UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

A return on investment study of Employee Assistance Programmes amongst corporate clients of The Careways Group.

by

Annaline Keet

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DEDICATION

To my sons, Che and Ethan for their unconditional love and support

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university

Annaline C.S. Keet
May 2009

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to conduct an evaluation of the return on investment value of Employee Assistance Programmes within the South African context.

Assistance to employees originated from the 19th century. The term Employee Assistance Programmes was however formulated in the 1970's in the United States. The Employee Assistance field has since seen a paradigm shift in its focus, significant growth in its market value (amount of corporate clients internationally investing in EAPs for their employees), the establishment of a regulatory and ethical body through EAPA and its formalization as an academic discipline.

This study takes the concept of return on investment value of EAPs further than the ratio of benefit-to-cost. The utilization of different data sources, inclusive of quantitative and qualitative instruments creates an opportunity to explore areas of value perception of different role players in the field. It furthermore maps the subjective and objective experience of behaviour change resulting from personal problems and the journey of change as a result of focused interventions. The consistency of views across different data-sources as well as between different industries strengthens the value add claims of EAPs as contributing to the financial bottom line of companies.

This study advocates for the importance of programme evaluation as a central part of EAP contracting. It furthermore also highlights the importance of documentation of employee performance for evaluation purposes. It illustrates a journey that can be complicated by the failure to agree to evaluative terms at program inception as well as unstructured data-capturing within companies. Employee behaviour consists of both computable and incomputable elements. Generally the focus of a return on investment study would be the computable components of human behaviour. This investigation however highlights significant elements of risk relating to employee performance challenges that is not easy to include in a ROI but holds significant financial and reputational risks for corporate clients. The influence of individual performance challenges on teams and the challenges it holds for line managers is also highlighted through the qualitative journey of this study.

Employee behaviour seems vulnerable to internal and external forces and as a result companies' productivity can be affected by how individual employees respond to these forces. It could be accepted that interventions that is aimed at stabilising and improving employee behaviour, will inevitably impact work performance and as a result the financial bottom-line of the company. Employee Assistance Programmes often operates in an arena where other programmes aimed at impacting employee behaviour are also present. It is thus difficult to isolate it's intervention as being one of the main behaviour changing facilitators of the company. This study acknowledges this challenge and changes focus to different data-sources reporting on employee behaviour before and after EAP intervention. The consistency of data across these different data-sources becomes one of the main reporting areas for this study.

Eventually the challenges encountered in this study guides the advocacy in the recommendations for a thorough agreement of programme evaluation at inception, the areas that will be included in such evaluations, the availability of Human Resource data to ensure effective evaluation inclusive of ROI assessments, targeted assessments at service provider level with effective software support.

A return on investment study of Employee Assistance Programmes amongst corporate clients of The Careways Group.

Annaline Keet

KEY WORDS

Return on Investment

Cost Benefit Analysis

Cost Effectiveness Analysis

Formative Evaluation

Summative Evaluation

Triangulation of data sources

Evaluation as strategy to measure change

Cost of employee staff turnover

Cost of employee absenteeism and sick leave

Health and Productivity Management

ACRONYMS

EAP: Employee Assistance Programmes

EWP: Employee Wellbeing Programmes

EAPA: Employee Assistance Programmes Association

ROI: Return on Investment

CBA: Cost Benefit Analysis

CEA: Cost Effectiveness Analysis

WL: Work Life

SANCA: South African National Council of Alcoholism

ISCOR: The Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa

SASOL: South African Synthetic Oils

ICAS: Independent Counselling and Advisory Service

PPCI: Personal Performance Consultants International

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are increasingly gaining popularity amongst work organisations. The term EAPs dates back to the United States in the 1970's, but assistance to employees in one form or another was evident since the latter part of the 19th century, (Van den Berg: 1995:842). Employee Assistance Programmes originate in workplace alcohol programmes, which possessed some inherent problems based on the stigmatisation of addiction, the ability of people with an addiction to divert attention from their real problems and the focus mainly on lower ranking employees. This resulted in the programme having problems penetrating the workforce at risk, and as a result, assisting people before the illness reached chronic stage was limited (Wrich: 1980:11).

Work has been regarded by Marx as an important element of human happiness and fulfilment (Haralambos 1980:228). People have needs and with the development of work outside of the family context, it is inevitable the employer would become partly responsible for the satisfaction of human needs. While the exchange of labour for money allows people to acquire goods to fulfil their basic needs, Csiernick (2005:17) describes an evolution of assistance to employees to aid the fulfilment of basic needs as it presented itself in both the Canadian and United States work environment. He describes four distinctive historical phases, namely; Welfare Capitalism, Occupational Alcoholism, Employee Assistance and Workplace Health Promotion. The first three concepts will be described briefly.

Welfare Capitalism developed as a response to the industrial growth in the late 1800's that resulted in high numbers of immigrants and women entering the labour force. The changing face of the labour force resulted in an increase in labour unrest and while some industries responded to these actions in a punitive manner, industrial welfare initiatives were regarded as a more humane intervention. Despite it's humanitarian overtones, it was also a strategy to create a healthy, hard working

and diligent non-unionized workforce that would not question management initiatives and decisions. The movement in itself was thus problematic as it did not give acknowledgement to existence of employee initiated support structures. The employment of welfare secretaries was evident of this era and this movement has not yet seen the professionalism of the field.

Occupational Alcoholism Programs became a prominent feature during the 1930's as the ideal of welfare capitalism were winding down. Two pioneers of this concept, Bob Smith and Bill Wilson played a fundamental role in how substance abuse would be treated with the development of the self-help concept through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The development of occupational assistance is interwoven with the development of the AA movement. Occupational assistance was also influenced by the emphasis placed by labour unions on business unionism. Labour in Canada had a history of social involvement through it's involvement with the social gospel movement. The influence of labour however started loosing momentum during the early 1900's and was substitute by Gomperism (Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation during the 1930s), which focused more on financial benefits and enhanced working conditions. With the onset of World War II the availability of labour was negatively influenced and with a smaller pool to choose from, troubled employees also seem to have entered the market more than before. The presence of employees with substance abuse problems were thus more prevalent and the presence of AA in the workplace became more evident in the form of occupational alcohol programs (OAP's).

Csiernick is of the impression that AA acted as the catalyst for change in the occupational assistance arena to a more broad-brush EAP approach. The passing of the Federal Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act by the United States Congress in 1970, increased the government's involvement in the treatment of alcohol abuse. The NIAAA (National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse) was created and this body became involved in the training of program consultants and administrators. This process saw the involvement of professionally trained social workers and psychologists into the field of occupational well-being. The focus also moved towards a more broad brush approach focusing on multiple problems instead of

alcoholism alone. Social workers and psychologists, by virtue of their training are involved in people's emotional and behavioural responses to the stimuli around them. It could thus be expected that their involvement in the field would be a catalyst for the inclusion of a multiple problem focus in the field.

The move towards identification of performance problems as a basis for referral into the program continue to be a fundamental principle upon which program utilization is build. James Wrich is regarded as the person who developed the term Employee Assistance Programs and was also the driver behind a more organized service delivery process consisting of comprehensive representation within the workplace, the development of formal program policies and the training of individuals involved in the field.

The concept of Employee Assistance Programmes can be regarded as an evolutionary, rather than a spontaneous development, and the shift from the symptomathology of alcoholism to impaired job performance took place in the early to latter part of the 1900's. This development is closely linked to developments in both the field of mental health, as well as developments in the industrial arena. Mental health problems like stress, depression, and alcohol and drug abuse are major contributors to sickness, absenteeism and lowering job performance. Highley (1996:4) indicates that 80 million working days are lost to mental illness every year and that 30-40 percent of all sick-leave use is due to mental or emotional disturbance. Steele (2002:18) also supports this argument by reflecting on studies suggesting that $5 billion is paid yearly to workers who miss workdays because of alcohol and other drug addiction. Further studies indicate that addiction costs the American economy up to $246 billion a year. Riotto (2001:2) continue to support this argument when looking at the industrial cost of depression. The indirect cost of depression in the American workforce, associated with lost productivity and absenteeism, has shown to exceed $3,000 per employee with depression.

The above reported costs of different mental illnesses to the workplace support the argument that, apart from the humanitarian concept, it also makes financial sense for workplaces to address these mental health issues through structured workplace programmes. Employee Assistance Programmes, often part of a broader wellness

approach in companies, are well-placed in addressing a wide variety of mental health issues. The researcher will focus upon two definitions reflecting the potential of EAPs to play such a comprehensive role.

> *EAPs are programmes designed to assist work organizations by providing help and counselling for employees and their families with a wide range of personal problems that may affect job performance, (Mann and Kelly 1999:1).*

> *EAPs are a programmatic intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of the individual employee, using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the recognition and control of certain work- and non work related problems (notably alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health) which adversely affect job performance, with the objective of enabling the individual to return to making his or her full work contribution and to attaining full functioning in personal life (Berridge and Cooper 1994:5).*

The above definitions refer to two important assumptions. The first is that people experiencing problems in their personal lives have the risk of this impacting on their productivity at work. Secondly, an assumption is made that EAPs have the potential to address these problems appropriately and thus impact on an organisations' efficiency. This remains a bold claim, as EAPs operate within an environment with competing intervention strategies implemented to manage the productivity of a workforce and the reality of this challenge was noted in the first mini-conference held to discuss the proposed research topic. The researcher in this chapter briefly focuses on recent attempts to both acknowledge and integrate the operation of these services within a company.

The second assumption opens the discussion for the rationale of ROI of EAPs. The international EAP field, since the 1980's, increasingly talks about the importance of the ROI of EAPs and a number of research projects have been done in this regard. This reflects a realisation that proofing the fiscal benefits of programmes is as important as the humanitarian part of it. People like Harris, Adams, Hill, Morgan, and Soliz (2002:55-59), Masi (1994:158-186), Highley (1996:4-8), Schear (1995:20-23), Dainas and Marks (2000:34-36), French & Zarkin (1995:95-109) and Houts (1991:57-71) are some of the international authors reporting on studies done

investigating the financial benefits to corporate clients when they are investing in EAP programmes. Studies of this nature are also strongly supported by the field of Human Resources and Economics reporting on the importance of a productive workforce for a healthy economy. Literature reveals a clear understanding in the corporate environment that employees' personal problems can impact on their productivity and that companies reflect financial wisdom when investing in programmes to help them address these problems. Authors like Nissly & Mennen (200215-27), Berridge & Cooper (1994:4-20), Murphy (1995:41-51), Mann & Kelly (1999:118-122), all discuss the impact of personal problems including stress and depression on people's functioning. Mental health problems like stress, depression, and alcohol and drug abuse are major contributors to sickness, absenteeism and lowering job performance. Cascio (1982:6) takes the argument a little further when he attempts to cost the impacts of employee turnover, absenteeism, attitudes and job-performance caused by the above-mentioned personal problems.

Adding to the concept of an evolutionary development, it is also worthwhile to look at the attempt of companies to integrate programmes focusing on the wellbeing of their employees. Gornick and Blair (2005:1-26) looks at the global forces behind this movement and the researcher enters into a brief discussion of this. In response to a variety of needs like performance, employee attraction and retention, productivity and rising benefit costs, employers have instituted a number of programmes to address these. These programmes are often housed in the company Human Resources or Occupational Health Departments. These programmes, covering different aspects of people's wellbeing typically fall under one of three general programme categories, namely: employee assistance, work-life or health and productivity.

Gornick and Blair (2005:16) indicates that trends in the larger, global society have influenced a more holistic and interconnected perception of strategic service integration occurring in five broad areas, namely: medicine, business, social work, globalisation and ecology. The two main groups responsible for people in the workplace are the human resources and occupational health functions and these have undergone numerous changes in recent years. Human resource professionals are increasingly seated at the executive table in organisations. A significant move

from the historic, mundane influence they used to have. This is giving a significant voice to the alignment of people or human capital strategies with overall business strategies. Changes also took place in the area of occupational health. The focus in this area was previously on injury and illness, and compliance with legal requirements. Today's occupational health departments shifted to reducing risk and promoting health.

The continuous development of EAPs is evident as the discipline broadens its scope to include employee wellbeing in its totality. Employee Assistance Programmes encompass a set of interventions within the workplace that includes customising the programme to the needs of the organisation, offering an advisory service regarding the development of specific and related policies within the company, ensuring effective access to the programme, staffing the programme with suitably trained professionals to provide appropriate interventions, training of staff on how to use the programme, as well as a reporting capability that provides important trends to the organisation.

The two EAP programmes evaluated include the above elements, coupled with counselling and advice services on different levels, namely the psychosocial, financial, legal and physical health advice components. Because it is impossible to evaluate the impact of all the components mentioned above, the scope of this research is narrowed down to the impact of the counselling component of the programmes**.** The counselling component is based on brief counselling as the model of choice. Freeman in McCullough-Vaillant (1994:2) indicates that within brief therapy/counselling, the focus is on clients' skills deficit, to help them gain skills so they can help themselves. Employee Assistance Programmes are increasingly obtaining recognition for their ability to help people regaining higher levels of efficiency with a dynamic brief period of therapeutic intervention. To maintain this acknowledgement within work organisations, it becomes increasingly important for EAPs to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness in both individual and corporate terms. The American market has for years involved themselves with research reporting on the financial benefits derived from investment in EAPs. The following examples used by Van den Berg (1995:845) reflect upon studies reporting on this type of saving. This information was available as early as 1988 already and further illustrate

that the economic value of EAPs has for long developed increasingly more importance in the corporate environment.

Kennecott Copper Corporation estimated a 6:1 benefit-cost ratio from employees' use of its EAP. Equitable Life Assurance found a $3 return for every $1 invested in its EAPs; the absenteeism of alcoholic employees dropped from 8% to 4% after EAP referral to and treatment by alcohol programmes. 3M Company data suggested that 80% of the employees who used the EAP showed improved attendance, greater productivity, and enhanced family and community relations.
The McDonnell Douglas study, often quoted as an example of a cost-effectiveness study, also determined that alcoholism treated through EAP was more effective (Mazi 1994:158).

1.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Employee Assistance Programmes in their present form in South Africa is a relatively new concept in comparison to their American counterparts. However, assistance to troubled employees in the South African context is not a new notion. At the time of the conception of the South African assistance to troubled employees, service delivery was influenced by the ideological trends of the time. Du Plessis in Maiden(1999: 20) indicates that at the time, 1930-1940's social workers were employed within the state-run railway services to offer assistance to poorly educated and disadvantaged white employees. The original focus of these services was to provide material assistance. As has been the case with their international counterparts, the treatment of substance abuse problems also played an important role in the developmental phases of Employee Assistance Programmes as a discipline. Du Plessis indicate that from the late 1970's SANCA has been an important lobbyist, encouraging the development of counselling services for alcohol dependent employees and they have emphasized two important points to motivate this. Their first point makes reference to the **link between productivity and impaired work performance** as a result of substance dependence and the second point refers to **the treatability of the decease**.

Terblanche (1992:17) reflects upon reports by different authors like Potgieter (1970), Taute (1975), and Pieterse (1972) that different industries like the Chamber of Mines, ISCOR and SASOL as early as the 1960's utilised social work services for the treatment of troubled employees. These services had a focus on both substance abuse problems and other mental health challenges. The South African worker population at the time experienced a combination of socio-economic and mental health challenges and programmes geared to assist them had to be responsive to these challenges holistically. Terblanche indicates that the major developments within the EAP field took place in the beginning of the eighties through the Chamber of Mines when a consultant was appointed to carry out a feasibility study of EAPs in the mining industry. This resulted in the first two counselling centres being established in 1986, in the main mining areas of the country. Van Jaarsveld, (2006) provides a systematic developmental description of EAPs locally. Up until 1996 EAPs were mainly conducted according to the internal model. Since then, a trend developed to outsource the service. In 1998, the first links were made with international EAPs like ICAS, PPCI and academic experts like Paul Maiden. It can be argued that as the political changes in the country opened the door to global opportunities in different arenas, EAPs gained from international exposure to programmes with a long track record, as well as involvement in universal conferences.

During this period, corporate companies developed a visible openness to look after their human capital and vendor companies experienced a growth of new contracts during the 1998-2003 period. Another significant development has been the South African EAPA Chapter, conducting yearly conferences. These provide the opportunity for engagement of all contributory bodies to knowledge development in the field. Van Jaarsveld has been the CEO of The Centre for Human Development, and later The Careways Group, some of the leaders in the field of EAPs locally.

A survey carried out by Terblanche in 1987, indicated that sixty-two percent of respondents confirmed the importance of EAPs to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, while only 1.5 percent of respondents had a purely economic motive for the introduction of EAP in their companies. This illustrates that although a majority of companies realise the need for EAPs to make economic sense, a lot more can be

done in the South African environment to demonstrate the importance thereof. Now, more than 20 years later, the EAP field may see an increased need for vendors to prove their impact through outcome evaluation processes. On a small scale, companies are making specific requests to have the outcome of their programmes measured. Client companies are also moving away from maintaining long-term relationships with one vendor and are increasingly following the tender route. This means that vendor companies are increasingly under pressure to prove their contribution to a company's bottom line.

The literature available both internationally and locally refers to the earlier forms of Employee Assistance Programmes as originating in the 1960's. The historical developmental process of the programme reflects a programmatic process moving from welfarism to a focus on work-performance, moving to a focus on cost benefits of the programme and most recently, investigating the feasibility of programme integration. As EAPs operates within a dynamic environment, it is important to acknowledge these developments as they will inevitably influence the future positioning of EAPs in the workplace. While EAPs are based on very sound principles through which a specific programme identity developed, it is also vulnerable to a metamorphic experience guided by the changing needs of the industry. This recent development to more integrated programmes can be regarded both as an attempt to save money, as well as an acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of competing programmes operating within the workplace. The table below illustrates in brief, the historical development of the discipline of EAPs. The latter phase of this development brings to the front two important aspects, firstly an acknowledgement that EAPs is one of the programmes providing services to employees in the workplace, and secondly that the discipline is gaining recognition as a value add.

ERA	PRO'S AND CONS OF ERA
WELFARISM	Focus on workplace alcoholism problems. Difficulty penetrating the general workforce due to stigmatisation.

FOCUS ON IMPAIRED JOB PERFORMANCE	Focus on impaired work performance gave life to the concept of management consultations in EAPs. A more holistic approach to people's personal problems and identification of family problems, depression, stress, etc. began.
RETURN ON INVESTMENT	Since the 1980's, research has been conducted focusing on the fiscal benefits of EAPs to the corporate world. This research focus coincides with the field of Human Resources and Economics increasingly relating a healthy workforce with improved economic performance of workplaces. The industry is able to use completed projects as examples of fiscal benefits when selling the programme to prospective clients. However, what is missing is a methodology that can be used continuously, and as part of programme implementation of each company to measure the fiscal benefits deriving from the operation of such a programme.
PROGRAM INTEGRATION	Most recent literature starts focusing on the integration of EA, WL and HPM programmes operating within a company. The rationale for this exploration is to bring together in a synergistic way, the specialised knowledge and expertise of different but related fields in an attempt to serve the company optimally. The EAPA conference held in South Africa (6-8 September 2006) significantly addressed the topic of programme integration.

(Table 1.1: Historical Development of the Discipline of EAPs)

The metamorphic development of EAPs has many similarities with developments in the social work field. The international historical view above only start talking about social work as a discipline involved in the field as assistance to employees started taking on a more professional format. The South African view in comparison talks about the involvement of social workers already when the program still had a strong welfare flavour to it. EAP intervention in it's current form remain compatible with social

work values. Corwin (2002:10) describes the tenets of brief therapy (the preferred therapeutic intervention in EAPs) as (a) client-determined, circumscribed goals, (b) focus on current stresses, (c) competency-based practice, (d) collaborative worker-client relationships and active client participation, and (e) worker as catalyst for change. The above belief system ties in closely with social work values like mutual participation in the professional relationship, clients' rights to make decisions and have input into the helping process and the fact that social work intervention should enhance people's dignity and individuality, enhance their competence and increase their problem-solving and coping abilities.

The above compatibility according to Corwin stems from the contribution that social work has made over 50 years to time-limited practice and crisis intervention where the focus is on people's immediate needs with a focus on where the person is at that time and how he/she define the problem(s).

1.2.1 **Academic development**

The field of employee assistance evolved significantly within a period of 80 years from a concept of pure welfarism to an independent academic discipline within which different disciplines like psychology, social work, human resource management and the medical fraternity is finding a specific niche. The move into a specific academic order creates the scope for programme evaluation strategies like return on investment studies to develop its relevant academic language constructs.

Van Jaarsveld, (2006) indicated that 1998-1999 saw the formalisation of training in the field of EAPs and universities like The University of Pretoria and WITS (University of Witwatersrand) are some of the local tertiary institutions offering qualifications in EAPs. The South African academic field has also developed significantly in the direction of research within the EAP field. Until recent years, few studies have been conducted locally on the cost benefit analysis of EAPs. Of the research done, one was a study by Meyers in 1994 looking at a needs assessment and a cost-benefit analysis within EAPs. Orren (2004), an Account Services Manager for the Careways Group at the time, also conducted a master's degree

thesis investigating the effectiveness and return on investment of EAP services for one of the company's corporate clients. The results of this study indicate that the savings based on two variables, namely absenteeism and disciplinary action are greater than the cost of the programme resulting in a R2 return for every R1 invested. Grace (2001) and Coppens (1997) both investigated the return on investment of Employee Wellness Programmes with a strong medical component on sick leave and absenteeism. Although these authors do not exclusively look at the **psychosocial component** of the programmes, they cover important areas of employee under-performance and the financial viability for work organisations to invest in these areas of employee life. Brief psychotherapy as a treatment model is also well-documented in literature. In this chapter, the researcher cited the ideas of Stalikas and De Stefano (1997) and McCullough-Vaillant (1994). Within the qualitative component of this report, the researcher investigated the perceived consistency of change taking place for individuals who made use of the programme. The individuals/subjects under investigation have all been exposed to the brief psychotherapeutic model and this perceived consistency is discussed at the hand of existing literature and the opinions of professionals in the field, locally (see section 5.11 of this report).

1.2.2 Socio-economic influences

Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa operate within a specific economic and organisational context. Companies are increasingly buying EAP services for their staff. Blue-collar employees seem to be frequent users of the EAP and are able to access reasonably good long-term services through their medical aid funds when a referral is needed. Lower income clients on the other hand, who have limited or no medical aid facilities are usually referred to the broader welfare structure. While there are a number of well-operating welfare facilities in the community, they are often restricted in their ability to react timeously to people's needs due to limited funds. This in itself affects the quality of care offered to employees through the continuum of care from EAP intervention to referral agent response. The group less likely to access the EAP services offered through their company seems to be those on an executive level. This may be due to a general

view that EAP services are suitable for their employees, but not well-placed to address the problems encountered by them. For this reason, it becomes necessary for EAP vendors to critically look at the nature of their programmes and its ability to be responsive to the needs of all layers of employees in a company. An EAP that is not only accepted by the executive team as a value-add to their employees, but was able to add value to their own well-being, will have a better chance to survive periodic tender processes. Due to their level of responsibility, the executives of a company often experience role-related stresses, and thus an integrated programme with health and lifestyle assessments and coaching may be able to address their needs more appropriately. In this context, the EAP becomes part of a broader corporate wellness intervention and thus expands the ability of the vendor to address employee wellness comprehensively. Employee Assistance Programmes, whether functioning independently or as part of the broader wellness concept of a company consists of different components being interdependent on each other.

The different components typically part of an EAP is discussed more thoroughly in chapter three. The focus of this research is narrowed down to an investigation of the impact of the counselling component of EAPs. It furthermore becomes more specific in its investigation of the impact on employees referred by their line-managers rather than all employees coming through the programme at the specified period. However, as the focus is on evaluative research, the methodology utilised can serve as a basis through which new programmes in general can be evaluated for their effectiveness.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT

1.3.1 Rationale for implementation of EAPs

Modern companies are becoming increasingly aware that people are amongst their most valuable assets. It is also becoming more evident that the modern workplace increasingly demands more employee time and input than ever before. Carrol (1996:1) argues that more and more employees suffer from what can be termed presenteeism, referring to the need to be seen at work while being underproductive

and negatively impacting the productivity of other workers. The changing workplace and societal context in which people operate, result in a number of challenges to both employees and the workplace. Employees do not leave their problems aside as they turn to face their working day. The kind of everyday problems that can be costly to companies if left untreated are relational in work and personal context, alcohol and drug abuse and dependence, death in the family, other traumatic events such as hi-jacking and armed robberies, impending divorce, financial difficulties, HIV/AIDS, stress and depression. If left unnoticed and not dealt with, the costs of these conditions can be immeasurable.

Employee Assistance Programmes, as a central part of Corporate Wellness Programmes, are generally regarded as being cost-effective, (Bellingham & Cohen: 1987:74). These two authors indicate that the bottom-line financial rewards of these programmes are:

- Reduced absenteeism;
- Increased productivity;
- Reduced turnover of staff;
- Decrease in health problems; and
- Improved morale.

From literature available, it is clear that internationally, engaging in a cost benefit analysis of these work-based programmes has already developed to an explanatory level. Why, one would like to say would we then want to engage in another academic exercise of the same nature? Is the theoretical development not established to a point that this form of evaluation can merely be duplicated in practice?

The answers to the question above can be twofold. Firstly, Employee Assistance Programmes are a practicing discipline, operating according to well-defined principles. Practitioners in the industry are directly involved in providing health care to people actively participating in the world of work and their families. This application of practice needs to be supported by theory development that in it express key ideas about the fundamental nature of practice. As the field of

Employee Well-being is a progressive discipline, the interpretation of practice into theoretical communication remains important and the researcher reflects on the importance of this interaction at the hand of Walker and Avant (1995:5). They refer to a distinction between levels of discovery and levels of justification in theory construction. **This research project functions at the level of evaluation of practice for theoretical advancement as enough is known of these phenomena to engage at this level.** Employee wellbeing as already stated is however a progressive discipline. There would thus continue to be an interflow of knowledge between the levels of theory construction and practice. Walker and Avant (1995:5) focus on the different levels of theory development and the relationship between them. They identified four:

Meta Theory	Focus on broad issues related to theory within a discipline. It focuses on philosophical and methodological questions related to the development of a theory base for the specific discipline.
Grand Theory	Consist of global conceptual frameworks defining broad perspectives for practice and ways of looking at phenomena based on these perspectives. They are abstracts and often have been proposed to give some broad perspectives to the goals and structure of a practice.
Middle-range theory	Developed as a means to fill the gaps between theory and practice. These theories contain limited numbers of variables and are limited in scope. They are testable, yet sufficiently general to be scientifically interesting. They thus have an element of conceptual economy found in grand theories as well as the specificity needed for usefulness in research and practice.
Practice theory	Here modalities for practice are delineated. The essence of this theory is that there is a desired goal with specific prescriptions for action to achieve the goal.

