 in the EAPA-SA standards document. The monitoring and evaluation of the EAP in an organisation refers not only to the individual employee but also to the work organisation and the impact, success, and value of the programme within these two spheres. In recent years, EAPs have been recognised for returning employees to higher levels of efficiency and productivity as a result of the brief therapy offered. In order to maintain this recognition, it is critical for EAPs to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness in terms of both employees and the organisation.

This study is based on General Systems Theory and is of a qualitative nature. As is consistent with qualitative research, the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning that participants attach to the evaluation of EAPs. This was done by interviewing identified role players, often being those dealing with the EAPs in their organisations. The sample was taken from the client base of a leading EAP service provider and each client was approached to participate voluntarily in the research.

The sample size was a total of twelve participants, however the researcher took saturation levels into consideration and therefore a total of ten participants were interviewed.

The results of the research highlighted that, in the represented population, there is wide use of monitoring and evaluation processes. The results of these processes are used for various reasons, at different levels of the organisation and are often associated with the success and continuation of the programme. The researcher found that, whilst monitoring and evaluation takes place, standardisation is lacking and a number of clients have mentioned the need for standardised definitions and processes as well as an automated system. It is, therefore, recommended that

further studies take place with clients of other service providers and that a process of standardisation be considered by EAPA.

Key Concepts

Employee assistance programme (EAP); internal EAP model; external EAP model; monitoring; evaluation, return on investment (ROI).

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Chapter 1: General background of the study

1.1 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation is a core technology of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), yet it is a much neglected area. According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2010: 18), the reason for engaging in monitoring and evaluation is “to allow the organisation to judge the programme’s progress and usefulness and to identify the need for programme modifications”.

By not engaging in active monitoring and evaluation or even benchmarking, EAPs run the risk of being seen as a “nice to have service” rather than as a business imperative. The absence of benchmarking and techniques for monitoring and evaluation can lead to the perception that, as a programme, EAP is not an essential part of a business’s goals and objectives and, more importantly, that it is not in line with an organisation’s vision (Amaral, 1999:161).

In the event that proper monitoring and evaluation does take place, an organisation can maximise the benefits of the programme and services as well as save costs and maximise the return on investment in the programme. Various strengths are associated with monitoring and evaluation and, therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the monitoring and evaluation of external EAP service providers as practiced by corporate clients as well as to explore the reasons why monitoring and evaluation is not being carried out.

The following concepts are used regularly in this research study as defined below.

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs): EAPs, in their earliest form, were defined as “programmes which aim to link employees with personal problems to appropriate resources in order to prevent or improve a deteriorating job performance” (Mthethwa, 2000: 2). This definition refers to a programme that assists employees with their personal issues to ensure that their job performance improves,

indicating that EAPs have a business outcome. Since then, the definition of EAPs has expanded to include the fact that there are specific, core technologies which must be used if the outcome is to be achieved. This is evident in the following definition (Attridge, Herlihy & Maiden, 2005: 3):

Employee assistance is the work organisation's resource that utilizes specific core technologies to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues.

Based on the above definitions, an EAP is a programme implemented within an organisation which can be used to serve both the employees and the employer. This is done through the implementation of specific, core requirements.

Internal EAP model: An internal model operates with the staff of the employer (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2010: 4).

External EAP model: According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2010: 4), an external model is one which makes use of a service provider selected and employed by the employer.

Monitoring: is defined by the Business Dictionary (2014) as "supervising activities in progress to ensure they are on course and on schedule in meeting the objectives and performance targets".

Evaluation: can be seen as a method of determining the changes that occur as a result of a planned programme. This is done by comparing actual changes (results) with desired changes (stated goals) as well as identifying the degree to which the planned programme is responsible for the changes (Mnisi, 2005: 35).

1.2 Literature overview of the concept Employee Assistance Programme

With the ever-changing environment and complexities of work and social life, people experience various degrees of stress and distress in both areas. As a result, many organisations have noticed that stress and distress have negative consequences for people as employees, affecting their productivity and ultimately having an impact on the functioning of the organisation as a whole. To mitigate these factors, most organisations have recognised the need to implement workplace programmes to assist employees and their immediate dependents in dealing with crucial issues in a constructive manner, so that the negative impact on the organisation is minimal. These programmes have become known as employee assistance programmes (EAPs).

EAPs began in the late 1970s because many employees were experiencing alcohol-related problems, which led to absenteeism, presenteeism and poor performance, which affected their productivity as a whole (Gornick & Blair, 2005: 9). Over the years, the need for the programmes has changed, with organisations realising that not only alcohol-based problems but also various life factors have an effect on employees in the workplace. It was with this in mind that EAPs have been developed in organisations.

As noted in the definition, the EAP is a programme run by the organisation and is based on core technologies, which provide a framework for the way in which EAPs should be run (EAPA Standards Committee, 2010: 1; Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 10). These core technologies also ensure that protocols are developed and implemented according to best practice. According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2010: 1), the core technologies are:

- Training and development.

- Marketing.
- Case management.
- Consultation work with the organisation.
- Networking.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

1.2.1 EAP models

These core technologies must be present and adhered to in order to run a successful EAP. A further development in EAPs since the 1970s model is that organisations can now make use of more than one service model. For the purposes of this research, the external model is studied in more detail, but the definition of the internal (in-house) model is provided for clarity.

- Internal model: This model is used when the EAP staff is employed entirely by the company itself (Masi, 2000: 407). All services, policies and procedures are defined and finalised by an internal manager (Masi, 2000: 407).
- External model: According to the Employee Assistance Society of North America (EASNA) (2009: 18), the external model is used when an organisation has an external vendor or service provider that provides all or most aspects of the EAP. The external provider employs all of the staff required for the EAP.

The researcher obtained permission from one of the largest EAP providers in South Africa to conduct this research using their client base.

1.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation as an EAP standard

This study considered monitoring and evaluation as an element that is critical to the success of any EAP. This is evident in Standard 27 of the EAPA-SA standards document (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2010: 18). The monitoring and evaluation of an EAP in an organisation refers not only to the individual employee but also to the work place and the impact, success, and value of the programme within these two spheres (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2010: 1). In recent years, EAPs have been recognised for restoring employees to higher levels of efficiency and productivity as a result of the brief therapy offered. In order to maintain this recognition, it is critical for EAPs to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness in terms of both employees and the corporation (Keet, 2009: 6).

Various elements are linked to the concept of monitoring and evaluation within the context of an EAP. While evaluation is seen as a way of determining the extent to which predetermined goals or expectations are met as well as the relative effectiveness and efficiency of the specific activities (Emener, Hutchison & Richard, 2003: 15), it is nevertheless often found to be a much-neglected aspect of the programme. The EAP essentially deals with issues of a personal nature that are very sensitive and confidential to employees, for example, relationship issues, stress, and financial issues, many of which are not quantifiable and this often makes monitoring and evaluation very difficult.

Organisations often implement an EAP for their employees because there is an urgent need, but nothing further is done about the programme following its implementation. It has become apparent to the researcher that it is only much later, or at the time of contract renewal, that the organisation realises that it is not satisfied with certain elements of the programme or that the programme had little or no effect in bringing about the required change. At that stage, it is often too late to make any changes, which is why the monitoring and evaluation of the EAP ought to be a

continuous process during the planning and implementation phase of the programme. Amaral (in Oher 1999: 161) states that benchmarking has become an important part of total quality management, continuous quality improvement, and other quality initiatives which are essential to service industries. Amaral (in Oher, 1999:162) states further that the development of a core set of benchmarking indicators is essential and that these must be able to stand the test of time.

Further to this, the World Economic Forum realised the need to understand wellness metrics and information, which led to the development of the Workplace Wellness Alliance in 2009 (World Economic Forum, 2013: 6). The main aim of the Workplace Wellness Alliance at that stage was to collect and understand global, baseline, wellness metrics (World Economic Forum, 2013:6). It is evident from this that there is worldwide recognition of the link between employee wellness and productivity in the work place and that monitoring and evaluation, generally done through the collection of metrics, is critical.

However, a trend has developed in the EAP field recently where organisations are demanding a demonstration of the actual return on investment (ROI) in EAPs (World Economic Forum, 2013: 5). The ROI can be seen as a measure of the monetary benefits gained by an organisation over a specified period of time in return for a given investment in a particular programme (Meyer, Opperman & Dyrbye, 2003: 5). Within the EAP field, however, it is not easy to define the term "return on investment" as there are no tangible and quantifiable factors that can be measured. It is therefore important that, in the context of an EAP, the organisation is able to accept measurement of returns in terms of finance as well as in terms of other aspects of the organisation (World Economic Forum, 2013: 5).

1.2.3 Current forms of monitoring and evaluation

Researchers in the EAP field are investigating various ways in which to demonstrate ROI. Since the EAP field is embedded in the humanities and concerned with helping professions, it is often argued that there are no tangible areas that can be evaluated.

This means that EAPs have had to investigate every area of the service offering and its effect in order to prove an ROI or Return on Value (ROV) in most instances. EAP practitioners, therefore, embark on different types of monitoring and evaluation, that is, if the programme is evaluated at all. These approaches are summarised below together with the problems associated with them, as explained by the respective authors.

- **Process evaluation**

This type of evaluation is regarded as being quite complex and is used to evaluate programme use, effectiveness, satisfaction, and impact on quality of life. This type of evaluation is time-consuming as it employs methods such as surveys, interviews, focus group interviews, document reviews and pre- and post-treatment questionnaires (Csiernik, 2005b: 124). One of the problems with this type of evaluation is that it does not provide a view of the long-term effects of the programme, nor does it measure the value of the programme or explain whether the programme has been designed effectively and appropriately (Highley & Cooper, 1994: 49; Newton, Hayday & Barkworth, 2005: 7). For instance, the pre- and post-treatment questionnaire evaluates the counsellor's ability to listen and the employee's sense of being heard as opposed to the actual impact of the therapy on the employee's productivity in the long term.

- **Outcome evaluation**

This is sometimes also referred to as a cost/benefit analysis (Csiernik, 2005b: 120; Yende, 2005: 40). The areas that are usually evaluated in this approach include: absenteeism, presenteeism and loss of productivity, healthcare costs, grievances, performance, disciplinary actions, disability and insurance claims, sick leave, workplace accidents and workers' compensation claims (Yende, 2005: 40). This, in effect, is as close to an ROI calculation as most organisations will get. The areas of concern, however, include the fact that, in order to measure these factors, pre- and post- intervention data are required and often, in the researcher's

experience, this is not communicated to the organisation until it is time for the evaluation. Only then does the organisation realise that they do not have a benchmark with which to work, as most organisations do not capture such data. It is thus almost impossible to conduct an evaluation. The importance of this type of information for calculating ROI must be stated at the start of the programme and emphasised throughout.

Although the above measurements exist and are used by certain service providers and organisations, it can be seen that these methods include various problems. Apart from the issues mentioned above, the concept of monitoring and evaluation itself is fraught with problems, one of which is mentioned briefly below.

- **The concept of utilisation**

A number of service providers attempt to evaluate the programme and its success according to its utilisation; in other words, the higher the rate of use, the more successful the programme. The first and most important problem identified with this concept is that there is no universal formula for the calculation of utilisation (Csiernik, 2003: 45; Csiernik, 2005c: 110). Csiernik (2005c:1 10) points out that formulae vary according to what factors are used in the calculation. The most common include:

- the number of cases;
- the number of new cases (not sessions);
- the number of cases involving employees only;
- the number of cases involving employees and their dependents;
- the number of interactions with employees (although this would be more indicative of the rate of engagement as opposed to utilisation).

Therefore, depending on the formula used, the rate of utilisation could be exorbitantly high, based on the number of interactions, or very low, based on the number of new cases involving employees only. Therefore this cannot be regarded as an accurate evaluation tool until a standardised formula has been developed.

While EAPs have been available for a very long time, there is still a lack of research on, and models for, evaluation (Highley & Cooper, 1994: 51; Sharar & Masi, 2006: 9).

It is recommended that EAP practitioners should invest the time and effort in building the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their EAP model and interventions based on outcome or cost/benefit analyses (Emener, Hutchison & Richard, 2003: 132). The practitioners responsible for EAPs should be able to measure and provide data on the effects of particular programmes and interventions on the most prominent employee problems such as absenteeism, healthcare costs, garnishee orders, and disciplinary actions (Sharar & Masi, 2006: 9). The researcher has found that the calculation of ROI usually takes place at the end of a contract or an annual period because the programme would have been running for a while by then and sufficient evidence would have been collected to make it possible to measure the effectiveness of the programme. In order to ensure an ROI, however, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate a programme consistently. During regular audits of the programme, the various role-players can identify when the programme is failing and will not yield a return and take proactive, corrective measures.

1.3 Theoretical framework

General Systems Theory sees any system as the dynamic inter-relationship between its component parts and its whole (Flamand, n.d.). To take the theory further in terms of understanding organisations, work places can be seen as structures composed of

inter-related parts (people and things) that interact with, and are affected by, the external environment (Hammond, n.d.).

In most cases, organisations are seen as systems made up of various inter-related sub-systems or functions, which include the operational, financial, marketing and public relations functions, as well as the personnel or human resources function (Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Wyk & Schenk: 1998: 12). Each of these sub-systems is related to, and has an impact on, the others and on the functioning of the system (organisation) as a whole. Each of these sub-systems must therefore be organised, directed, and controlled in an integrated way (Prochaska & Norcross, 1999: 359; Swanepoel *et al.*, 2006: 9). If an EAP is seen in the context of Systems Theory, it would form part of the Human Resources sub-system within the organisation. The HR sub-system deals with various people and psycho-social issues, both internal and external to the organisation. Therefore, if the EAP does not function optimally, it will affect the other sub-systems and the organisation in the following ways:

- **Production:** An effective EAP usually has a positive effect on productivity, evident in reduced absenteeism and presenteeism. An ineffective EAP would therefore have either the opposite effect or none.
- **Stakeholders in the organisation:** A key function of any EAP is to help managers proactively identify employees who are experiencing personal problems which have the potential to affect productivity. An ineffective EAP would not alert managers in this way.
- **Organisation:** The organisation as a whole is affected by an ill-functioning EAP because, if productivity decreases, it ultimately has a negative effect on the organisation's bottom line.

Furthermore, in terms of Systems Theory, employees themselves can be seen as a sub-system that affects other sub-systems within the organisation, for example:

- **Colleagues/co-workers:** A troubled employee will not function optimally in terms of productivity and will put added strain and pressure on colleagues and co-workers who have to make up for the lack of productivity on the part of the troubled employee.
- **Managers:** Troubled employees often make errors on the job or have lower levels of productivity and put pressure on managers, who have to re-allocate work or deal with disciplinary processes.
- **Customers:** Troubled employees are sometimes so “involved” in their problem that they lose their temper with clients or are impatient when dealing with customers, resulting in customer complaints and poor service delivery.

In the context of this study, organisations are seen as systems of people and departments, which are not only influenced by each other but by other psycho-social elements, which affect the organisation as a whole. This research aimed to illustrate the effect of an EAP on the various sub-systems within an organisation and the impact that the lack of monitoring and evaluating an EAP can have on the organisation as a whole. This was done by using interviews that included questions about a number of sub-systems within the HR divisions of organisations, such as:

- Human Resources (HR)
- Productivity
- Managers
- Safety (in safety critical environments)
- Finance

1.4 Rationale and problem statement

While carrying out a literature review, the researcher noticed that research exists on cost/benefit analyses or evaluations of specific EAPs within specific organisations but there is a gap in the research when it comes to understanding the monitoring and evaluation of EAPs by organisations as a whole.

The intention of this study was to investigate the monitoring and evaluation element of EAPs as a core technology, as this element is seen as being critical to the successful functioning of an EAP.

Although EAPs started out as programmes to assist employees with their personal and work-related problems, research has shown that the programmes have developed into organisational tools, which not only assist employees but also have a direct effect on an organisation's bottom line by improving productivity (Csiernik, 2005a: 73; Yende, 2005: 42), this is consistent with the systems theory mentioned above which illustrates that a well-functioning EAP will have an effect on productivity as a sub-system or function within the organisation and ultimately the bottom line of the organisation. According to Keet (2009: 14) EAPs have the following outcomes:

- **Reduced turnover of staff:** This leads directly to cost savings in recruitment and training, and retains expertise and experience in the organisation. In relation to the systems theory this once again has an impact on recruitment costs and training within HR as well as a managers time in having to deal with the loss of or recruitment of new employees. This relates to the personnel sub-system/function.
- **Increased productivity:** This has a direct effect on the bottom line of the organisation.
- **Decreased health problems:** This leads to improved financial control as a result of reduced healthcare costs, reduced absenteeism, reduced presenteeism and lost productivity, and reduced labour costs. Once again, this is consistent with the systems theory, that is, if the EAP has an impact on the health of employees, this leads to a direct increase in production as

one sub-system as well as cost saving for the organisation on healthcare and absenteeism costs.