(Table 1.2: Table of Theory Development according to Walker and Avant 1995:5)

The above theories all serve a purpose in the development and practice of a discipline. The question is how these levels of theory development relate to each other. Walker and Avant (1995:13) describe this linkage as follows:

	META THEORY LEVEL	
Clarifies ⇩	**GRAND THEORY LEVEL**	⇧ Provides material
	MIDDLE-THEORY LEVEL	
Guides ⇩	**PRACTICE THEORY LEVEL**	⇧ Refines
Directs ⇩		⇧ Tests in practice

(Table 1.3: Linkages between Levels of Theory Development according to Walker and Avant 1995:13)

While Employee Assistance Programmes are at a practicing theoretical level, the execution of a cost benefit analysis operates on a middle range level. These platforms provide data for theory development on a grand and meta level, which in turn provides guidance for practice. These different levels of theory development are thus interrelated to each other and development on any of these levels allows for progress on the others.

The second reason why research of this nature continues to be relevant is that while existing research can serve as a reference to fiscal savings in a sales pitch for new business, what is still missing is the ability to build this type of research into each programme from the point of implementation. Maiden (2006) indicated that the last study of this nature (a cost benefit analysis) in America was during the 1980's. There is a fundamental problem with using the data from old studies to illustrate the potential monetary value of the programme. As EAPs operate within a progressive, ever-changing environment, the information on which its value-adding potential is based should also be progressive and based on more current findings. The researcher as an employee and role player in the EAP field is particularly interested in **contributing** towards South African based theory development reiterating the

financial and other benefits deriving from taking care of employees through an EAP. The researcher is particularly interested in developing a methodology that will not only serve an academic purpose, but will have operational value and can be used constructively as an evaluation tool in industry. This study is intended to take the concept of a cost benefit analysis in a slightly different direction when the researcher not only look at the potential cost saving for the companies participating in the study but also look at the strength of the data sources used for the study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6, dealing with the data analysis, will address these issues.

The environmental forces within which an EAP operates influence programmes of this nature. This includes the organisational and economic culture, as well as the broader community context. The context within which programmes of this nature operates in this country is further illustrated in the discussion below.

1.3.2 **The South African context**

The Employee Assistance field can generally be regarded as a constantly developing field, judging the historical development with present programmatic intervention. The reason for these changes exists within the fact that EAPs address needs within the corporate field. Corporate South Africa, like elsewhere in the world, is in itself a constantly developing environment. Looking at the South African scenario, EAPs are relatively new compared to international standards, even though the conception of industrial social work seems to have its roots in the 1930s. South Africa also has a specific socio-economic context from which the employee population functions. Employees from this part of the world represent the disparities of the community, coming from the very poor to the very rich parts of the population. As South Africans we are in a very exiting process of development that bring with it significant challenges. Examples of these challenges are: coming to grips with the diversity amongst us, unacceptable levels of crime in the face of worrying levels of poverty, HIV and Aids and retrenchments within the working population. The practice of EAPs in the South African context is thus faced with challenges based on the elements mentioned above, directing the route of operational implementation.

To stay relevant as a programmatic intervention to companies, EAPs as part of Corporate Wellness Programmes must be prepared to constantly adapt their intervention strategies. The evaluation of EAPs is by nature a programme evaluation process, thus creating the argument that as components of these programmes change, scientific research is needed to illustrate the value of these components. EAP vendor companies in South Africa find themselves having to adapt to the needs of the corporate world on a regular basis or face the risk of becoming irrelevant. To prove its relevance in the field, scientific evidence of the financial spin-offs companies can obtain by making use of these programmes will strengthen their selling power. Research of this nature thus contributes towards empirical evidence utilised by the company, as well as contributing to the case of EAPs as part of the Corporate Wellness debate in the broader South African context. It can furthermore illustrate to hard-headed managers and directors of companies that EAPs are much more than just a counselling service provided to employees on humanitarian grounds, but that it is an effectively designed programmatic intervention equipped to keep organisations operating at a high level of efficiency, quality and competitiveness, able to demonstrate its cost-effectiveness in both individual and corporate terms. Van Jaarsveld (2006) is of the impression that companies in South Africa is developing an interest to measure the impact and evaluate the outcome the programme has on the performance of their employees. This is putting pressure on the presentation of management information to evaluate change in performance indicators and report on these. The following can be regarded as the **key selling points** for EAPs when interacting with potential customers and once again the need to illustrate value, plays a role:

- The majority of people experience psychosocial problems at some stage in their life and it can impact on their performance, resulting in losses for the company.
- The EAP engages in formalised processes to manage troubled employees.
- The EAP also provides a roll-out plan that integrates with existing internal processes.
- The programme is a way within which the company can demonstrate its care to its employees.

- Because of its ability to effect change within individual behaviour, the programme promises a return on investment to the company. The programme thus offers more than integration into well-being processes but really incorporation into the company business processes.

Absenteeism from the workplace potentially cost the South African economy at least R20 milliard for the year 2006. The average cost of absenteeism per day for an employee who earns about R5 000 was estimated to R200 (direct costs) and up to R600 if indirect costs were included. (Rapport Loopbane 2 July 2006). Newspaper reports of this nature serve as a reality check to workplaces, clearly highlighting the need for a comprehensive management strategy.

Despite the notion that research reflecting the financial benefit of EAPs are limited in the South African market, the local academic field has not been ignorant to proving the financial benefits of Employee Assistance Programmes and Corporate Wellness Programmes in general. Grace (2001:1) in her research focusing upon the impact of physical wellness programmes also reiterates the fact that employers incur both direct and indirect economic costs due to absenteeism and sick leave. Although her study primarily focuses upon the impact of a physical wellness programme in a corporate environment, the close link between physical and emotional well being, as well as the inclusion of emotional and social health as part of the wellness dimensions, makes her methodology and findings relevant for this study. Coppens (1997:10) also reiterates that costs of absenteeism and low productivity above 4% of the general payroll can be regarded as excessive. Absenteeism is generic in nature and consists of several categories. Her study focuses primarily upon the impact of lifestyle on employee absenteeism and the author's discussion on different forms of absenteeism in the South African context and its impact on organizational costs are of specific interest for this study. A more detailed discussion of the different forms of absenteeism will be provided in the literature study (chapter 2).

Meyer (1994) conducted a needs assessment and cost-benefit analysis of Employee Assistance Programmes. It is especially the second part of the study, namely the cost-benefit analysis that is relevant for the purpose of the present

study. She regards the major advantages of CBA's (cost benefit analysis) as being its ability to assess the inherent worth of a programme, thus determining whether the benefits of a programme exceeds its costs. Furthermore, because the costs and benefits of the programme are expressed in monetary values, CBA's allows for the comparison of alternative programmes with different goals and clients. One of the major challenges for CBA's is however the relative difficulty of expressing costs and benefits in monetary values. Meyer describes the costs and benefits attributable to EAPs as follows:

- **Fixed costs** are those items that will not change even if the number of people served by the EAP during the programme period changes. This form of costing is specifically applicable within a vendor relationship.

- **Variable costs** are expenses related to the operation of the EAP like staff salaries, supplies of materials and travel costs related directly to client service. The latter is especially relevant in the case of an in-house programme and is thus not cost that will be calculated for the purpose of this study.

- **Tangible benefits** are the measurable effects of the EAP directly related to its programme objectives, like savings due to reduction in absenteeism, improvements in job performance, and decrease in medical care utilisation, reduction in disciplinary action and grievances and decreases in accidents on the job. This study looks at the tangible benefits through reduced absenteeism and disciplinary actions.

- **Intangible benefits** includes positive changes effected by an EAP which are indirectly related to EAP objectives and usually too difficult to translate into monetary units. These refers to future benefits linked to improvement in employee quality of life, long-term health and morale, family problems that did not happen, reduction in anxiety, improved decision-making as some examples. For the purpose of this study the identification of intangible benefits takes place through the completion of the self-reporting

questionnaires and the interviews conducted with referral agents into the program.

The researcher in her literature study takes cognisance of both local and international documentation on the topic. Through this process the researcher are able to analyse the weaknesses and strength of existing studies in an attempt to determine the most appropriate model of evaluation for EAP cost-benefit analysis in future.

The following section will reflect on brief counselling as intervention strategy. The rationale for this focus is that, although the EAP has different facets to its operation within companies, it is the impact of its counselling component that is measured within this study. For the purpose of an academic exercise of this nature it would be impractical to measure the impact of all different components of the programme. The counselling component is also one of the direct interventions geared towards behavioural change in troubled employees.

1.3.3 **Brief counselling as intervention strategy in Employee Assistance Programmes**

Employee Assistance Programmes within the Corporate Wellness environment operates from a paradigm of brief therapeutic intervention. McCullough-Vaillant (1994:1) indicates that brief psychotherapy seeks long-lasting change in an active, involved and time-efficient way. Stalikas and De Stefano (1997:2) focuses on short-term dynamic psychotherapy (STDP) developed by Davanloo in 1976 and describe it as psychoanalytic in nature and dynamic in practice. The process is based on highly-focused interviews from the very first contact where the method is utilised as a trail therapy in assessing the problem and evaluating the client's response and disposition for psychotherapy. The therapist intervenes actively to clarify, confront and interpret both current and past relationships, to challenge resistance and to elicit client feelings. The purpose of the intervention is to expose the dynamic components of the client's problems with their attending affect. In this way the clients' insights into how defences are preventing them from fully experiencing

feelings and their underlying anxieties contribute to the process. McCullough-Vaillant (1994:2) indicates that some problems respond better to brief therapeutic intervention than others. These are panic disorders, adjustment disorders, and mild forms of depression, job stress and marital problems. Other problems such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and suicidal depression need long-term care. They also indicate that the DSM-IV's Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) Scale should be used as a rule of thumb to determine whether a patient will make a good candidate for brief counselling. If people have a moderate level of symptoms, or moderate impairment in functioning, meaning they can still work, have some friends, have some relationships, they can be considered for short-term therapeutic intervention. If they have severe impairment or severe symptoms, for instance they cannot go to work and have no friends, short-term intervention will not be effective. McCullough-Vaillant is of the impression that a GAF-score above 50 suggest the possibility for shorter-term treatment and below 50 suggests longer –term treatment, taking in consideration exceptions to this rule. Employee Assistance Programmes are made available to help employees deal with personal problems whilst they are still productive citizens. It can thus be argued that Employee Assistance Programmes make therapeutic intervention available at a time when the majority of employees are still receptive to brief therapy.

1.4 **PROBLEM FORMULATION**

The Employee Assistance Programme is widely accepted as a workplace intervention that not only reflects the humanitarian intentions of an organisation, but having a real cost-saving potential as well. The American EAP market, although not on a consistent basis, started at an early stage to determine the monetary value of their programmes. This does not seem to be the case within the South African context. Studies of this nature only started in the mid-1990s and when faced with the question of the monetary value, EAP vendors still heavily rely on statistics from abroad. Highley (1996:4) indicates that the UK market is also increasingly demanding information on the effectiveness of their programmes stretching beyond employee support.

1.4.1 Challenges facing return on investment studies

A research project by Harris, Adams, Hill, Morgan and Soliz (2002:55) criticised studies examining the impact and benefit of EAPs based on customer satisfaction data. Although studies of this nature contributes to an understanding that EAPs are doing some good and that employees lives are benefited by using the service, the major limitation of satisfaction surveys are that the people participating are normally the very satisfied, putting into question the credibility of such surveys. As a response to this criticism, they expanded on this methodology by designing a study using a pre- and post-test design with random selection. All clients entering the EAP at the specific site were requested to complete the pre-test questionnaire focusing on their self-reporting of general health, mental health, and impact of emotional problems on social activities and daily activities. Three months after completion of the EAP, clients were randomly selected to complete the post-test that included the same scales used for the pre-test. While this is an obvious improvement on the post-test only design often used in customer satisfaction surveys, the reliance on self-reporting information continue to compromise the validity of studies and the researchers in this instance emphasized that future EAP outcome studies must utilise different points of data collection like economic factors such as absenteeism rates, productivity levels, workplace harmony and workforce stability.

French and Zarkin (1995:2) take this argument further and indicate that several EAP evaluation studies have been criticized for a poor study design. This is essentially a compromise on the validity of results that is intended to enhance the credibility of programs. The evaluation of Employee Assistance Programmes is complicated by various limitations, including the following:

- Ethical issues around the use of control groups.
- The brevity of the observation period.
- Collecting and valuing employee absenteeism, turnover, medical claims, productivity and work behaviour.

- Confidentiality of programme records.
- The need of corporate clients to obtain information timeously vs. long academic research projects.
- Scepticism about the research on the part of administrators.

While these limitations will continue being a challenge to researchers in the field, the authors identified four components essential for evaluation studies. These are:

- A process description to understand the structure, operating environment, and goals of the EAP, and to guide the evaluation.
- A cost analysis to comprehensively identify and estimate the full range of EAP costs.
- An outcome analysis to rigorously estimate the effectiveness of the programme for groups of employees and the overall impact of the programme on employee performance and workplace productivity.
- An economic evaluation to estimate cost-effectiveness ratios, monetary benefits, and net benefits of the EAP.

The four components described above provides a structural outline of the most important areas that needs to be covered by an EAP evaluation process and is especially useful for its ability to be applicable to the differential services offered by different Employee Assistance Programmes. This structural outline will be partly adopted in this study for its potential to provide clarity of the nature of the programmes under investigation and direction for interpretation of data.

The researcher in her study includes elements of the above structural outline, focusing on both the individual and organization impact of Employee Assistance Programmes and using different points of data-collection. The researcher made use of a randomised, longitudinal survey looking at behavioural changes through the EAP as well as the perceived consistency of these changes. The **first** point of data collection has been through self reporting questionnaires at post test level. The **second** component focused on data collection through semi-structured interviews with line managers who referred employees into the program, exploring their

perceptions of human resource processes in their organisations and how the EAP fits into this, the industrial risks of employee personal problems, the benefits of the EAP after participation and their perception of consistency of these changes taking place. The **third** component of data collection has been done through statistical analysis, investigating impact on and changes within economic factors like absenteeism rates and disciplinaries, thus covering a pre-intervention and post-intervention analysis. This study focused primarily on the external EAP model, as the financial gains of improved productivity will be measured against the costs incurred for employee psycho-social counselling in the programme. To be able to do this, the researcher had to gain clarity on what constitute productivity within the companies participating in the project. The Accell Team in a 2006 report defines productivity as the relationship between the inputs required producing a product or service, and the value of the output produced. Measuring productivity across industries will be significantly different. Measuring productivity in a factory is relatively easy and fundamentally different in comparison to doing it in an office set-up.

Du Toit Visser (1995:274) refers in his work to the productivity indicators used by companies. When comparing the indicators of 30 South African companies, there seems to be a strong comparison between employee costs and outputs in the industry. Employee cost is a significant part of the inputs cost and Cascio (1982:6), writing from a Human Resource point of view, developed measures to investigate the relationship between employment costs and productivity outputs. He describes the costing of human behaviour as the quantification in financial terms of common behaviour and performance outcomes. He uses the same terminology that Meyer uses in section 1.3.2 when she refers to cost elements in an EAP. Cascio however uses these terms, namely **fixed costs**, **variable costs** and **opportunity costs** to describe production costs. Fixed costs are independent of production rates and examples of these are salary and fringe benefits for staff replacing absentees. Variable costs rise as production rises, an example of which is overtime costs incurred because of absenteeism. Opportunity costs reflect what the company might have earned had they put the resources in question to another use, like profits lost during the replacement process. Cascio thus designed formulas testing the financial impact of organisational behaviour like employee turnover, absenteeism, job

performance, productivity and attitudes. He allows for the inclusion of significantly more variables when measuring the impact of EAPs on organisational behaviour and expenses. Although Masi (1994:151) criticise Cascio's formulas for costing human corporate behaviour and it's applicability to EAP cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis, these formulas provide a practical guide to Human Resource Departments and Employee Assistance practitioners on how impaired work-performance can be calculated as "waste to the company". What lack in this process is calculating these losses against costs of implementing and running an EAP.

1.4.2 **Lack of Return on Investment studies in the South African market**

Despite some research being done in the South African market, professionals in the EAP field as late as 2002 identified that research focusing on a return on investment studies of Employee Assistance Programmes are still greatly lacking in the South African context. As a result, vendors still rely strongly on statistics from especially the American market. This poses the question on whether research in the South African field is not well known, or whether the scope of these studies until now were too limited to gain the necessary recognition. The South African EAP field is presently a fast growing industry with more and more companies committing themselves to care of their employees through the provision of mental health services. With South African companies revisiting their priorities due to financial limitations, EAPs need to position themselves as financially sound investments rather than disposable commodities. Providing up to date, local research and illustrating that the investment in an EAP adds monetary value to the company can contribute to the positioning of programmes of this nature.

With a lack of scientific proof that EAPs are able to impact positively on employee productivity, this industry will struggle to penetrate the boardroom conversations of companies and be recognised as an essential human resource tool.

1.5 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives to be obtained within this research have been to track the efficacy of the EAP programme at two designated work sites, as identified by the researcher. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:210) says that since the 1990's there has been a mounting recognition in South Africa that evaluative evidence is needed for accountability purposes, and that the process of evaluation is an essential part of the development of social programmes. The objectives of evaluative processes differ in their focus and McMillan and Schumacher (1997:546) refers to such different approaches regarding evaluation. The major evaluation approaches according to their classification is:

- ***Objective-oriented approaches****: This refers to the degree to which the objectives of a practice are attained by the target group. The evaluation measures the outcomes of the practice and the discrepancy between the stated objectives and the outcomes becomes the measure of success of the practice.*
- ***Consumer-oriented approaches****: The central focus of this approach is the development of evaluative information on products broadly defined for use by consumers when choosing among competing merchandise.*
- ***Expertise-oriented approaches****: This approach depends primarily on the direct application of professional expertise to judge the quality of endeavours, especially the resources available and the process followed.*
- ***Decision-oriented approaches****: Here the focus is on describing and assessing a* ***change process*** *and* ***resulting outcomes*** *to provide information to a decision-maker.*
- ***Adversary-oriented approach****: Here the planned opposition in points of view of different evaluators (pro and con) becomes the focus of the evaluation.*
- ***Naturalistic and participant-oriented approaches***: *Here the naturalistic inquiry and involvement of participants (stakeholders in the practice that is evaluated, are central in determining the values, criteria, needs and data for the evaluation.*

This return on investment study can be placed within a decision-oriented approach with a focus on outcome and product evaluation. Within this evaluation, the workplace is able to determine whether the programme is able to bring about positive change in employee behaviour and thus contribute positively towards its financial bottom-line. A ROI study is in essence a component of an efficiency evaluation of a programme and becomes the overall objective to be achieved in this research project.

In the area of interest of this research, there is an existing theoretical understanding that Employee Assistance Programmes are able to enhance employee productivity. The concept of paid labour also creates a direct link between employee productivity and the financial gains and losses of a company. A ROI study is programme evaluation at a summative level, evaluating the effectiveness of a programme operating for a significant period and in this instance using an area of knowledge for which a lot of information has been generated. Due to the fact that this study makes use of different data-sources and is also an evaluation of a similar program in two different work places, the reliability of data-sources is also tested. This part of the study is thus able to inform future role-players about the most reliable data-sources to use in prospective evaluative studies.

1.5.1 **Goal**

De Vos (2005:7) indicates that authors like Mouton and Marais (1990) and Rubin and Babbie (1993) refer to goals as being explorative, descriptive or explanatory. There are however differences of opinion amongst researchers, and De Vos takes the stance that the goal of research is guided through a basic or applied framework. This research is of an applied nature and as a result the goal is evaluative of nature with a focus of application in practice.

The goal of this research is to evaluate EAPs in the South African context, by exploring the return on investment of the program amongst two corporate clients of The Careways Group. The focus is on the counselling component of the program

and information will be gathered through different data-sources, namely self-reporting, statistical analysis and feedback from referral agents.

1.5.2 **Objectives**

De Vos (2005:9) conceptualise the objectives of a research programme as being potentially explorative, descriptive or explanatory. EAPs are established programs operating in the corporate environment. The objectives of this research are explanatory in nature and can be described as follows:

- To investigate the impact of an EAP on organisations focusing on employee impairment on performance indicators like absenteeism, on-the-job absenteeism and disciplinary action.

- To provide guidelines for future ROI evaluation tools that can be used by companies and EAP vendors to determine the return on investment of their EAPs.

- To investigate the consistency of data from different measuring instruments / data sources, namely self reporting, impressions from referral agent and statistical data analysis.

- To provide recommendations focusing on important programme elements, as well as future return on investment studies.

1.6 **RESEARCH APPROACH**

The researcher used both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches with data-triangulation as the fusion of findings within this study. The researcher intended to follow the dominant-less dominant approach, with the quantitative component being the dominant and the qualitative component being the less dominant approach. As the study evolved, and the significance of the qualitative

data became apparent, the study started to incorporate strong elements of the mixed-model approach.

Chapter four provides a detailed discussion of the quantitative approach and an analysis of the data obtained through this medium. The discussion also gives a dissection of the sample used for this component of the study.

Chapter five provides a detailed dialogue about the qualitative approach and it's application in this study. It also gives a breakdown of the sample used for this part of the research.

Chapter six bring together the data generated through the quantitative and qualitative approaches in a triangulative manner and the chapter provides a succinct discussion about triangulation as an approach in the field of research.

1.7 TYPE OF RESEARCH

McMillan and Schumacher (1997:22) makes a simplistic but well-established distinguish between the two broad types of research, namely basic research and applied research.

Basic research focuses upon testing theory with little regard of applications of the results to practical problems in the social environment. It is exactly the inability of basic research to contribute to the problem solving of the social sphere that made it inappropriate for this study. The purpose of this study is to contribute to knowledge but also to identify and develop an evaluative formula for use in practice.

Applied research on the other hand is concerned with the application and development of research-based knowledge about a specific practice. Applied research tests the usefulness of scientific theories and determines empirical and analytical relations within a given field. It further adds to the research-based knowledge in a given field. This knowledge influences the way practitioners think and perceive a common problem, stimulate further research, suggest new theories

and stimulate methodological development. Applied research as a result became more appropriate for this research process.

1.7.1 **Evaluation Research**

Evaluation research is regarded as a subtitle within applied research. The purpose of this type of research is to assess the merit and worth of a particular practice in terms of the values operating at the site(s). Evaluation determines whether the practice works, and whether it is worth the costs incurred in development, implementation, or widespread adoption. It adds to our knowledge about a specific practice and can stimulate further research and methodological development to study practice. Evaluative research often identifies variables or suggest hypothesis for other evaluation and applied research. The researcher embarked on evaluative research, investigating whether the EAPs in question as a workplace programme are able to reduce costs incurred by reduction in productivity like absenteeism, on-the-job absenteeism and disciplinary action caused by employee emotional problems.

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:47) refers to the three different roles **that evaluation research has to play in social interventions**. These are identified as follows:

Diagnostic evaluation	Focuses on informing researchers and project managers about present situation, highlight current problems, trends, forces and resources, thus gathering information that is important in the planning of a new project.
Formative evaluation	Relating to the development and implementation of a program with the aim to shape the program so that it will have the greatest beneficial impact on the target community. This type of evaluation always form part of the initial planning of a program and in the scope of EAPs should be agreed upon at implementation of all new programmes.

Summative evaluation	This is the focus of this research. The programmes under investigation have been established for different periods of time and their length of existence have no significance to the study. Summative evaluation research sets out to determine the extent to which programmes meet their specified aims and objectives. This information is used to gain credibility with various groups of people.

(Table 1.4: Different roles of Evaluation Research. Bless and Higson-Smith 1995:47)

Babbie and Mouton (2005:338) also contributes to the above and talks about The **purpose of evaluation studies.** They add an additional component, namely the generation of knowledge. The following table gives a short description of their description of the roles/purpose.

Uses or purpose	Examples
Judgement or worth	*(These judgement-oriented journeys into programs involve questions like: Was programme successful? Did it achieve its objectives? Was it effective? Did the programme attain its goals? Did the intended beneficiaries receive the intervention in the most effective and efficient manner?)* Summative evaluation Accountability Audits Quality control Cost-benefit decisions Deciding a programme's future Accreditation/licensing

Improve programmes	*(This type of evaluations asks different questions: What are the programme's strengths and weaknesses? Has the programme been implemented properly? What constrains are there on proper implementation? Are the programme recipients responding positively to the intervention and if not why not?)* Formative evaluation: Identifying strengths and weaknesses Quality enhancement Managing more effectively Adopting a model locally
Generate knowledge	*(While the above purposes of evaluation are driven by concerns for use and application, here the purpose is to generate new knowledge. These can be: to clarify a programme model or underlying theory, to distinguish between types of intervention or elaborating policy options. In some cases the knowledge-oriented evaluation might have more general aims such as understanding the programme better, reduce uncertainty and risk of failure)* Generalisation about effectiveness Extrapolating principles about what works Building new theories and models Informing policy

(Table 1.5 : Source: Micheal Patton (1997) Utilization-focused evaluation. Third Edition.p.76.)

Babbie and Mouton (2005:348) is of the impression that outcome evaluation can only be achieved if a pre-test, post-test design is implemented. This study utilised a multi-method approach that allows for data gathering for pre- and post intervention performance indicators.

1.8 **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:63) describes the research design as having two meanings. Firstly, it can be understood as the planning of any scientific research from the first to the last step. Secondly, it is a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test specific hypothesis under given conditions. This correlates with the description of Rubin and Babbie in De Vos

(2005:133), also looking at the term “research design” as referring to as related courses of action within the research process. The first connotation relates to the logical arrangements from which one can select, examples being experimental research designs or correlation research designs. The second connotation relates to the process of designing the study in its broadest sense, including everything from the design to sampling, data collection and analysis. Both these authors describe research designs as having a comprehensive, all-inclusive meaning as well as a very specific, focused meaning. Bless and Higson-Smith prefers to call the second connotation the plan or programme, rather than the research design.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:29) describe the research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. Reflecting on the meaning given by the above-named authors to research designs, the design in this instance is a plan used to guide the arrangement of activities for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economical viability. Research designs generally can be regarded as a plan that specifies how the research is going to be executed in a way that it answers the research question. This description also places the research design into the more inclusive framework, as discussed above.