- **Enhanced employee morale:** This can lead to an organisation becoming an employer of choice.

While the above are stated as being the outcomes or the ROI of an EAP, organisations often fail to perceive these returns because there are no processes in place to measure and assess whether the outcomes are being achieved. It has become apparent that most EAP practitioners do not realise the importance of monitoring and evaluation and, therefore, tend to ignore this as a core technology. The risk of not engaging in monitoring and evaluation is that EAPs might become redundant, or be seen as not contributing to the profits of the company. In other words, the lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation leads to the inability to determine a Return on Investment (ROI) in order to justify the need for EAPs.

The role of monitoring and evaluation is to ascertain the value of the EAP and whether the programme is effective or ineffective in reaching its target audience and achieving its goals (Ligon & Yegidis, 2009: 167). In the past, EAPs have been evaluated on the basis of the following:

- **Vindication:** This is a method of justifying the need for the programme often by reporting high utilisation rates in order to prove that employees need and use the service.
- **Marketing:** EAPs are evaluated according to whether employees are aware of all their services and how to access them.
- **Verification:** Organisations require data supported by facts to show that the services are important and are being used in good faith, and often to substantiate the constant fee increases.

- **Improvement:** In an ideal world, an EAP could be evaluated according to the continuous changes and improvements made to the programme based on constant monitoring and evaluation. However, this is not always the case and, often, changes and improvements are sold with additional costs that are not affordable to the organisation.
- **Understanding:** This refers to evaluating EAPs in order to understand whether the programme is working and to discern which components are leading to this success.
- **Accountability:** The purpose of certain programme evaluations is to hold service providers accountable for the success or failure of the service. This can also mean that EAP service providers are held accountable only for what is sold to the organisation during the proposal phase, which ensures that all outcomes are met.

What is evident in all of the above processes is that there is no calculation or demonstration of a return on investment (ROI) for the organisation. What this means is that, while it is possible to demonstrate a consistent need for an EAP, there is no way of measuring the outcomes and ultimate value gained from addressing this need, which makes it difficult to build a case to retain EAP services should cost cutting be required.

Based on the above issues relating to monitoring and evaluation, the problem statement for this study was:

The lack of knowledge about monitoring and evaluation practices used by external service providers of Employee Assistance Programmes in the South African context makes it difficult to demonstrate the real value and benefits of EAPs to corporate clients.

Firstly, the researcher aimed to determine whether monitoring and evaluation of EAPs does take place. Then the following research questions were addressed.

For organisations that do engage in monitoring and evaluation:

- What monitoring and evaluation practices are used?

For organisations that do not engage in monitoring and evaluation:

- What are the reasons for not engaging in monitoring and evaluation?
- What elements hinder the process of monitoring and evaluation?

Ultimately, the research addressed the following question:

- What practices are currently being used to monitor and evaluate EAPs in corporations contracted with external service providers?

1.5 Goal and objectives

The goal of this research was to explore and describe the monitoring and evaluation practices of corporate clients using external EAP service providers.

The objectives were as follows:

- To explore the understanding that corporate clients have of the concept of monitoring and evaluating their EAPs;
- To explore the extent to which monitoring and evaluating EAPs takes place in corporations using external service providers;
- To explore and describe the areas of an EAP that are monitored and evaluated within corporations using an external service provider;

- To explore and describe the challenges faced by corporate clients with regard to monitoring and evaluation;
- To recommend best practices in monitoring and evaluating EAPs for corporate clients using external service providers.

1.6 Research methodology

The researcher aimed to understand the role of monitoring and evaluating of EAPs in organisations that make use of external service providers. This was achieved by following a qualitative approach. The nature of this research was exploratory and descriptive, because the aimed was to understand how organisations currently perceive and deal with the concept of evaluating their EAPs (Creswell, 2009: 175; Padgett, 2008: 16).

In keeping with qualitative research, the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning that participants in the research attached to the evaluation of EAPs. This was done by conducting interviews with identified role players who deal with the EAPs in their organisations. The outcome of the research was an exploratory and descriptive report that expounds the role of monitoring and evaluation and any issues associated with it (Babbie, 2004: 87; Fouche & De Vos, 2011: 89).

In addition, the researcher hoped to contribute to the field of EAP by advising on other areas of monitoring and evaluation using criteria that would be more meaningful than the current criteria, which is appropriate to an applied research study (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liac, 2004: 19) where one wishes to provide recommendations or make changes to the way things are done in a particular field. This was done and forms part of the recommendations.

In terms of research design, the focus of this research was on exploring and describing the role of monitoring and evaluating EAPs as a common concept in various organisations. This can, therefore, be seen as the “bounded system” (Delpont, Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 320). The bounded system related to the fact

that there is a common issue or concept that is faced by a number of different people or organisations, in this instance the common concept was EAP within various organisations. The researcher used a collective case study design by contacting specific organisations that have an EAP in place with an external service provider in order to compare the evaluation techniques used by these organisations, or their reasons for not monitoring and evaluating (Delport, Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 322).

The population used for this study comprised the corporate clients of an external service provider that uses a particular grading system for their clients. The grading system utilized is based on income, strategic value and size of the organisation and is made up of four grades, black, platinum, gold and silver with black the highest grade and silver being the lowest grade. The sample for the study was taken from 2 particular grades of the service provider's client base. This meant that elements of purposive, non-probability sampling were used because the participants were chosen purposefully from the two graded groups on the particular service provider's client list (Strydom & Delport, 2011: 390; Creswell, 2007: 125; Roussouw, 2003: 113).

Both systematic and stratified sampling were used in the study in that participants from the two grades of clients were listed in no particular order. The first organisation was chosen randomly and thereafter every tenth organisation was chosen (Strydom, 2011: 230).

Finally, sampling was voluntary. Each of the chosen organisations was approached for written permission to participate in the research as well as for a representative nominated by the organisation to be interviewed. Each of these nominees was then asked for written consent. (Strydom & Delport, 2011: 394).

This was followed by data collection which was done by conducting semi-structured, one-on-one interviews during which the researcher used specific questions to guide the direction of the interviews while allowing them to follow the path taken by the participants (Greef, 2011: 341; Babbie, 2004: 300). The researcher also collected

descriptive data on the behaviour of participants during the interviews (Brink, Van der Walt, & Van Rensburg, 2012: 150).

Before the interviews began, a schedule was drawn up to ensure that the process was constructive and avoided gaps in the data collected. The questions were based on specifically identified themes (e.g. lack of time to conduct monitoring and evaluation; lack of understanding of methods of monitoring and evaluation) which were then put into a sequence so that the interview flowed in a logical manner (Greeff, 2011: 352).

After the interviews, an extensive process of data analysis was undertaken. The researcher made use of a digital recorder to ensure that all data were captured accurately. The recordings were managed and filed during the interview process (Brink, Van der Walt & Rensburg, 2012: 397). The researcher also ensured that all recorded data were transcribed timeously to ensure that reflective notes and observed data were captured together with the transcriptions (Brink, Van der Walt & Rensburg, 2012: 404). During this process, the researcher identified themes and patterns which were used to code the data to simplify retrieval as the study progressed. The data analysis was not done as a once-off activity but as a continuous process which began during the interview phase with the writing of detailed, reflective notes during and after each interview (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 408). Data was transcribed and saved in specific folders according to themes, key words, and timelines which made the final analysis and report writing easier.

The coding of data took place during the interview process and was done as soon after the collection of data in the field as possible to ensure that the researcher was able to immerse herself in the data and themes (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 397) and so that codes could be given to data that had already been categorised (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 411).

In order to ensure that the analysis of the data was trustworthy, the researcher clarified all assumptions during the interview process to confirm that the participants and the researcher understood each other's messages accurately.

To ensure that the interview schedule measured what it was supposed to and was not open to interpretation, a pilot study was conducted with one EAP practitioner, employed by a corporate client contracted with the service provider, who has had an EAP in place for more than 12 months. The pilot study served to make sure that the questions in the interview schedule were in line with the needs of the study and that there were no gaps in the questions. Data obtained from the participants in the pilot study were not included in the data for the final study.

1.7 Chapter outline and timeline

The research report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Overview

Chapter 1 contained the general background to the study. This included a summary relating to the literature review as well as background relating to the research methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature review on monitoring and evaluation

Chapter 2 contains the literature study in which the researcher reviews available research in order to provide a definition and current trends and practices of monitoring and evaluation in the field of EAP. The chapter also includes a consideration of the importance of monitoring and evaluation and its future.

Chapter 3: Empirical study

Chapter 3 includes the empirical study, which is broken down as follows:

- Introduction
- Practical application of the research methodology

- Empirical results: analysis and conclusions
- Summary.

Empirical data was collected in order to benchmark the actual practice of monitoring and evaluation against existing theory.

Chapter 4: Key findings and recommendations

The final chapter includes the key findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the research in this study.

1.8 Limitations of the study

One of the most important limitations of **this** study **is** that the research was conducted on organisations **associated with only** one EAP service provider and, therefore, does not **provide** a full view of industry practice regarding monitoring and evaluation. The researcher did, however, ensure that all organisations were chosen randomly in order to **consider** all types of clients as not all **of the** clients **on** this service provider's list engage in monitoring and evaluation.

An area that would be important to consider for further study would be to interview various senior stakeholders in organisations to determine how well they understood EAP data and the value they place on it. A limitation of this study is that the interviews were conducted with those responsible for managing the EAP in their organisations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the current economic environment, EAPs have become increasingly necessary, yet their importance can be easily overlooked. A number of organisations are downsizing or reviewing operational efficiencies. This means that there are retrenchments and a push for early retirement. In many cases, this is because the organisations as a whole need to reduce costs. This means that not only internal restructuring and downsizing takes place but also all service providers are reviewed and those that are seen as not providing value are cut. It is with this in mind that monitoring and evaluation of EAPs in order to show value is critical for two reasons:

- Employees need the service now more than ever with the threat of job losses as well as increased stress levels as fewer people are expected to do more as a result of downsizing.
- If the EAP is not seen as valuable it will be one of the first programmes/initiatives to be cut.

2.2 History of employee assistance programmes (EAPs)

As recognised by Gornick and Blair (2005: 2), most forward-thinking organisations understand that their success is linked to the method they use to maximise the effectiveness of their people or, as commonly stated these days, the way in which they maximise the effectiveness of their human capital. Burke (2004: 24) further emphasises that there has been a change in employers around the world. They are beginning to realise that business success and the ability to compete globally are dependent on how well human issues which affect productivity are addressed.

Furthermore, according to Govender (2009: 14), labour legislation in South Africa, such as the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 29 of 1996, places responsibility on employers to manage behaviour risks which employees bring to the work place as well as risks that the work place brings to employees. This statement highlights the systems theory even further in that it clearly identifies the organisation as an open system which is influenced by both internal and external or environmental factors, in this case the employees home life being the external factors. Organisations are seen as open systems as they are not closed off from their environments. According to Scott, W.R and Davis, G.F (2015: 31), organisations are open to and dependent on flows of personnel, resources, and information from outside. They go on to further advise that employees have multiple loyalties and identities, thereby creating different psychological contracts with the organisation. Therefore the fact that an organisation takes care of their and their dependents psychological wellbeing will go a long way to cement the psychological contract.

Further to that, the employee is seen as one element of the sub-system whose emotional state in the home and workplace has an effect on other sub-systems within the workplace. This means that should the EAP not assist to mitigate a risk posed by an employee it would have a detrimental effect on safety, productivity and even the time required from managers and HR to deal with such an employee. An example could be that a disciplinary process could be avoided should a manager identify and refer a troubled employee early enough.

The legislation states further that the enforcement of corporate regulations and related disciplinary action should be progressive and provide assistance and support to employees who are experiencing problems, which might incapacitate them or cause decreased productivity, before punishment or dismissal is considered. Employers, therefore, are under pressure to implement mechanisms for monitoring and managing employees while monitoring and measuring the impact they have on the workplace. EAP is one way of meeting this need.

It was with this in mind that workplace programmes were put in place to assist employees as early as the 1970s. It was in the 1970s that Occupational Alcoholism Programmes (OAPs) were developed. The OAPs worked on the assumption that alcoholism was a treatable illness, that is, once it had been identified it could be treated. In order for OAPs to be successful, managers or supervisors were required to identify employees with alcohol-related issues and refer them for assistance appropriately. Essentially, this meant that managers or supervisors had to diagnose such issues which they were neither trained nor willing to do. It became evident that managers and supervisors were not comfortable being placed in a position of having to diagnose any type of illness, including alcoholism. This led to managers/supervisors being required rather to identify compromised or lowered productivity and performance which fell within their role as managers/supervisors. Managers and supervisors were, therefore, trained to understand and identify employee productivity issues.

Through this process, however, organisations began to notice that lowered or compromised productivity was not only caused by alcohol-related issues but by a myriad other personal or psycho-social issues that affect employees. It was this realisation that led to the creation of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) rather than OAPs. Common to both OAPs and EAPs, however, is the fact that the aim of the programmes has always been to help employees to return to previous levels of productivity (Bhoodram, 2010: 47).

2.3 Current nature of EAPs in the corporate world

In recent years, organisations have come to realise that their human capital is the critical component in the success of their business (Gammie, 1997: 6; Gornick & Blair, 2005: 2). For this reason, organisations invest funds in their human capital in many ways, one of which is the EAP. The EAP is seen as a direct investment in an organisation's human capital owing to its ability to restore employees from being troubled to being fully productive, thereby reducing the negative effect on the organisation's bottom line. This is illustrated by the definition of an EAP as being "the work organisation's resource, based on core technologies or functions, to enhance

employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification and resolution of personal and productivity issues” (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2010: 1). This is further emphasised by a special report published by the Employee Assistance Society of North America (2009: 11) which highlights the results of a survey of human resources executives. It was found that mental health is considered to be the number one driver of indirect business costs such as lost productivity and absenteeism. This is important because current research shows that indirect costs are typically far greater than direct costs, such as disability claims, which get a lot more attention from employers.

What is important is that, in order to gain the most value and be seen as a business imperative, the EAP must be strategically placed within the organisation. Mathlape (2003: 31) explains the areas of a business in which an EAP should be positioned in order to become a business imperative. These are discussed in detail below:

2.3.1 EAP as a component of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

OHS usually exists in organisations where there are health hazards and appropriate legal standards which must be followed in order to ensure the safety of employees in the work place. These often involve departments already established within an organisation. The focus of OHS is generally on the physical wellbeing of employees, what has been missed but is slowly coming to the fore is the fact that psycho-social wellbeing is of equal importance in ensuring the safety of employees and the organisation. For example, having an employee with poor eye sight driving a forklift is a hazard to all those around the employee as well as to the individual employee. Equally so, having a suicidal employee driving a forklift could have just as dire consequences should that employee choose to end his/her life at work using that piece of equipment. Therefore, there is room for the EAP and OHS to work together. Similarly, issues such as high levels of stress and burnout lead to fatigue and other workplace hazards which would also fall within the realms of both EAP and OHS. Through an alignment with OHS the EAP would have a stronger business imperative as it would then be aligned to a department which is governed by legislation.

2.3.2 EAP as an employment benefit

According to Mabe (1999: 25), an EAP is not often seen as something that would attract a prospective employee to an organisation. However, for employees already in an organisation, it is seen as a benefit. Therefore it offers the following benefits to the employer organisation:

- Increased employee morale
- Reduced staff turnover
- Increased job satisfaction
- Motivated employees
- Enhanced organisational image amongst employees and possibly the market place
- Better use made of compensation
- Reduced union influence

This means that the EAP can be seen as an employee value proposition (EVP) which can be an important especially in industries that are very similar such as auditing firms where the best employees are often head-hunted by competitors. A strong EVP would mean that the employee would reconsider moving to a competitor.

What is important in this instance is the way in which the EAP is marketed within the organisation. It must be seen as an additional support at no cost to employees and their dependents.

2.3.3 EAP as part of a caring organisational culture

This element is closely linked to the EVP of the organisation. As is noted throughout this dissertation, employees are now seen as the human capital of an organisation and the success of the organisation is dependent on this human capital. It is for this

reason that organisations give more attention to the wellbeing of their employees in the same way as other assets are taken care of. As Matlhape states (1999: 33), the EAP is a programme that an organisation can use to communicate its compassion to its employees while capitalising on its value in enhancing the organisation's image.

Once again by making the EAP part of organisational culture, it stands a greater chance of being aligned to business strategy as it is aligned to organisational and human capital strategy in which retention of employees is often an important factor.

2.3.4 EAP as social responsibility

In most organisations, the employees generally come from a community in proximity to the organisation particularly in the industrial or mining sectors. It is suggested by Matlhape (1999: 33) that organisations should extend their EAPs to their immediate communities as part of good citizenship. This would not be regarded as an EAP if it were not directed only at employees with an element of managing productivity. However, by assisting the families and support systems of employees it does have an effect on the employee's productivity and work albeit not a direct one.