Some researchers describe designs as architectural blueprints. When looking at research designs from this viewpoint, it is understood that research designs are fixed and specified before execution and that they are defined by technical considerations. In contrast, qualitative researchers often propose designs that are more open, fluid and changeable, not defined purely in technical terms. There continue to be debate between quantitative and qualitative researchers about the type of research designs most appropriate for the social sciences. Durrheim prefers to regard a design as a strategic framework, a plan that guides research activity to ensure that sound conclusions are reached. The researcher feels comfortable with Durrheim’s description as it creates a good balance between the two opposite paradigms of operating within a fixed mould or being open and fluid. To see the research design as a strategic framework allows for the development of a design

that will address the disjuncture being created by operating a psychosocial service within a business-orientated field.

In developing a research design, the researcher explores four focus areas as cited by Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002:33). These are, firstly, the purpose of the research, in this instance to determine the financial benefits for companies deriving from their investment into an Employee Assistance Programme, giving it more than just a humanitarian face. The second focus area is the theoretical paradigm informing the research. There is a general belief that emotionally troubled employees are absent more often, has lower productivity and contributes to lower staff morale and staff turn-over. Employee Assistance Programmes, in essence psychosocial programmes operating in work organisations, claims to have the ability to reduce the occurrence and impacts of these manifestations of emotional problems through brief psychotherapeutic intervention. Another distinctive characteristic of workplace psycho-social programmes is its ability to intervene at a time when problems has not yet reached its chronic phase, or resulted in loss of employment. Steele (2002:21) rightfully argues that we can prevent people ending up in the criminal-justice system or the general welfare system by providing access to an Employee Assistance Programme while still a productive citizen. Thirdly, the context or situation within which the research is carried out, play a significant role. This research will be carried out within an environment where a disjuncture exists between the qualitative nature of the service and the quantitative environment within which it operates. The interplay between the complexity of human behaviour and its impact on workplace productivity and thus financial prosperity, requires a design technique that can capture the complexity of human behaviour and present results that will make economic sense. The quantitative presentation of research findings plays a significant role in enhancing the marketing value of Employee Assistance Programmes, while the qualitative presentation provides a rich description of observed behavioural impacts and industry risk, often the salient elements that cannot be measured through a return on investment exercise.

Finally, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:44) focuses on the research techniques employed to collect and analyse data. In this instance statistical research, the

investigation of historical Human Resource records, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilised.

These methods were chosen to allow for the collection of both subjective and objective data.

The above authors also reflect on two important principles in research designs. These are **design validity** and **design coherence**. These two principles are discussed below.

1.8.1 **Design Validity**

Traditionally, research in the social sciences has been restricted to a positivistic paradigm, using standard sets of research techniques like experimentation and surveys with the purpose of controlling the research context. This notion supports the idea of research designs as being blueprints, captured in a set of standard technical procedures with the purpose of controlling or eliminating threats to validity. Validity refers to the ability of a design to establish a relationship between the independent and dependent variables with a high degree of certainty and is measured in terms of two separate but related dimensions, **internal** and **external** validity. **Internal validity** examines the extent to which a particular research design has excluded all other possible hypothesis, which could explain the variation of the dependent variable. This means that a research design should control as many extraneous variables as possible. **External validity** is concerned with whether the results obtained from the particular sample of participants apply to all subjects in the population being studied. It is thus concerned with the extent of generalization to the real world that can be made. The sample must thus be representative of the population in question and the researcher must also ensure that the study simulates the real world as closely as possible. The design the researcher selected was decided upon with the background of identifying and eliminating plausible rival hypothesis. This refers to possible alternative interpretations of the research findings. Although thinking about plausible rival hypothesis is historically associated with positivism, the principle is a way of checking the validity of all kinds of

research. Because of the exclusion of a control group for obvious ethical reasons, it was essential for the researcher to eliminate plausible rival hypothesis by identifying and controlling unexplained variables that could influence the findings by removing their presence or measure them in order to determine their presence. In this instance, design validity was threatened by complementing programmes operating within the organisations, changes in employee fringe benefits (positive or negative), organizational culture impacting on staff morale and fluency of the employment market impacting on staff turnover. This coincides with a concern raised by Glenda Noemdoe, previous COO of the Careways Group in a 2002 panel discussion that within a study of this nature the impact of other variables impacting on performance indicators should be taken in consideration. To deal with this threat it became easier to study subjects who used the programme through the mandatory referral process where performance challenges has been identified prior to intervention and has been tracked vigorously.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000:115) refer to the following ways by which threats to design validity can be minimised:

- Choosing appropriate time scales.
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to undertake the research.
- Selection of appropriate methodology for answering the research questions.
- Selecting the appropriate data collection instrument.
- The use of a representative sample.
- Demonstrating internal, external, content, concurrent and construct validity, thus operationalising the constructs fairly.
- Ensuring reliability in terms of stability (consistency, equivalence, split-half analysis of test material).
- Selection of an appropriate focus to answer the research question.
- Devising and using appropriate instruments, ensuring readability, avoiding ambiguity, leading questions, ensuring the level of the test are not too easy or difficult, too short or too long, using instruments that will catch the complexity of issues.

- Avoiding a biased choice of research team.

1.8.2 **Design coherence**

Design coherence is becoming more and more important as research paradigms other than positivism are obtaining dominance. The coherence of the research design is achieved when the decisions from each of the following different domains, namely purpose, paradigm, context and techniques, fits together with an internal logic. Design coherence is a broader construct than design validity. Researchers achieve coherent designs by ensuring that the research purposes and techniques are arranged logically within the research framework provided by the particular paradigm.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:36) refer to paradigms as systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. They act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation. Their ability to impact both on the nature of the research question and the manner in which the question is to be studied, makes them central to the research design.

Design validity and design coherence are not opposing principles. Both aim to ensure a level of consistency between the researcher's paradigmatic assumptions, the purpose of the research and the conclusions reached. This consistency is achieved when the research activity produces data that provides valid answers to the research question. Research coherence is however a broader concept that accommodates research designs with different understandings of validity.

1.8.3 **Research design for this study**

With the above discussion as background, the researcher will now discuss her choice of research design. Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee (2006) distinguishes between three categories of research designs, relating to the level of scientific

rigour involved in proving the cause-effect relationship. These categories are pre-experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs and experimental designs.

Because pre-experimental designs are regarded as having little scientific rigour and are thus not likely to establish a clear cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables, it would be difficult to claim that the improvement in work-performance of a troubled employee who participated in the EAP is as a result of the programme intervention.

The use of a purely experimental design however, also brings up a range of ethical issues. The ethical considerations for this study will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Of significant importance here is the danger of withholding treatment from a group of people, which is the case with control groups as discussed in experimental designs. As is often the case with social work research, a compromise is needed and as a result the design chosen has been of a quasi-experimental nature. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) refers to these designs as ones that do not meet the exact criteria for experimental designs, but are able to approximate experimental conditions.

De Vos (2005:362) describes programme evaluation as having the potential to use a combination of qualitative-quantitative methodology. Programme evaluation as illustrated by the Integrated Model of Programme Evaluation (IMPE) comprises of six phases. These are: needs assessment, evaluability assessment, programme monitoring, impact assessment, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit studies and utilisation evaluation. This study focuses primarily on the area of cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis. De Vos indicates that cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses are mostly conducted in a quantitative research paradigm.

Cost-benefit analysis requires estimates of the benefit of a programme, both tangible and intangible, and the costs of undertaking the programme, both direct and indirect. Once specified, the costs and benefits are translated into a common measure, usually a monetary unit. Hudson in De Vos (2005:376) argues that despite the great interest in cost-benefit analysis, it continues to be difficult to accomplish in the caring professions and will remain like this until people can

understand and use the fairly simple concept of measured change. This requires the measurement of the client's problem at least at two points in time and computing the difference. This difference can then be equated to the benefit used in the cost-benefit ratio.

The different forms of data gathering allows for the researcher to have insight into performance challenges presented by research subjects before using the program as well as observed changes after participating in the EAP. The different forms of data gathering use elements of different research designs, e.g.:

- The statistical analysis holds elements of a multi-group pretest-posttest design as described by De Vos (2005:139). It looks as follows:
    - (O_1 X O_2)
        - Where O_1 is the measurement of the dependent variable without X being present.
        - X is the independent variable being introduced.
        - O_2 is the repeated measurement of the dependent variable after introduction of the independent variable.
- The questionnaire completion component takes the form of a randomised longitudinal survey as described by Grinnell and Williams (1990:159). The design looks as follows:
    - (R O_1 O_2)
        - Where R is the random selection from a population.
        - O_1 is the first measurement of the dependent variable.
        - O_2 is the second measurement of the dependent variable (due to a very low response, this part of the investigation has been omitted).

The reason for the time series measurement after introduction of the independent variable is to be able to measure the effect of the therapeutic intervention over a period of time, thus looking at the stability of behavioural change due to the therapeutic intervention.

- The qualitative component represents a phenomenological and ethno methodological strategy of enquiry as described by De Vos (2005). The semi-structured interviews aimed to understand and interpret the meaning research participant's gives to their everyday lives and in this instance the researcher was able to understand the interface between the personal and industrial values of line managers and supervisors as referral agents and the language they use to describe phenomena in their context. The line managers/supervisors selected for this study has been involved in the referral of the specific respondents and their views are thus closely linked to that of the respondents.

One of the main limitations of the overall design is the fact that it lacks the comparison with a control group. As is often the case within a therapeutic context, it will be unethical to deny a certain group of respondents' treatment and introduction of a control group is thus not a consideration.

The design also does not include a pre-test component for the questionnaire section. However, the data collection through statistical analysis as well as the design of the questionnaires and interviews as measuring instrument allows for the retrieval of information about performance challenges before and after employees made use of the EAP.

Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee (2006) discussed ***sources of bias and validity threats*** of research designs. These sources of bias is identified and discussed for its' applicability to this study. These are;

- ***History and Maturation*****:** History refers to changes, which occur in the world, other than those intended by the researcher, which may affect the results. Maturation refers to changes that occur within subjects and thus confound the researcher's design. This is particularly true of designs, which require collection of data at more than one time, as has been the intention of this design (more than one point of measuring after the introduction of the independent variable). The researcher was confronted with a very low participation of respondents in the completion of the follow-up questionnaire. The consistency of changes taking place thus had to be interpreted from the alternative data sources.

- ***Regression towards the mean*:** This arises when the researcher base their conclusions upon single measurements. As a result the multiple post-test nature of the design is not likely to be effected by this.

- ***Test effects*:** Prior exposure to a test of measurement can bias a person's responses. The initial multiple post-test nature of the quantitative design was open to this bias. To counter this effect, the researcher has kept in mind a limited amount of re-tests and also varied the test slightly. In the final product, the relevant data were generated excluding this effect.

- ***Instrumentation*:** Instruments present a problem for design when different instruments are used to test the same concept. The researcher made sure that the instruments are equally sensitive and accurate to ensure that changes between the different measurements would be due to differences within the subjects and not due to difference in the instruments. The semi-structured interviews were directed towards a different sub-group within the larger research population. The focus areas however remained similar. The statistical analysis also focused on similar components of measurement as represented in the other instruments.

- ***Experimental mortality*:** Subjects often drop out of the research project during data collection procedure. This particular design was also vulnerable to this phenomenon due to the exposure of subjects to measurement over a long period of time within a fluctuation job market. Although the researcher took this in consideration and had to ensure that it is convenient for subjects to participate until the end, the response to the second set of questionnaires has been very low and as a result was omitted from this study. The other procedure involved another subgroup in the larger population (line managers/supervisors who acted as referral agents) and their participation was required at one point in the research only. Sufficient subjects had to be selected at the onset of the data-collection period. This has been relatively easy in terms of the second subgroup and participation has been at (80 %) of the selected individuals for company one as well as for company two. For the first subgroup (96%) of the intended

subjects participated in the first round of data-collection for company one. However, due to the size of the company it was difficult for the onsite personnel who assisted in the administration of the questionnaires to reach all the respondents and only 23 % of this group participated in the second round of data-collection. It posed a bigger challenge within company two where fewer subjects used the EAP through the formal referral process for the identified period. At the time of data collection only (35%) of the identified subjects were available for participation and (14%) of these subjects participated in the second round.

- ***Reactive effects*:** This refers to a group of related effects resulting from the fact that the subjects know that they are being observed and thus behave unnaturally. Measuring instruments often creates anxiety. Again this research design has been vulnerable to this response as questionnaires have been utilized, thus not able to collect data in an unobstructive manner. The confidentiality of the subjects during data collection may have limited this challenge to some extent. The use of statistical data as well as the semi-structured interviews conducted with line managers/supervisors also countered this concern.

- ***Selection bias*:** Where the study incorporates more than one group of participants, it is important that the researcher be sure that these groups are equivalent to each other in all respects. In this instance the researcher made use of two sub-groups per corporate company and two corporate companies participated in the research. Each subgroup within one corporate company represented equivalence with the similar subgroup in the other corporate company. Selection within subgroups represented a relative equivalence where employees from Company One came from a production background as well as an administrative background. The employees from Company Two also required a matric and post-matric qualification to perform their duties. Line-managers/supervisors representing the subjects from the second sub-group in both companies have a combination of academic qualifications and industry specific knowledge coupled with sufficient managerial exposure.

The topic under investigation is one for which a lot of information is already known. This allows the researcher to develop a hypothesis, stipulating the variables involved in the study. The next section will look at the formulation of a hypothesis appropriate for this study.

1.9 **HYPOTHESIS**

Once the research problem has been identified and reduced to a workable size, and when the gathering of background information, by literature review and other means, has helped to clarify the position of the problem within the theoretical framework and the already available results, the researcher is in a position to formulate the research problem, (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee:2006:29).

The above authors further indicate that hypothesis cannot be formulated unless all concepts have been given, as theoretical, practical and operational definitions. Concepts are utilised to facilitate communication amongst people, in research they are building blocks of theory. However, for concepts to be useful, they must be defined in a clear, precise, non-ambiguous way. Section 16 of this chapter focuses specifically on defining key concepts important in the conceptual understanding of this study. The researcher is in a position to formulate a hypothesis as sufficient information on the topic under investigation is available to do so. The hypothesis for this study reads as follows:

The participation of employees in Employee Assistance Programmes can result in an improvement of their psychosocial problems, resulting in improved productivity at work.

In this instance the dependent variable is the improvement in psychosocial problems and productivity as a result of the participation in the independent variable, the Employee Assistance Programme.

1.10 DATA COLLECTION

Data has been collected through interviews according to **an unstructured** interview **schedule** (qualitative part of investigation), and through a survey by using **questionnaires** and **existing statistics research** (quantitative part of investigation)**.** The researcher also sourced the opinion of three clinical psychologists in the field to support/discuss the reasons why long-term change is possible through a brief intervention strategy as is used in the Employee Assistance Field.

1.10.1 Unstructured interviews

De Vos (2005: 296) refers to the schedule within unstructured interviews as a guideline for the interviewer that contains questions and themes essential to the research. These questions were not necessarily asked in a particular sequence, but they ensured that all the relevant topics were covered during the interviews. These interviews were conducted with supervisors and line managers involved in productivity management and referral of employees into the programme. To counter the concern that a cost benefit analysis is only able to measure the tangible benefits of the programme, the interactions with line management allowed for the investigation of perceived intangible benefits of the programme and yielded valuable information that opens the path for further research.

De Vos (2005:253) indicates that the qualitative researcher will use purposive sampling methods by identifying access points where subjects will be easily reached and by selecting informed subjects. In this instance, the focus on line management has been the natural choice of a sample. Fifteen participants from each work-site have been selected for the qualitative part of the study. Twelve participants from each company were eventually interviewed.

1.10.2 **Questionnaires**

Babbie and Mouton (2001:233) refers to questionnaires as widely used in evaluation research. The subjects received a questionnaire to be completed after participation in the programme. Subjects were randomly selected from a group of employees who completed participation in the EAP between 3 – 6 months. Thirty respondents from worksite one and twenty subjects from work-site two have been selected for the quantitative part of the study. Twenty nine respondents from company one and twelve respondents from company two eventually participated.

Harris et.al.(2002:78) designed a questionnaire for an EAP outcome study focusing on areas like subjects self-reporting on general health, how emotional problems interfere with social, family and daily activities, depression, anxiety and general emotional functioning. Although self-reporting has the potential to pose validity threats due to the subjective nature thereof, the pre- and post-test nature allows for a more objective measure of change. The areas covered in Harris's study plays a significant role in the choice of areas covered in this study. The impact of social problems upon functioning at work has also be an important area covered in the questionnaire as well as across the different measuring instruments.

1.10.3 **Existing statistical analysis**

Existing statistical analysis are often used as a supplemental source of data in evaluation research, (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:393). Recorded performance challenges like absenteeism and disciplinary actions resulting in productivity losses provides a conceptual context within which the research is located. Although the subjects involved in the research have been people entering the Employee Assistance Programmes as mandatory referrals, it has been with great care to the ethical dilemmas tied into confidentiality that their permission were requested to obtain statistical data of performance indicators available in their personal files. As the subjects involved in the research project have been involved over a period of time, and entry to their world has been through people in the organisation they have a trust relationship (their supervisors/line managers or therapists within the

program) a relationship developed or existed where the disclosure of such information was generally not regarded as an intrusion. However, in some instances subjects did not feel comfortable and withheld consent. In these instances subjects had to be central in the disclosure of such statistical information and it proofed to be less threatening than an exercise involving purely the Human Resource component of the organisation. Information regarding subjects' income level has been included in the questionnaires as it is an essential component allowing the researcher to use existing statistical information at organizational level measured against salaries paid to determine the financial impact of psycho-social problems on the workplace and the savings resulting from the improvement of these conditions.

1.11 **PILOT STUDY**

De Vos (2005:205) defines the pilot study as a process where the research design for a prospective survey is tested. It involves the pre-testing of a measuring instrument, referring to trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents. For the purpose of this research the questionnaire was tested with two employees who were referred into the program through the formal referral process during 2006. The interview schedule was tested with a manager who used the program in the capacity of a referral agent. The piloting took place at worksites not demarcated for the main study.

De Vos (2005) also indicates that for any researcher to undertake meaningful research, he/she needs to be fully up to date with existing knowledge on the specific subject. Neuman (1997:88) indicates that a systematic literature review assist the researcher to define and refine a topic. He also describes the goals of a literature review as:

- Demonstrating a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility.
- To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked

to it.

- To integrate and summarise what is known in an area.
- To learn from others and stimulate new ideas.

De Vos also warns that the amount of literature confronting the researcher at the initial stage of the investigation can be frightening. However, the literature study during the pilot study does not entail a study of all researches in great detail. The purpose is to orientate, making sure that literature on the specific subject actually exist, what kind of literature it is and whether it is freely available.

The current literature study revealed that a vast amount of literature is available on Employee Assistance Programmes generally, both in academic books, journals and on the internet. Information on the internet also varies from business orientated reporting to academic reports. The international EAP field since the 1980's increasingly talks about the importance of cost benefit analysis of EAPs and a number of research studies has been done in this regard. This reflects a realisation that proofing the fiscal benefits of programmes is as important as the humanitarian part of it. Maiden (2006) is of the impression that the interest in this type of studies where expressed mostly in the US and Western Europe during the 1980s and 1990's. He further stressed that the availability of information lies within the corporate environment, making this the ideal arena for research of this nature. Harris et.al.(1999:55-59), Masi (1994:158-186), Highley (1996:4-8), Schear (1995:20-23), Dainas and Marks (2000:34-36), French et.al(1995:95-109) and Houts (1991:57-81) are some of the international authors reporting on studies done, investigating the financial benefits to corporate clients when they are investing in EAP programmes. Studies of this nature are also strongly supported by the field of Human Resources and Economics reporting on the importance of a productive workforce for a healthy economy. Literature reveals a clear understanding in the corporate environment that employees' personal problems can impact on their productivity and that companies reflect financial wisdom when investing in programmes to help them address these problems. Authors like Nissly and Mennen (2002:15-22), Berridge and Cooper (1994), Murphy (1995), Mann and Kelly (1999:118-122), all discusses the impact of personal problems including

stress and depression on people's functioning. Cascio (1982) makes an important contribution to the search for concrete financial data explaining the costs of employee behaviour.

The South African academic field has also developed significantly in the direction of research within the EAP field. Until recent years not a lot of studies were conducted locally regarding return on investment of EAPs. Of the research done was a study by Meyers (1994) looking at a needs assessment and a cost-benefit analysis within EAPs. Grace (2001) and Coppens (1997) both investigated the return on investment of Employee Wellness Programmes with a strong medical component on sick leave and absenteeism. Although these authors do not exclusively look at the psychosocial component of the programmes, they cover important areas of employee under-performance and the financial viability for work organisations to invest in these areas of employee life. Brief psychotherapy as a treatment model is also well documented in literature. In this chapter the researcher cited the ideas of Stalikas and De Stefano (1997) and McCullough-Valiant (1994). The literature review presents a comprehensive combination of viewpoints in order to highlight the central paradigm of the approach within Employee Assistance Programmes.

1.12 CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS

De Vos (2005:180) indicates that consultation with experts holds both positive and negative implications. Experts often complicate the conceptualisation of the problem formulation and this can lead to confusion for the researcher. However they are able to provide an expert view. The researcher decided to consult with experts both locally and internationally. On the local front an in-debt interview were conducted with van Jaarsveld (2006). This interview covered the following broad aspects:

- The historical development of EAP's in South Africa.
- The interest amongst corporate clients locally to measure the outcome of their EAP's.
- Challenges facing return on investment studies in the industry.

Maiden (2006) provided an international perspective to the topic. This e-mail based interview covered the following aspects:

- The interest of corporate clients internationally in studies of this nature;
- The ideal arena for these types of studies to take place, within the academic field or within the corporate environment;
- Challenges facing this type of study; and
- Conditions that will enhance the process of return on investment studies within the EAP field.

During a 2002 mini-conference, attended by members of senior management as well as staff with a significant amount of experience within the field of EAP, the following comments was made and were taken in consideration in the development of this study:

- A concern that measuring the impact of the counselling component of the service only, will exclude the positioning of supervisor and management training and consultation as a key element in EAP. If ignored, it could lead to an investigation too narrow in focus. While this is regarded as a valuable concern, the researcher also had to take in consideration that measuring all aspects of an EAP would result in a too lengthy research exercise. Within an academic consultation following this conference, it was decided that this concern would best be dealt with capturing the different components and how they contribute towards the success of an EAP within one chapter. Chapter three makes provision for this discussion. The qualitative interviews with line managers and supervisors provided a window into the contribution that this population can make.

- Another concern coming from this conference that had an impact on the initial mapping of the process was the fact that the sample initially suggested, were too big. It was also suggested that the focus be narrowed down to subjects who

accessed the service through the formal referral process only. While the latter could initially present itself as further running the risk of a too narrow research focus, the broader discussion regarding the different components that make this brief intervention successful would deal with this concern. These suggestions were built into the project.

The lack of available data was also highlighted in this discussion and correlates with the views of Maiden (2006). It is thus possible to make an assumption that this may be a world-wide challenge for cost-benefit / return on investment studies within the EAP field. It was suggested that the researcher focuses on companies where data would be more readily available.

- Corporate terminology was also cited as an important aspect, and this study uses the term " return-on-investment" rather than cost benefit analysis.

- Another comment of significant importance highlighted in this discussion referred to the impact of different variables on performance indicators. While it is not possible to control all variables, it is important to recognise and acknowledge them in the study. *Variables identified were the following*:

    - Organisational variables. These refer to organizational culture and competing programmes that may impact on the performance of employees.
    - The therapist. The therapeutic style and skills of therapists differs and may impact on the abilities of research subjects to develop insight into the influence of his/her personal challenges on work performance indicators, and as a result his/her ability to address this.
    - Client variables. People responses to therapeutic intervention are influenced by the type and severity of their presenting problems as well as their openness to change. It can thus be accepted that some research subjects (EAP clients) will respond more positively to intervention than others. This will in effect influence the change to be identified within performance indicators and as a result influence the potential "return on investment" for the corporate client. The researcher encountered these

phenomena while conducting her research at company two. Three of the respondents initially identified for the research presented with significant problems that could not effectively be dealt with through the program. At the time of the investigation two already left the company while one was on extended sick leave.

During July/August 2008 the researcher consulted with three clinical psychologists around the strong sense of consistency of behavioural changes that is observed through the research. The three professionals, Wright, (2008), Kgalema (2008) and Mvoko (2008) are all familiar with the brief intervention model. The question posed to them is "what is it according to his/her opinion that takes place within the individual that contributes to sustainable change through a brief intervention model as used in Employee Assistance Programmes. Their responses looked at the following areas:

- The brief solution focused in itself uses positive and goal orientated approach and if the therapist knows how to apply it, it should be able to instil long-term change.
- Employees who have been formally referred into the program are often at risk of losing their jobs and as a result are more open to making changes.
- The referral creates an opportunity for them to develop insight, it creates a better understanding of themselves and their workplace and a realisation that personal issues is spilling over into the workplace.
- Access to the program can potentially create a sense of trust and emotional caring by the workplace and this can also facilitate a process of change. It can also create a sense of emotional security and thus contribute to sustained change.
- Some problems are more receptive to sustained change while others like chronic substance addiction and personality problems may not present with significant changes over a period of time. There is a definite link between the type of problem and the seriousness thereof at the time of referral.

1.13 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

The fiscal costs of a study of this nature can be significant if a representative sample is to be utilised. Fortunately, questionnaires as a measuring instrument are generally not a costly procedure. The existing statistical research procedure also does not necessarily present huge financial implications. It was however a time-consuming procedure and was also dependent, like the entire study, on permission from corporate clients to use their records. The extent to which records are kept up to date also influenced the quality of information retrieved.

Fiscal costs were generated from travelling costs to the different sites and the reproduction of measuring instruments.

The study has been conducted with two corporate clients of one of the larger vendor companies in South Africa, the researcher's previous employer. Concern about bias of reported results has been defused by using different forms of data collection, conducting the research at two corporate clients and comparing the results generated from the two sites. The results of this study are also compared with those of similar studies conducted locally and abroad. There is a significant correspondence between the results from this study and that of other studies conducted and the inference can be made that the impact of bias has been limited.

The researcher's previous employer has been approached for consent to conduct this research and agreement has been given.

1.14 DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION / DEMARCATION OF SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

De Vos et.al (2005:192) describes a research population as a term that sets boundaries on the study units. It refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. The population in this research refers to all employees of the identified corporate clients who are making use of the EAP services. More

specifically the population in this instance refers to the employees from the demarcated companies who used the service as part of a formal referral process during 2007. Power, Meenaghan and Toomey (1985:235) define a population as a set of entities for which all the measurements of interest to the practitioner or researcher are represented.