2.3.5 EAP as part of the business strategy

Linking the EAP to an organisation's business strategy ensures that it meets the needs of the business in terms of mobilising services based on the organisation's values and, therefore, provides a competitive advantage. An important element here is the pro-activeness of the EAP in pre-empting any employee risk before it becomes a reality.

This is the perfect example of the systems nature of an organisation where the EAP has an effect on various areas/functions/sub-systems of the business based on the level at which it is placed. The EAP would have an effect on:

- HR as a whole in terms of the HR strategy and how it links to the business strategy;

- Productivity as most business strategies would illustrate growth and sustainability as a part of the business strategy;
- Managers in terms of how they utilize their EAP to meet the business strategy and objectives;
- Safety and health and safety components; and
- Finance based on the need for increased productivity and reduced costs in areas such as health, absenteeism, etc.

All of the above are seen as sub-systems within the organisation as they perform different functions within the organisation.

Based on all of the above areas, the most important element is for EAPs to position themselves as partners to HR and assist them in all functions. The EAP has access to employees on all levels in various ways and it is important to build on this. According to Mathape (2003: 31), all of the above culminates in the following success of EAP in the world of work:

- Productivity being seen as a strategic issue for South African organisations. This will lead to the need for solutions that enhance productivity such as the EAP. In tough economic times, this is currently the position most organisations are faced with, that is doing more with fewer resources. These resources are therefore under tremendous pressure which leads to stress and family problems, further highlighting the need for services provided by EAPs.
- The organisation's use of the EAP being one of strategic intent with specific objectives aligned to the strategic objectives of the organisation.
- EAPs moving from being a reactive service to being a proactive service playing a preventive and facilitative role. The customary, reactive services often mean dealing with existing issues which often carry a stigma, whereas a proactive stance would mean employees engage with the programme for other reasons other than assistance and, therefore, have a more positive outlook.
- EAP being positioned as a central function and closely aligned to all human resource functions.

- EAP professionals needing to think of the business as a whole including competitive edge and not focus just on wellness.
- The importance of engaging the unions from the inception of an EAP programme. The success of any programme in the South African context is dependent on union buy-in.

With all of the above in mind, it can be seen that EAPs today are starting to be seen more as partners with human resources in various elements and therefore forming a part of the HR sub-system as mentioned above. EAPs have moved away from merely assisting with psycho-social issues to being proactive and supporting the business as a whole.

2.4 Services provided by EAPs

The table below illustrates the types of services provided by EAPs worldwide:

Table 2.1: Service provided by EAPs

Individual Services	Organisational Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the problem/need for EAP use. • Short-term problem solving and brief counselling. • Treatment planning for individual clinical issues. • Referral to community or benefit providers for clinical mental health or specialty services. • Referral to legal and financial assistance services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence prevention and response. • Crisis and disaster preparedness management. • Traumatic and critical incident services. • Group interventions and support groups. • Employee orientation. • Educational services and programmes, health and wellness presentations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to work life resources. • Referral to other health benefit programmes/services. • Follow-up with users of the EAP. • Collaboration with treatment facilities, managed care organisations, managers, HR staff, and others regarding case planning and outcomes. • Education and information for self-help resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational change management (e.g. layoffs, re-organisation, downsizing, mergers). • Organisational development (e.g. leadership, work culture, employee engagement, inter-group conflicts). • Speciality and auxiliary services (e.g. work-life, drug-free workplace, outplacement services, disability management, disease management, etc.).
<p>Managerial/Supervisory Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor training and education. • Assistance in how to refer employees to the EAP. • Guidance on appropriately supporting employees with personal or work issues. • Assistance with employees' return-to-work and work accommodation needs (e.g. disability, workers' compensation). • Guidance on employee work performance review, disciplinary issues, and drug testing results. • Management consulting and skills development. • Dealing with work-teams and group 	<p>Administrative Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme structure and design (e.g. budget, advisory committees, leadership) • Development of and adherence to organisational policies and procedures, and regulations. • Outreach, marketing and publicity for EAP. • Evaluation, reporting and quality improvement. • Website development and maintenance. • Staffing and professional development/HR. • Referral resources development and maintenance.

dynamics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with other committees, groups, and administrative teams within the organisation.
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Source: EASNA (2009: 17)

2.5 Defining an EAP

“Employee assistance is the work organisation’s resource that utilizes specific core technologies to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues” (Attridge, Herlihy & Maiden, 2005: 3). From this definition it can be seen that an EAP is a programme used by organisations to support and assist employees in optimising their performance. EAPs provide this support and assistance to employees in the form of counselling services, as well as other advisory and health-related services. Whilst an EAP aims to assist employees with their personal and psycho-social problems, the main aim is to assist the employer by ensuring the employees’ work performance is unaffected by these issues. The EAP, therefore, has two functions: the first is to assist the employee with whatever issue he/she might be faced with at the time, and the second and most important function is to serve the employer by ensuring that the employee’s personal problems do not affect work performance.

New research and case studies are constantly finding evidence to support the argument that employers are able to reduce costs by investing in the health of their employees. According to the PriceWaterHouse, Wellness at Work Survey (2015: 8), however, it seems that a large number of employers are starting to see wellness initiatives as not just a way to reduce costs but also to achieve other objectives related to overall organisational effectiveness. These include (PriceWaterHouse Wellness at Work Survey, 2015: 8):

- Improving employee engagement;
- Building individual resilience;

- Strengthening the employee value proposition to attract and retain the best talent;
- Improving safety;
- Enhancing the value and sustainability of the organisation's most critical resource – people – and demonstrating this to stakeholders;
- Managing the risks associated with workforce health;
- Achieving a wider purpose of the organisation, e.g. to improve the lives of people significantly and demonstrably; and
- Building the organisation's reputation and brand.

From the above discussion it can be seen that the OAPs, despite having the best intentions, did not cover all aspects of personal needs. They also did not take the full role and potential of the assistance programme into account. At that stage, therefore, there were not a lot of areas that were governed and there was no need to monitor an entire programme but merely the return to work of an employee. With the EAPs, however, the spectrum of assistance is a lot wider and there is also a lot more importance given to the role of the EAP as seen in its current definition. It is for these reasons that EAPs today are a lot more structured and made up of core technologies as well as standards which assist organisations to understand how their programmes should be set out and run. These core technologies ensure that best practice protocols are developed and implemented. The core technologies are briefly outlined in the next section.

2.6 Core Technologies

2.6.1 Training and development

According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015: 1), this relates to “training and development of, and assistance to, work organisation stakeholders (managers, supervisors, and unions) seeking to effectively manage the employee who is

experiencing behavioural, emotional and wellness issues; enhancing the work environment, and improving employee job performance”.

What this means is that all stakeholders who use the EAP in some or other way must be trained. This training takes on various forms, with three main aims according to Emener *et al.* (2003: 194):

- i. **Developing an understanding of the EAP:** It is essential that all relevant stakeholders understand the rationale behind implementing an EAP. They need to understand the impact that employee well-being has on productivity and ultimately the “bottom-line” (rands and cents) of the organisation, as well as how the EAP should be seen and used as a managerial tool to optimise performance through assisting employees who are in need.
- ii. **Understanding the consultation process:** This is an essential part of the programme and is often known as manager/supervisory training even though the audience also includes HR personnel, union representatives, wellness custodians and anyone who has an employee at any level reporting to him/her. The aim of this training is to help these stakeholders understand how to identify the “troubled employee”, what to do in these circumstances, how to refer them to the EAP, and what feedback they will receive under what circumstances. The most important element of this training is to highlight the fact that supervisors themselves should not take on the responsibility of becoming the counsellor, what boundaries exist and why, and, importantly, how to refer the employee to the EAP empathetically whilst still being supportive. It was recognised very early on that managers/supervisors play a critical role in the EAP framework. As noted by Bhoodram (2010: 14) the success of EAPs depends on the support of management and involvement of supervisors in the organisation. He further states that supervisors can be seen as the primary source of helping to identify troubled employees, and the EAP serves to support them in dealing with poor work performance that is often associated with personal problems. This is in line with the systems theory of managers being one of the sub-systems affected by the EAP and employees interactions with the EAP as they play a bigger role within the daily functioning of the organisation.

- iii. **Understanding how the programme operates:** This training ensures that all relevant stakeholders understand what services are available, who has access to them (for example, in most cases, dependents are also included), and any limitations such as confidentiality. All EAPs are built on confidentiality so there should be no doubt whatsoever as to the confidential nature of the service. The programme also covers reporting to illustrate the type of feedback that is provided to the organisation whilst still maintaining confidentiality.

Further, Bhoodram (2010: 236) believes that training managers, supervisors and union representatives is critical to the acceptance and success of any EAP in any organisation because they are always interacting with employees. Employees generally spend a great deal of time with their supervisors and union representatives so increasing their abilities and skills would lead to the success and promotion of the programme.

2.6.2 Marketing

Marketing refers to “outreach and promotion of EAP services (availability and guarantees, i.e. confidentiality) to management, supervisors, unions, employees and their family members” (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2015: 1). According to Beidel (1999: 91), for most EAPs, marketing the programme as well as its services is a critical and fundamental activity not only in promoting the services to the employee population, but also in addressing expectations on how the programme’s effectiveness will be measured. According to Beidel (1999: 91), marketing can be seen as having five primary purposes:

- i. To increase the employees’ knowledge of the EAP, the services offered, activities and other key components (e.g. confidentiality, referral processes and procedures);

- ii. To increase familiarity and comfort with the EAP operations and to promote acceptance and use of the services by employees, managers, labour representatives and the organisation's leadership;
- iii. To promote and increase the use of the services at all levels within the organisation;
- iv. To enhance the integration of the EAP at all levels in the organisation and to create a sense of ownership amongst its custodians, managers and employees;
- v. To maintain the visibility of the EAP and its presence as a vital contributor to the organisation's productivity and efficiency and to the well-being and life-at-work in general for employees and managers.

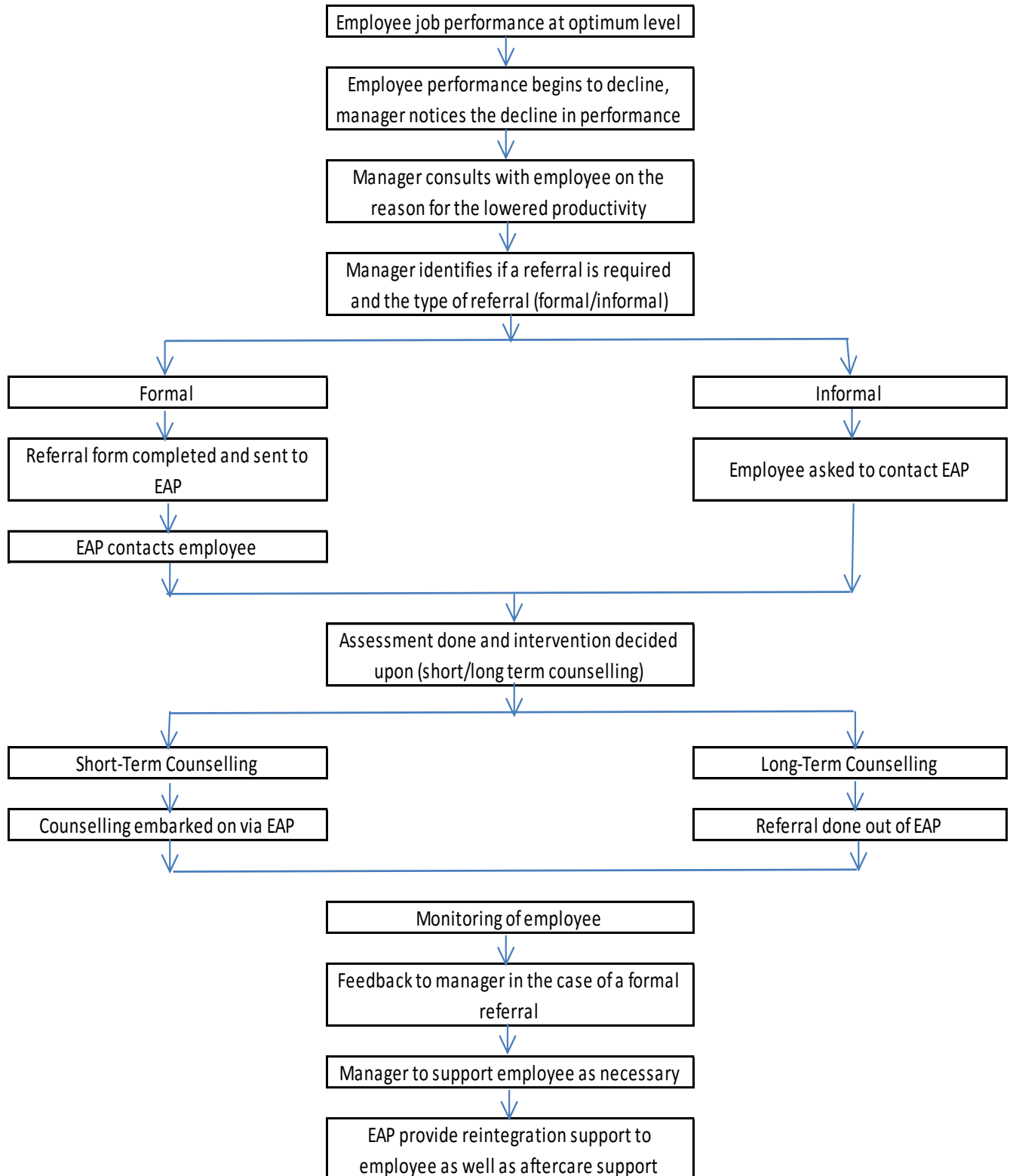
Marketing is one of the most essential components of an EAP. If people are not aware of the programme or how to use it, it will not be effective or well used. As stated by Baloyi (2014: 42) there is no point in offering an EAP if employees do not know what services are available.

Furthermore, various kinds of marketing should be used for different audiences. It is important that not only employees but also their dependents are aware of the service and how to access it and important aspects, such as confidentiality, must be emphasised at all opportunities. The marketing budget should be decided at the start of each period and planning should be done according to the available budget. It is important that marketing not only takes place at the inception of a programme but continues in order to ensure that the programme remains top of mind. Finally, when planning the marketing campaigns, different marketing media and methods should be considered. It is often beneficial to take into account the methods of communication currently used by the organisation and to follow the same route to ensure that employees are made aware.

2.6.3 Case management

Case management involves “confidential and timely risk identification, assessment, motivation, short-term intervention, referral monitoring, follow-up, re-integration and aftercare services for employees with personal and work-related concerns that may affect job performance” (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 2015: 2). When dealing with employees’ personal issues, it is important to have a proper case management process which follows the employee from referral to the programme, during their counselling/rehabilitation process and re-integration into the work place. The figure below illustrates the researcher’s understanding of what the case management process should entail.

Figure 2.1: Case management process



Source: Researcher's construct

2.6.4 Consultation to work organisation

According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015: 2), this refers to “consultation with organisations to pro-actively address inherent trends stemming from personal or organisational issues”. Through the EAP, an organisation is able to identify trends and themes relating to the issues facing employees. Ideally, the organisation should use these trends and themes to address the highlighted risks proactively through targeted interventions. Through its reporting, the EAP should provide information that would enable the organisation to provide targeted interventions in specific areas of the business rather than a blanket approach across the board. This type of consultation also needs to take place at different levels in the organisation and not just with the EAP practitioner. The trends and themes should be communicated in forums such as executive committee meetings, HR forums, management meetings and wellness forums. All of the relevant stakeholders in these forums need to be aware of the issues and areas that are most affected and have proper buy-in to the interventions implemented to counteract these issues and assist employees.

In addition, according to Bhoodram (2010: 91), it is important that relationships with treatment and other service providers are established and maintained by the EAP practitioner and that provider contracts are managed. This relates to the external environmental factors which need to be maintained in order to have positive influences on the organisation as an open system.

2.6.5 Stakeholder management

Cloete (2015: 24) states that stakeholder management addresses the internal and external partnerships of an EAP. The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015: 2) explains stakeholder management as “being able to establish and maintain effective relations with internal and external role-players and service providers. Depending on the model used (internal or external), the relevant EAP custodian/practitioner must ensure that he/she is well networked both within the organisation as well as with

relevant external resources including community resources in some instances, once again highlighting the organisation as an open system and the need to maintain all internal and external relations in order to maintain an equilibrium.

Internally, important stakeholders would include EXCO members, managers/supervisors, union representatives, HR representatives, as well as wellness champions. This will ensure that the EAP practitioner is able to promote and get buy-in to the service and also that these stakeholders promote the programme through continuous awareness and active referrals.

External resources include community resources for assistance, clinics, as well as rehabilitation centres should employees require this type of assistance.

2.6.6 Monitoring and evaluation

According to Nsibandé-Mbokazi (2010: 31), evaluation involves identifying the effects of EAP services on the work organisation and individual job performance. The Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015: 2) refers to “monitoring and evaluation of the value/success/impact of EAP services relating to the work organisation and individual job performance”. This is one of the most important components as it can be used to determine whether all other competencies are in place as well as to gauge the success or actual value of the programme. Citrin (2004: 20) refers to a survey which has shown that corporate human resources professionals are clearly satisfied with services received from EAPs. However, at the same time, EAPs are not always seen as enhancers of productivity. This is mainly because they do not communicate their value in ways that are useful to corporate decision makers.

Monitoring and evaluation is a way of determining whether the goals and objectives set out at the start of a programme are being met. From this it can be seen that monitoring and evaluation should be considered at the start of the programme, where the individuals setting the goals and objectives also endeavour to identify methods of continuous monitoring and evaluating of these goals and objectives at

the same time. There are various elements that should be monitored and evaluated and this can be done in different ways. The basis of this research is to understand the types of methods currently being used as well as reasons why organisations do not engage in monitoring and evaluation.

From the above it is evident that EAPs can be very structured and best practice methodology can be developed. This is further supported by specific standards set by EAPA-SA. One element of monitoring and evaluation, therefore, should be to examine each of the core technologies and ensure that each is functioning optimally. In the rest of this chapter, the researcher discusses monitoring and evaluation in more detail as well as the relation to the theoretical framework.

2.7 Monitoring and evaluating the core technologies

2.7.1 Training and development

As mentioned earlier in this chapter there are various forms of training that can be formal or informal. Training and development includes orientation sessions during which time employees are made aware of the services to which they have access, how to access them and who can have access to them (i.e. dependents). The need to highlight the fact that dependents can access the service illustrates the fact that the employee forms part of two systems that is the home or family as well as the organisation. What happens in the home environment has an effect on the employee who then brings it into the work environment, thereby affecting various sub-systems at work. In the event that a problem at home is left unresolved that could lead to distraction and even errors on the employee's behalf which would then have an effect on the previously mentioned sub-systems within the organisation, example, productivity and/or safety.

Training employees can also take the form of wellness training in topics such as stress and work/life balance.

Training and development also takes place at different levels in the organisation and training for managers and supervisors is critical. This training is a form of marketing for awareness and, more importantly, a way of equipping managers to assist, support and deal with troubled employees. As stated by Monyakeni (2010:18), the time spent by management or supervisors on resolving employee problems through disciplinary hearings, or helping employees to deal with interpersonal conflict, is time lost for other issues that might have increased the productivity of the organisation and led to financial benefit, once again representing the various sub-systems within the organisation.

The core technology of training and development can be monitored and evaluated in various ways, including some statistical methods of monitoring, as follows:

- The number of awareness sessions conducted and the number of employees present during these sessions.
- The number of managerial/supervisory sessions conducted and the number of managers/supervisors present.
- The number of wellness-related training sessions that take place and the number of employees and managers present.
- If sufficient awareness sessions have taken place, there should also be good use made of the programme. This can be viewed as part of the periodic reports on utilisation and/or engagement rates.

Some of the methods of evaluating impact might include:

- Evaluation forms completed after any awareness or training session to ascertain whether the desired impact has been achieved.
- Monitoring formal/managerial referrals to the EAP in order to determine the success of the managerial/supervisory training.
- Following each session, a satisfaction survey can also be done in order to determine whether participants felt that their needs were met.

2.7.2 Marketing

Marketing can be seen as any activity that the EAP Practitioner or EAP service provider performs in order to inform employees about the EAP and its accessibility. This would even include the training and development activities mentioned above. These activities could include orientation sessions, training of supervisors, distribution of brochures, posters, presentations in staff meetings, informal contacts, and reminders such as posters, emails and wallet cards (Mnisi, 2005: 36).

According to Beidel (1999: 91), the marketing of the EAP and its services is critical not only to promote the services to the employees, but also to form the foundation of the expectations on which the programme's effectiveness will be measured.

Monitoring and evaluation methods related to marketing might include:

- Measuring the rate of programme utilisation and engagement, as the higher the usage, the higher the awareness.
- Monitoring the number of awareness campaigns done throughout the year to ascertain whether the target set during the planning stage of the programme is met.
- Surveys amongst employees and dependants to gauge the level of awareness and understanding of the programme.

2.7.3 Case management

This refers to the actual clinical assistance that employees receive. Based on the researcher's knowledge and experience from working within an EAP, there are a number of elements involved here which might form part of monitoring and evaluation, including:

- Asking those who use the service and those who do not whether they trust the confidentiality aspect of the programme.

- The number of risk cases dealt with during the programme and how many resulted in a reduced level of risk on completion of the intervention. This has a direct impact on the rest of the organisation and its various sub-systems, with safety being the main area that is affected. Safety as a sub-system then has a direct impact on productivity and finances.
- The number of successful cases that are re-integrated into the workplace. This also further illustrates the relationship with other sub-systems such as the recruitment function and disciplinary processes, what this means is that the more employees that are successfully re-integrated into the workplace, the less impact there is on other sub-systems.
- An impact assessment on completion of the intervention. For example, if someone reported that his/her problem was causing absenteeism and presenteeism, to what extent does it still affect productivity once he/she has made contact with the programme. This point relates directly to productivity and therefore the financial bottom line and whether the EAP has had a positive impact.
- Feedback from managers who have made formal referrals on whether or not there has been a noticeable change in the behaviour and performance of the referred employee.

2.7.4 Consultation with the work organisation

In the researcher's opinion, trends need to be identified which should be communicated to the organisation together with recommendations. So continuous reporting is essential and can be easily monitored.

2.7.5 Stakeholder management

Managing stakeholders internally and externally is one of the determining factors of the success of the programme. A measurement of this might be the number of presentations conducted in HR forums, EXCO or MANCO meetings. Building relationships with external stakeholders and service providers is also important so monitoring the number of affiliated rehabilitation centres might be one way of measuring this. In addition, the level of use and success of these services will determine the impact and might, therefore, be used as an indicator.

2.7.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is, therefore, used to determine the success of the entire programme. As a core technology itself, however, it can also be monitored to check whether there is a monitoring and evaluation strategy in place, how closely it is aligned to the business strategy, and how often it is consulted in relation to the initial plan. There are various elements of monitoring and evaluation that should be in place and these are discussed further in the chapter.

2.8 A definition of monitoring and evaluation

The Online Business Dictionary (2014) defines monitoring as: “supervising activities in progress to ensure that they are on course and on schedule in meeting the objectives and performance targets.”

According to Shapiro [Sa], monitoring involves:

- Establishing indicators of efficiency, effectiveness and impact;
- Setting up systems to collect information relating to these indicators;
- Collecting and recording information;
- Analysing this information;
- Using this information to inform day-to-day management.

Ultimately monitoring is seen as continuous checking of the programme to ensure that the overall goals will be met. This prevents the organisation reaching the end of the year, project or contractual period and realising that none of the objectives have been met. As continuous monitoring takes place, corrective action can be taken where necessary.

According to Cekiso (2014: 69), reporting, as part of monitoring, is also used for invoicing or pricing in a fee-per-service-based pricing model. Cekiso (2014: 69) states that the following utilisation metrics could be used:

- Number of EAP clinical sessions provided by telephone;
- Number of EAP clinical sessions provided in person;
- Total number of clinical cases provided and managed;
- Number of management consultations provided;
- Other services, e.g. critical incident support, training interventions, management consultations, etc.

The problem with this approach, however, is that EAP practitioners are confronted with the challenge of rigid, conventional understanding and interpretation of utilisation reports.

Furthermore, reporting and metrics are important because different metrics are used for different needs. According to Cekiso (2014: 70), a fee-per-service model, for example, would also concentrate on:

- Average speed of call response;
- Percentage of calls to the service centre that are abandoned before being answered;
- Average length of waiting time for appointment with an EAP counselor;
- Level of satisfaction of service users

The reason for the above is that organisations would usually impose financial penalties on the service provider should performance in the above areas be regarded as inadequate. This relates back to the fact that the EAP forms part of the larger organisational system whereby if it has little or no effect on employees, it would lead to negative effects on productivity, safety and ultimately the bottom line. Therefore in order to ensure that the above sub-systems are impacted positively, the EAP as part of the HR sub-system needs to be monitored closely.

Evaluation according to Emener *et al.* (2003: 125) can be described as the determination of the relative importance of something; the extent to which a predetermined goal or expectation has been gained; and the relative effectiveness or efficiency of specific activities or set of activities. Rossi and Freeman (1993), as cited by Ligon and Yegedis (2003: 130), agree with this description and state further that programme evaluation is responsible for determining the worth and value of a programme by assessing whether or not the programme was effective or ineffective in achieving the stipulated action, process, or product and, according to Stoer-Scaggs (in Oher, 1999: 45), can be seen as a way of justifying the existence of the EAP.

Evaluation involves measuring the impact of the programme and assessing whether the overall goals of the programme have been met.

With regard to the EAP, some of the evaluation questions, according to Dickman (in Richard, Emener & Hutschison, 2009: 54), could include:

- Penetration rates (how much of the service is being used and by what percentage of the population?);
- Cost effectiveness (determining the return on investment of the programme);
- Nature of client populations (what demographic sectors of the population make the most use of the service?);
- Client satisfaction (do those that use the service feel that it meets their needs and they are being helped?);
- Management and union satisfaction (these stakeholders are critical to the success of the programme. It is therefore essential to determine whether they feel that the programme is meeting their needs as well as those of their employee population);
- Medical cost savings (when determining these, it is essential that pre- and post-assessments are done in order to understand any savings);
- Productivity gain (understanding the impact on productivity; also closely linked to ROI).

From the above it can be seen that Dickman (2009: 54) places considerable emphasis on the statistical and numerical aspects of the programme, specifically regarding the usage of the programme. Dickman (2009: 54) then goes on to look at the financial and productivity aspects of the programme which relate to the impact of the services.

Ligon and Yegedis (2003: 130) add the following to the list above:

- Outcome evaluations which assess the degree to which the EAP affected the outcome variables as identified at the onset of the programme, such as the level of absenteeism, the number of grievances filed, and the number of workplace accidents. These highlight the extent to which the EAP within the HR sub-system directly affects numerous other sub-systems within the organisation, these can be either positive or negative effects, dependent on the usage of the programme. It is for this reason that it is critical for monitoring and evaluation to be part of the planning phase so that these areas can be agreed upon from the beginning and the relevant data can be

collected. The collection of data is often the stumbling block for these measurements.

Ligon and Yegedis (2003: 130) are not specific in advising what should be covered under monitoring and evaluation. They simply mention that the programme should be reviewed in terms of its outcomes or final impacts. From this it can be seen that the areas of impact need to be specified at the start of the contract, and the monitoring and evaluation must then focus on these aspects. In order to conduct monitoring and evaluation of this nature, the outcomes as well as what will be used to measure them need to be very specific. If these are not specified at the outset it will not be possible to do at the end as the right information will not have been collected from the outset.

It is evident from the literature that there are various elements of the EAP that can and should be monitored and evaluated. It is necessary to specify what will be monitored and evaluated and how, and the process must be carried out from the start of the programme.

Yamatani (1993: 65), however, views the process differently. Yamatani proposes a form of monitoring and evaluation before the launch of an EAP, as explained in the first point below. The other points are more similar to the above. Yamatani regards the following aspects as important:

- **Service needs assessment:** Usually conducted at the start of the programme, to determine the potential number of employees that might need the EAP as well as the type of services required. This is a novel concept and this step was not stated as being important by the authors mentioned previously. In the researcher's opinion, however, this is a critical component as it serves to ensure that the services rendered are completely in line with the needs and wants of the employees. When the organisation decides to contract a provider, they will also have an understanding of the number of employees that will need the service and an idea of the size and nature of the service provider needed.

- **Compliance or legality assessment:** To assess whether the EAP complies with legal rules and regulations. This is also in relation to the standards of the EAPA-SA. There are no official rules or regulations governing EAPs, it is therefore up to the service provider to follow the EAPA guidelines. From the researcher's experience, when organisations procure the services of an EAP service provider, they often request the EAPA certificate but that is where it ends. It is recommended later in this research document that even monitoring and evaluation should be carried out in accordance with the EAPA-SA standards documents.
- **Programme adequacy:** To examine the appropriateness of EAP service availability and usage rates. This is similar to the penetration rates mentioned by Dickman (2009: 54) above.
- **External resources:** To examine outside agencies/service providers used, including the extent of their services and satisfaction with the services. The researcher believes that this is an important aspect as it enables the organisation to consider the most widely used service providers as well as customer satisfaction with these service providers. Once again, the researcher has observed that when organisations procure the services of an EAP service provider, they often ask for references or testimonials from current clients that can be contacted. This element goes further than just monitoring and evaluating a service that is in place but illustrates the evaluation of service providers prior to them entering a business.
- **Programme effort:** Assessing the processes undertaken during the implementation phase of an EAP. This is similar to the idea that monitoring and evaluation should take place during the programme to ensure that it is on track and so that corrective action can be taken when necessary.
- **Programme effectiveness:** This relates to the impact of the service that can be assessed by measuring the change which takes place following an intervention. This is similar the outcome evaluations described by Ligon and Yegedis (2003: 130) discussion above as this looks at the impact of the services.
- **Programme benefit equity:** This measures any difference in the type of service available to specific populations within the employee base. For

example, if contractors only have contact with part of the service and not the full programme.

- **Programme constraint analysis:** This involves identifying any limitations of the programme. This is an important aspect in order to ensure that corrective action can take place as soon as possible.

The above discussion highlights the importance of the following types of evaluation:

- Understanding the usage of the service, i.e. the number of services being used, types of services being used, etc.
- The return on investment is critical. This is measured in different formats by different people but the ultimate outcome is of critical importance for the continuation of services.
- Customer satisfaction is important as it is not desirable to continue with a service where the employees are not happy.
- Yamatani (1993: 65) considers aspects outside of the actual service offering. Such aspects are of critical importance, however, in order to ensure that the right services are provided to the right audiences.

2.9 Current trends and practices in monitoring and evaluation

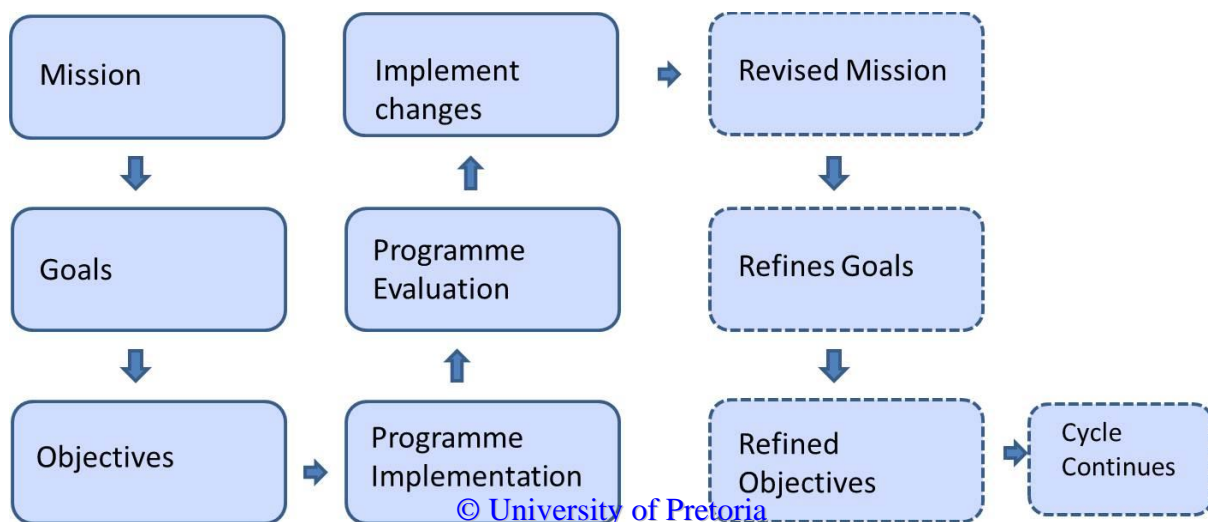
Jorgensen and Brooks (2007: 16) states that EAPs provide a number of services including counselling, critical incident support, and management support to name a few. Yet EAPs are unable to demonstrate effectively how valuable they are to organisations to a calculable extent. Paul (2007: 28) indicates that employers want proven intervention strategies that reduce human capital risks and boost productivity, as well as communication methods that effectively engage employees to make good healthcare and lifestyle decisions. However in the absence of clear monitoring and evaluation, it is impossible to illustrate these successes. Jorgensen and Brooks

(2007: 16) states further that it is time for EAPs to demonstrate that they belong to, and have an effect on, the world of work and not just health care this means that EAPs need to begin to demonstrate the actual and tangible effects that they have on the rest of the organisation as a system. It is important to demonstrate the direct effects on productivity and the related financial aspects as well as the cost saving on health costs and absenteeism as well as staff turnover. It is with this in mind that having a structured and formal monitoring and evaluation process becomes even more important.