The researcher used systematic sampling and the particular interval used in selecting the sample has been every second person being referred through the formal referral process for the demarcated companies during 2007. De Vos (2005:197) indicates that systematic sampling is considered of higher value than simple random sampling, at least as far as convenience is concerned. With the second corporate company, a relatively small percentage of employees entered the Employee Assistance Programme through the formal referral process for 2007. As a result all employees in this category were identified for research purposes. *(See chapter 4 section 4.3 for more details on the methodology applied).*

Because of confidentiality, great care had to be taken to protect subjects' privacy. Subjects have been assured of confidentiality but not anonymity. Only the researcher and the referring manager have been aware of their identity.

The population from which a sample was drawn for the qualitative component of the research were the line managers and supervisors who make referrals into the program. The sample represented all the line managers/supervisors who were responsible for the referral of the respondents into the program. *(See chapter 5 section 5.1 for more details on the methodology applied in this study).*

1.15 **ETHICAL ASPECTS**

Strydom in De Vos et. al. (2005:56) refers to eight ethical issues to take in consideration when conducting a research project. These are;

- **Harm to experimental subjects or respondents**

An ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect subjects against any form of physical or emotional harm, which may emerge from the research project. Respondents have been informed beforehand about the potential impact of the research. The researcher in this instance was cautious not to extract emotionally sensitive information through the questionnaire or the interview schedule.

- **Informed consent**

This refers to the need for all possible information on the goal of the investigation to be made available, the procedure that will be followed, advantages and disadvantages which respondents may be exposed to. With regard to this study, research subjects has been informed that although their identities would remain confidential, information regarding their absenteeism and work performance may be drawn from organizational records with their consent. Only the researcher and the referring manager were aware of their participation. The researcher developed an “informed consent” form and each respondent were required to sign such a form.

- **Deception of subjects and/or respondents**

This refers to the deliberate misrepresentation of facts in order to make another person believe what is in fact untrue. Reasons for this are to disguise the real goal of the study, to hide the real function of the actions of the subjects, and to hide the experiences that subjects will go through. Some of the dangers for the present study have been that this study could cause real harm to the trust of subjects in the EAP and as a result cause damage to the contracts for the vendor. To limit this risk, the researcher had to ensure that the purpose and processes of the research be explained clearly to the research subjects.

- **Violation of privacy**

Privacy refers to the information about people that are not intended for others to observe or analyse. Confidentiality can be regarded as a continuation of privacy, referring to a limitation to people's private information. Confidentiality in the research context indicates that only the researcher and possibly a few members of his/her staff should be aware of the identity of participants, and should make a commitment with regard to confidentiality. Invasion of privacy in the present study were avoided by excluding intimate, personal questions from the measuring instrument (questionnaire) and the interview schedule. Invasion could not be avoided completely as subjects were requested to give permission for data to be drawn from their personal files. This was needed for the statistical research component of the study.

- **Actions and competence of researchers**

Researchers are ethically obliged to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. In the initial reasoned proposal for the investigation, the researcher clarified the reasons for the study and indicated in what manner she would be able to honour ethical guidelines. Objectivity and restraint from making value judgements are part of the equipment of a competent researcher. Professional practitioners who want to base their practice on scientific principles must refrain from value judgements. The researcher in this instance obtained the relevant information to ensure that she became sensitive towards the values, norms and climate, which exist in the organisations before the research project commenced. The researcher maintained contact with the corporate wellbeing consultants for the two work sites as well as the internal Employee Wellbeing Coordinators. Utilisation of scarce resources is often an ethical issue influencing the researcher directly. Utilisation of one method of investigation above another because of a lack of funds can be a dilemma and in this instance the researcher had to be careful not

to compromise on the data collection methods, namely questionnaires, interviews and statistical research, due to time limits.

- **Cooperation with collaborators**

Often research projects are too comprehensive and expensive for researchers to handle individually and sponsorships are needed. The relationship between the researcher and the sponsoring body can raise ethical issues, especially when the sponsoring body acts prescriptively. Researchers, as a result, should ensure that manipulation from the sponsoring body do not manipulate the purpose and outcome of the study. The researcher has not identified and approached any sponsoring bodies for this specific project and as a result this is not a direct threat at present. Co-workers are often involved in the study in some way. In this instance it has only been the corporate wellbeing consultants for the two sites as well as the internal EWP coordinators who have been involved in a supportive capacity. At the first worksite the EAP clinical team has been involved in identifying the research subjects and assisting in the completion of the questionnaires.

- **Release or publication of the findings**

The findings of the study will be introduced to the reading public in written form as failure to do so will make the investigation meaningless. The report will be compiled as accurately and objectively as possible as errors in the study will lead to other researchers wasting their time and funds by relying upon the findings. Formulations and conveyance of the information should be clear and unambiguous, so that misappropriation by subjects, the general public and even colleagues can be avoided or minimised. The incorporation of other people's work in the study will also receive proper acknowledgement. Subjects will be informed about the findings in an objective manner without offering too many details or impairing the principle of confidentiality. Research is a learning experience and should be for all parties involved. Debriefing interviews are one

way of ensuring that subjects are part of the learning experience. Making the report available in simpler language is another way in which the project can be rounded off ethically.

- **Restoration of subjects or respondents**

Debriefing sessions during which subjects get the opportunity, after the study, to work through their experience and its aftermath, are possibly one way in which the researcher can assist subjects and minimise harm. After completion of the project, the researcher has to rectify any misperceptions, which may have arisen in the minds of participants. Termination of and withdrawal of a therapeutic process must be handled with the utmost sensitivity. The research process must at all times be a learning experience for both the researcher and research subjects. In this instance the research subjects have not been involved in a therapeutic process. However, it was important for them to know that their willingness to participate has contributed to the knowledge base in the field while their identities were protected.

1.16 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts will be used in this study regularly. Literature illustrates the following meanings to these concepts.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP):

Mann and Kelly (1999:1) defines EAPs as programmes designed to assist work organization by providing help and counselling for employees and their families with a wide range of personal problems that may affect job performance.

Berridge and Cooper (1994:5) defines EAPs as a programmatic intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of the individual employee, using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the recognition and control of certain work- and non work

related problems (notably alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health) which adversely affect job performance, with the objective of enabling the individual to return to making her or his full work contribution and to attaining full functioning in personal life.

The EAPA-SA Standards Document (2005) defines EAPs as a worksite-based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns, including, but not limited to, health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance.

The above definitions all makes reference to a strategic relationship between personal wellbeing, workplace behaviour and the financial wellbeing of a company. It can thus be argued that by definition EAPs position itself as a corporate benefit rather than soft service benefit.

EAP Vendors:

Masi (1994:190) defines this as a company hired by an organization to provide EAP/MBC (Managed Behaviour Care) staff and services.
An EAP vendor can thus be defined as a company specialising in the delivery of psychosocial services to work-organisations as a means of keeping employees healthy and productivity high.

Costs benefit analysis:

Schear (1995:20) defines this as a method of comparing the benefits of a programme with its cost. It requires a consideration of all long-term and related benefits and costs and can be used to compare very different programmes.

Masi (1994:186) defines it as the estimation of a dollar value for the benefits the EAP provides to the organization. It measures the direct and indirect costs, including programme operational expenses and costs attributed to the employee's problems, in order to determine the total dollar expenditure for implementation of the programme as compared to the costs that would be incurred without the programme. The two

amounts are weighed to evaluate whether the programme, given its estimated cost, can be justified economically.

Grace (2001:5) defines cost-benefit analysis as the measuring of economic efficiency of a programme in monetary units as a relationship of costs and benefits.

The above definitions all reflects the financial calculation that is part of analysis of this nature and the application thereof in a social science field requires an understanding of how human behaviour have financial implications in the corporate world.

Cost effectiveness analysis:

Schear (1995: 20) defines this as an evaluation of the costs incurred in reaching a desired outcome. This is typically expressed as a ratio – the cost of obtaining a result divided by the number of desired outcomes. The method can also be used to compare different ways of achieving the same objectives.

Masi (1994:186) defines this as the quantification of programme outcomes, most likely in dollars, and compares this with the available programme costs. It does not require a projection of intangible or future savings for various types of programmes. The analysis addresses whether a programme is being conducted at an acceptable level of effectiveness, in terms of optimum return per dollar expended.

Grace (2001:5) defines it as measuring the value or merit of a programme in non-monetary units. This refers to the extent to which resources allocated to an accepted specific objective under each of several alternatives actually contributes to accomplishing that objective, so that different ways of achieving the objective may be compared.

Cost-impact/offset studies:

Schear (1995:20) defines this as the evaluation of cost savings that occur as a result of providing a service. The concepts of cost-benefit, cost effectiveness and cost-

impact/offset thus all operate in the space where the financial validation of programme effectiveness is concerned.

Return on investment:

Meyer, Opperman and Dyrbye (2003:5) defines return on investment as a measure of the monetary benefits obtained by an organisation over a specified period of time in return for a given investment in a programme. In other words, it is the extent to which the benefits (outputs) exceeds the costs (inputs). In the context of this study the researcher will use the concept, Return on Investment (ROI) as opposed to cost benefit analysis.

Employees:

An employee as described by Berridge and Cooper (1994:7), is economically active people. Oss (1998:1-5) refers to employees as productively active individuals in an organisation. Of significance is that employees and management are usually referred to as separate entities. It can thus be argued that present day literature contributes to the perception that EAPs are being bought by management for their employees and not for their own use.

Evaluative research:

Masi (1995:187) defines evaluation as the scientific gathering, analysis and reporting of data. It determines the worth or merit of a programme designed to change people's knowledge, behaviour or attitudes.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:334) refers to evaluative research as a research purpose rather than a research method, the purpose to measure the impact of social interventions. The researcher particularly prefer the reference to purpose and by transferring the concept to the field of EAPs, there is a responsibility of programme managers to ensure that evaluation becomes part of the programme construct.

Absenteeism:

Nel in Grace (2001:3) defines absenteeism as the failure of employees to report on the job when they are scheduled to work. Absence may take a variety of forms, not always easily identifiable and can also indicate time lost with sickness or accidents, preventing a worker from being on the job. Absenteeism is one of the most tangible workplace indicators through which company losses can be determined.

Brief psychotherapy:

Brief therapy involves a conceptual shift for therapists from the archaeological search for why people are the way they are, to a much more here-and-now focus on what keeps them that way, McCullough-Vaillant, (1994:2).

Brief counselling is a problem-focused form of individual or family outpatient counselling that seeks resolution of problems in living, emphasises client skills and resources, involves setting and maintaining realistic goals that are achievable in a one to five month period, encourages clients to practice behaviour outside the counselling session and looks to the counsellor to provide structure, interpret behaviour, offer suggestions and assign homework activities. (abridged from clinical notes of PPC International:1999).

Internationally this approach seems to be the intervention strategy around which EAPs are designed.

CHAPTER TWO

OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS OF A RETURN ON INVESTMENT AS A SUMMATIVE FORM OF EVALUATION FOR AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

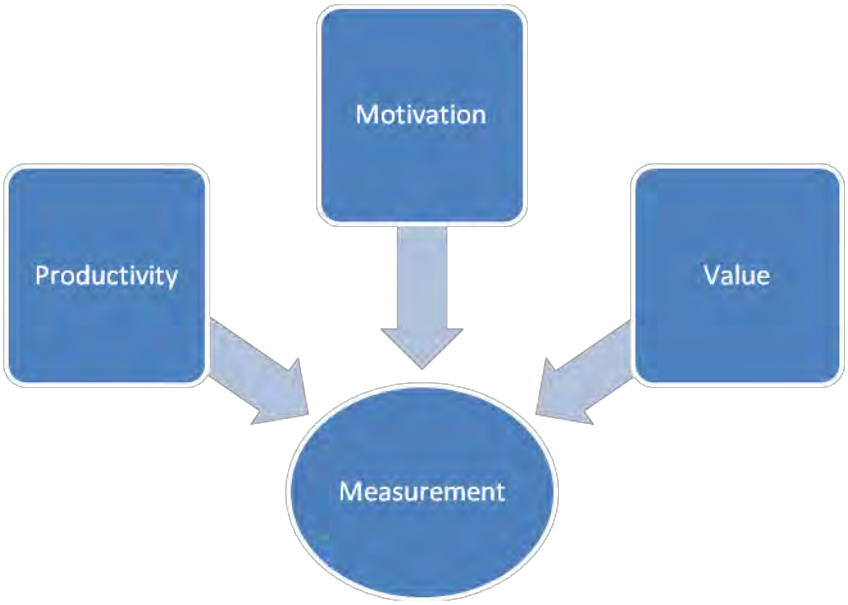
The purpose of this chapter is to gain an in-depth understanding of return on investment analysis as an evaluative tool, specifically in the operation of Employee Assistance Programmes and generally as a tool designed to measure the financial benefits deriving from implementing a human orientated workplace programme. Sudgen and Williams (1978:13) indicates that the decision to invest in a project at any point in time is usually based on a commitment or promise of returns in the future as well as in the present. Investing in employee health is based upon such a commitment that healthier employees are more likely to maintain good productivity, thus contributing to a company's financial turnover. Returns can take on different forms, some of them relatively intangible. This study focuses on the more tangible returns for which measurement can be applied as well as exploring the value attached to the non-monitory benefits of the program. Meyer (1994:1) points out that the performance of any organization is to a large extent influenced by the performance of its employees. She draws from Gibson et al (1991) focusing on the inter-relatedness of individual, group and organisational performance. Individual performance contributes to group performance, which in-turn impacts on organisational performance. When thinking from this framework, it becomes clear that any organisation interested in good company performance, must acknowledge that the employees' wellbeing is crucial to the success of their business. Marc Drizin wrote in the Sunday Times Business Times of 5 October 2003 that employees stay with an organisation for different reasons. Some feels obligated to stay, having to pay back an employer who provided them with training and development opportunities or do not believe that they have the necessary skills to find another job. However, employees who stay with a company because they

have a strong personal attachment are those who not only stay longer, but also will recommend the company as a good one to work for and go the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction. The above thinking just reiterates the importance of people for organisational excellence, thus allowing the rightful title of human capital.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN PRACTICE

2.2.1 Motivation as a prerequisite for productivity and the EAPs' ability to impact on both tangible and intangible employee benefits

Concept development plays an important role in the knowledge and even in the conduct of everyday existence, (Smith, 1994:21). Without clear definitions or attributes, the ability of a concept to assist in fundamental tasks is greatly impaired. This section looks at the productivity, motivation, value and measurement as essential concepts in this study. The graph below illustrates the relationship between these concepts within the context of this study. Measurement becomes the fundamental action while productivity, motivation and value are some of the forces influencing the quality of work performance.



(Graph 1: Relationship between Productivity, Motivation, Value and Measurement)

Ramafoko (2002:42) is of the impression that there is a correlation between the motivational levels of employees and their work performance/productivity. She uses the motivational theories of Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg and McCleland in explaining that it is important in the workplace to meet people's needs from the most basic to the more advanced. In all four of these theorists' description of needs, reference is made to needs referring to existential, interpersonal relational and a need for self worth. These are needs upon which an EAP and the field of social work has a significant impact.

There seems to be interrelatedness between employee performance and organisational performance. Ramafoko (2002:49) provides a basic description of productivity and refers to it as a measure that compares outputs to inputs. The measures of productivity depend upon the type of institutions that are being discussed and include efficiency and effectiveness of outputs measured in terms of client satisfaction, labour turnover and absenteeism, and such intangibles as employee morale, loyalty and job satisfaction.

Marx uses the concept of surplus value where he describes the value of products created through labour power to be much more than the value of the labour power itself. Organizations thus buys labour power according to the current market value of those professional categories. What they expect the output value of that to be is much higher than what they have paid for. The employee is thus involved in exchange value of his labour but is alienated from it's use value (Trotsky, 2002:104). Haralambos and Heald (1980:229) in their reflection of Marx's work refers to his belief that work provides the most important means for man to fulfil both his basic needs, his individuality and his humanity.

Leiss (1988:14) look at the individual as the consumer of goods and focuses on how their needs are manipulated by the availability of products. People in the workplace are simultaneously creators of goods as well as consumers of these products. People can thus seek satisfaction in their craftsmanship (not being alienated from the use value of their creations), as well as seeking satisfaction around the circumstances of their work that allows them to satisfy their needs as consumers.

Shillito and De Marle (1992:3) refer to **value** as the primary force **motivating** human actions. Value is seen as a potential energy field between people and the objects that they need and the magnitude of this energy field depends on the interplay between needs, usefulness and cost. Value becomes the force that can be quantified. **Value measurement** is a process in which numbers are used to quantify the value of elements in a system. This process consists of several steps:

- First a system is identified and its components named.
- Secondly, needs are analysed and the functions of the components identified.
- Thirdly, value measurement techniques are used to qualify the value of components in the system.
- Finally, these value indices are graphed, and various value, performance, or cost targets are derived and used as references in value improvement efforts.

For the purpose of this study, areas of potential value measurement will be mentioned but its components will not be discussed in the format as highlighted above. The researcher will focus briefly on the emotional value of work for people as discussed by Drafke and Kossen (2002), the value of work activities as highlighted by Cascio (1999) and focus on the value components of a typical Employee Wellbeing Program as offered by the vendor companies who provided permission to the researcher to approach their client companies for fieldwork purposes.

Work and its value-components for people: Drafke and Kossen (2002:10) is of the impression that while most people will say that money is the overall reason why they are working, money in itself has very little value to people. It is the things that money can buy that are of real value to people. The above refers to the monetary value of work. However, work seems to fulfil certain human needs. People attach a certain value to the type of work they do, their level of personal enjoyment (example an artist who is passionate about painting and makes a living out of it), the status attached to their position and value/importance in terms of societal views. This view

may part from the views of Marx as depicted earlier in this text as it refers to a value-add component more than the exchange value of labour.

Many employers may hold the view that people are paid to fulfil the needs of the company. Employee functions are designed to fulfil the mandate of service delivery, profit making and financial wellbeing of the company. It is the objective of any business to make money and in the case of a service orientated company, to render a quality, cost-effective service. In measuring the **value of work activities,** Cascio (1999:220) refers to six elements to consider when referring to a financial cost accounting of work activities. These are:

- The average value of production or service unit.
- Quality of the object or service.
- Overheads, including rental, office support costs, cost depreciation, rental of equipment.
- Errors, accidents, spoilage, damage to equipment and general wear and tear.
- Factors such as appearance, friendliness, poise and general social effectiveness in public relations.
- The cost of time spent of other personnel, including supervisory time.

Human behaviour has the ability to impact on the financial wealth of an organization and certain behaviour patterns contributes directly towards losses within a company while the absence thereof ensure better financial performance. Cascio refers to the concept of **burden adjustment** created when a worker operates at less than the general standard. This concept is supported by authors like Highley (1996:4-8), Steele (2002:18-21) and Riotto (2001:37-48), who are of the impression that people's personal problems have the ability to affect their work performance negatively. In the first chapter of this study the researcher looks at reference being made by these authors to studies indicating the extent of people's personal problem on their work performance and thus the financial bottom-line of the companies who employ them. Authors like Oss (1998:3) and Bellingham and Cohen (1987:74) also strengthen the perception of value-add of Employee Assistance

Programs/Employee Wellbeing Programs when they refer to studies highlighting the positive contributions of these programs to workplace productivity. The utilisation of a cost benefit/return on investment analysis within the field of Employee Assistance Programmes is an attempt to make an economic estimation of the impact of the programme on social behaviour.

Return on investment studies as a concept had its foundation in the field of economy. Today it is a method used amongst economists and non-economists. It is also a concept that is in existence and has been written about for over thirty years. Frost (1979:3) refers to a return on investment analysis as a comparison of two or more solutions to a given problem and to provide a framework in which such comparisons can be usefully discussed. It starts from defined assumptions and relies on the preferences expressed by groups of people concerned by the decision. This form of analysis traditionally is based upon economic assumptions, yet is often utilised to **measure** impacts of more complex problems outside the area of traditional economics like social factors such as the value of life. The utilisation of monetary standards to explain values and social norms can however be very dangerous. Pearce (1986:2) shares the concerns of Mishan when he refers to this process as an attempt to press non-economic values into the framework of the economic calculus. The writer is concerned that this procedure puts a price tag to values that is otherwise priceless. Pearce describes return on investment analysis as a procedure that:

- Measure the gains and losses to individuals/companies, using money as the measuring rod of those gains and losses.
- Aggregating the money valuations of the gains and losses of individuals/companies and expressing them as net social gains or losses.

While the above argument needs to be taken in consideration when using a return on investment analysis to evaluate social programmes, the lack of a thorough measurement may leave expenditure decisions without a guided process, thus creating the danger of inefficient spending.

This study is entered on the premises that a company investing in a programme that is to benefit its employees has an interest in knowing that it is adding value to the organisation both on a personal and a financial level. A return on investment study, the main focus of measurement for this study, has its limitations as only those benefits that can be translated into monetary terms, can be included in the analysis. Mishan (1976:405) are of the impression that typical return on investment exercises finds it difficult to effectively take in consideration the concept of social merit. "Goods" like improved health, better education, decrease in stress levels and improvement in interpersonal relationships may be difficult to include in a return on investment/cost-benefit calculus. These socially desirable goods may be measured by what is known as social indicators and the components of units used for measuring purposes vary from one social indicator to another. Meyers (1994:147) makes the reader aware of the fact that an Employee Assistance Programme typically has the potential to impact on social indicators like employees' quality of life, employee morale and improved decision-making, but that these aspects may be too difficult to translate into monitory terms, thus often be excluded from this type of analysis. A Return on Investment analysis should thus never be seen as a measurement of all possible costs and benefits of an EAP. It is at best an attempt to measure as many as possible, often the major measurable costs and benefits of the programme. The interviews conducted with line managers/supervisors generated a wealth of information relating to social capital. There has been significant consistency in the opinions of participants from both work sites. They are of the opinion that employees with personal problems impact negatively on their teams within the workplace. Because of mood changes they tend to withdraw from their colleagues and the latter often gets frustrated when they have to carry an added workload due to the lack of performance of a team member. Participants were all of the impression that there is usually a visible change in the social interaction of previously troubled employees after participation in their EAP and that these positive changes translate into better functioning teams as well as individuals who not only improve their performance, but are in a position to assist fellow employees. These are indicators that cannot be measured in monetary terms however its value to the organisation cannot be under-estimated. This creates the question whether a return on investment analysis, excluding non-monitory indicators, really addresses

all the needs that an impact study of Employee Assistance Programmes should deal with.

Measuring of clinical service delivery is an important component within the field of social work. LaSala (1997: 54-63)), Gaston & Sabourin (1997: 227-231)) and Fisher & Valley (2000: 271-284) provides reflections on the usefulness and validity of client satisfaction surveys in the monitoring and evaluation of mental health services. LaSala is of the opinion that the need to determine how satisfied clients are with the service, are consistent with social work values. Fisher and Valley refers to a perception that client satisfaction surveys are often regarded as scientifically problematic but professionally useful. The lack of standardization between measuring tools makes comparison of findings fundamentally difficult. While there continue to be a concern that client's reports of satisfaction do not represent a valid outcome variable, Gaston & Sabourin found a weak correlation between client satisfaction and the need to give socially desirable responses. There has however been a stronger correlation with pre and post-treatment reduction in anger, depression, social problems, anxiety and thought disturbances.

Employee Assistance Programmes consist of different components and these are discussed in detail in chapter three. Components within an Employee Assistance Programme for which value measurement is possible are:

- The corporate wellbeing consultation process
- The management consultation process
- Direct services
    - Clinical
    - Financial
    - Legal
    - Medical
- Reporting component (provision of management information)
- The pricing model

For the purpose of this study the value measurement will focus only on the clinical component of directs services.

2.3 MEASURING CHANGE WITHIN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

"Measuring is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you can't measure something, you can't understand it. If you can't understand it, you can't control it. If you can't control it, you can't improve it." (Harrington in Kaydos,1998:3).

Googins (1998:224) asks the very radical question whether EAPs do in fact effect change. In order to measure change within the context of EAPs, it is necessary to first understand how change itself is at the heart of the programme. For an EAP to achieve its goals regarding change, it needs to be acknowledged that problems exist and that a changed state is desirable. Googins, Howard and Kurtz in a 1983 writing grouped measures of change in four major classes. These are;

- Change in drinking behaviour – a measure of the degree to which a person has achieved an abstinent or sober state. As EAPs address problems much more holistic than drinking, we would refer to this as a change in emotional well-being.
- Change in work performance – a measure of the degree to which the employee has improved work performance.
- Change in cost reduction – a measure of savings realized through improved work performance.
- Change in penetration – a measure of the extent to which a programme reaches the target population of a given organization.

The above categories address different types or objects of change, illustrating the lack of consensus on how programme success are conceptualised, targeted and measured. The scope of this study addressed specific changes within work performance and its cost implication. Such a specific focus is possible as many

changes to performance as well as its financial impact are tangible and thus measurable.

According to Csiernik (2004:26) an EAP should have a mechanism in place to evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. According to Csiernik only a few return on investment studies were conducted during the 1990s. Briefer outcome reports also did not provide comprehensive literature reviews, context for the study or discussion of the organisations. The focus of these reports was rather on methodology and outcome. The table below provides an illustration of studies conducted during the 1990's, the methodologies used, study time frames, variables examined and their outcomes.

Author /year /workplace	**Workforce size and EAP delivery**	**Method**	**Study time frame**	**Variables examined**	**Outcome**
Blaze-Temple & Howatt 1977. Hospital Laundry and Linen. Perth, Australia	400 External model	Quasi-experimental multiple time series 2 pre-3 post EAP use. EAP counselling vs. no counselling	2.5 (two and a half) years	Absenteeism Compensation claims, sick leave, retention	Self-arranged counselling produced the most cost savings as there is no programme cost to the employer. EAP was cost neutral
Bruhnsen 1994. Unit of Michigan Medical Centre. Ann Arbor	8 000 Internal	Matched cohert of 122 former EAP clients. Groups matched by age, sex, education, job, class and years of service.	5 years	Retention and sick leave	EAP clients had a higher retention rate and no difference in sick days leading to a cost savings f $65,341
Collins 1998. Chevron Corporation	Internal	Review of all EAP files from 1990 – 1994. n =	Retention rates 10 years Productivity:	Accidents Productivity Retention	Cost returns of 14:1. Few substance abusing

		11,773 Safety rates: programme users vs. non-users Retention rates: 1992 CATOR study baseline	4 years Accident rates: 3 years		employees fired. Improvement in both supervisory referrals (mean 50%) and self referrals (mean 5%) clients. Safety rates identical.
Conlin, Amaral @ Harlow 1996. Southern California Edison	Internal	Matched cohort of employees with substance abuse claims. 30 employees EAP use. 29 no EAP contact – only managed care use	30 months	Medical costs.	EAP users had higher initial addiction treatment costs but subsequently lower mental and physical health care costs. EAP users had 38% less medical costs over 30-month post-treatment period.
Editorial Board.1993. McDonnell Douglas. Unites States	130 000 Internal	Comparison of EAP users to those with problems who sought help outside the EAP to a control group of those without substance abuse or mental health issues	5 years	Absenteeism Medical costs Termination	Chemical dependency clients had 29% fewer days of absence, 42% fewer terminations, &7.150 less in medical costs. Anticipated future offset of $6,000,000
Schear 1995. Burlington-Northern		Comparison of costs the month prior to EAP use to one year	1 year.	Absenteeism, accidents/injuries. Medical costs. Performance. Workers'	Job performance ratings by supervisors increased. Fewer health insurance

		after EAP use.		compensation.	claims, medical leaves and absences. No changes in disability or workers' compensation claims.
Stephenson & Bingaman. 1999. United States. Postal Services.	900,000 Internal	Prospective cost-benefit analysis using first time EAP users.	5 year prospective	Absenteeism. Benefit costs Cost of EAP	Benefit to cost ratio: Year 1: 1.27:1 Year 5: 7.21:1 Cost savings increase post EAP use
Yandrick 1992a Orange County Florida Public Schools	19,000 Internal	Comparison of health costs in one year using 5 sets of 25 employees tiered across 4 years of EAP use compared to 25 non-programme users	5 years	Medical costs Sick time	Both medical costs and claims drop after EAP use and continue to fall over time. Prior to EAP use clients' sick leave above organization average, after EAP use, it fell below the organization average
Yandrick 1992b Virginia Power Richmond, Virginia	12.000 Internal	Pre-post EAP use comparison to those using behavioural health benefits.	8 years	Benefit costs Medical costs	EAP users had 23% lower medical costs and 15% lower non-behavioural health benefit costs than did the comparison group.

(Table 2.1: Return on Investment Studies conducted in 1990's according to Csiernik 2004)

Van Jaarsveld (2006) indicates that one of the challenges that cost benefit/return on investment studies in the EAP field faces is the fact that these studies are lengthy exercises while the industry requires this information to be available to them much quicker. The average time period of all the studies above is 4.5 years with the shortest period being one year. Management information is generally provided in the form of quarterly reports providing utilisation statistics (creating the ability to determine if the programme is well utilised and which pockets of employees are making use of the programme), trends of the types of problems people experience within the organization generally as well as different departments specifically and the impact on performance indicators (based on self reporting). While this information is immensely valuable to management and assists them in strategic decision-making regarding their human resources, what is often missing in these reports is the ability to measure changes in performance indicators for people participating in the programme.

The manner in which information gathering is structured through the format of client assessment and management consultation documents determines the ease with which evaluative studies can be conducted. Although reference is made to performance indicators within the relevant assessment tools, these are basically reported on without the ability to report on changes during and after interventions. This limitation thus necessitates additional evaluative studies for companies who are interested in measuring their return on investment based on changes in performance indicators. The researcher looked into the content of the assessment forms of three leading EAP companies, two local and one international company. All three assessment forms make provision for a thorough psycho-social investigation while reference is made to the impact of these psycho-social problems on work performance in a generalised manner. No other additional work performance information is generated. Below is an illustration of the findings of this exercise.

COMPANY	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS REFERRING TO WORK PERFORMANCE COMPROMISES	ARE ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS HAVING A NUMERICAL VALUE TO THEM	OVERALL FOCUS OF ASSESSMENT FORM
Company One	One question related to work performance	There is no numerical valuation to the question.	Overall clinical focus based on brief solution therapy.
Company Two	One question related to work performance	No numerical valuation to the question.	Overall clinical focus within the context of brief solution therapy.
Company Three	Two questions related to work performance	No numerical valuation to the question.	Overall clinical focus also within the context of brief solution therapy.

(Table 2.2: Brief view on assessment tools for three EAP vendor companies)

For ROI and effectiveness measures to be ingrained into the service delivery process of the vendor company, a more significant focus should be given to the impact of psycho-social problems on work performance both at the time of initial assessment as well as the time of service assessment (termination). Well-established EAPs who services a large number of corporate clients is presently not generating this information in a format that will eliminate the need for lengthy and extensive return on investment studies. It thus means that while extensive information is available within the data basis of EAP vendor companies, this information in itself allows for only generalised reporting on the impact of the programme on work performance indicators. Maiden (2006) indicated that the therapeutic intervention is but the first step in the process of measurement. He is of the opinion that it is essential to establish clear parameters with an employer at the point of EAP introduction. A problem with many ROI studies, as is the case with this research project as well, is that the parameters for measurement is determined long

after implementation and as a result, information is not generated in a format that will enhance the speed of such a study.

The variables within the studies monitored by Csiernik (2004) centred on absenteeism, retention, sick leave, accidents, productivity, medical costs and benefit costs. These variables are relatively tangible, allowing for measurement to take place, providing effective documentation took place within the work organisation.

All measures require documentation while not all documentation needs measurement. Documentation is more of an enumeration of observation while measurement has a much more precise connotation and represents an overriding concern in science. In essence, measurement consists of rules for assigning numbers to objects to represent quantities of attributes. The scientific measurement of change in EAPs allows us to assign the change occurring as due to the programme and not to some external event. EAPs, although remaining one of the main components of work-based programmes, more and more operate within a broader wellness arena. When looking at the impact of the programme on behavioural change, it will be crucial to take cognisance of all other components of the specific programme, impact of other relevant programmes and conditions within the workplace impacting on employee behavioural change.

There are dilemmas and difficulties in measuring change. There are scientific obstacles to measurement as no research method is without bias like sampling errors, threats to validity and interviewer bias to name but a few.

A further difficulty in evaluating programmes of this nature is the isolation of quantifiable programmatic goals that can be linked to and measured against programme efforts. When a workplace purchases an EAP they often do it on the premise of wanting to demonstrate their care towards their employees rather than having identified specific problems they would like to have addressed. If this is the case, the organisation has failed to determine what its baseline functioning is at the time of programme implementation and what its desired changed state will constitute. An organisation needs to understand its status quo at the point of

departure in order to determine the benefits derived from any programme intended to bring about change. Maiden (2006) reiterate the importance of generating baseline data at the point of implementation of a programme to allow effective measurement of progress or the lack thereof to take place.

It is possible in EAPs to determine change as all behaviour changes within the workplace can be measured in value of lost productivity. This implies that the ability to link an EAP to job performance allows for the introduction of a primary evaluation measure. However, job performance measures are often also criticised as one of its main measurable expressions may not be anything more than replacements for job performance and productivity, unrelated to the quality of work, but may be sensitive to the intervention strategy. This can lead to a biasing of the results that presume to generalise job performance. However, despite the criticism and because these are more concrete and precise indicators of problem behaviour, they are more useful for measuring programme success. The researcher was able to address these concerns through the more qualitative part of the intervention, specifically the interaction with supervisory and middle management, determining what they regard as qualitative performance indicators within individual employees. As indicated in the first chapter, a semi-structured interview schedule has been utilised to interact with supervisors and line managers regarding their experience of the impact of the programme on employee work performance.

2.4 EVALUATION AS A STRATEGY TO MEASURE CHANGES: EXPLORING METHODOLOGIES OF EVALUATION

As mentioned in the first chapter, the methodology of evaluating the costs and benefits of an EAP as cited by French and Zarkin (1995:95-109) has a structural influence on the evaluation strategy used in this study. The process as mapped out by these authors allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the environment within which the specific programme is operating, an acknowledgement of complementing programmes operating within the company that may have an influence on people's productivity as well as a measurement of the costs of running the programme. This process has the

potential to go a long way in addressing the concerns around EAPs claims of value-adding to a company while operating within an environment rife with variables having the potential to impact on employee's behaviour. The methodology used by French is discussed on page 80 below and has an influence on the format used in this study.

Step one of French's methodology: Process discription	**Step two:** Cost analysis	**Step three:** Outcome analysis
• **Describe structure of the EAP:** This includes a history of the programme, when it started, any important changes, utilization rates and staffing structure, types and intensity of services provided, referral, follow-up and administrative activities. This descriptive process is concluded with a discussion of the philosophy of the EAP and it's position in the corporate hierarchy • **Describe environment within which the EAP operates involving** the worksite, the organization and the community • **Identify the goals and objectives of the EAP:** Most programmes provide a wide range of services to employers and employees, often referred to as the core technologie of the programme. Roman and Blum (1988) refer to the core technologies of an EAP as the unique functions that differentiate them from other Human Resource activities in the workplace. It has a boundary maintenance function that allows for it to be integrated into other systems without being absorbed. As the core technology often vary from programme to programme, it is necessary to identify the individual goals of the programme under study. • **Identifying the cost elements and key outcome variables:** This includes direct expenditure and in the case of an external programme only the direct cost of the service contract. Outcome variables include absenteeism, health insurance claims and accident rates.	• The cost analysis allows for the collection of necessary data to estimae the total and average costs of the EAP. Records of actual expenditure for direct costs are often used and not budgets as these often deviate from each other. Opportunity costs should be included and these are calculated by deterining the amount the programme would pay for the resources if they were not provided free of charge. Once all relevant resource-use and expenditure data have been collected, total and average cost estimates for the programme can be computed. Total cost is calculated by simply adding all appropriae cost elements for a given time period. Average cost are then calculated by dividing total cost estimate by some measure of eligibility or utilization. Whether eligibility or utilization will be used wil depend on whether the study wants to determine avarage cost per troubled employee or aveage cost of providing EAP services to all employees. • Often the calculation of EAP costs may appear to be a straightforward . However, EAP budgets and expenditure reports are often included within those of larger departments. Although detailed record keeping may help, the evaluator must often develop imputation rules to assign expenses to the programme. • When estimating opportunity costs, imputation rules and assumptions that form the basis of opportunity cost estimates should be clearly stated to make cost estimates understandable and condusive for future analysis.	• The outcome analysis is perhaps the most challenging of the three evaluation components due to the difficulty in measuring the incremental effect of EAP services on outcome variables. The first four components as indicated below are already discussed in detail in the first chapter. These are: • *Choice of study design and methodology to guide the outcome analysis.* • *Determining the appropriate employee sample to study.* • *Establish a time frame for the analysis.* • *Collecting the necessary data.* • The last two components of this secion, namely estimating the effectiveness of the EAP for employees and estimating the overall impact of the programme is discussed at the hand of an evaluative study embarked on by Goss (1997). **See discussion below.**

(Graph 2: Methodology of Evaluating the Costs and Benefits of an EAP: French and Zarkin 1995)

Goss (1997: 327) embarked on a study of employee counselling adopting the principles of an integrated pluralist evaluation significantly incorporating the methods of triangulation. It allowed for both humanist (phenomenological) and reductionist (positivist) philosophies at every stage of the investigation. By focusing on both the quantitative and qualitative, he addresses the needs of different stakeholders interested in the value adding of a service of this nature. People's lack of emotional well-being rarely only impact on one area of their personal or work life. Typically, addressing their well being in a positive manner, also rarely only impact on only one area of their workplace performance . A study of this nature thus allows for a more holistic evaluation of the impact of an Employee Assistance Programme.

It should however be noticed that it is impossible to investigate all possible impacts that a programme can have and it become necessary to focus on a selected group. The value of Goss's study is that it includes both quantitative and qualitative valuation where a pure return on investment analysis looks only at the quantitative value adding, allowing for the argument that such an approach reduces complex human interactions and feelings to misleadingly simple numbers. Goss (1997) and French et.al (1995) seems to think alike in this regard. This current study narrows its focus to a component of employee assistance offerings by focusing on the counselling aspects. Although this specific focus allows for criticism around the fact that the programme consists of different interactive processes contributing to the value adding of a company, it will complicate the study if the impact of all the programme components should be included in the investigation. For the purpose of this study, chapter three (3) will address the different components involved in the process, thus providing a clearer perspective of the comprehensiveness of an EAP.

The questionnaire focuses on respondents' perception of the impact of their personal problems on their personal as well as work life. It furthermore focuses on the change in personal and work related behaviour as perceived by the respondents.

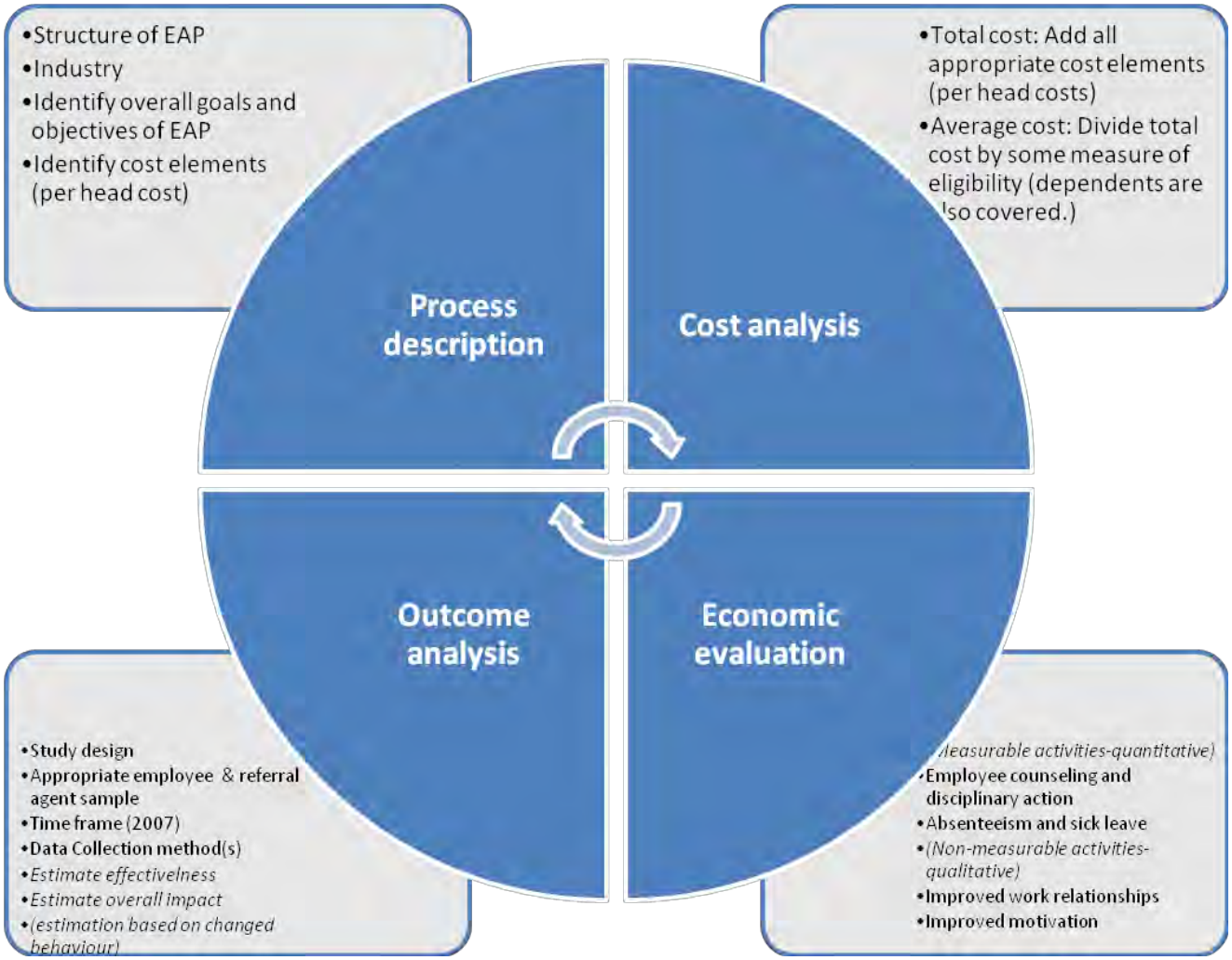
Permission received from respondents to obtain statistical data assisted in incorporating an objective view to the self-reporting data received in the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interviews with supervisors/managers involved in referring employees into the programme brought a wealth of information that could not be captured through the questionnaires. It creates a view of the perceived value-add the program has for managers and supervisors, key partners in driving the company's human capital. These interviews represent the qualitative part of the investigation.

The final step in French's study does eventually become the most important part of the study. Information received from the measuring instruments allows for us to make an economic evaluation of the behavioural changes reported in the study. Although the reported changes in respondents' personal relations are not included in the economic evaluation, they form an integral part of the cycle of change taking place within the individual. The impact on work-related activities is used to make an economic evaluation. For this purpose Cascio's measurement of human resource activities are utilised.

From the description of French and Goss, the following return on investment tool has been derived. This study will use this tool when measuring the impact of the identified intervention strategies.

2.4. Return on investment tool for this study



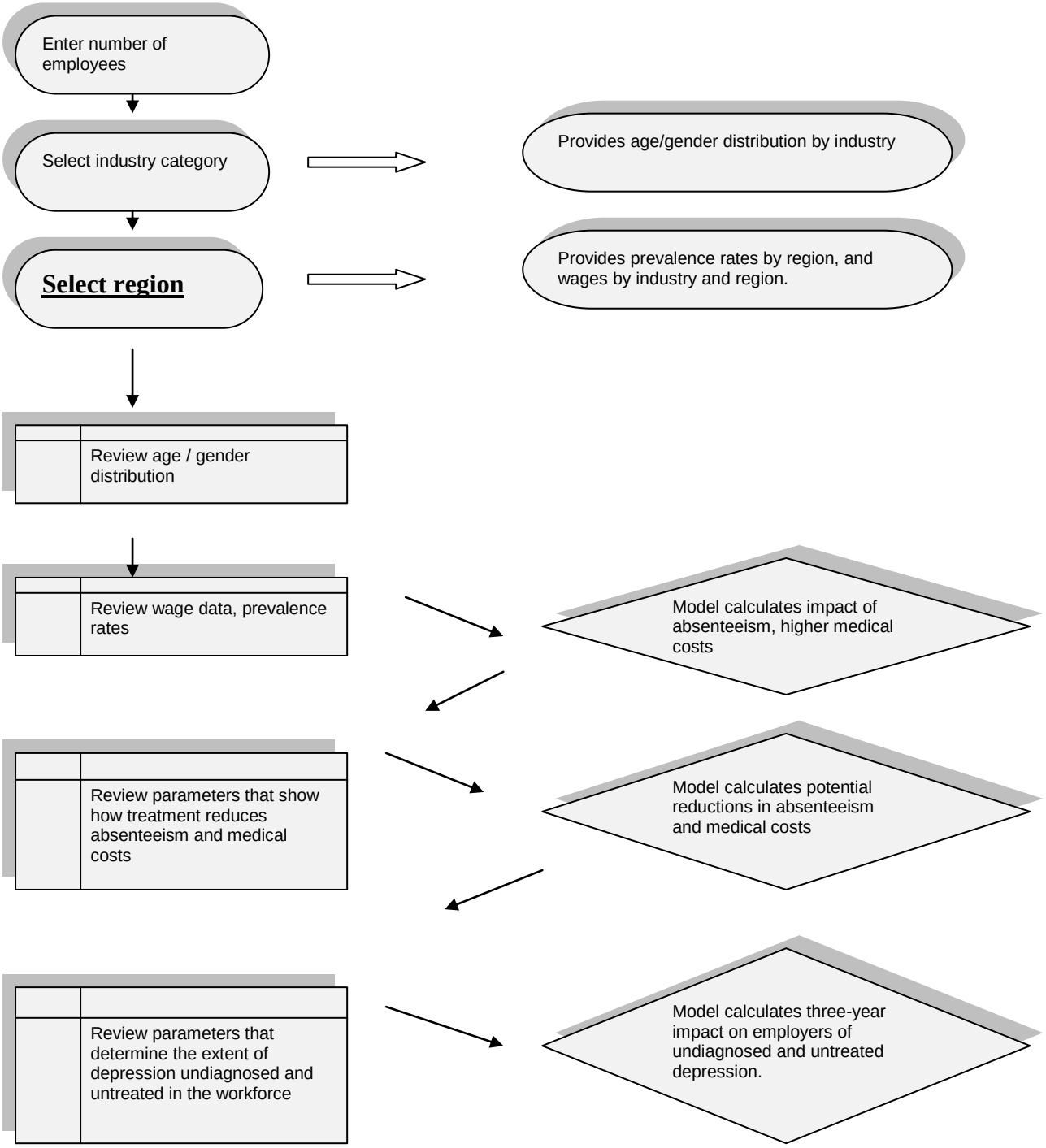
Effectiveness in the context of this study is measured through:

- Questionnaires (self-reporting of impact of problems on personal and work life). It is a measure of change in personal and work related behaviour. This represents the quantitative process.
- Statistical analysis. Information received from personnel files for changes in absenteeism trends. Also a part of the quantitative process.
- Semi-structured interviews with referral agents. (qualitative component).

(Graph 3: ROI tool for this study)

The HSM Group (2005) also developed a model for calculating the impact of depression on the workplace. This model also provides an economic evaluation of the impact of psycho-social problems on the workplace as a whole. It shows the interconnectedness of data sources housed in departments like human resources, medical, payroll and the EAP. Its' further appeal is the potential to develop it as a software program for use within a company. Although the example below focuses on the impact of depression specifically, the formula can be used to measure the impact of multiple mental health challenges on the financial bottom-line of an organisation.

The model below operates on the premise of good record-keeping and its effectiveness would thus be compromised in the event of the company not adhering to such practices.



(HSM Group Model for calculating impact of depression on the workplace)

2.5 METHOD OF MEASURING HUMAN ACTIVITIES IN THE WORKPLACE ACCORDING TO CASCIO

Wayne Cascio, more than twenty years ago expressed an interest to look at the role that the human resource field should play in determining the financial costs of human behaviour in the workplace. Cascio (1982: 1) indicates that for some time, human resource activities were measured in behavioural and statistical terms. Behavioural measures include measures of the reaction of various groups, what individuals have learned, or how their behaviour has changed on the job. Statistical measures include various ratios such as: accident frequencies, percentages like labour turnover, measures of central tendency and variability like cash register shortages. The need often exists for human resource activities to be measured in economic terms. Since the middle of the 1970's, behavioural scientists made a shift in focus, measuring employee behaviour in financial terms. Such measures require an interdisciplinary approach, collaboration between accounting and behavioural science.

The determination whether Employee Assistance Programmes are having the desired impact on workplace productivity in essence requires such a partnership between the behavioural and financial sciences. Cascio attempted to do this by developing measures by which organizational behaviour can be measured in financial terms. Following is a description of some of Casio's measurements that will be used for the purpose of this study. These are the costs of:

- Absenteeism and sick leave;
- Employee staff turn-over (in this case the intention to leave the company is explored); and
- Disciplinary action.

The rationale of including only the above measurements relates to the argument that only certain elements of human behaviour can be measured in monetary terms.

The qualitative element of the study, referring to the interviews with supervisors and middle managers, has the potential to explore the impact of the programme on employees' quality of life, employee morale and improved decision-making, elements generally regarded as being too difficult to translate into monitory terms. The qualitative component also covers the impact of lower productivity and mistakes on organisational performance. What Cascio's work is able to contribute to this study is the ability to measure the financial costs of some of an employee's behaviour in the workplace. It is cautiously used as part of this analysis, allowing the researcher to determine losses a corporate client is incurring when people's personal problems are impacting on their work. Within the following section a discussion will pursue, focusing on the economic valuation of job performance as discussed by Cascio-Ramos. The model called CREDIP is valuable as an overall estimation of job performance value within a company for certain clusters of employees. It is an intense and timely investigation and for the purpose of this study is used to highlight the principle of job performance value only.

2.5.1 **The economic value of job performance**

Measuring job performance may feel like a complex activity. The Cascio-Ramos estimate of performance works as follows:

The assumption is made that a company's compensation programme reflects current market rates for jobs and that the average economic value of each employee's labour is reflected in his/her annual wage or salary. The CREPID model breaks down each employee's job into its principal activities, assigns a proportional amount of the annual salary to each principal activity and then requires supervisors to rate each employee's job performance on each principal activity. The resulting ratings are then translated into estimates of rand value for each principal activity. The sum of the rand values assigned to each principal activity equals the economic value of each employee's job performance to the company.

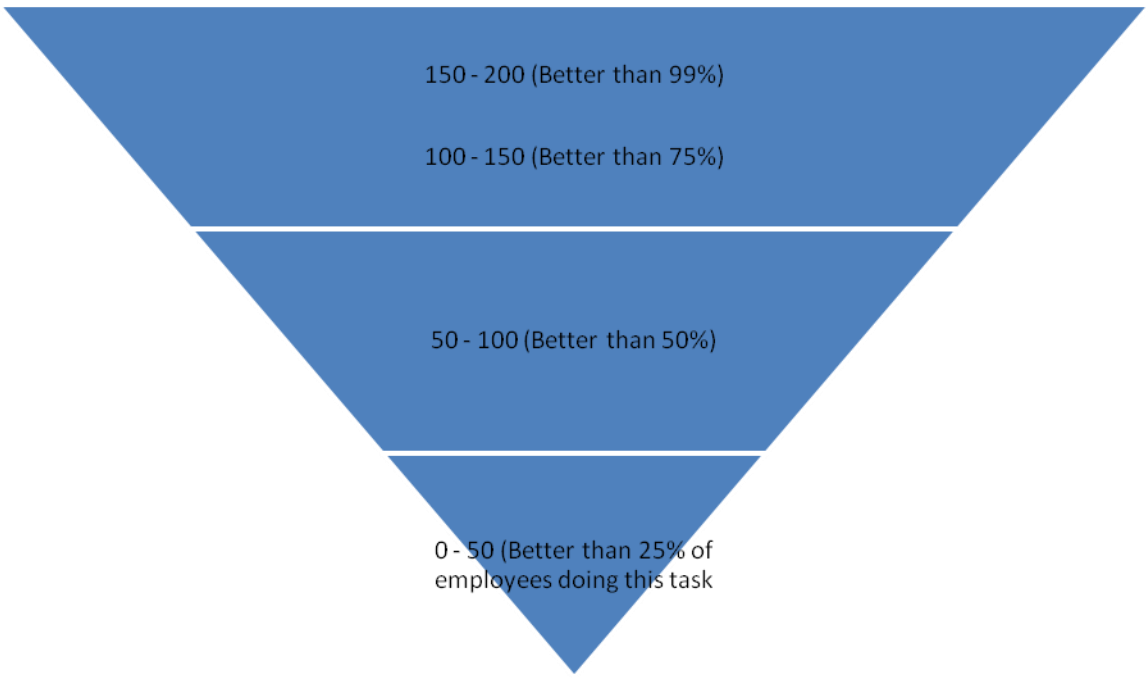
Following are the above-mentioned steps in more detail. The researcher will also use a hypothetical example of an employee to illustrate the process more clearly.