Casio (2000: 112) indicates that there are major problems when it comes to the evaluation of EAPs in quantitative terms. The first is how to establish all of the programme costs and benefits. The second is how to express and translate the costs and benefits into monetary values. The third is the lack of proper experimental controls that could be exercised to determine cause and effect relationships between EAP involvement and one or more dependent variables. Dependent variables could refer to productivity, turnover, unemployment costs, and out-patient versus in-patient treatment for substance abuse, absenteeism, supervisor's time, accidents, training and replacement costs, and the use of insurance benefits. In order to account for the impact these variables have on clients' lives, EAP service providers must incorporate an information system that can hold factors such as insurance use, absenteeism, performance analysis, accidents, and attendance data.

The monitoring and evaluation process can be seen as a cyclical one, which begins with the planning phase and moves towards constant refinement. This is illustrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2.2: The cyclical monitoring and evaluation process



Source: Emener and Yegedis (2003: 127)

This is further illustrated by Monyakeni (2010: 53) who states that an evaluation committee is often a starting point for evaluation. The committee should answer the following questions:

- **What?** This is the first step in evaluation and is conducted during the planning phase of the programme. The committee must decide what is to be evaluated together with the sequence of evaluation. It is important at this stage to ensure that the programme is not looked at in isolation but that the committee also include methods of evaluating the effect of the programme on other functional sub-systems within the organisation.
- **Who?** At the start of the programme, parties responsible for evaluation should already have been identified. The evaluation committee itself will be responsible for the evaluation. However, the committee should determine what information and from whom data will be collected for evaluation purposes. Information can be collected from various sources, depending on the type and area of evaluation, including: employees, supervisors, managers, employee representatives, as well as service providers. At this stage one should ensure that relevant stakeholders are identified from all organisational sub-systems in order to be able to gain information from them on the effects of the programme throughout the process. The committee must also identify the person or people responsible to follow up the evaluation.
- **Where?** This would depend on the type of evaluation and would include a decision on whether the people referred to above are taken off the job for evaluation or are evaluated on the job.

An evaluation committee is important as it will drive the monitoring and evaluation process. A lot of the time this committee could be the same as the employee wellness forum/committee that begins the planning of the project and follows

through into the monitoring and evaluation phases. Although the discussion above has been mostly about evaluation, the monitoring process must take place consistently throughout the contractual period and can be regarded as more of an ongoing process.

2.9.1 Current evaluation practices

- **Vindication:** This method can be used to justify the need for a programme and is based on evidence that shows high levels of utilisation to show that employees have a need for and are using the service (Ligon & Yegeedis, 2009: 167). This enables the EAP practitioner to show the value of the programme and to motivate the organisation to fund the services for another year.
- **Marketing:** As has been mentioned previously, marketing is one of the critical factors which leads to the success or failure of an EAP. If employees are not aware of the services to which they have access or how to access them, they will not make use of them. Furthermore, marketing needs to be continuous and take place at various levels within the organisation. Marketing to executives and managers will be very different from marketing to employees. It is also important not to forget the value of marketing to employee dependents, who also have access to the service but are often unaware. It is assumed that employees will inform their dependents about the service but this is not always the case. It is, therefore, important to evaluate the level of awareness and accessibility of the service and, generally, whether employees feel that the programme is kept top of mind for them. It is also important to engage in some form of evaluation with dependents in order to understand their awareness of, and accessibility to, the service (Monyakeni, 2010: 56).
- **Verification:** Organisations are no longer willing just to continue paying and constantly agreeing to increases at the end of each contractual period. They

are requesting to be presented with facts supported by data. This confirms the importance of reporting in an EAP, the types of information reported on and the methods of reporting.

- **Improvement:** As with any programme, there is always room for improvement as time goes by. As the programme becomes embedded and employees become more aware of the programme, continuous improvement is essential. Evaluation makes it possible to identify areas for improvement so that measures can be put in place and, after a period of time, these can be evaluated further to see if the outcomes have been achieved.

Improvement also means being able to add to or remove areas of the programme should this be necessary.

- **Understanding:** Identifies whether a programme is working and what areas of the programme are currently successful.
- **Accountability:** Accountability means that both the EAP practitioner and service provider are accountable. The EAP practitioner is accountable internally for the programme that he/she manages but the service provider is also held accountable for providing the services and that which was promised to the client during the purchase phase. This means that the extent to which all services purchased have been delivered can be evaluated as well as whether the outcomes and objectives set by the evaluation committee have been met.

Ligon and Yegedis (2003: 126) state simply that “every programme should be continually striving for improvement”.

It is evident from the above that there is no real evidence or method to demonstrate:

- a return on investment for the programme;

- an understanding of the value of the contribution made by the programme:
 - to the bottom line (if any),
 - to the business strategy,
 - to the HR strategy
 - to all relevant sub-systems within the organisation.

The above also does not show a way of demonstrating whether the programme has met the initial goals that were set up when the programme was implemented.

2.10 The link between monitoring and evaluating wellness and the business strategy

In order to demonstrate the true value of any investment made by an organisation in an EAP, it is necessary to show a link between the programme outcomes and the business strategy of the organisation. The programme must demonstrate how it supports and responds to the goals set out in the business strategy. Once this is done, it is almost certain that the programme will have a direct effect on the overall wellbeing and success of the organisation, even going as far as affecting the “bottom line” of the organisation. The business strategy often incorporates or links to all other functional or sub-system strategies within the organisation, such as the HR strategy, the financial strategy, occupational health and safety, etc. It therefore makes sense that the EAP links up to the business and all relevant strategies in order to ensure that it has the required effect on all of these sub-systems within the organisation.

The key to an effective EAP is to incorporate it into the organisational culture, ensuring that it responds to the business strategy and, more importantly, to the people agenda, this is according to an article by Greyling in the Working Well Magazine (Greyling, 2015: 19).

During the development of a health and wellness strategy it is important to be guided by the overall business strategy of the organisation. Furthermore, according to Tousignant and Tsumagari (2014: 63), the actual strategy should be written in a style

that is consistent with the thoughts and language of the CEO and CFO. Whatever health and wellness programmes are implemented, they must be easily understood and make sense to the CEO and CFO who consider issues from the perspective of running a company. The development of a sound health and wellness strategy will also mean that it is a lot easier to evaluate the programme against its objectives at a later stage, as well as to ascertain the ROI derived from the programme.

According to Tousignany and Tsumagari (2014: 66), there are four main steps in developing a health and wellness strategy. These steps are outlined below:

- **Step 1: Understand the company's business focus.** This is the first and most critical step in developing a health and wellness strategy. During the development of the strategy, various business-related documents should be consulted including annual reports, any investor preparations, and the actual business strategy. The HR manager or EAP practitioner (whoever is dealing with the development of the health and wellness strategy) should also attempt to engage directly with the CEO and CFO to obtain their perspectives on the direction of the business and how health and wellness might be able to support this.

Examples of metrics used to measure a company's business focus include:

- Market share
 - Efficiency in operations
 - Risk management
 - Leadership quality
- **Step 2: Understand your population and develop your health and wellness strategy.** The key here is to understand who the users of the programme are and to understand their needs and wants. Areas to focus on include:

- Older versus younger: An older population might need a stronger focus on health care because as populations grow older they begin to experience chronic diseases.
 - Blue collar versus white collar: This will affect not only the type of services offered but also how the message is communicated. For example, white collar employees would be familiar with technology whereas a blue collar workforce might not have access to technology.
 - Male versus female: There is no doubt that there is a huge difference between the needs of men and women. For example, in a young population of women, there would be a need for awareness and support regarding pregnancy, returning to work following maternity leave, parenting, etc.
 - Remote/offsite workers versus office workers: An offsite worker might not have access to onsite interventions or activities and, therefore, other ways of reaching and engaging them need to be developed.
 - Cultural requirements: The religion, culture, and language requirements of the population should never be neglected as they can have a huge impact on the use of the programme, depending on cultural beliefs.
- **Step 3: Build a case for a health and wellness strategy based on return on investment (ROI).** Ensuring buy-in from the CEO and CFO as well as other senior stakeholders requires a case built on ROI that shows the link between the health and wellness strategy and the profitability of the organisation. Accordingly the HR manager should identify key HR metrics that could contribute to the key business metrics that have been identified. Examples of key HR metrics include: high employee engagement, low usage of sick days, low presenteeism, less team conflicts, increased team cohesion, and lower accident/incident rates.
 - **Step 4: Track and monitor the outcome of the strategy.** Once again the importance of monitoring and evaluation is evident. It is important to have begun to collect data by this stage to ensure measurements in the future.

Also, the HR manager should measure not only HR objectives but also track the specific business metrics that connect the health and wellness strategy with the company's business focus in order to show a true link to business strategy and true ROI.

In the PWC 2015 Wellness at Work Survey (2015: 5) conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) with a total of 42 organisations, there were 24 organisations which stated that they had a wellness strategy in place. Despite such a large number of the respondents having a wellness strategy, it is cause for concern to note that only half felt that the objectives of their strategy were being met. Based on the survey it was noted that many employers do not have specific and measurable objectives which are linked to their outcomes.

2.11 The future need for monitoring and evaluation

Based on all the information above, it is evident that monitoring and evaluation is important for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

- Showing the value of the programme;
- Ensuring the success of the programme;
- Allowing the objectives of the programme to be changed should they no longer be appropriate, thereby ensuring that the programme can succeed;
- Ensuring a return on investment from the programme and demonstrating this to the business as a whole;
- Helping to validate the need for the programme to continue.

Although much can be seen to be done in terms of monitoring and evaluation in organisations, the researcher's opinion is that a lot more can be done. The researcher believes that every one of the core technologies as well as the EAPA-SA standards should be a separate area that is monitored and evaluated because every

single one of these elements has a role to play in the success or failure of the programme. These elements are also easy to measure. Using the example of supervisory training, monitoring and evaluation, criteria could include:

- Is supervisory training taking place?
- Is the content accurate and does it meet the needs of the demographic to which it is being presented?
- What percentage of the population has been reached in relation to the target population?
- Is the success of the training evident in how the managerial component of the service is used as well as in supervisors' and managers' awareness of how to assist employees in need.

Further, according to the PWC 2015 Wellness at Work Survey (PwC, 2015: 30), elements that should be measured or monitored include:

- Participation/take-up
- Employee health risk profile
- Compliance and adherence
- Healthcare costs
- Productivity
- Absenteeism
- Employee appreciation
- Contribution to employee engagement
- External (customer feedback)
- Return on investment (ROI)
- Value of investment (VOI)

The above elements suggest a more holistic form of monitoring and evaluation which includes all elements of wellness and not just the EAP. This is the ideal situation where the employer is able to gain a complete understanding of the health and well-being of its employee population.

Furthermore, a proper return on investment calculation should be done at the end of every annual period, regardless of the size of the client as this will demonstrate the true value and business impact of the programme.

In terms of the monitoring and evaluation, the corrective action to be taken when part of the programme is not having the desired effect must also be indicated during the development of the monitoring and evaluation plan.

Additional points have been recommended later in this dissertation based on in-depth understanding obtained through the interview process.

2.12 General Systems Theory as a theoretical framework for this study

As mentioned in chapter one, this research document is based on general systems theory. This concept is elaborated further in this section.

McNamara (2010) states that simply put, a system is a collection of parts (or sub-systems) integrated to accomplish an overall goal. He further states that a system of people is called an organisation. An organisation can further be seen as a complex system, as it is a social system, and is comprised of various sub-systems (examples would be functional areas such as finance, management, safety, HR, etc.) McNamara goes on to state that these sub-systems are often organized and even put in a hierarchy as is evidenced in organisations. This is to ensure that each sub-system works with the other in order to ensure the overall goal of the system (organisation).

General systems theory was first formulated in the 1930s by von Bertalanffy who stated: “there exists models, principals and laws that apply to generalized systems or their sub-classes irrespective of their particular kind, the nature of the component elements, and the relations or forces between them” (Von Bertalanffy, 1972: 411).

Business Dictionary [sa] defines a system as an organised, purposeful structure that consists of interrelated and interdependent elements that continually influence one another directly or indirectly to maintain their activity and the existence of the system, in order to achieve the goal of the system.

Furthermore, Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998: 20) describe a systems theory as a way of conceptualising seemingly unrelated phenomena and understanding how, together, they represent interrelated components of a larger system. A system, therefore, represents a complex of component parts or interacting elements that might together form an entity. In order to understand how the entire system operates, it is necessary to look beyond how each function would perform in singularity.

According to the PWC Wellness at Work Survey (2015: 9), wellness is normally seen in the context of the human resources (HR) department. Often, however, there are a number of functions or departments which are usually interested, involved or responsible for aspects of wellness including:

- Finance: this department is generally responsible for accounting for revenue, cost control and is therefore concerned with the economic sustainability of the organisation.
- Human Resources: are usually concerned with recruiting and retaining the best talent and maximising employee performance.
- Employee benefits and, in certain organisations, the medical aid.
- Occupational health and safety.
- A specialist wellness function.

As illustrated in Figure 3 below, these are just some of the functions which work together to form a system within an organisation and are influenced directly by the wellness of employees and therefore the EAP.

Figure 2.3: Functions as components of a system



*Source: PWC Wellness at Work Survey
(2015: 15)*

The appropriateness of General Systems Theory will be demonstrated throughout the remainder of this report.

2.13 Conclusion

As can be seen, EAPs have come a long way since merely being programmes which dealt with alcohol related issues in the workplace. EAPs are now seen as dealing with a full ambit of personal and work related problems which may have an impact on productivity in the workplace. It is for this reason that EAPs are seen more as partners in the workplace who are able to assist with increasing productivity. In order to fully understand these benefits however, monitoring and evaluation of the programme must take place.

Chapter 3: Empirical study into monitoring and evaluation practices of corporate clients of an external service provider

3.1 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation is one of the core technologies of EAPs. However it is not always adhered to for various reasons. The other technologies of an EAP are more about getting the programme running and ensuring that people are aware of the programme and, therefore, cannot be ignored. However, once the programme is running, monitoring and evaluation is a difficult technology to adhere to. This research shows that the perception that monitoring and evaluation is not done is not accurate. However, the needs for monitoring and evaluation and the methods of monitoring and evaluation differ significantly, depending on the purpose for which the data is used. Bearing this in mind, the goal of this study was to explore and describe the monitoring and evaluation practices of corporate clients using external EAP service providers.

3.2 Research methodology

Whilst the term "evaluation" is usually associated with quantitative research, in this context, the researcher did not aim to evaluate programmes but to understand the role that monitoring and evaluation plays in EAPs. This was achieved by following a qualitative approach because the nature of this research was exploratory and descriptive in order to understand how organisations currently perceive and deal with the concept of monitoring and evaluating EAPs (Creswell, 2009: 175; Padgett, 2008: 16).

3.3 Type of research

In order to achieve a full understanding of the views of different organisations as well as the problems experienced and successes achieved, the researcher engaged in

direct discussions with those currently involved in evaluating EAPs. For this reason the researcher adopted an exploratory and descriptive approach (Babbie, 2004: 87). The researcher's aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning participants attached to the monitoring and evaluation of EAPs. This was done by interviewing role-players from the various sub-systems within organisations. Furthermore, the outcome was a descriptive research project which expounds the role of monitoring and evaluation and any issues associated with it (Fouche & De Vos, 2011: 89). This is consistent with qualitative research (Silverman, 2005: 32).

The researcher hoped to add to the field of EAP by advising on additional areas of monitoring and evaluation, using criteria that would be more meaningful than those currently being used. This will help corporate clients of external service providers to monitor and evaluate their programmes better and, therefore, derive more benefit from their EAP, if and where such differences in procedures are indicated. The research, therefore, took the form of an applied research study (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liac, 2004: 19).

3.4 Research design

Since the focus of this research was on exploring and describing the role of monitoring and evaluating EAPs as a concept common to various organisations, this can, therefore, be seen as the "bounded system" (Delpont, Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 320). The researcher used a collective case study design because this made it possible to contact specific organisations that have an EAP in place with an external service provider and to compare the EAP evaluation techniques used by these organisations, or their reasons for not engaging in monitoring and evaluating (Delpont, Fouché & Schurink, 2011: 322).

3.5 Research methods

3.5.1 Study population and sampling

The population used for this study comprised the corporate clients of an external service provider. This provider currently grades their clients in terms of black, platinum, gold, and silver. These gradings are based on strategic value, size of the population, as well as monetary income from the clients, where black is the highest grading and silver the lowest. The sample for the study was taken from the list of black and platinum clients. Elements of purposive, non-probability sampling were used because the participants were chosen purposefully from these two graded groups on the service provider's client list (Strydom & Delport, 2011:390; Creswell, 2007: 125; Roussouw, 2003: 113).

In the first stage of sampling, a systematic sampling technique was used to select ten organisations from the two graded groups. Further to the systematic sampling, there was a level of stratified, random sampling because the clients were chosen from the two grading systems or strata being black and platinum (Strydom, 2011: 230). The clients were listed in no specific order and the first participant was selected randomly. Thereafter, every 10th client on the list was selected to make up the total sample of 12 organisations (Strydom, 2011: 230). Each organisation selected had to be approached in order to provide informed consent that their organisation was willing to participate. In some organisations this approval process was carried out by specific research departments and, in others, by their human resource departments. The entire process was time-consuming and extended the research period. Once approval had been received from all the organisations, each interviewee was approached individually to obtain informed consent to be involved in the research project.

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, the sample included companies that met the following criteria:

- the company had an EAP in place;
- the EAP had been in place for longer than twelve months;
- the EAP had to be run by an external service provider.

In this case, the external service provider was also the researcher's employer. However, only companies with which the researcher was not directly involved were selected for the study to ensure objectivity. Once an organisation had been selected, the researcher took her involvement into account before approaching them to participate. The Service Provider was approached to identify the individual EAP practitioners who represented the corporate clients in the sample.

In the second stage of sampling, the EAP practitioners in the 12 selected organisations were requested to participate voluntarily (Strydom & Delpont, 2011: 394).

As noted by Strydom and Delpont (2011: 391), when interviewing is the method of data collection, the emphasis is on the collection of detailed, in-depth information of a qualitative nature rather than quantitative. Rossouw (2003: 114) emphasises that the number of variables being studied plays a role in the sample size, as the higher the number of variables involved, the larger the sample size required. The first ten EAP practitioners required for the sample of corporate clients were interviewed. However as the interviews progressed, the researcher identified that the saturation point of data had been reached. Therefore, the ten participants interviewed made up the total.

3.5.2 Data collection

In order to gain the participants' viewpoints and understanding of the concepts of monitoring and evaluation, the researcher used semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. The researcher made use of specific questions to guide the direction of

the interview while allowing the interviews to follow the path that the interviewees took (Greeff, 2011: 341; Babbie, 2004: 300). The researcher also collected descriptive data on the behaviour of the interviewees (Brink, van der Walt, & Van Rensburg, 2012: 150). The researcher asked additional probing questions as the interview progressed (Brink, van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012: 158; Greeff, 2011: 350) in order to ensure that she obtained a rich view of the interviewees' knowledge regarding the concepts.

The researcher developed an interview schedule before starting the interviews to ensure that the process was constructive and avoided gaps in the data collected. This was done by compiling questions around themes which addressed all the areas that needed to be covered as well as other possible avenues for exploration. These themes (e.g. lack of time to conduct monitoring and evaluation, lack of understanding of methods of monitoring and evaluation, and the need for monitoring and evaluation) were then placed in a sequence that helped the interview to flow in a logical manner (Greeff, 2011: 352).

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher used the following process to analyse the data.

3.6.1 Data collection: recording

Given that the data collection method included semi-structured, one-to-one interviews, the researcher made use of digital recordings to ensure that all the data were captured accurately. The recordings were managed and filed while the interviews were being conducted (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012: 397). The researcher also ensured that all recorded data were transcribed within a short space of time after the interview to ensure that reflective notes and observed data were captured correctly (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012: 404). As this process unfolded, the researcher was able to identify themes and patterns which were used to code the data and simplify its retrieval as the study progressed. It was

also important to understand the various themes that emerged from each interview (Creswell, 2009: 186; Babbie, 2007:3 84; Saldanha, 2010: 5).

3.6.2 Continuous data analysis

Owing to the qualitative nature of the study, analysis was continuous and began during the actual interview phase while writing detailed reflective notes during and after each interview (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 408). This enabled the researcher to identify and explore specific themes as the process progressed. Data was transcribed and saved in specific folders accordingly. This made the final analysis and report writing easier.

3.6.3 Coding of data

Coding of the data began during the interviews. This phase was carried out as close to the collection of the data in the field as possible in order to ensure that the researcher was able to immerse herself in the data and themes (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 397) so that codes were given to data that had already been categorised (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 411).

Once the interviews came to an end and the coding was complete, the researcher was able to analyse the data and identify trends which were used to present the data in a readable and publishable format. Actual quotations are included from the recordings in order to validate and reinforce the data presented.

3.6.4 Reducing data

During the process of reducing the data, the researcher established categories and links between the various interviews. This enabled the researcher to establish commonalities between data from the various clients. During this time, the

researcher ensured that data were labelled and filed accurately to ensure clear understanding (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 411).

Finally, having obtained the data and identified commonalities and themes, in certain cases, the researcher put some of the data into tabular format for ease of reading and understanding.

3.6.5 Ensuring trustworthiness

Often, qualitative studies are perceived to have been influenced subjectively by the researcher, as well as by the interviewees. It is, therefore, important to implement strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the outcome of such studies.

In order to ensure that the analysis of the data was trustworthy, the researcher clarified all assumptions during the interview process to confirm that participants and the researcher understood each other's messages accurately. The following four criteria were adhered to during the study, as recommended by Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012: 172):

- **Credibility:** This was done by using methods such as triangulation (asking different questions and seeking different sources); peer debriefing (obtaining advice from a peer of similar status in the same field); and member checks (assessing the intentions of the participants and correcting any obvious errors) as recommended by Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012: 172).
- **Reliability:** This entailed the use of a strategy embedded with techniques which enabled the study to be repeated independently with the same or similar participants, within the same or similar contexts, to produce the same or similar outcomes (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012: 172).

- **Confirmability:** The researcher ensured that the data were an accurate reflection of the participants' perceptions which were not tainted by any bias imposed by the researcher (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012: 172).

3.7 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted with one EAP practitioner, employed by a corporate client contracted with the service provider, who has had an EAP in place for more than 12 months. The pilot study served to make sure that the questions in the interview schedule were in line with the needs of the study and that there were no gaps in the questions. Data obtained from the participant in the pilot study were not included in the data for the final study. The participant that was approached for the pilot study was chosen randomly from the clients graded as black or platinum on the service provider's database.

Further to the above, the researcher engaged with various peers and experts in the field to get their views on the questions and interview schedule. Their comments and recommendations were taken into account and the questions were revised accordingly.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that ethical obligations were maintained throughout the study. The ethical considerations are outlined below:

- **Avoidance of harm:** The first and foremost concern in the humanities field is to ensure that the participants in the study are not exposed to harm (Babbie, 2004: 64; Strydom, 2011: 115). The researcher ensured that, in this study, no identifiable characteristics of the participants or their organisations were used.

- **Voluntary participation:** It is essential for the participants to feel that they had a choice to participate in the study and that they chose with full understanding of what the study would entail (Babbie, 2007: 26). In addition to full disclosure regarding the research, the participants were not obliged in any way to participate in the study.

- **Informed consent:** The concept of informed consent is closely associated with the concept of voluntary participation. The researcher developed an informed consent form that was distributed to all participants, to give them an understanding of the study. Their signature on the consent form indicated their consent. The informed consent form included the following, as explained by Strydom (2011: 116):
 - the goal of the study;
 - the duration of participation in the study;
 - the procedures to be followed during the study, with specific information relating to confidentiality and the use of a voice/audio recorder;
 - the possible advantages, disadvantages and risks involved in participating in the study;
 - the researcher's credibility in undertaking the study; and
 - publishing of the study results.

- **Violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality:** Since the researcher conducted the interviews in her personal capacity, it was not possible to maintain complete anonymity. However, the researcher will ensure that the data received remains confidential (Strydom, 2011: 119). The researcher has made every attempt to maintain this confidentiality by using aliases as opposed to the participants' names or the names of their organisations.

- **Actions and competence of the researcher:** This study is embedded in the EAP field in which the researcher has worked for the past eight years. She has worked for two of the largest EAP providers in South Africa and has seen the need to deal with EAP monitoring and evaluation in this context. The researcher is currently employed as the client service manager: key accounts and deals with the management of the client relationships managers working on the key accounts in the organisation. At the time of the interviews, however, the researcher was the retention and growth manager. The researcher's experience is evidence of her competence in the field of EAP and her ability to carry out this study (Strydom, 2011: 123).

Despite being employed by the Service Provider, whose clients participated in the study, the only companies that were selected included companies with which the researcher has not been directly involved, to ensure objectivity.

- **Publication of findings:** During the research, all participants and sponsors were made aware of the intention to publish the study. This was communicated in an open and honest manner. It has also been stipulated that all data captured will be stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years for archival purposes and possible future research.

3.9 Data analysis

Section A of the interview schedule dealt with the detail about the participating organisation as well as the participants themselves. It also examined the participant's general understanding and value perception of monitoring and evaluation. The last question of Section A asked whether the organisation currently engaged in monitoring and evaluation. If the answer was 'yes', the interviewees were asked a specific set of questions; if the answer was 'no' the interviewees were asked

a different set of questions according to the interview schedule. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study the participants are referred to as clients as they are clients of the specific EAP service provider.

Table 3.1 below shows the profile of the organisations and the participants in terms of the EAP. The first few questions were generic and related to the participants' position within the organisation, how long they have had an EAP in place, as well as whether they were employed by the organisation or in their position since the start of the EAP.

Table 3.1: Profile of participating organisations

Client	Position /title	EAP in place ≥ 5 years	Engaged in EAP since inception Yes / No	Industry of organisation	No. of employees
Client 1	EAP Manager	Yes	No	Financial	4 362
Client 2	Employee Wellness Programme Manager	Yes	No	Government	3 514
Client 3	Group HR Manager	No	No	Consumer Services	1 380
Client 4	SHEQ Manager: Health and Wellness	No	No	Industrial	15 103
Client 5	Employee Wellbeing Manager	Yes	Yes	Consumer Services	2 029
Client 6	Transformation, Wellness and People	Yes	No	Healthcare	20 322

Client	Position /title	EAP in place ≥ 5 years	Engaged in EAP since inception Yes / No	Industry of organisation	No. of employees
	Development Manager				
Client 7	Manager for Wellness	Yes	Yes	Public Sector	3 686
Client 8	Senior Manager: Group Wellness and Benefits	Yes	Yes	Industrial	26 987
Client 9	Group Employee Wellness and Transformation Manager	Yes	No	Industrial	54 766
Client 10	Wellness Manager	Yes	No	Public Sector	3 000

During the discussion with the participants based on questions one and two, it was found that all ten participants did not have the EAP as their sole responsibility but that managing the EAP was part of a bigger portfolio. In some instances the EAP was their main responsibility, but they had other “*ad hoc* responsibilities”, e.g. Client 5 was also responsible for event planning in the organisation. For other participants, the EAP was less important compared to their bigger roles, e.g. Client 3 was the Group HR Manager and was therefore responsible for all HR functions this illustrates the statements made that the EAP often falls within the HHR sub-system of an organisation, and Client 8 was the Senior Manager: Group Wellness and Benefits which included all functions related to employee benefits such as medical schemes, pension and provident funds and others, this further illustrated the fact that the EAP is one component in a number of other sub-systems within an organisation but it has an impact on all of these systems which is why it often sits under the people stated

above. In most of these cases, however, the participants had support from others in managing the EAP, including managers in different business units in the case of the larger organisations such as Clients 9 and 4 and, in other cases; this meant having EAP custodians or consultants reporting to them as support.

Questions three and four of Section A related to the how long the EAP had been running in the organisation as well as whether or not the EAP had always been with an external service provider. Out of the ten organisations, a total of eight had had an EAP in place for longer than five years, in most cases even longer than ten years, with two organisations having had an EAP in place for approximately four-and-a-half years. This meant that the participating organisations had had a programme in place for a long enough period of time to have started monitoring and evaluation should that have been a priority.

Finally, of the ten organisations, only one had an internal EAP model for a period of time prior to the introduction of a service provider.

The last three questions of Section A referred to monitoring and evaluation in general, in order to obtain an understanding of how the participants viewed these two concepts.

Question five specifically addressed the definition of monitoring and evaluation as well as whether the participants saw a difference between the two concepts. Of the ten participants, two felt that there was no difference between the two concepts although, in their discussion, slight differences between the two became evident. One participant was not sure, and the remaining seven participants felt that there are clear distinctions between the two concepts.

Even though the participants considered the two terms to be different, there were definite areas in which the same thing is measured in different ways. For example, return on investment is mentioned under both monitoring and evaluation.

Table 3.2 below shows the differences described by the participants.

Table 3.2: Difference between monitoring and evaluation

<u>Client</u>	<u>Monitoring</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-to-day tracking of EAP activities from a business perspective. Tracking of smaller elements. • What returns are generated from the programme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More holistic, from an organisational view rather than an operational view.
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine checking and reporting of priority information about the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of examining to determine whether the objectives we have set for ourselves are satisfying our objective based on our own expectations and standards of excellence.
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that it is happening • Ongoing / Is it happening? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting a return on investment • Why are we doing it? • If it is happening what am I getting out of it?
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing of the statistical data and looking for trends and looking for possible areas of concern that need to come up and what we 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis of the data. • Analysis of the numbers in monitoring.

<u>Client</u>	<u>Monitoring</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
	<p>could potentially do to address them. So how my occupational health data and my employee wellness data show trends that are similar and where our problem areas lie so that we know what actions to take.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at the numbers. 	
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not understand the concepts very well. Monitoring the utilisation and presenting to steercom. Return on investment. 	
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is EAP achieving its objectives? What has it unearthed? Are we doing what we need to be doing and are we getting out of the system what we need to be getting out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe and progress the quality of the programme over a period of time. Is there progress or quality? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically think about what you do evaluate if what you are doing is effective; does it need improvement? Measure what is effective or not.
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a look at your results and seeing that the programme is running; is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bit more qualitative. So what are we doing with the programme? Is the

<u>Client</u>	<u>Monitoring</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
	functioning.	programme achieving its objectives, and are those objectives in line with where the organisation is and can you measure it and can you determine an ROI for it?
9.	Monitoring and evaluation for me is being able to provide information on whether the programme actually meets the intended outcomes.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring different indicators that you've agreed to, that would be a measure of the success of the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation would be something a little bit more long term to evaluate the actual impact of that programme.
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not see a difference 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checking that you are on the right track, because in the beginning you plan that this is what you want to achieve, and monitoring and evaluation means, as you go along, you check whether you are still on track or are there other issues you need to look at or fix? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for weaknesses.

The following discussion illustrates the themes that were highlighted during the interview process.

3.9.1 Tracking of EAP activities

Clients 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 all mentioned that monitoring meant tracking or constantly checking that they are on the right track and achieving their objectives.

Client 2 stated that “monitoring is like a routine checking and reporting of priority information about the programme”, which captures this theme according to what most of the participants stated. Client 3 also stated that monitoring is “making sure that it is happening”, which highlights the need for the clients to ensure that they are getting what they paid for in terms of the contract.

3.9.1.1 Discussion

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the distinction that most participants made was that these two procedures occurred at different times of the programme, with evaluation being annual which could be seen as the return on investment, whereas monitoring is seen more as the day-to-day tracking. This correlates with the response that most participants gave that there were some things that needed to be tracked continuously rather than measured once off in order to understand success factors. This also aligns with the definition provided in Chapter One which states that monitoring means “supervising activities in progress to ensure they are on course and on schedule in meeting the objectives and performance targets” (Business Directory, 2014). A number of participants also mentioned that they monitored the impact of various interventions as they occurred. Clients 1 and 2 both stated that they used evaluation forms following any intervention in order to assess the impact of the intervention. Clients 1 and 7 stated that they also get informal feedback from staff by email or telephone after the use of the services. In both instances this was done very informally and both participants suggested a need to standardise this.

3.9.2 Periodic nature of reporting

Clients 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 all highlighted the periodic nature of their monitoring and evaluation, with some seeing both monitoring and evaluation being done at separate intervals.

Client 1 stated that, in their environment, unfortunately, the evaluation only takes place on an annual basis because the results are used to determine the budget for the next year. The participant stated her dissatisfaction with this process as she felt that they were losing out on valuable information.

Client 9 stated that there are some things that are monitored more frequently, such as utilisation, while others, such as impact, are looked at in the longer term and mostly in relation to return on investment.

3.9.2.1 Discussion

Based on the participants' responses, it was found that reporting takes place periodically and is usually stipulated during the planning phase. This is when the client organisation decides when they would like to receive their reports as well as the type of information required. This ensures that the service provider is able to plan when they need to provide reports to the client as well as the format required. It also means that the service provider is able to collect and compile the information that the client requires so that there are no discrepancies. Client 8 stated that it had been a long road to get the report into the format that is meaningful for them. He stated the following: "I think we're still going to see huge progression. We started off very, very rudimentary with a traffic-light type of concept that we reported on. It was a one pager with a red, orange and green light that we used and now we've progressed 4 or 5 years later. We progressed into quite a sophisticated report which is very comprehensive and where we're starting to look at employees holistically."