(Graph 4: Economic Value of Job Performance: Cascio 1982)

After the principle activities are rated as described above, we can now multiply the numerical rating of time/frequency, importance, consequence of error, and level of difficulty for each principal activity. The purpose of this step is to develop an overall relative weight to assign each principal activity. The ratings are multiplied together so that if a zero rating is assigned to any category, the relative weight of that principal activity is zero. This means that if an activity is never done, or it is totally unimportant, or there is absolutely no consequence of an error, or there is zero difficulty associated with its performance, then the relative weight of that activity should be zero.

The next step will now be to assign a financial value to each principal activity. This involves taking average annual rates of pay for all participants in the study and allocates it across principal activities according to the relative weights obtained in step 3 (previous step).

Performance on each principal activity on a zero to two hundred scale. When we now know what each employee does, the relative weight of each principal activity and the rand value of each principal activity, the next task are to determine how well the employee does each principal activity and can be illustrated as follows:



(Graph 4.1: Economic Value – continue)

This rating is used for each employee on a performance appraisal basis. The supervisor is then asked to, based on the principal activities of the job and relative to others doing the same activities, compare the job performance of each employee (in this case the individual entering the EAP) – using the 0-200 scale.

The next step is to multiply the point rating (expressed as a decimal number) assigned to each principal activity by the activity's rand value.

We would then compute the overall economic value of each employee's job performance by adding the results of the previous step.

The final step is to, over all the employees in the study, compute the mean and standard deviation of rand-valued job performance

2.5.2 **The cost of employee staff turnover**

People make a decision to move from one company to another as a normal part of their professional lifestyle. Not all turnovers are bad and no workplace programme is able to eliminate this tendency completely. Employee turnover, to the extent that it is concentrated on erroneous acceptance into the organization, can have a cleansing effect as it makes room for new employees whose abilities and temperaments may better fit the organization's needs. Cascio (1982:19) however indicates that very few companies are aware of the actual cost of staff turnover. He goes further indicating that unless the cost linked to this phenomenon is known, management will be unaware of the need for action to prevent controllable turnover and may not develop a basis for choosing amongst alternative programmes designed to reduce it.

Within the framework of this study, respondents' intentions of leaving the client organisation/company, as well as threats of dismissal are determined. Cascio's model below is thus described against the backdrop of 29% of respondents from company one considering leaving the company while experiencing their personal problems and 57% of respondents from company two considering leaving the company during their emotional turbulence. (see section 4.3.12 of this report).

Cascio identifies three major cost categories to be considered in staff turnover. These are:

1. *separation costs*,
2. *replacement costs* and
3. *training costs*.

The Cost of Employee Staff Turnover

Separation Cost:

Cost elements includes exit interviews, administrative functions related to termination, separation pay and unemployment tax where appropriate.

Exit interviews includes cost of the interviewers time (preparation time + interview time x by interviewer's pay rate x by number of turnovers during the period)

It also includes the cost of the terminating employee (time required for interview x the weighted average pay x the number of turnovers for the period.

Administrative function includes time required by HR department for administraive functions related to the termination x the average personnel department employee's pay rate x the number of staff turnover.

Separation pay relates to the amount of separation pay per terminated employee x by the number of turnovers during the period.

Replacement Cost

Cascio identifies six cost categories:

1.Communication of job availability (advertising and employment agency fees + time required for communication of job availability x HR employee's pay rate x number of turnover raplaced during the period)

2.Pre-employment administrative tasks (time required by HR staff for pre-employment administrative functions x by average HR employee pay rate x number of turnover replaced during period)

3.Entrance interviews (time required for interview x interviewer's pay rate x number of interviews)

4.Staff meetings (Time required for meeting x HR department employees' pay rate x number of meetings during period)

5.Post-employment acquisition and dissemination of information (Acquiring and dissemination of information x the average HR employee pay rate x the number of turnovers during period)

6. Employment medical examinations [where it is done]-In-house=examination x examinators pay + cost of supplies used x number of turnovers replaced for period.

External=cost of medical examinaiton x the number of turnovers replaced during the period

Training Cost:

Generally, all replacement staff needs to be orientated and trained to a standard level of competence before assuming their regular duties. The cost of reduced productivity of new employees while undergoing training and of experienced employees providing training should be taken in consideration. The cost of decrease in the quantity and quality of goods or services produced is very real as less experienced employees may cause an increase in operational expenses due to poor utilization of supplies and equipment. The latter however is too complex to include in the calculation of training costs.

Calculated expenses includes:

Information literature: unit cost of information package x number of replacements during the period.

Formal training programme: lenght of training programme x average pay rate of trainer(s) x number of programmes conducted + average pay rae per trainee x number of trainees during period x the proportion of training costs attributed to replacements.

Instruction by employee assignment: number of hours required for instruction x new employee's pay rate x number of instructions during the period

(Graph 5: The Cost of Employee Staff Turn-over: Cascio 1982)

The calculation of costs as described above is purely an economic exercise attempting to describe the impact of human behaviour in the workplace. When staff turnover is caused by mental health reasons rather than what can be regarded as a normal growth pattern of the professional, what is happening can be regarded as a strategic interaction between emotional well-being, its presentation in behavioural terms and financial indicators in the workplace. Cascio translates complex human behaviour into simple economic calculations and it is true that through this method he is not able to reflect on the more complex psychological processes linked to this behaviour. It is also true that not all staff turnover is necessarily due to mental health challenges being experienced by the individuals. A lot of other forces within the organization as well as in the industry as a whole usually contribute to staff turnover and any calculation of cost must be cautious of this. What Cascio's measurement for costing staff turnover offers is a formula to calculate all possible cost factors included in the process. Without a formula identifying all the activities involved in the process, workplaces tend to lose focus of the actual financial implication of turnover.

Cascio used a number of performance indicators in developing a calculus for the impact of performance challenges on the workplace. The links between absenteeism and staff turnover is very strong as the intent to leave an organisation often impacts absenteeism rates. Following are the focus of absenteeism and sick leave, probably the most tangible indicator to measure.

2.5.3 **The costs of absenteeism and sick leave**

The costs of employee absenteeism can be estimated at a macro level referring to its impact on the economy, and the micro level indicating its impact on the individual organization. Absenteeism is defined by Coppens (1997:10) and Cascio (1982:46) as the failure of workers to report for duty when they are scheduled to do so. This excludes vacation and study leave but all other absence, regardless of reason, should be included in this. Sargent (1989:24) reiterates this view indicating that if an all-embracing approach is not used, an organization runs the risk of never

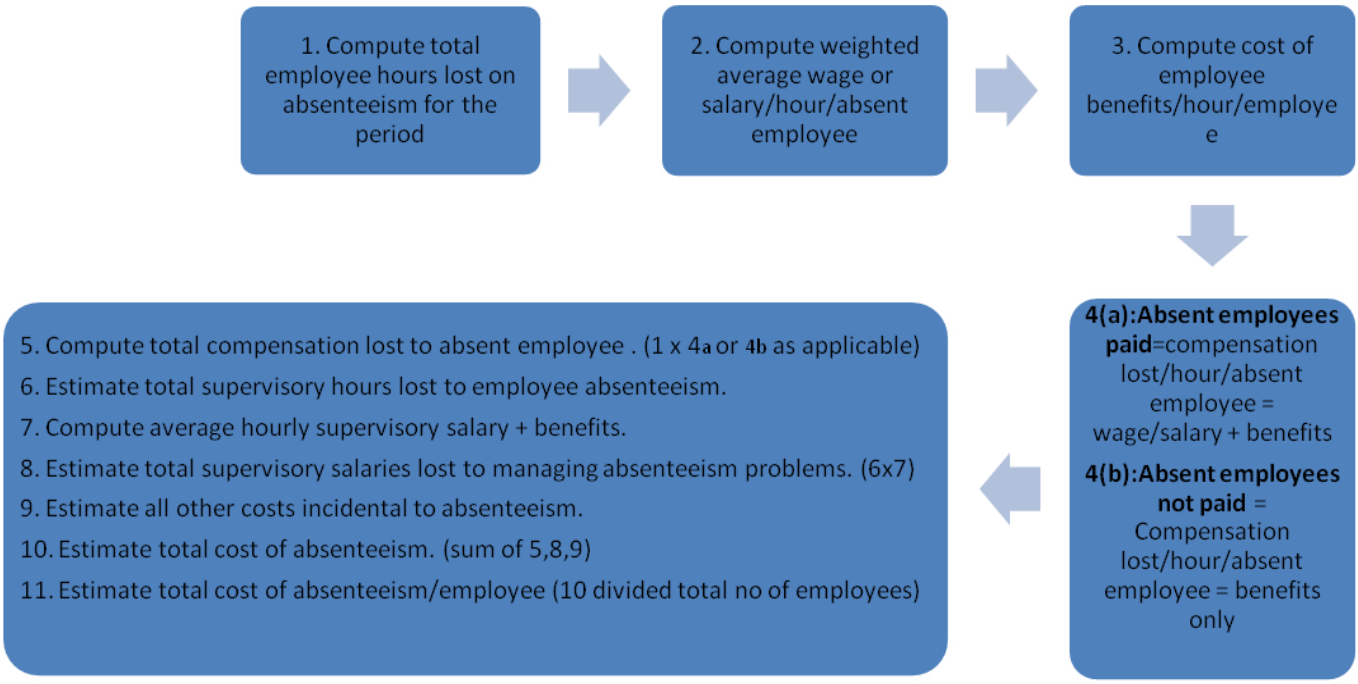
understanding the extend of the problem, in turn impacting on the management thereof. The cause of absenteeism is seldom only psycho-social and organizational elements like clearly defined objectives, strong teamwork, regular performance reviews, open communication, fair employment conditions and a strong management are motivating factors that also contribute positively towards people's attendance at work.

The Australian Faculty of Occupational Medicine (1999:40) discusses two theories of absenteeism, namely the psychological and economic theories of workplace attendance. These will be discussed briefly:

According to the psychological model employee attendance is largely a function of two variables, namely the **ability** to attend and the **motivation** to attend. Routinization, job stress, job satisfaction, work involvement, leadership and co-worker support are all regarded as workplace determinants influencing job satisfaction resulting in attendance or absence. An EAP focusing mainly on the holistic well-being of the individual must be realistic in its claim of positively impacting on employee attendance. While it is intuitively attractive to assume that those who are less satisfied with work are more likely to be absent, research has indicated a weak relationship between job satisfaction and employee absence, indicating that multiple factors exist influencing this trend.

The **economic theory** of labour absence sees the need to work competing with other alternatives as commodities within the same market. There seems to be considerable overlap between the two theories with the economic focus looking more at conditions within the workplace.

Both the economic and psychological theory implies that there are competing variables impacting on absenteeism. Employee counselling provides the opportunity to determine the reasons for absenteeism and where an underlying psycho-social problem is present, the EAP has an opportunity to impact directly on the employee's attendance. Cascio uses the following method to determine the relevant costs of absenteeism.



(Graph 6: The Cost of Absenteeism and Sick Leave: Cascio 1982)

The formula used in this discussion can be used to determine the cost of complete days lost to absenteeism as well as hours lost to on-the-job absenteeism as losses are determined according to employees' hourly rate of pay.

Coppens (1997:10) indicates that when the cost of absenteeism of employees is above 4% of the total payroll, it can be perceived as high, thus requiring some action steps. The cost to the company can be two-fold.

I. The first refer to paid time for no return in labour productivity. This can fall into the category covered by the South African Basic Conditions of Employment Act

(1983) that is 30 days of sick leave from the workplace over a three-year cycle or can be absence without permission.

II. The second cost factor is reduced productivity due to the absence of the worker. It may affect the smooth running of production through a machine if the operator is off work and there are no other skilled operators available to work the machine. The more skilled the employee, the more impact on productivity for an employee absent without prior notice. Production time is further lost in the re-allocation of staff. Replacement staff is often not so productive in the workplace as the scheduled employee with an increase in mistakes and a slower work rate.

The calculus used to measure employee absenteeism can be regarded as one of the most tangible measures when attempting to determine the impact of performance problems on the financial bottom-line of an organisation. The Australian Faculty of Occupational Medicine (1999: 18) highlights an important aspect, indicating while measuring absenteeism is easy, what to measure becomes a complicated exercise. Determining whether staff are at work or not tells us little about what may be happening and what the causes are. Benchmarking within industry categories and within organizations is an important tool for absence management. The rate, pattern and distribution of lost time from sickness absence can give an insight into the possible causes of absenteeism. It also remains essential to use the measurement in the context of all support programmes operating within an organization to avoid a misrepresentation of the value of any given programme. A further challenge in the use of this measurement will be the lack of record-keeping within the client company.

The Australian Faculty of Occupational Medicine also highlights key features that should be part of an absence measure. While Cascio's measurement allows for a financial costing of absenteeism in the workplace, these features as discussed by the foundation have the potential to look at the possible causes of absenteeism. These features are:

- Defining absence leave types;

- Defining unit of time lost – days, half days, hours;
- Defining a denominator – normal working hours, normal working days per year;
- An absence profile;
- Attaching a cost (financial and productivity);
- Able to be diagnostic; and
- Integrated with other performance measures.

2.6 CRITIQUE TO CASCIO'S MEASUREMENT AND THE RESEARCHER'S APPROACH TO IT'S USE IN THE STUDY

Masi (1994) reflects on Marcus Liebermann's response to the above and other formulas used by Cascio and concludes that although it has the potential to provide a step-by-step guide for performing a return on investment analysis, it may not be applicable to the employee assistance field. Liebermann is of the impression that Cascio uses simple calculations in the form of complicated formulas and that it can easily confuse the reader. There is value in this criticism for two reasons. These are the complexity of human interaction and secondly the complexity of the world within which EAPs operate:

Throughout this study one of the major concerns is the danger of simplifying complex human interactions to basic numerical calculations. Cascio takes complex human behaviour; identifies the external signs of it and the impact of these on the economic environment within which it operates. What makes this possible is the fact that people are compensated for their work according to current market rates and the average economic value of each employee's labour is reflected in his/her annual wage or salary. Masi like Cascio also refers to the CREDIP model that breaks down each employee's job into its principal activities and assigns a proportional amount of the annual salary to each principal activity (see section 2.5.1).

Masi (1994: 150) explains that a return on investment analysis addresses the question of whether an organization can expect a reasonable return on its investment of resources allocated to a programme. An analysis of this nature

measures the direct and indirect costs of a programme in relation to the measured change in employee behaviour and its financial impact on organisational financial resources. The researcher deals with the criticism that Cascio's measurements of employee behaviour is not taking in account the expenses incurred in running the programme by using the process as described by French. What is important within this argument is to accept that to determine the benefits of an Employee Assistance Programme, these measures cannot operate in isolation from a determination of the costs involved in running the programme. As this study looks specifically at the psychosocial counselling component of an Employee Assistance Programme and its impact on behaviour in a company, the measurement used is designed to do this. This will allow for what Goss (1997:367) describe as a humanistic and reductionist evaluation of Employee Assistance Programmes.

2.7 **CONCLUSION**

There are important learning's to be drawn from the ideas of different authors on the topic of measuring the cost of human behaviour and the possible financial benefits from programmes that is geared to address these. The first essential component can be regarded as the ability of an organisation to determine what its baseline functioning is at the implementation phase. An assessment of this nature will allow for the following:

- It will put the spotlight on the importance of effective HR documentation.
- The organisation can identify its specific performance challenges.
- It can determine the cost factors of these performance challenges.
- When entering into a relationship with a vendor company focusing on addressing the well-being of its human resources, they would be able to specify the areas of improvement the programme should address.

A comprehensive return on investment study within an EAP environment will thus entail the following:

- There should be an agreement between the client organisation and the vendor company what the performance indicators are that needs to be addressed through the programme.
- The assessment forms used when people enter the programme should include a comprehensive area exploring the impact of the employees' personal problems on his/her work performance. This not only refers to the identification of performance challenges, but also to reporting on prevalence (how often it occurs). To apply this effectively within a cost benefit exercise cost elements like separation costs, replacement costs, training costs, the economic value of job activities, the occurrence of absenteeism and the pattern thereof for the individual as well as for the organisation, should be well-documented.
- All HR practitioners and line managers should thus be trained and motivated to maintain a good documentation system reflecting the performance patterns of each employee.
- EAP clinical consultants (usually with a social work and psychology background), involved in initial assessment of people entering the programme should be trained to explore the prevalence of performance challenges and document them correctly. If the clinical consultant rendering the intervention is different from the one doing the initial assessment, as is often the case in vendor companies making use of a call centre for access purposes, they should also be trained to screen extensively for the impact of personal problems on work performance. This screening should be repeated when terminating services to determine changes that occurred as a result of the intervention. To limit the challenges of bias, this follow-up assessment should also include a screening for other interventions/influences that took place during the time that could have an impact on performance indicators.
- If consistency of change is to be measured, the clinical consultant (affiliate) should also inform the client that a follow-up telephonic consultation will take place within "three" months (an agreed upon time period). The software used to capture clinical interactions must be able to report on the prevalence of

and changes within performance indicators, allowing both the service provider and the client company to monitor the impact of the service on ROI.

For the above process to successfully take place, a few key issues need to take place.

- When a new EAP contract is entered into, a baseline assessment of the occurrence of performance challenges should take place. A company must be clear about what the performance challenges are that they would like the EAP to address.

- Client companies must have a system of documentation where performance challenges per individual employee are captured.

- Line managers and HR practitioners referring employees into the programme, must be able to provide comprehensive information about the prevalence of performance challenges at the time of referral.

- All clinical consultants accepting referrals into the programme and involved in on-line assessment must be trained to explore the prevalence of performance challenges both with referral agents and clients and document this comprehensively.

- All clinical software must have a balance in its capturing and reporting on both clinical and performance issues. The latter should ideally be captured in numerical prevalence format.

- A follow-up consultation to monitor the sustainability of change should also be build into the programme.

The above refers to a need for a paradigm shift for all parties involved in the establishment and maintenance of an EAP. If a client company is interested in

measuring the impact of the programme on its bottom line, the ability to measure must be build into all aspects of the programme from inception. If this is not done, cost-benefit studies (ROI studies) will continue to be a lengthy exercise, mostly conducted for academic purposes with minimal impact on the world of business if an integrative approach, where the ability to measure, is absent.

The following chapter will address the essential components of an EAP. The focus of the study will then is narrowed down to the counselling component and as in the case of Goss, embark on both a quantitative and qualitative investigation of the impact of this component of the programme.

CHAPTER THREE

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THE EAP

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3.1 INTRODUCTION:

An EAP seldom consists of singular activities functioning in isolation and for this reason it is not possible to claim the success of a programme on these individual units. This study identifies the outcome of the counselling component as the part of the programme the researcher will explore, but the different components involved in the operation of the programme are interchangeable and will be discussed in this chapter. Csiernick (2003:15) is of the impression that policies forms the foundation of Employee Assistance Programs but that not enough literature exist on the topic. It ensures “best practice”, those actions that ensures the service delivery to the target population is of a good quality. These include the principles, guidelines, resources, research, the actual programs and the policies that guide the programs. In another publication by Csiernick (2003:33 – 43) while reviewing Canadian EAP policies, the author applies a policy critique guideline assessing existing EAP policies based on five criteria. These are; statement of principles, procedures, program development, roles and overall policy presentation. The findings of the review highlighted the following:

- Larger, more unionised organizations with more established EAP’s with a stronger union-management agreement are more likely to have formal policies in place.
- The above also correlate with more program features available and more uncapped clinical services.
- The presence of exclusively external providers also seems to correlate with less likely-hood of a strong policy presence.

Further conclusions from this study indicate that more comprehensive policy designs correlates with a more comprehensive program with a wider variety of

access options, more ownership of the program and higher utilization. Best practice guidelines also contribute to the evaluability of the program.

The discussion in this chapter (3) will be broader and refer to the different components that should be part of an EAP offering and will be guided by what is today known as the core technology of EAPs as well as the standards set for a good EAP. (EAPA-SA Standards Document 2005, Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa 1999, UK EAPA Standards and Professional Guidelines 1998, US EAPA Standards and Professional Guidelines 1992).

The stake holding relationship within a client organisation is a complex one. Stakeholders should include the company executives/board of directors, the employee benefits manager, labour union, divisional/line managers, human resource department, occupational health and safety department and the employees in general. The organisation determines what the programme should offer them depending on the structure and needs of the employee population. The different stake-holders would be interested in how their specific needs and concerns may be met through the program they have adopted. After adopting a particular programme, be that based on an in-house model or an external model, the programme needs to be clearly developed and positioned within the organisation. If this process is not well managed, the future success of the programme can be hugely compromised. Providing a counselling service within an organization does not equate an EAP and the standards designed by different EAPA bodies illustrate the essential elements involved in a comprehensive program. Numerous EAP's have failed to proof its worth in the corporate environment due to it being positioned as a "soft" service offered from an office somewhere in the medical clinic of the organization. If the programme is recognised by top management as part of corporate wellness and acknowledged as having the ability to impact on the company's bottom line, its scope within the company is greatly enhanced. The US EAPA Standards and Professional Guidelines (1992) indicate that working relationships with a variety of strategic departments and committees in the organisation can facilitate the recognition of the program at senior management and executive level.

This chapter will not cover a detailed discussion of all the standards, but will highlight those activities most appropriate to the study. The visual illustration of the standards below reflects a comprehensive programme with elements designed to infiltrate all spheres of the organization. The standards as designed by EAPA bodies internationally and highlighted below demonstrate the existence of the following elements within the design of a good EAP:

- Business appropriateness;
- Professionalism;
- Academic credentials;
- Structured process;
- Ability to address the needs of different stakeholders;
- An intervention based on a thorough needs assessment with measures put in place to evaluate success on different levels at different time frames; and
- A high-level reporting structure.

While baseline needs assessments are referred to in the standards documents of all three countries referred to in this chapter, the questions do exist as to what level this is implemented in practice. Within both the companies used for this study, these baseline assessments were absent.

(Graph 7: EAPA Standards of Employee Assistance Programmes)

3.2 DESIGN AND POSITIONING

Each Employee Assistance Programme consists of a duel-client relationship where the needs of the client company are always present while serving the individual accessing the service. No programme can be successful if it is not endorsed by the management structure of a company and the latter can only take place if:

- The **design** is perceived as meeting the needs of the company.
- The programme is **positioned** strategically as having the ability to benefit the bottom-line.

The EAPA South African Chapter (2005) as well as the EAPA UK (1998) and EAPA USA Standards Documents (1992) refers to the first **standard** of an EAP as the design of the programme.

The Standards and Professional Guidelines documents from the three countries indicated above refers to the **establishment of an Advisory Committee** at the highest possible level involving all subdivisions of the workforce. The functions of this committee should include the formulation of policy, advice on the implementation, assistance in marketing of the programme and contribution to the evaluation of the programme.

With involvement of representatives of all segments of the organisation, the optimal functioning of the programme is ensured. Megranahan (1995:55) looks at the drivers of EAP objectives as a group of internal staff members representing different sections having an interest in the effective operation of the programme. In this context the objectives are determined in the pre-implementation phase and it will determine who the provider will be and what will be the nature of the EAP service.

The EAPA UK Standards and Professional Guidelines Document (1998) refer to the **needs assessment** as the first component under Programme Design. This document, as well as its South African and American counterparts, is of the opinion

that any program design should be based on an assessment of organisational and employee needs. This assessment should include an organisational profile and needs, employees' needs, supervisory and union's needs as well as health care profiles and needs. This component of the standards document is especially significant as it sets the path for a baseline assessment to be conducted at the onset of programme implementation. If this component takes place, the ability to evaluate the success of the programme is greatly enhanced.

The above assessment also assists in determining the next standard, **the selection of an appropriate service delivery model.** This model can typically be an in-house model, outsourced model or combination of these. It is important that the model chosen is appropriate to the needs of the organisation and reflects detailed operational procedures.

The operational procedure also guides the **pricing model** to be followed. The EAPA-SA Standards Document (2005) refers to this component as a negotiation between the service provider and the employer with the goal of ensuring that financial resources are applied in the best possible manner. It is also a process of justifying the balance between expenditure and benefits. The pricing model for an internal programme would differ fundamentally from that of an external programme. In the case of an internal programme the financial resources should allow for the availability of appropriate levels and numbers of staff to serve the employee population. The EAPA USA Standards Document (1992) provides an outline of staffing levels per number of employees. Where an external programme is in operation, the pricing model can vary. Cost elements include access to the service, case management, consultation services and corporate reporting, training of significant role players and eligibility, Some components of the service can be provided on a fee for service basis while others can be delivered via a per capita fee structure.

3.3 **IMPLEMENTATION**

Programme implementation plays a significant role providing structure to the operation of a successful programme.

The second main group of standards as highlighted in the EAPA-SA Standards document (2005) refers to the implementation phase, designing a policy that shall describe the EAP in its totality. Klarreich, Francek and Moore (1985:34-51) looks at the importance of detailed, documented policies and procedures as components that serves as a road map of the realistic expectations of the programme, providing clarity to all role-players of what to expect from the programme. The EAPA UK Standards Document (1998) also indicate that a policy statement ensure consistency in the message about the service going forward When a workplace make use of an external service provider the Corporate Well-being Consultant or Account Manager is tasked to assist the workplace putting in place the policy and procedures needed to guide the programme.

Klarreich discusses the programme objectives that should reflect within the programme philosophy, and policy statement. The Statement of programme philosophy is normally the shortest text within the policy document, but is of utmost importance as it sets out the overall operating premise of the programme and also attempts to integrate the disparate notion of corporate self interest and humanitarian ideals. It allows for a healthy interplay between the employee as an individual and as part of an organizational unit**.** Typical clauses in this section as well as in the policy statement may include:

- *An acknowledgement that every employee faces problems in their personal lives and often do not know where to turn.*
- *Stating the programme's ability to deal with a wide range of human problems, which include health, marriage, family difficulties, financial or work related problems, and emotional distress, or problems caused by alcohol or drug abuse.*
- *Confidentiality is promised and services are offered as a helping hand, not as an attempt to pry or punish.*

- *The main reason for the programme is to help employees and their families enrich the quality of their lives, whether or not they are experiencing job-related problems. It is recognised, however, that in time, a secondary benefit related to the general level of job performance may accrue to the company.*

This section not only sets the tone for the rest of the document but also presents a macro purpose statement against which all other statements that follow can be tested for consistency. What is interesting to note in the philosophy above is that improved job performance as a benefit to the company is regarded as a secondary focus. This can be seen as both a positive or negative aspect. From a positive view, it highlights the interest of the employee as the most important in the offering of the programme and thus serves as a motivator for them to use it. From a negative view, it posed the question whether this contributes to workplaces not insisting on scientific proof of returns on their investment, thus not building in a baseline assessment at the onset of programme implementation. Megranahan (1995:54) indicates that an EAP is designed to benefit every area within an organization where employee performance plays a part. The structure and delivery of services is guided by what is called the “core technology” of the programme. It is a service set out to benefit multiple groups, namely the employee and his/her family, the supervisor/manager, the union, the occupational health department, Human Resources and eventually the organisation as a whole. The policy statement naturally flows from the philosophy section and clarify the overall intentions of the programme. It also addresses issues of eligibility, ways of accessing the service, different types of referral and the conditions under which management can mandate a referral to the programme.