According to Cloete (2015: 29), the sharing of data by service providers gives credibility to their efforts and the regular, structured feedback given to organisations enables the organisations to calculate and understand their return on investment in the programme. From the discussion with the participants, it was clear that they also saw the need to report on an ongoing basis so that the programme can be reviewed and measures put in place when information shows that the programme is lacking. This links to the theme of achieving objectives.

3.9.3 Reliance on service provider for data

Clients 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 all relied heavily on the service provider for EAP data. However, this would apply without saying because of the confidential nature of the service and sensitive nature of the issues about which people make contact. Such issues are not frequently discussed by users of the service which is why the data sets provided by the service provider are critical in understanding the success or failure of the programme as well as in understanding the trends which have an impact on all other areas and themes mentioned in this analysis.

Client 1 stated that the only time they use the service provider for information is during the annual review when the service provider gives a presentation to specific decision-making stakeholders in the business and this has an influence on the budget that is allocated to the programme for the next financial year.

Whilst most participants stated that they rely on the service provider's reports to monitor the progress of the programme and the services used, Client 2 also mentioned the important factor that they rely on the service provider's reports to indicate whether the services were impactful for the employees or not, as well as the reports that are provided to managers following a formal referral as these have a direct bearing on the productivity of the employee.

3.9.3.1 Discussion

All participants stated that they rely heavily on the data received from their EAP Service Provider. They receive reports from their service provider at periodic intervals including monthly, quarterly and annually. In most instances the service provider would also take the opportunity to present the data to the organisation at different levels in a formal setting, the results of which are used in various ways. In terms of the EAP, the clients rely on these reports as they do not have access to the information that their employees share with the EAP provider. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, the reasons for which employees contact the EAP provider are usually regarded highly confidential. It is, therefore, the service provider's responsibility to highlight the trends when presenting problems and can also highlight specific areas or business units that are of concern.

Client 4 also stated that the service provider reports on customer service and customer satisfaction so that the client organisation is aware of any complaints that are received.

3.9.4 Identifying hot spots or managing employees according to risk

Clients 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9 all regarded the programme as a way of identifying a risk in some form or other. For some, the risk was that there were gaps in the current services which needed to be filled and, for others who worked in more safety related environments, the data helped to highlight actual risks to the business and employees. This highlights further the relationship between the other sub-systems within the organisation and the EAP. By highlighting risk, there is a direct correlation to safety and risk mitigation.

In both instances the organisation is able to take corrective action, either by including other services where there are gaps, or by using targeted interventions when dealing with employees that pose a risk in a particular area. During the discussion, Client 8 also mentioned that the current service provider also provided specialised services for specific employees who were in a safety critical position. These services ensure

that all risks are mitigated for both the employee and the organisation as the employee is temporarily removed from duty should they be seen as a risk. Whilst removing employees from the work environment affects productivity at that time, the effect would be even more severe if the employee returned to work in a state that could cause an incident or accident as the damage could cause a complete shutdown of services. In such instances, it is critical that the service provider is able to report in a format that highlights the risk so that the employer does not face such outcomes.

Client 2 stated that managing employees according to risk was of great value to them as “we are able to identify the gaps and also we are able to mitigate any risk that we have identified.”

Client 4 stated that “it then gives you key trends within your business and you then work out where your challenges are lying so that you can be more proactive in fixing it [sic]” which leads to targeted interventions based on the results. Client 4’s environment is also one with safety critical positions, meaning that safety is a grave concern for them. Therefore, the programme and its interventions are also used to highlight safety issues in order to provide interventions to support the safety fraternity within the organisation in mitigating relevant safety risks. Client 8 also works within a safety critical environment and his belief is that “monitoring and evaluation highlights hot spots in the organisation that are high risk where you can change that behaviour and potentially you can improve the safety aspect in the organisation and definitely productivity”.

3.9.4.1 Discussion

As stated by the participants the EAP service provider takes the opportunity in the reports to identify specific high-risk areas for the organisation by highlighting a specific trend per region, per site or per business unit, depending on how the particular client has structured their report.

From the discussion above it can be seen that it is critical that the reports highlight information which is relevant to an organisation depending on the client's environment and industry, as illustrated by Client 8's example of a business shutting down if there is a severe accident which could have been prevented if the service provider had reported on this risk.

3.9.5 Targeted interventions

Clients 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 all indicated that they use the EAP data to develop interventions to assist employees to deal with the trends that are identified through the monitoring and evaluation processes.

Client 3 mentioned that they would do a second review after a targeted intervention in order to assess whether it had a visible impact. Client 6 said, "The value I see is first of all from a monitoring point of view... with employees, what are the psycho-social issues that they are dealing with and how do we respond to those, whether proactively or in a more management oriented type of way and I think there is really a great value in that and how do we then take that information to inform the way forward." Client 9 specifically stated that the data has an impact on interventions being rolled out. She stated, "Have a plan, yes, but I always say the plan is subject to change depending on what I'm seeing coming out of the data, and the data has sharply told me what I should be focusing on."

3.9.5.1 Discussion

The information which highlights specific trends or risks in the business enables the particular client organisation to plan specific and appropriately targeted interventions in those areas rather than using a blanket approach across the business. For example, if there were high levels of stress in business unit one based in Gauteng and high levels of substance abuse in business unit 4 based in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Then the organisation would run a stress intervention in business unit one in Johannesburg and a substance abuse intervention in business unit 4 in Kwa-Zulu

Natal. This would also allow the organisation to engage in follow up monitoring and evaluation to determine whether there had been any impact and/or change in behaviour after the targeted interventions. This also means that the organisation would be able to make better use of their budget by spending on additional services/interventions only in areas where they are needed and not across the business.

3.9.6 Achievement of objectives

Clients 2, 6, 8, 9 and 10 all stated that monitoring and evaluation helps them to determine whether they are meeting the objectives that they set for the programme or the contract.

Client 2 stated that evaluation is seen as “a process of examining, to determine whether the objectives we have set for ourselves are satisfying our objectives based on our own expectations and standard of excellence”. Similarly, Client 6 referred to evaluation as deciding “is the EAP meeting its objectives?” Client 8 stated that evaluation is asking “is the programme achieving its objectives, and are those objectives in line with where the organisation is and can you measure it and can you determine an ROI for it?”

3.9.6.1 Discussion

From the above responses, it is evident that the tracking of the data serves two purposes. The first is to highlight problem trends for the organisation and recommend what should be done by the service provider or relevant internal custodians. The second purpose is to understand whether the programme is actually meeting the objectives that were set out at the start of the programme. In certain instances these objectives are part of the operational plan (as with client 2); in others it is part of a bigger strategy. Client 6 stated that the information is used to see if the

programme is achieving what it is supposed to or if other services or changes are required.

Understanding whether the programme is meeting its objectives enables the participants to put measures in place to rectify areas of concern where the programme seems to be lacking or not meeting the need. Since this is done on a continuous basis, it means that remedies can be put in place quickly to effect change. Further to that, in relation to themes 1 and 2, since tracking of the data is done on a periodic basis, it is possible to check whether targeted interventions that are implemented out of the recommendations have met the need or objectives or if further interventions are required.

3.9.7 Sharing of data with relevant role players/stakeholders in the organisation

Clients 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 all share their findings from the monitoring and evaluation in different forums and with different levels of stakeholders. These forums were inclusive of peer forums to very high level EXCO forums. In certain cases they were even shared with labour unions.

Client 1 stated that the service provider reports are discussed and the various role players would consider them in terms of what was happening “on the ground” in the organisation to see if the feedback made sense and was reflective of what was currently happening in the organisation and therefore reflective of what is happening within each sub-system of the organisation. They also consider where they have achieved their objectives for that period as for the previous theme. Client 6 and 8 made similar comments about how they engage with the reports, consider the context and what is happening in the organisation at the time, and then decide if they agree with the recommendations or whether there are additional avenues to follow.

3.9.7.1 Discussion

A number of participants stated that monitoring and evaluation is a continuous process that takes place periodically. In most instances, the EAP is monitored on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. It has been seen that the monthly monitoring is generally quite basic where the reliance is on data from the service provider and the clients consider the reports and decide whether they agree or disagree with the trends that are highlighted. Depending on the size of the organisation, the reports are sometimes shared with other role players in the business such as HR business partners (e.g. Client 1 and Client 6), with the intention that they take the data and recommendations back to their business units for implementation, thereby leading to targeted interventions. From the discussions with participants, it was found that organisations in which the data were presented at higher levels, were the organisations that had the most success. This correlates with the six essential pillars of Berry (2010: 1) where the first pillar refers to engaged and supportive leadership at multiple levels. This finding is also in accordance with Chapman (2010: 9). This was highlighted by clients 7, 8, 9 and 10 where the data were reported to EXCO and also linked to the business strategy, and the allocation of a budget to the programme was never questioned.

3.9.8 Implementation of corrective action

Clients 5, 6, 7 and 10 all mentioned that EAP data were used to review the status of their programmes and to reconsider what they were doing if need be.

Client 5 used the data from the monitoring of their onsite clinics to notice a serious drop in cases when a new onsite therapist was appointed. The client followed up the finding and immediately began to rectify the situation, creating awareness and building relationships so that the service would be better utilised. This is an example of where the client did not wait until the end of the contractual period to notice that one element of the programme was not working. Instead, the issue was noticed immediately from the reporting and measures were put in place to increase the usage that was monitored constantly until it reached an acceptable level.

Client 6 also mentioned that the evaluation of the overall programme enabled them to see if there were opportunities to improve or expand what is being offered continuously so that they actually respond to the demands of all the complex and multi-dimensional issues that are highlighted in the data and through the EAP itself.

3.9.8.1 Discussion

As was discussed in Chapters One and Two, it is essential that periodic monitoring and evaluation, also in the form of audits, enables an organisation to identify when a programme is failing and in order to implement proactive and corrective measures to rectify the situation. As was mentioned by Client 1, if the programme is only reviewed at the end of the annual period, it means that a lot of time has been lost in terms of rectifying the situation and gaining a greater return on investment. It also means that there is great possibility of money being spent on services that are not meeting the needs of the organisation or the employees. This would, in turn, have a direct effect on the allocation of a budget to the programme for the new contractual period. If the programme has not reached sufficient employees or dependants and not had any effect on the workforce or the organisation's bottom line, there would be no reason to put more money into the programme. This can be avoided, as with client 5, if the issues are identified and rectified quickly.

3.9.9 Informal/unstructured monitoring and evaluation practices

Clients 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 all stated that their monitoring and evaluation processes were currently informal and needed to be structured in order to get better value.

Client 5 seemed to be engaging in informal monitoring and evaluation processes by monitoring the change in usage after awareness drives and the change in trends following interventions. However, she was not aware that this was actually deemed to be a form of monitoring and evaluation.

Clients 1 and 7 also mentioned that they sometimes received feedback directly from individuals who might have used the service on an *ad hoc* basis. Therefore, there was no actual monitoring of employee satisfaction with the service but reliance on feedback from very few people.

Client 7 also felt that owing to the informal and unstructured nature a lot of the time, it was the complaints or failures of the programme that were recorded and not the successes.

Some participants reported that their monitoring and evaluation processes were very informal as they did not have any governing processes and protocols in place to guide them. In certain instances the processes were so informal that, at first, the participants felt that they did not participate in monitoring or evaluation. However, as the interview progressed they realised that they actually did monitor and evaluate, but very informally.

3.9.9.1 Discussion

Whilst a number of the employees felt that monitoring and evaluation is important, a few felt that they did not know how to engage in it effectively. It was found that the participants all engaged in monitoring and evaluation in some form or another but, because the EAP industry is silent on proper guidelines for monitoring and evaluation, these participants did not know that they were in fact engaged in monitoring and evaluation. Even the participants who indicated that they engaged in formal monitoring and evaluation, highlighted the need for more formal, industry guidelines. Many stated that this should include guidelines for strategy, policies and the actual procedures. It was also highlighted by client 1 and 8 that there was no one definition in the industry for the measurement of utilisation versus engagement, for example, which means that the entire process is flawed and clients are then dependent on the service providers for guidance.

3.9.10 Need to formalise monitoring and evaluation

Clients 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9, all felt that they needed to formalise monitoring and evaluation more.

3.9.10.1 Discussion

Almost all of the participants stated that there is a need to formalise their monitoring and evaluation practices. This would involve the following:

- **An over-arching strategy:** Client 3 made specific mention of this which could be a wellness or EAP strategy that governs the monitoring and evaluation process and dictates the frequency and types of reporting that should take place.
- **Policies and guidelines:** Clients 2, 4, 7 and 8 all made reference to this. It was stated that, as an industry, the EAP field needs to be more structured and provide guidelines in terms of how monitoring and evaluation should be carried out. At this stage the industry is unable to decide even on one formula to calculate utilisation, which leads to discrepancies in terms of how data is understood in order to determine the value derived from the service. It has therefore been recommended that, as an industry or profession, the EAP field should develop more formalised guidelines both for service providers and clients as a whole. A few participants also stated that they believe monitoring and evaluation is a very specific field that requires some form of training and expertise. This is one of the reasons why clients do not engage in monitoring and evaluation as they do not feel competent enough.
- **System:** Clients 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9 felt that this would be a critical factor in terms of changing the way monitoring and evaluation is done. It was even suggested that a standardised system be developed and made available into which all data is entered. This system should be able to draw up reports and highlight trends and specific risks automatically according to the client's

industry. Client 8 even felt that this system should provide real-time monitoring. Participants felt that, whilst their service provider would enter the data on the back end, they as the clients should be able to access and interact with the data without seeing any identifying information that could breach confidentiality. The system should allow them to work with the data in order to get reports that are meaningful to them in terms of their needs. It would also mean that they have information at their fingertips to work with as they constantly build their business case. In terms of available technology, it is no wonder that clients are looking in this direction.

3.9.11 Return on investment (outcome evaluation)

Clients 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 all stated that demonstrating an ROI is a key element in their monitoring and evaluation processes.

Client 1 stated that the service provider presents the return on investment calculation and results at the end of the annual period. This is counter-productive as there is no room for corrective action at this stage.

Client 8 indicated that an ROI is critical. He said, “Why should an organisation invest in an EAP if you can’t measure it and determine a return on investment to the organisation?”

3.9.11.1 Discussion

According to Lubbe (2013: 6), return on investment is the economic return which is defined as the total cost savings of the employee wellbeing programme minus the total cost of the programme. Accordingly, for a number of participants the return on investment is seen as the evaluation of the programme. They feel this should be done over a longer period of time in order to gauge the success of the programme.

According to Keet (2009: iv), employee wellbeing programmes add value to the organisation's financial bottom line. Evaluation, therefore, is key to the process in order to determine the financial saving or value added by the programme.

3.9.12 Using monitoring and evaluation to justify the need for EAP and the EAP department

Clients 1 and 7 specifically stated that their data are used to justify the need for the programme and for themselves. Two other participants (Clients 8 and 9) alluded to the fact that the data which comes from monitoring and evaluation speaks for itself in terms of the value of the programme, with client 9 stating that the data gives her the business case for the programme and nobody is able to question her in terms of whether or not the programme is being used.

3.9.12.1 Discussion

According to Cloete (2015: 29), being able to evaluate the outcomes of an EAP puts the employer in a position to review the existence of the EAP programme, to determine the extent to which the programme's objectives are being met, and to find ways to improve the overall effectiveness of the programme. This statement does not only relate to this theme but to quite a number of the themes mentioned in this section, including the ability to monitor the achievement of objectives and implement corrective action where necessary. It is a reality that, during tough economic times, the EAP and wellness budgets are the first to be cut or removed altogether. It is for this reason that constant, periodic reporting is so important in order to have a business case available should the need arise.. The ability to pull data off a system at any given time in a format that makes sense plays a huge role in this regard.

3.9.13 Integration of wellness data

Clients 4, 6, 8 and 9 ensure that their data are integrated to represent holistic wellness before they are presented to other stakeholders. This helps them to draw better trends and compare trends amongst the various wellness elements enabling them to plan more effective, targeted interventions. Essentially, what clients are looking for is the link between the various sub-systems present within the organisation and which are external but have an effect on the organisation.

3.9.13.1 Discussion

Several participants stated that they do not only consider EAP data but all of their wellness data as a whole in order to create meaningful feedback. The data most often used to create an integrated view include:

- Medical scheme data
- Absenteeism data
- Wellness day data
- Incapacity and disability data
- Occupational health and safety data

Client 6 stated that they look at various data sets and try to pull them all together and establish the trends. However this is not always an easy task. As stated by Client 6, "...you sort of have to navigate those complexities to say we need to find a way of integrating those things to be able to get a strategic picture... there are also competition related issues and confidentiality related issues that serve to protect our employees, ourselves and the service provider but I [feel] they actually compromise the need to integrate the data." He went on to state that, for the future, he would like to propose that all wellbeing-related services fall under one service provider which would make the entire process a lot easier and more beneficial for employees. This statement corresponds with a recommendation by Chadehumbe (2004: 74-83), who states that the integration of various services or programmes such as EAP, nutrition and weight, active living, chronic disease management, health promotion

and illness prevention, etc. will contribute to the effectiveness of an overall workplace programme.

Client 8 stated, "...we're taking medical aid information, absenteeism information from our payroll system and we're taking financial information of our employees and we're starting to pull it together to, instead of looking at things in silos, look at people holistically to say, so what are the issues that people are dealing with and how do we address these issues. Because you can't divorce these issues from one another because a person is a whole person and all of these things impact you in some way or another."

When participants receive reports on all of the above areas, they engage with the data as a whole, looking for common themes and trends. This then validates the areas of concern within the organisation and enables the client to engage with different providers in order to develop targeted interventions. It was also mentioned by Clients 4, 5, 6 and 8 that the ideal situation would be to have their various service providers interact with each other on the back end of an automated system to develop these interventions as well as to cross-refer employees between each other.

3.9.14 Monitoring and evaluation important from the onset of the programme

Clients 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 all engaged in monitoring and evaluation in some form from the outset of the EAP.

Client 2 said, "We needed to understand, from the beginning, how we are going to monitor this programme. When are we going to evaluate it? What is required in terms of the input for us to monitor and evaluate? That is where we identified the procedures that we need to put in place; the protocols that are needed for each and every activity." Client 8 stated that their EAP journey began with another EAP service provider who had extremely poor reporting skills which affected their monitoring and evaluation processes and this was the reason why the client moved to the current provider. Client 9 stated that monitoring began immediately; however, the actual

evaluation could only be done after a period of time, once sufficient data had been gathered.

3.9.14.1 Discussion

A number of participants stated that their monitoring and evaluation began at the outset of the EAP, during the planning phase. This ensured that both the service provider and the client were aware of the type of monitoring and evaluation that needed to take place throughout the duration of the contract and what level of interaction and engagement needed to take place at what intervals. This is supported by the findings in the literature review. According to Sieberhagen, Pienaar and Els (2011: 2), the programme outcomes must be stipulated at the start of the programme in order to indicate which measurements will show the true value of the programme.

This element is very closely aligned to the fact that in order to plan the monitoring and evaluation processes from the start of the programme, it is often linked to the over-arching strategy which dictates what needs to be measured in order to show value. Ideally, the over-arching wellness strategy should be related to the organisation's business strategy. This will ensure that the programme is aligned to the organisation's business goals (Berry *et al.*, 2010: 1), meaning that it should always be an agenda item that is of importance at all levels in the organisation especially to the business leaders.

3.9.15 Influence on budget

Clients 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 all indicated that monitoring and evaluation has an influence on the budget that is allocated to the programme.

Client 1 stated that the only time monitoring and evaluation results are used is at financial year end when the organisation decides whether the EAP should continue

during the next financial year. It is also only at this stage that the service provider is called in to give a presentation of the results. Client 2 stated that the results of the monitoring and, more importantly, the evaluation are presented at EXCO levels as they need to decide on what resources need to be implemented and whether they have the right resources in place. They need to understand whether the current resources are “providing for the programme or not”.

This illustrates clearly that the EAP not only affects other sub-systems but is also affected by other sub-systems, that the EAP is dependent on the financial sub-system of the organisation for its continuation of future funding.

Client 4 felt very strongly about this and in response to the question of whether the results of monitoring and evaluation influenced the budget, said “100%. The day I stop showing a return on investment, that programme will get cut. It is just the reality of the business. It has to show value.”

Clients 8, 9 and 10 stated that, because they constantly provide data representing what is found through monitoring and evaluation, they do not have to motivate a budget at the end of every financial year.

3.9.15.1 Discussion

All the participants indicated that monitoring and evaluation has an influence on the budget that they are allocated for the upcoming year. In certain instances the actual data is used to determine whether or not a budget is given for EAP as well as how much of a budget is provided. In other instances, the data ensures that there is never a question about the budget that is allocated to the programme.

3.10 Conclusion

A thorough data collection, coding and analysis was conducted in this chapter. At the onset of the research the literature study led the researcher to believe that a number of organisations did not engage in monitoring and evaluation of their EAP

and that most did not see the value. As the interviews progressed however, it became evident that this was not the case. A large number of organisations do in fact engage in some form of monitoring and evaluation, where the literature was however correct is that there is a lack of standardization and a lack of tools for monitoring and evaluation of EAPs.

The conclusions and proposed recommendations are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Key Findings, Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher has summarised the findings of the study in relation to the original research question, goals and objectives. The researcher has also provided recommendations based on the findings.

4.2 Discussion and recommendations regarding problem statement and objectives

The problem statement for this study was:

The lack of knowledge about monitoring and evaluation practices used by external service providers of employee assistance programmes in the South African context makes it difficult to demonstrate the real value and benefits of EAPs to corporate clients.

4.2.1 Findings

In relation to the problem statement, the researcher found through the interview process that there were some clients that were doing very well in demonstrating the value and benefits of EAPs to larger audiences in their organisations and often this was done with the support of the service provider in the form of reports and data provided. In this instance, all interviewees made very good use of the service provider's data and reporting mechanisms to understand their programme, demonstrate value, as well as mitigate employee and organisational risk. This demonstrates that a number of organisations, certainly all of those that participated in this study, are actually aware of the monitoring and evaluation practices of their service provider and they are well utilised.

Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents relied on the service provider for standard data in terms of utilisation of trends and identification of themes, while 30% of the interviewees also used the reports in terms of what the business would like to see, for example, safety-related information. They therefore used the service provider to address business needs directly.

On the other hand, a common theme that emerged was the lack of standardisation of monitoring and evaluation in the EAP industry as a whole. This is discussed as a separate item.

4.2.2 Recommendations

The first recommendation would be for service providers to highlight their various monitoring and evaluation practices better in relation to the business needs and not just in identifying utilisation rates and trends. Service providers should attempt to partner with their organisational clients better to have a clearer understanding of the business strategy in order to ensure that reporting is aligned to this and, therefore, makes better business sense.

Secondly it is recommended that service providers continue to highlight the importance of monitoring and evaluation, the practices in which they engage and

their importance, and how organisations can make the best use of their service provider's monitoring and evaluation practices in relation to their business needs.

Since these findings are based on interviews conducted with the clients of one service provider, it is recommended that further study be carried with a larger sample to determine whether clients of other service providers are as aware of the practices of monitoring and evaluation.

4.2.3 Objective 1: To explore corporate clients' understanding of the concept of monitoring and evaluating as related to their EAPs

4.2.3.1 Findings

From the interview process, the researcher found the following:

- All but one interviewee saw a definite distinction between the two concepts.
- Monitoring was regarded as more ongoing, day-to-day tracking.
- Evaluation was considered by most participants to be the impact and, therefore, done on a longer-term basis, in most cases annually.

All participants saw the monitoring and evaluation process as providing critical information regarding programme usage and problem trends, which was to be used in various forums and with different intentions. Some of these intentions were quite strategic when dealing with EXCOs whilst others were basic when dealing with peers and planning awareness drives and interventions based on needs gathered from the data.

What stood out in the research was the lack of a standard definition for each of these concepts, or a clear distinction between the two, in the EAP field.

At the start of the interviews, most participants used the words interchangeably until the researcher asked if the participant saw a difference between the two. Only then did they try to provide descriptions. Although most gave similar descriptions, they were always based on their opinion and nothing that stands as a solid, academic definition in the industry.

4.2.3.2 Recommendations

Based on the fact that the terms monitoring and evaluation are used interchangeably, it is recommended that the following takes place in the industry:

- A clear distinction should be made between the two concepts. This can be done by service providers or by EAPA-SA as the governing body.
- Academic definitions be provided in the EAP industry for each of these terms as well as guidance on the stages of the programme at which each of the process should take place. This can be done by any governing body and reiterated at academic institutions that provide education relating to EAPs.

4.2.4 Objective 2: To explore the extent to which monitoring and evaluation of EAPs takes place within corporations using an external service provider

4.2.4.1 Findings

Contrary to most of the literature, the results showed that monitoring and evaluation is undertaken and understood sufficiently.

Eighty percent (80%) of the participants knew, understood and engaged in monitoring and evaluation on a formal level with 10% engaging only in monitoring and another 10% engaging in monitoring and evaluation without knowing that this was being done.

4.2.4.2 Recommendations

Service providers and client organisations should be more aligned to the EAPA-SA Standards when building a strategy at the start of the programme, which should include the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the programme. This will ensure that all monitoring and evaluation practices are formalised from the start, documented and shared with the relevant stakeholders in the appropriate forms. This will leave no room for doubt concerning the monitoring and evaluation practices or outcomes. Formalising a monitoring and evaluation plan at the start of the programme creates more structure and more areas in which to provide feedback and highlight concerns in the form of service delivery issues, problem trends, etc.

4.2.5 Objective 3: To explore and describe the areas of an EAP that are monitored and evaluated within corporations using an external service provider

4.2.5.1 Findings

From the responses to the interviews, the researcher found that the areas most commonly considered included the following:

- **Utilisation:** All participants used this to understand the usage of the service. This gave an indication of whether or not more marketing needed to take place in order to ensure usage of the service. In certain instances, it also provided early indicators of whether or not the value of the programme would later come into question.
- **Problem trends:** This helped participants to plan interventions based on the identified needs of the employees currently using the services.
- **“Hot Spots”/ Risk Areas:** The service provider in question provided reports which enabled the organisation to highlight specific areas of the organisation

which presented higher levels of a particular issue than others. For example, they would have a table with the top 10 problems and all of the sites. The table then illustrates which department was higher than the organisational norm with regards to a particular problem. This, in turn, enabled the participants to plan targeted interventions for the particular departments rather than using a “blanketed” approach. This would then lead to a further opportunity to evaluate the impact of the intervention over a certain period of time.

- **Return on investment:** Participants also used the data to understand and illustrate the return on investment for the organisation. In most instances this calculation was done and provided by the service providers themselves.

4.2.5.2 Recommendations

During the interviews a lot of emphasis was placed on utilisation as a measurement of the usage. This is actually not a true reflection as utilisation often refers only to the actual cases opened. This would, therefore, exclude any training conducted by the service provider which is a value provided. It also does not show engagement with any online tools or awareness, which are all values provided by a service provider and are often noted as engagement and not utilisation.

It is, therefore, recommended that organisations take into account all engagement with the service by employees as this would be a more accurate and complete reflection of the use of the service. This links to the fact that the programme does not only need to be used when employees are already facing a problem but rather to prevent them from getting to that point through proactive engagement with the service.

Further, this point is a contentious one because there is no consensus on an industry calculation for utilisation or engagement, which makes it difficult to measure. It is, therefore, recommended that the formula be standardised.

A lot of what is monitored or evaluated can be seen as reactive as it is based on what has already occurred and is thus treated as usage in the reports. Therefore, the employees are already faced with the issues and, in most cases, productivity has already been affected. The researcher recommends that clients monitor their organisations as a whole in order to pre-empt issues. For example, during restructuring, engage in proactive resilience and change management to equip employees to deal with the changes before they are faced with them.

During the interviews, participants did not highlight the monitoring or evaluation of other areas of the programme or core technologies and standards according to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015). For example, when asked if marketing was evaluated, Client 8 stated that a high use of the service illustrates that the service is marketed. However, there are no overt evaluation or monitoring strategies for any of the other services. It is, therefore, recommended that, as part of the guideline on monitoring and evaluation, methods or strategies to monitor all standards should be provided.

4.2.6 Objective 4: To explore and describe the challenges faced by corporate clients with regards to monitoring and evaluation

4.2.6.1 Findings

The main challenge that emerged from all the interviews was the lack of formalisation. In most instances, monitoring and evaluation is engaged in very informally and in an unstructured format. This is because there is no real understanding of the definitions or guidelines on how it should be done. A second trend that emerged was a lack of resources and a perception that monitoring and evaluation requires a level of expertise or knowledge that not everyone possesses.

4.2.6.2 Recommendations

As mentioned previously, it is recommended that standard definitions be developed and communicated for the concepts of monitoring and evaluation. Further to this, a set of guidelines or guiding principles should be developed and communicated to the EAP industry as a whole. Lastly, in terms of expertise and knowledge, there is a gap for a training course specifically aimed at monitoring and evaluation of EAPs.

The last objective relates to the recommendation of best practices which is covered as part of the conclusion.

4.2.7 Additional themes: achievement of objectives

4.2.7.1 Findings

Fifty percent (50%) of the participants use their monitoring and evaluation to determine whether they are meeting their objectives in terms of what was set out at the beginning of the programme, as well as whether the service provider is meeting the contractual objectives and obligations. This is an important element in any EAP as this allows for correction action to take place should the programme or service provider be falling short in any area. It is critical that these shortfalls be highlighted and addressed early enough so that changes can be implemented in order to ensure the success of the programme. As only 50% of the participants engaged in this, it is an area for further consideration.

4.2.7.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that as part of the guidelines recommended above, there should be a specific section which explains the different elements that should be considered during monitoring and evaluation, and the achievement of objectives should be one of these areas. Guidance should be provided on how this can be done and perhaps a pro forma template of monitoring and evaluation tools could be provided.

4.2.8 Integration of wellness data

4.2.8.1 Findings

It was found that 40% of the participants use the EAP data as just one element of the wellness monitoring and evaluation and reporting processes. These participants stated that they often use their EAP data as well as other wellness-related data, such as absenteeism, medical scheme, wellness day, etc. in an attempt to integrate these data sets to identify common trends and recommendations for interventions. Participants indicated that, in their ideal world, their service providers would be able to do the integration for them on an organisational level as well as on an employee level through direct cross referrals to each other. The use of the words integrated or holistic wellness has grown in popularity over the past six years and it seems that this is where organisations are headed.

4.2.8.2 Recommendations

Based on the need identified for the integration of data, the researcher, as a service provider, recommends the use of Wellness Committees where all wellness service providers can meet to discuss their findings and recommendations. Where possible, and without breaking confidentiality or the POPI Act, service providers should investigate the possibility of more integrated reporting to clients even if the services are provided by more than one service provider.

4.2.9 Need for a standardised system

4.2.9.1 Findings

In conjunction with the need for standard definitions and guidelines, participants also stated that, in their ideal world, they would like to engage in monitoring and evaluation at the touch of a button using an automated system. The requirement is that the system is governed by guiding principles per industry and, once data input takes place, it is able to highlight risks or concerns. Clients also need to be able to process and use the data according to their needs.

Participants also highlighted that this system should have the ability to integrate various wellness related data into meaningful trends and themes so that a holistic view is gained.

4.2.9.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that perhaps service providers in the EAP industry together with EAPA-SA should begin to research and developing an automated system. The system should include guidelines, be interactive, and be able to identify trends and needs per industry. It is possible that further research might be needed before such a tool can be built, so it is recommended that further studies be conducted with the aim of developing a tool that meets various needs.

4.3 To recommend best practices in monitoring and evaluating EAPs for corporate clients using external service providers

From all of the responses to the interviews, it is noted that the perceived lack of standardisation and guidelines is a huge stumbling block for most participants. Whilst participants mentioned that there are no guidelines, none mentioned the EAPA-SA standards which can be seen as a first-level guide to best practice in terms of all programme-related areas, including monitoring and evaluation.

However, it is suggested that more in-depth and formal guidelines be developed relating specifically to monitoring and evaluation. A suggestion would be for these guidelines to include:

- Definition of each concept.
- List of differences between the two concepts of monitoring and evaluation.
- The link between monitoring and evaluation and the overall wellness and business strategy.
- Timelines for each of these concepts for when each one should take place ideally
- Guidance on what areas should be examined during monitoring and/or evaluation. For example, is it just utilisation that should be considered or is best practice to evaluate all of the EAP core technologies and standards?
- What practices can be undertaken for monitoring and evaluation?
- Documenting specific formulae that would be relevant for monitoring and evaluation, for example, utilisation or return on value calculations.
- A guideline in terms of what outcomes should be seen as risk areas.

4.4 Conclusion

When the researcher began the research, much of the literature pointed to the perception that monitoring and evaluation is not widely undertaken and that, when it is, the results are not used correctly. From the responses to the interview process, many of these assumptions were proved incorrect. It was found that all of the participants in this research engaged in monitoring and evaluation in one form or another and this was done either formally or informally. To a large extent the results of monitoring and evaluation were used to ensure the continuation of the EAPs as there was no need to prove the need for the programme constantly as the results of the monitoring and evaluation processes created the business case for itself. The only area left lacking in monitoring and evaluation is the lack of structure, formalisation and guidelines. It is, therefore, a recommendation out of this study that

effort should be put into formalising monitoring and evaluation and creating specific standards and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation practices in the EAP industry.

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