The **policy statement** also discusses the role of the internal committee in policy maintenance, planning and evaluation of the programme as well as the role and relationship of the external representative with the internal committee should also be clarified.

The professional credentialing of the professionals contracted to deliver the service on the project as well as the boundaries of their relationship with the company,

employee representative groups and the employee also needs clarification in this document.

It is important to illustrate that the accountability line allows for some degree of safe distance between the company and the professional in the operation of the programme. It is thus important that management's support for the programme is illustrated but at the same times their acknowledgement for the confidential use of the programme be demonstrated. Confidentiality is probably one of the most delicate components of the programme. PPC International in their Clinical Volume Part 1 (2004) indicates that respect for client confidentiality is the cornerstone of an Employee Assistance Programme. Respect for an individual's right to privacy must infuse every interaction and clients should have the confidence that their privacy is protected. The following two statements by managers interviewed for this research report illustrate this concern and how it can affect the referral process:

- *The employee may feel it is a disgrace to be send to the EAP and we have to convince him it is not an ugly place and privacy and confidentiality is protected. He is worried that other workers may find out.*
- *Confidentiality is important for group leaders as employees do not want their personal life to be exposed.*

More specific objectives of the programme also includes the delivery of training and orientation sessions to all company employees, as well as the development of a public relations package which will describe the programme to employees and assist them to use it appropriately. Without the necessary training and orientation, both employees and line managers might struggle to use the resources available to them constructively when faced with organisational challenges. The following comment made by a manager interviewed for this research project illustrates this sense of helplessness:

- *Training would have helped and is critical. I have supervisors reporting to me who are also not sure how the programme works. I sit in hearings and sometimes also chair hearings. It is strange how people get referred, a recent guy was referred and*

never attended and committed an offense again. If supervisors are trained a bit more it could prevent such things from happening again.

The objectives discussed above also refer to operational as well as consultative functions. These objectives can even be made more specific by including implementation dates, numbers of employees to be trained and dates of completion. This makes it easier to evaluate the extent to which they were achieved. The reporting function within the programme and its ability to contribute to company profiling and organisational risk assessment should also be specified in this section. As this is a document with a longer view in mind, it may be wise to state the objectives in a general manner and leave more specific time limits for another document.

Objectives as described above reflect a strong external driver, meaning that the vendor company plays a significant role with the client organisation determining certain actions of the programme. Megranahan (1995:55) looks at the drivers of EAP objectives as a group of internal staff members representing different sections having an interest in the effective operation of the programme. In this context, the objectives are determined in the pre-implementation phase and it will determine who the provider will be and what will be the nature of the EAP service. When objectives are set at this level, it motivates clear baseline assessment processes to take place. For example, if the reduction of stress is identified as an objective, it first need to be clearly understood and defined both in general terms as well as how it presents itself within the organisation. The beneficiaries of the programme and how they interact with each other and the programme, is also identified at this level. If these objectives are agreed for the EAP, then the ways in which services, and particularly counselling from an EAP, can contribute towards this objective, need to be explored and explained.

3.4 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The EAPA-SA Standards Document (2005) highlights other important components that should be present for effective programme management and administration. These are:

- Staffing;
- EAP consultation and case management;
- Professional liability insurance;
- Confidentiality;
- Record keeping; and
- Ethics.

Staffing refers to the need for an appropriate number and suitably qualified EAP professionals to be available to achieve the stated goals and objectives of the programme. Appropriateness in this context also refers to professionals matching the needs of the programme. The geographical location of the workforce, ethnic and cultural mix of the employee population and the job descriptions of each EAP staff member are important guidelines determining the ideal staffing level of an EAP.

EAP consultation and case management refers to the need for all EAP professionals providing services to be subjected to ongoing consultation and/or case management. Because EAP professionals have a potentially profound effect on their clients, consultation and case management provides an assurance of quality services. It furthermore prevents isolation and professional burnout.

Professional liability is an important tool in protecting both the EAP professional and the customer. It is expected that all EAP professionals have adequate professional liability insurance, taking the necessary precautions to deal with legal challenges related to the delivery of services.

Record keeping/ data management: All EAP programmes require some form of data collection and this may vary from very sophisticated software programmes to

very basic data collection methods. It is wise to address the statistical information system in the policy document as this allow time to reflect on issues such as what type of data needs to be captured and what it will be used for, focus on confidentiality issues and how information will contribute to reporting and evaluation capabilities. The EAPA USA Standards Document (1992) provides a clear guideline of the type of information to be captured that will guide different forms of evaluation processes. Large Employee wellbeing vendors utilise software systems that has reporting capabilities for all components of the programme. Client organisations usually require regular reports (often quarterly) on programme activities. Wentzel (1996:34) indicates that the software used by an EAP needs to be an integrative programme. It should provide the consultant taking the initial calls and scheduling appointments with all relevant account information and benefits available, determine any previous contacts, assist in identifying the best assessment professional and assist in scheduling appointments. It is an added advantage if the provider network is enabled with the same software system where intervention data can be entered. The use of client specified numbers allows for the tracking of all interventions per client over a period of time and can be an advantage to the clinical intervention and the quality management of these interventions.

Wentzel (1996:33) further indicates that this system should be able to generate reports in a short space of time. Reports are generally drawn in a manner that respect individual confidentiality but allows for reporting on important trends per client organization. The data capturing capability of the software system can contribute to or limit the type of programme evaluation that can take place. This data collection process is an essential tool in determining the value of the programme to a company. Quarterly reports provide the client company with valuable information regarding trends in the work force as well as the utilization of the programme. It also assists with a database that can be used in programme evaluation, as is the case in this research project. The EAPA Standards documents referred to in this chapter highlights the importance of **confidential record keeping** and for that reason software is usually developed with different access levels for staff members, thus limiting access to clinical data.

3.5 DIRECT SERVICES

3.5.1 Access

For each individual wanting to use the service, there needs to be easy access to the service. For this reason, vendor companies over the years developed call centres allowing for national access to the service. Smaller regional offices and on-site clinics are also used for client organisations preferring a walk-in facility. While call centre staff generally need to have a good knowledge of the product/service their company is offering, call centre staff within an EAP also needs to have good clinical skills. They must have the ability to make a clinical assessment, screen for potential risk and guide employees using the service to make the right decision about how to solve their problems. Call Centres can potentially provide a 24-hour access point while regional offices and on-site facilities provide a more personalised and geographically convenient point of access.

3.5.2 Intervention Mix

EAP's moved away from the historical focus on substance abuse only and for this reason EAP practitioners must be able to address a wide range of psycho-social challenges. In 1982, three prominent figures in the field of EAP, McClellan, Corneil and Watkins discussed the need for degree professionals in the field of EAP (Haaz, et.al. 2003:15). With the move to a more broad brush approach, the need for appropriately qualified individuals being able to deal with a variety of personal challenges became significantly important. This can be seen as an important step in the professionalization of the service field. EAP professionals are required to maintain their registration with their respective statutory and professional councils and should adhere to the codes of practice of these bodies. Through this the adherence to professional behaviour is ensured.

While the majority of challenges being addressed in a programme are of a psycho-social nature, EAP's for long also recognised the need for **financial** and **legal**

services. Contemporary EAP's are becoming part of more comprehensive program offerings focusing on health and lifestyle issues. While no programme can be everything to everybody, the offering of these components allows for a fairly comprehensive service.

The EAPA SA Standards Document (2005) reflects on aspects of the **intervention mix** in the psycho-social component further by identifying specific clinical services as offered within the program. These are:

- ***Trauma debriefing:*** The EAP should offer trauma diffusion and trauma debriefing services for employees, family members and the organization in extreme situations and through this illustrate its ability to respond to distressing situations in a timely, consistent fashion. Alexander in Csiernick (2005:145) indicate that people seek support from their EAP when they feel they do not have the capacity to resolve their problems through their usual coping strategies. High impact traumatic events may incapacitate a person to resort to their usual coping strategies and as a result the availability of objective, professional service are essential in this context.

- ***Assessment and referral:*** Companies generally decide to buy a full service offering a maximum number of therapy sessions or an assess and refer model offering the following:
    - An assessment to identify employee and/or family member problems.
    - Develop a plan of action.
    - Recommend or refer the individual(s) to an appropriate resource of intervention.

The nature of a person's presenting problems may also determine a need for longer-term intervention, generally not offered through the EAP. In these instances an assess-and-refer strategy will also be used to ensure that individual(s) are directed to the most appropriate services.

- The motivation for ***short-term intervention*** is the fact that the

workplace offers the ideal opportunity for time-limited intervention. Large numbers of clients can be assisted if the EAP confines itself to short-term intervention and it is cost-effective. The latter part of this chapter will deal with short-term intervention in more detail. Crisis intervention refers to the ability of an EAP to be responsive to people's needs in crisis situations. Red Flag management, both clinical and organisational also falls in this category and all EAP's should have policies and procedures in place guiding the management of these situations.

- Roman and Blum (1988:23) refer to ***management consultation*** as one of the key technologies of an EAP. It refers to the consultations with, training of, and assistance to work organization leadership (managers, supervisors and unions) seeking to manage the troubled employee, enhance the work environment and improve employee job performance. Monitoring the progress of employees being referred into the programme and providing feedback to referring managers is also a key element of assisting employees to regain their optimal level of functioning. Sonnenstuhl and Trice (1995:14) also reflects on the core technology looking at the role of management and shop steward training and consultation in helping troubled employees. The identification of employees' personal problems is based on job performance, which is contrary to the usual approach if identifying personal problems though more general symptoms. EAP's use the job performance standard for two reasons. Firstly, because industrial relations indicate that management cannot intervene in employee's personal lives unless performance is affected. Secondly, there remains disagreement over the meaning of early versus late symptoms of pathology. By training supervisors and union representatives to pay attention to performance issues, EAP's adhere to standards of industrial justice and introduce an objective criterion for deciding when something becomes a problem.

The following abstracts from interviews with referral agents in this study reflect on their ability to identify troubled employees within the different work contexts and different symptomatology:

- *If I find that a person keeps missing a defect, we record it and have a discussion with the person and show them where they went wrong.*
- *If I pick up someone has a trend to absenteeism.*
- *Quality of work deteriorated. You pick up a lack of focus through a superficial response and bad grammar.*

Through expert consultation and advice to supervisors, managers and union representatives on how to follow the programme policies and procedures, the EAP specialist assists in deciding whether a given case is appropriate for referral to the programme's counselling component or might be better managed by other means, such as retraining or reassigning to different jobs.

EAP specialists are expected to advice and discuss with the above organizational role players the strategy and appropriate use of constructive confrontation throughout the entire process of referral and return to work. This research project illustrated the significant value of these role-players in the process. Information gathered through the interviews conducted with referral agents highlighted the industrial risks of lower performance, the impact on team morale and through their own observations, the significant change in most individuals who addressed their personal problems through the program.

The following abstracts from interviews with referral agents serves as eye-openers as to the significance of industrial risks caused by potential lower performance:

- *We have a TATT time. Within each process the line moves within 99 seconds and if you delay and you stop a line for about five minutes, 99 seconds is like a minute and a half, so you lose four vehicles in about five minutes. This is quite a severe impact.*
- *Mistakes on life cover pay-outs that can result in millions of rands of losses. Placing a client in the incorrect portfolio may also mean that a person loses*

money and the company becomes liable to pay the person back. That can range between R1000 and R100 000.

3.6 NETWORKING:

The linkages highlighted as most appropriate to enhance the service delivery process are as follows:

- *Internal: referring to the program's positioning at organizational level where it can gain the appropriate Executive and Senior Management endorsement.*
- *External Community Resources: through the identification of appropriately priced and effective health care services and resources for referral purposes.*
- *Professional Organisations: the need for EAP professionals to maintain and upgrade their knowledge through the necessary training and development activities as well as networks.*
- *External Agencies: to be aware of agencies and legislation that impact on EAP and organisational activities.*

3.7 EVALUATION OF SERVICES:

EAP professionals should be able to evaluate the appropriateness, cost effectiveness and efficiency of EAP operational activities. Measurable objectives allow the organization to judge the programme's progress and usefulness, and to identify the need for programme modification.

Satisfaction is generally determined by an individual's experience of his/her problems being addressed and being part of a broader client organization, these individuals often verbalise their experience of the programme in the workplace, playing a significant role in shaping the perception of the programme being helpful or not. The feedback received from referral agents interviewed for this research has been generally positive and has been an illustration that their unique positioning

in the program utilisation allows for an objective insider view. The following two abstracts are just some of the views shared by referral agents interviewed for the project:

- *She can still become emotional but she deal with things better, it is as if she has a stronger cry.*
- *You notice a big change, the person will socialize again and will not indulge in the wrong things.*

To be able to ensure a service that is applicable to the needs of the employees, the client organisation plays a significant role in designing the programme. A written evaluation plan, directly related to the programme, should be included in the programme design. Evaluation should take place with regular intervals to determine whether goals and objectives are being met. Both qualitative and quantitative data should be used and there should be a feedback mechanism build into the design of the programme.

3.8 SHORT TERM PSYCHOTHERAPY AS A CLINICAL APPROACH IN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

Short-term intervention, a service offered with a predetermined maximum sessions is regarded as one of the most appropriate forms of intervention that can be offered within the workplace. This may sometimes be coupled with a referral to appropriate resources in the community but is often also sufficient on its own. Short-term intervention is the strategy adopted for exploration in this study and will thus be discussed more thoroughly.

Short-term counselling or intervention is the therapeutic method generally utilised in Employee Assistance Programmes. EAP vendors sell their product offering a specified number of sessions with a psychotherapist per intervention for employees. Short-term therapeutic interventions are often criticized for not allowing patients to metabolise change in order for it to stick, (McCullough-Valiant, 1994:2). This can pose a challenge for EAP's claiming to bring about behavioural change through brief

intervention. It also poses a challenge for return-on-investment studies of this nature as the relevance of change lies not only in the fact that it occurs, but also in the notion that it is sustained over a period of time. Within this section the researcher will explore the elements of short-term counselling/therapy and discuss its use in the EAP environment in the context of it being able to contribute to long-term positive behavioural change.

McCullough-Valiant (1994:1) indicates that short-term therapeutic intervention is often linked to managed care that economically restricts the number of sessions. Within the EAP environment this is probably true. Time-limited counselling has been extensively used in occupational settings, (Rogers, McLeod and Slobata (1995:222). There is an economic motivation for this. Organisations may be willing to provide opportunities for counselling because it is believed that costs involved in counselling will be offset by lower sickness rates and higher employee motivation and productivity. However, they may be unwilling to face an open-ended commitment to unlimited therapy.

Short-term counselling is however not only a decision based on limitations in the financial commitment of employers. Even outside the Employee wellbeing field, the exploration of brief counselling as an intervention strategy is increasingly becoming a methodology to explore. Contemporary medical aids limit the amount of benefits allowed for therapeutic services. Very often, people are unwilling to stretch already thinly spread budgets to address emotional well-being over a period of time. It thus becomes increasingly important for private practitioners to plan for their intervention strategies to have maximum impact over a shorter period of time. The ability to do this would also improve the perception of therapeutic excellence of a therapist.

If financial consideration is the only or even the strongest motivator, short-term intervention is in essence toppled in a credibility crisis. Short- term therapeutic intervention is however much more than a compromise for what is known as the traditional longer-term intervention strategies. It is a discipline that can proudly claim its own space within the field of emotional wellbeing. The graph below covers the important principles of this approach including a set of guidelines (referred to as the

doctrine of brief treatment by Corwin 2002) and also focuses on the role of the therapist.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF BRIEF THERAPY:

Short-term therapeutic intervention seeks deep and long-lasting change, just like long-term therapy, but in a more active, involved and time-efficient way. Peake (1997:218) indicates that as early as 1946 it was argued for therapists to take a more active role in therapy rather than operating as a blank screen. McCullough-Vaillant (1994:2) goes further saying that often therapists use time inefficiently and wasteful. Vague goals lead to vague therapy. Rogers *et al.*(1995:226) also makes the claim that therapeutic change appears to follow a law of diminishing returns, with the greatest gains observed in the first eight sessions, and lesser change thereafter. The basic principles can thus be highlighted as follows:

- *An actively involved therapist.*
- *Motivation of active participation of the client through homework assignments and feedback.*
- *Sharply focused goal attainment strategies.*

THE DOCTRINE OF BRIEF THERAPY (CORWIN 2002:15)

1. Clients can benefit from therapy focused on current stresses and on narrowly defined problems in functioning.

2. Goal specification and goal orientation are essential. Goals should be well constructed, narrow down the focus and clearly elucidate the scope of the treatment. Goals should be achievable and relevant to the present stresses

3. Active participation from clients are encouraged with systems that promote regular client feedback and intersession tasks. Brief treatment is predicted upon the assumption that change is inevitable, that it takes place largely outside of therapy and that clients have strenghts that can be drawn on to facilitate the change process. the therapist fullfill the role of catalyst rather than a curative one and the focus shift from uncovering pathology to increasing clients' own solutions, ideas and successes.

ROLE OF THERAPIST IN BRIEF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION:

The role of the therapist in short-term intervention is an active one. Freeman in McCullough-Vaillant (1994:2) indicates that to make brief therapy work, a shift in mindset is needed away from cures to coping skills. What needs to be focused on is the skills deficit in clients. The goal is not to cure them of all their problems, but to help them gain skills so that they can help themselves. Malan in Peake (1997:219) provides guidelines for the brief therapeutic process. This indicates a deliberate assessment and careful patient selection before therapy, often done by an intake counselor, development of a fixed contract with the patient specifying the length of treatment and finally making explicit the specific role expectations in the therapy. Stalikas & De Stefano (1997:5) refers to the stages of brief therapy as follows:

1. Provision of efficient information

2. Insight development

3. Moving towards strong feelings in personal life situations

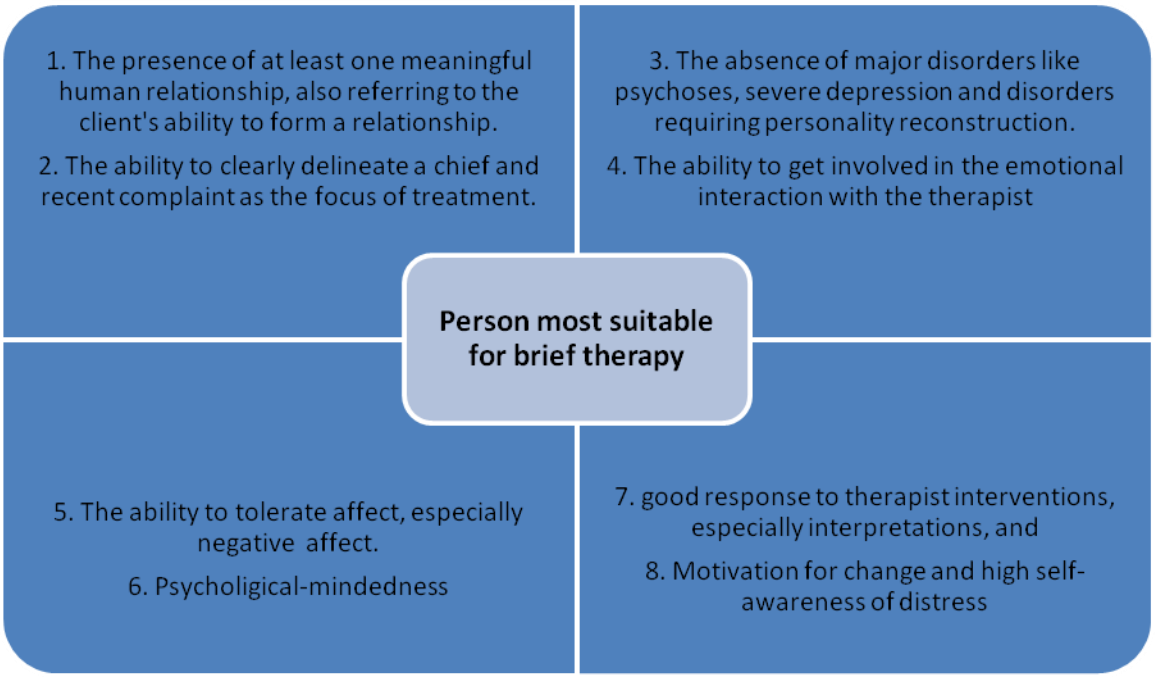
4. Towards the end visibility of discrete change, undertaking new ways of being outside of therapy, changes in target behaviours and a general state of well-being

(Graph 8: Brief Therapeutic Intervention in Context)

It should be accepted that not all people or type of problems will be appropriately treated within a time-limited therapeutic approach. McCullough-Vaillant (1994:3) uses the DSM-IV's Global Assessment of Functioning Scale, generally known as GAF as a rule of thumb to determine whether a client will make a good candidate for short-term therapy. If people have a moderate level of symptoms, or moderate impairment in functioning, meaning they can still work and they have some friends and some relationships, they can be considered for a short-term approach. If they have severe impairment that affects their functioning, they can't go to work or they have no friends, rapid treatment will not be effective. In the context of Employee Assistance Programmes people falling in the latter category will be referred for longer-term intervention. Peake (1997:3) refers to the exclusion of clients with character disorders and major psychiatric conditions as they cannot manage the insights they will be confronted with in short-term therapy. Many traditional brief therapies have however been criticised for their narrow selection criteria and exclusion of the more severe psychiatric patients. Peake thus explored the work of Horowits and co-workers at the Langley-Porter Institute at the University of California who designed a significantly broader approach to brief therapy to include the treatment of a variety of personality disorders.

Horowits's approach was orientated towards treating stress response syndromes or reactions to distressing recent life events. While the focus is on these recent life events, the approach was designed in a sufficiently broad manner to allow for consideration of the patient's personality characteristics and how coping resources or absence thereof affect their current life stressors thus allowing for the treatment of personality-disordered individuals who may seek treatment when feeling sufficiently distressed.

Stalikas and De Stefano (1997:3), Peake (1997:219) and Rogers et.al. (1995:222) profiled the person most suitable for short-term intervention and these characteristics are described in the matrix below.



(Graph 9: Profiling the Person most suitable for Brief Therapeutic Intervention)

3.9 CONCLUSION

Different Employee Assistance Programmes may differ in the components involved in the programme as a whole, the services offered as well as its clinical approach. What however remains fairly similar of most programmes is that the relationship involves:

- programme development;
- consultation on different levels;
- access;
- appropriate service provision within a relatively brief period;
- data capturing; and
- an ability to report on and evaluate these different components of the programme.

The effective functioning of all these components contributes to programme excellence. Any good work-based programme should have a long-term evaluation plan build into its structure to ensure it remains appropriate to the needs of the

organisation. It is possible to evaluate all these components within the life cycle of a programme. For the purpose of an academic exercise of this nature, it is more practical to select a component of the programme. The selection of this specific component of the programme, the therapeutic intervention, allows for an investigation of the appropriateness of the intervention to enhance product development and excellence of the programme. The focus on this component allows the opportunity to explore whether the applications within the therapy is comprehensive enough to successfully address the challenges the workplace is facing in the form of performance challenges as a result of personal problems.

The following chapter will provide a background of the environment where the study will be conducted. This will include a description of the EAP programme as it operates within the specific companies.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT VALUE OF THE EAP ACCORDING TO THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an discussion of the quantitative approach from a theoretical point of view as well as an analysis of the data obtained from the two different work sites. The discussion will include a brief overview of the two work sites, the types of industries and the structure of the EAP program within each of them. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the strength of the correlations of data between the two industries.

De Vos (2005:73) refers to Creswell's (1994) explanation of quantitative research as an approach taking scientific explanation to be nomethic. Babbie and Mouton (2005:22) refers to positivism in research as scientific claims that have been proposed on the basis of empirical evidence as opposed to claims that are based on evidence beyond the physical science, commonly known as metaphysical. It emphasises the quantification of theoretical constructs with its focal aims to objectively assess the social world, to test hypotheses and to forecast and control human behaviour.

Quantitative research is regarded as the approach in social science research that is highly formularised and more overtly-controlled, with a range that is more defined and which, in term of the methods used, is comparatively close to the physical science. Quantitative research uses a deductive form of reasoning, taking universal propositions and generalisations as a point of departure. The quantitative researcher uses a school of thought believing in an objective reality that can be explained, controlled and predicted by means of natural, cause-effect laws. In designing quantitative research it is necessary to consider **who** will be assessed, **what** would be the assessment tool and **how** they will be assessed (McMillan and

Schumacher, 1997:162). This refers to the subjects under investigation, the instruments used and procedures for data collection.

In this study, the researcher investigated the link between employee participation in the Employee Assistance Programmes, improved work performance, reduction in absenteeism and disciplinary action and its resulting financial saving to a company. The rendering of a psychosocial service within a business-orientated field poses a significant challenge to researchers. Despite Employee Assistance Programmes being psychosocial programmes focusing on enhancing the qualitative nature of human functioning, it is often requested that its' value be measured in numerical terms. Business managers are interested in the financial costs and contributions made by worksite practices, and measured results have the potential to provide the information needed to make these financial judgements. What makes it possible to adopt a quantitative approach are the fact that the manifestation of psycho-social problems in the workplace is often tangible and the results measurable.

Return on Investment studies are generally being conducted within a quantitative environment, making this form of research the dominant methodology of choice through which these objectives of the study has been achieved. As critiques of this form of study however indicate, it is not possible for a cost benefit analysis to address the salient, less tangible benefits of a programme. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:211) indicate that positivist evaluation is based on the belief that the scope of programme evaluation is limited to those aspects of social programmes that can be objectively observed and tested. There are obvious limitations to this approach if the less prominent objectives are not reported on in any significant way. As a result, the qualitative part of the study as described in chapter five addresses these areas.

The goal of this part of the study is to obtain through self-reporting questionnaires:

- a subjective view of
    - the impact of personal problems on employee performance; and
    - the ability of EAP interventions to positively impact employee personal problems and thus their work performance.

- a comparative analysis of self-reporting data amongst the two industries.

4.2 ENVIRONMENTS WHERE RESEARCH WERE CONDUCTED

The research were conducted within two work organizations.

4.2.1 Client Company One

The client company where research were conducted is a motor vehicle production company within South Africa. The research site is the production plant within one of South Africa's coastal towns. This is a highly production-orientated environment and the majority of work groups are tightly linked to ensure that motor vehicles are produced through the production line within a set time frame. A weak link in this production chain can be very costly to the company.

The company has a significant focus on employee development and its vision statement includes words like "enhancement and empowerment of employees with knowledge, skills and attitudes".
The company further has a management trainees program through which potential leaders are recognised and developed to their full potential (company use the term "high flyers"). This program also assists in broadening the skills base of the company.

4.2.1.1 Structure of the EAP

The EAP for this company operates since 1995. While the company makes use of an external provider, they operate in the framework of an on-site clinic and the vendor company makes available a number of therapists permanently stationed on the premises. The EAP Department has a staff component that renders a holistic service, incorporated in the company structures. The aim of the program is to enable individual employees and their families to identify and effectively deal with

root causes that render individuals, employees or groups unable to meet acceptable work performance, work behaviour and lifestyle standards. The therapeutic services are supported by a well-structured medical component as discussed below. The full employee support program costs the company around R1 million per annum.

The workplace contracted with the vendor company to provide assessment services, brief interventions and linkages to high quality speciality treatment providers. The scope of this intervention encompasses the following:

- emotional intervention;
- financial advice; and
- legal advice.

These services are used as a tool to optimise workplace and personal wellbeing including:

- workplace productivity;
- workplace conflict;
- behavioural deficiencies;
- living with HIV/AIDS; and
- managing substance abuse

4.2.1.2 **Industry within which the EAP operates**

The Employee Assistance Programme operates within a production driven environment with a zero tolerance substance abuse policy and safety sensitive work areas. The main plant is situated in one of the South African coastal towns. The structure of the workplace Health Services looks as follows:

- Primary Health Care (PHC) services covering, prevention, chronic care and absenteeism management.

- Occupational Health Care (OHC) focusing on health risk assessments, medical surveillance, biological monitoring, injury on duty and emergency/first aid services.
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) with elements as discussed above.
- An HIV/AIDS management program.

The existing health services within this workplace comply with the following South African Acts:

Compensation of Occupational Injury and Decease Act (1993)	Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993)
Disaster Management Act (2002)	Environmental Act
Mental Health Act (2002)	Labour Relations Act

4.2.2 **Client Company Two**

Client Company Two operates within the insurance industry and is also situated in a different coastal town with branches country-wide. Typical risk factors for lower performance are mistakes in client risk profiles, incorrect pay-outs and resulting complaints with regulating bodies. Substandard services thus poses a financial and reputation risk for the company. The general goals of the program focus on:

- Empowerment of employees through professional assistance to resolve personal and health-related problems.

- Enabling managers to manage employees with personal problems whilst they remain focused on work performance and reap the benefits of a healthy, balanced and high-performing workforce.

4.2.2.1 **Structure of the program**

The company prefers to use the term EWP as opposed to EAP. The program components are very similar to that of the first company and the program has been in operation since June 2000. The specific site from where the respondents and participants were selected also operates as an on-site clinic with designated therapists available on specific days during the week. The program is also supported by a complementing medical service /health care strategies. Specific components to this program are:

- The counselling component (similar focus as for company one).
- Financial wellbeing.
- Events like “know your status” campaigns and health days.
- Training and development strategies.
- Peer-education program
- HIV/AIDS workplace intervention programme.
- The programme is also well supported through a reporting and evaluation component and website access to programme components.

The program is guided by similar constitutional ethics as company one. The program cost is approximately R14 per head per month and as with company one, the overall costs depend on the number of employees covered through this. Of note for both programs is the fact that this cost includes eligibility of employee dependents.

Both programmes thus have internal support structures as well as external variables that can enhance the effectiveness of service delivery but can also affect behaviour change independently.

The rest of this chapter and the two subsequent chapters focuses on the data generated through the different data-sources. Chapter six focuses on the similarities in findings and viewpoints and the strength of these counter to an extent the concern of other variables impacting on employee improvement in work performance.

4.3 RESULTS FROM QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Introduction:

For the quantitative component of the survey 29 employees/respondents from **Company One** who was referred to the Employee Assistance Programme through the formal referral process for the period 2007 completed post intervention questionnaires. These respondents were at the time of the survey also attending a standard after-care program as provided by the on-site EAP facility of the company.

Within **Company Two** 12 of the employees who participated in the EAP for the same period through the formal referral process contributed to the survey.
The above respondents from both companies represent a small percentage of the entire workforce for both companies. These numbers should be interpreted against the backdrop of a small percentage of the workforce using the program during any given period and an even smaller percentage of the employees who access the program, being referred through the formal referral process.

4.3.1 Period working for the company

Question 1:

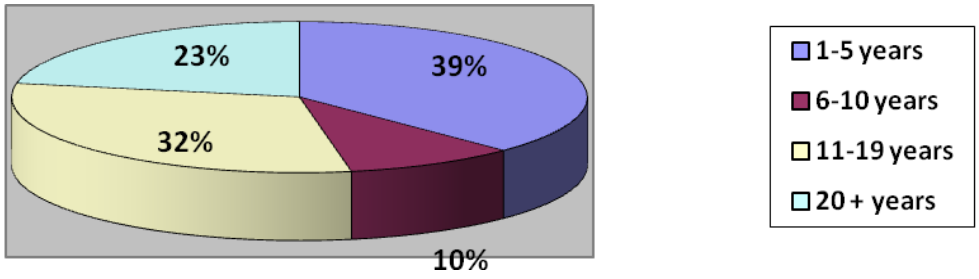


Figure 1.1: Term of office – Company One (n=29)

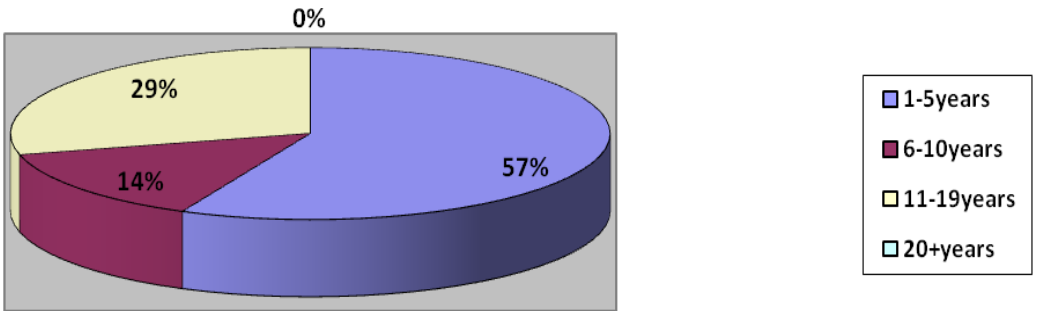


Figure 1.2: Term of office – Company Two (n-12)

4.3.1.1 **Discussion of data – Figure 1.1 and 1.2:**

With the largest group of respondents, (39%) for Company One within the 1-5 year cycle of employment, it is possible to draw an inference that younger employees has a greater tendency to personal problems significant enough to impact on their work performance. There is however not a notable difference between the group 1-5 years and the group 11-20 years (7% difference) and an assumption of youthful irresponsibility can be fundamentally flawed. It can also not automatically be assumed that shorter service necessarily mean younger employees. For Company Two, taking in consideration that the sample is significantly smaller, the employment cycle 1-5 years is also notably bigger (57%) than for any of the other age groups. It is possible that other unexplored variables may have an impact on these results. These are:

- Staff members with a shorter period of employment are younger and may have a more open attitude towards therapeutic interventions.
- Staff members who were more recently employed by the company were exposed to recent orientation programmes where the existence of the EAP was discussed.

Substance related problems are by far the most prevalent presenting problem for Company One, (see analysis of presenting problems table 4.1). With a significant number of respondents within the employment cycle of 11- 20 years (32%) and the cycle exceeding 20 years, the impact of the substance addiction cycle over a period of time, progressively affecting the health, relationships and job performance of employees is worth considering in this context. Substance-related problems within Company Two only seem to have presented itself in two of the subjects initially intended for participation in the study, but subsequently dismissed from the company.

4.3.2 **Age of respondents**

Question 2:

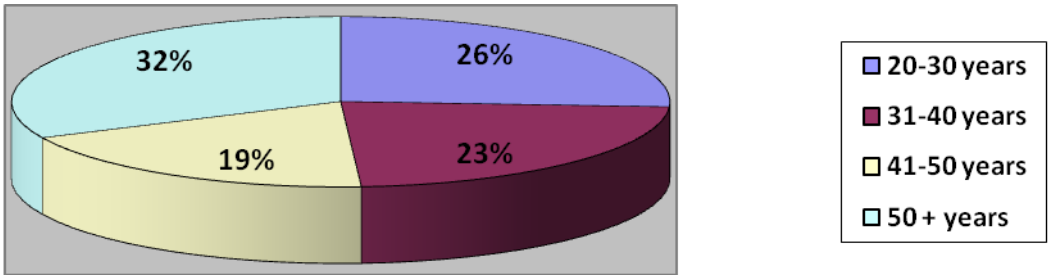


Figure 2.1: Age group – Company One (n=29)

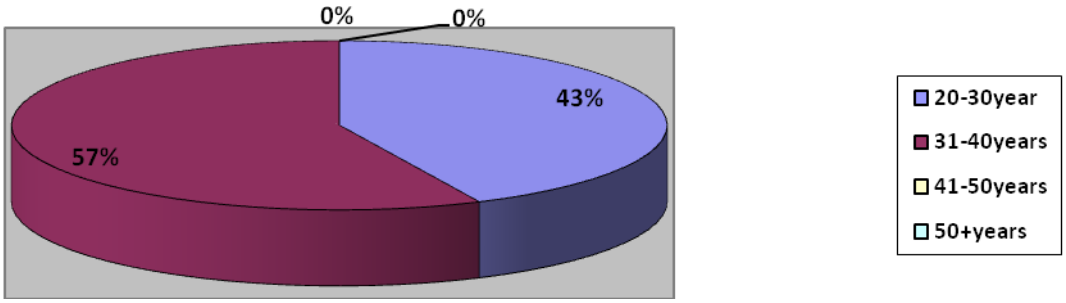


Figure 2.2: Age group – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.2.1 **Discussion of data – Figure 2.1 and 2.2:**

There is a relatively equal presentation of age groups across the sample for Company One. With the age group 50 years and older being the highest represented group in the sample of formally referred employees, the progressive impact of personal problems on work performance becomes an area of interest. As noted in the responses to table 4.1, substance related problems stand out as the most prominent presenting problem for respondents in Company One. Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents over the age of 50 years indicated that their presenting problem were substance related. The correlation between the substance addiction cycle and compromised work performance seems to be considerable for this component of the research sample.

For Company Two there is also a relatively equal spread of age groups, representing a fairly young work population. Once again the size of the sample can be regarded as a limiting factor. It should also be noted that two of the research subjects who would have been part of the sample (one currently on extended sick leave and one being dismissed), are in the age group 41-50 years. Interviews with the relevant referral agents revealed that the intervention for these individuals did not bring about the required change and that their problems have been present for a long time before the EWP intervention.

4.3.3 **Monthly income**

(Question 3)

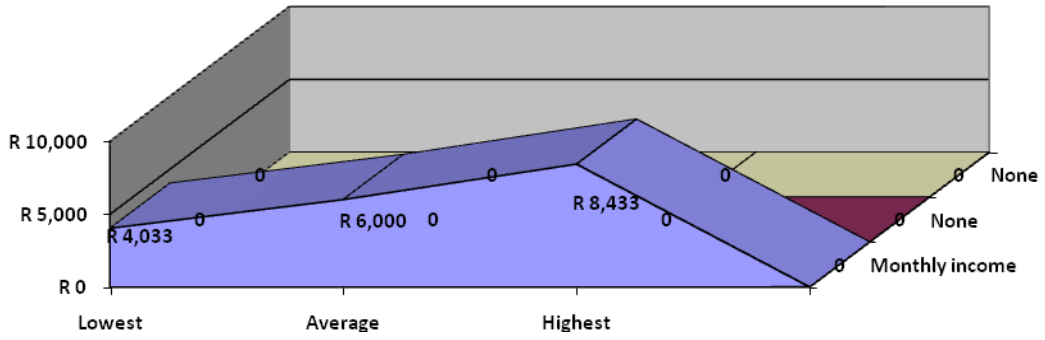


Figure 3.1 Average income: Company One (n=29)

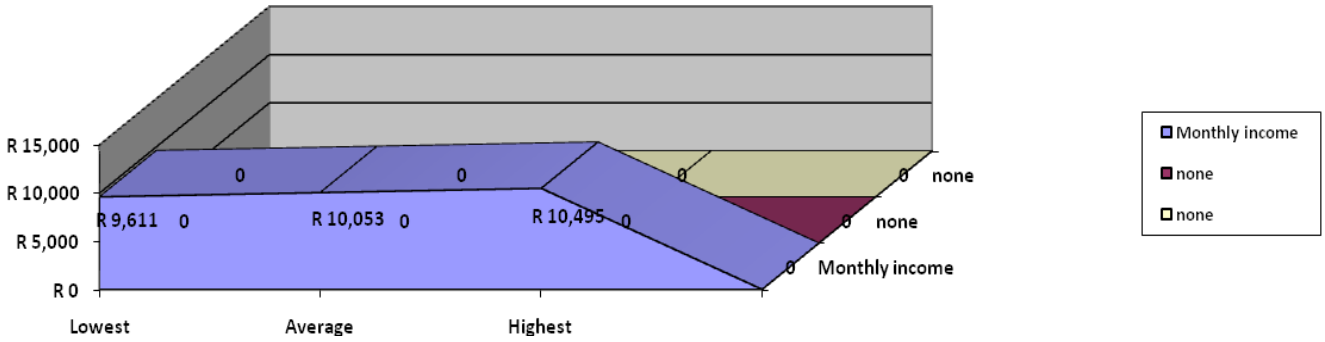


Figure 3.2 Average income: Company Two (n=12)

4.3.3.1 Discussion of data for figure 3.1 and 3.2

On average, the cost of one day of absenteeism for one employee for Company One is about R273. For Company Two this amount rises to R457. This amount only reflects the salary paid for time not worked and excludes the salary of the co-worker, temp or supervisor who has to stand in for that person during absenteeism.

4.3.4 Nature of problem /reasons for using the program

(Question 4)

Because people's problems are often multi-facetted, they were able to select as many options as what is relevant to them. The numbers and percentages are thus a reflection of the number of people identifying their presenting problem(s) to fall within the categories below.

Table 4.1: Category of presenting problems – Company One

Presenting problem n = 29	Number of responses	Percentage of sample
Substance related	20	69%
Marital or partner relational	5	17%
Stress	4	14%
Depression	2	7%
Bereavement	3	10%
Trauma	2	7%
Accident at work	1	3%
Financial	12	41%
Legal	1	3%
Parent-child relational	2	7%
Work-related problems	9	31%
Health-related problems	6	21%
Other – specify	1	3%

Table 4.2: Category of presenting problems – Company Two

Presenting problem n = 12	Number of responses	Percentage of sample
Substance related	0 (two employees who already left company were referred for substance abuse)	
Marital or partner relational	2	17%
Stress	2	17%
Depression	2	17%
Bereavement	1	8%
Trauma		
Accident at work		
Financial	1	8%
Legal		
Parent-child relational	1	8%
Work-related problems	4	33%
Health-related problems		
Other – specify	3(absenteeism)	25%

4.3.4.1 **Discussion of Table 4.1 and 4.2:**

Substance related problems are by far the most prevalent presenting problem experienced by the research sample for Company One. The impact of substance abuse and other forms of addiction is often manifold with substance abusers experiencing strain in other areas of their lives.

From the 69% of the respondents who indicated substance related problems, 59% also indicated by means of multiple selection of presenting problems, strain in areas like:

- relationships
- finances
- health
- mood disturbances (stress and depression)
- work-related, including accidents at work.

A significant number of the respondents (41%) also experiences financial problems to a point where it has impacted on their work performance, hence the formal referral into the programme. Financial problems have the potential to create significant emotional discomfort for people and in a work environment it is able to negatively affect people's performance. The Employee Assistance Programme for this company offers a financial wellbeing solution that can be beneficial both from an educational and curative point of view.

For Company Two, there is a stronger tendency towards work-related problems and absenteeism plays a significant role in this. The samples from both companies however also reflect multiplicity in its presentation, with one individual rarely only experiencing problems in one area. While the presentation of substance abuse problems in Company Two is almost none-existing, there is an indication from referral agents interviewed that two of the subjects originally intended for inclusion in this project, presented with chronic substance abuse problems and eventually

had their contracts terminated. For these subjects the treatment did not bring about significant behaviour change.

4.3.5 Duration of the problem before referral to the EAP

(Question 5)

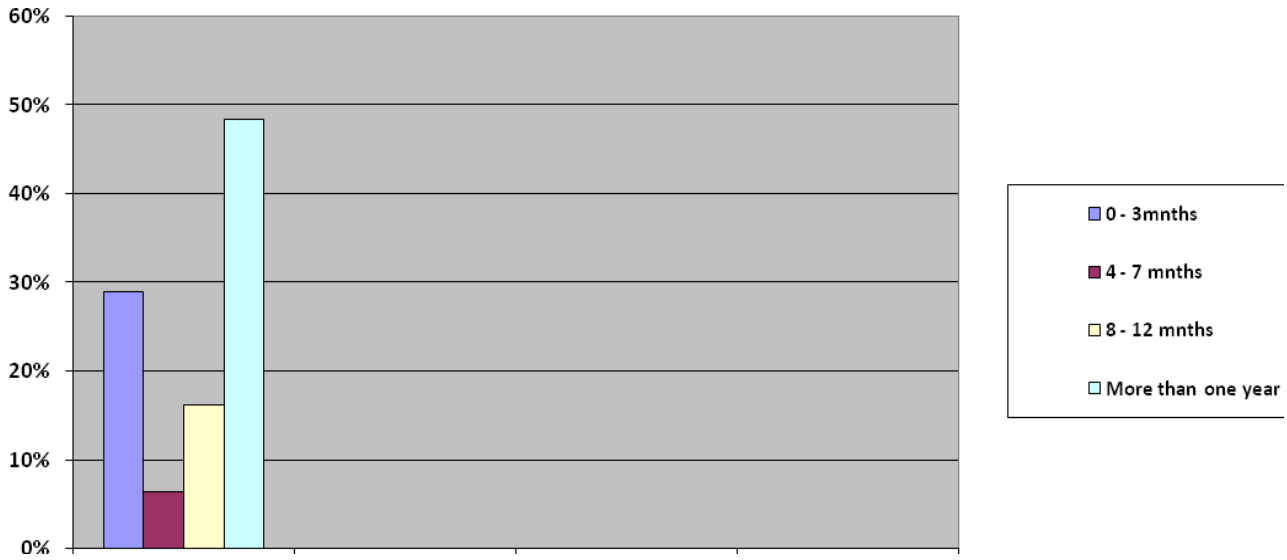


Figure 4.1: Period of problem existence – Company One (n=29)

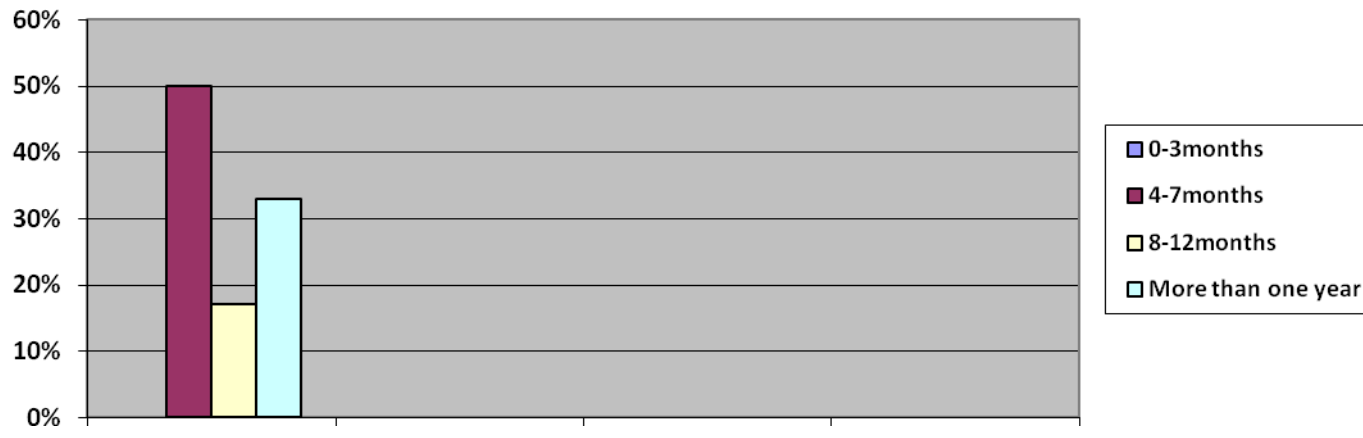


Figure 4.2 Period of problem existence – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.5.1 **Discussion of figure 4.1 and 4.2**

The majority of respondents in Company One (48%) experienced their personal problems for a period exceeding one year. Within this group of respondents substance abuse problems once again stands out as the most prominent presenting problem and the progressive impact on different areas of an individual's life, including work performance, may play a role in this phenomenon.

For the group of respondents who indicated that their personal problems has been present for a period 0-3 months before using the programme (29%), work-related problems is reflected as the dominant presenting problem. The questionnaire does not distinguish between different type of work-related problems and responses thus refer to an all-inclusive concept.

For Company Two the majority of respondents (50%) experienced their problems between four to seven months before entering the program. This is not significantly long and can be described as an acute phase of problem existence rather than chronic. When a troubled individual receive assistance while he is in the acute phase, a brief intervention strategy is more likely to have a positive impact. Thirty two percent (32%) of the respondents indicated that they experienced their personal problems for a period exceeding one year. Through the interview process referral agents were also able to provide insight into the profiles of identified respondents who were not available to complete the questionnaire. The profile of these individuals also indicated the existence of problems exceeding the one year period and from the discussions it became evident that their response to the intervention has been less successful and longer-term intervention was needed.

4.3.6 Improvement of spouse/partner relationship after participation in EAP:

Question 6:

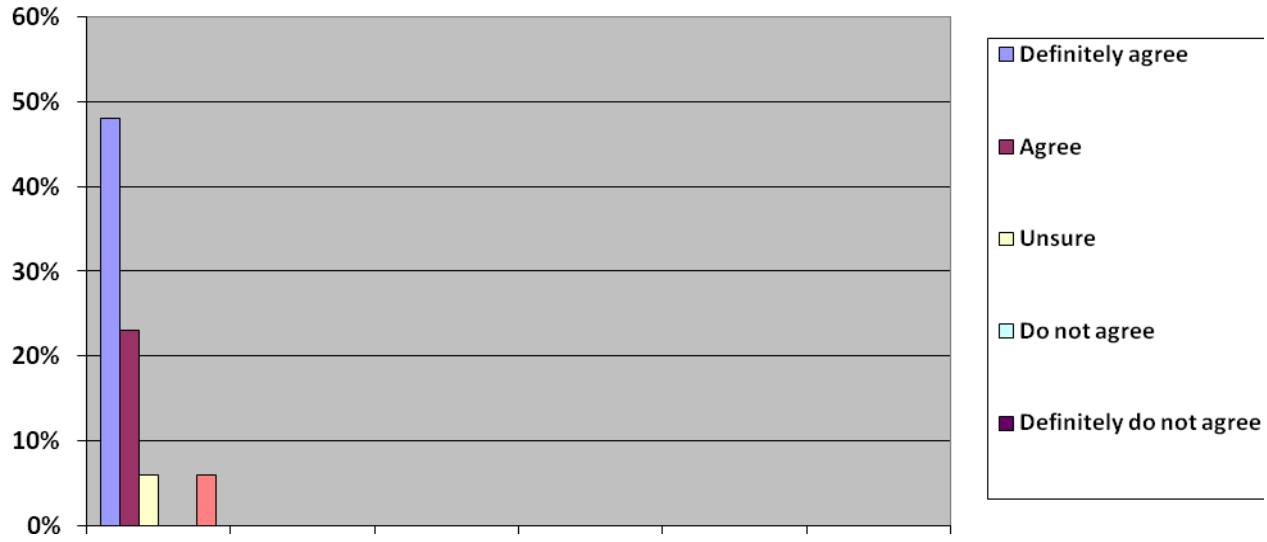


Figure 5.1: Enrichment of spouse/partner relationships – Company One (N=24)

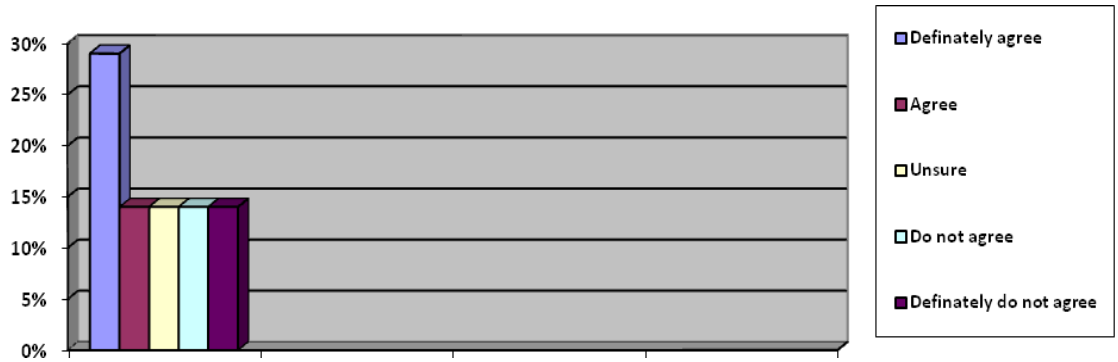


Figure 5.2: Enrichment of spouse/partner relationships – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.6.1 **Discussion of data figure 5.1 and 5.2**

Sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents in Company One did not complete this section of the questionnaire. From the remaining group, the majority of the respondents is of the opinion that participation in the programme notably improved their relationships with significant others. Seventy one percent (71%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to this statement. These results correlate with the view earlier in this report that partner-relational problems respond well to brief therapeutic intervention, McCullough-Vailant (1994:2), *see section 1.3.3*

Partner-relational challenges account for only 16% of the presenting problems for the respondents from Company One. It is thus interesting to see that a considerable number of respondents are of the opinion that the intervention has not only addressed their presenting problem but also improved their relationships with their spouses. This phenomenon may contribute to the notion that improvement in one area of a person's life has the potential to influence other areas of his/her life positively.

In Company Two, 43% of respondents were of the impression that the intervention had a positive impact on their relationships with partners. (This calculation refers to 29% strongly agree and 14 % agree to this question). Twenty eight percent (28%) of respondents were of the impression that the intervention had no real positive spin-offs for their relationships with their partners.

4.3.7 **Positive impact of counselling on child/children relationships:**

(Question 7)

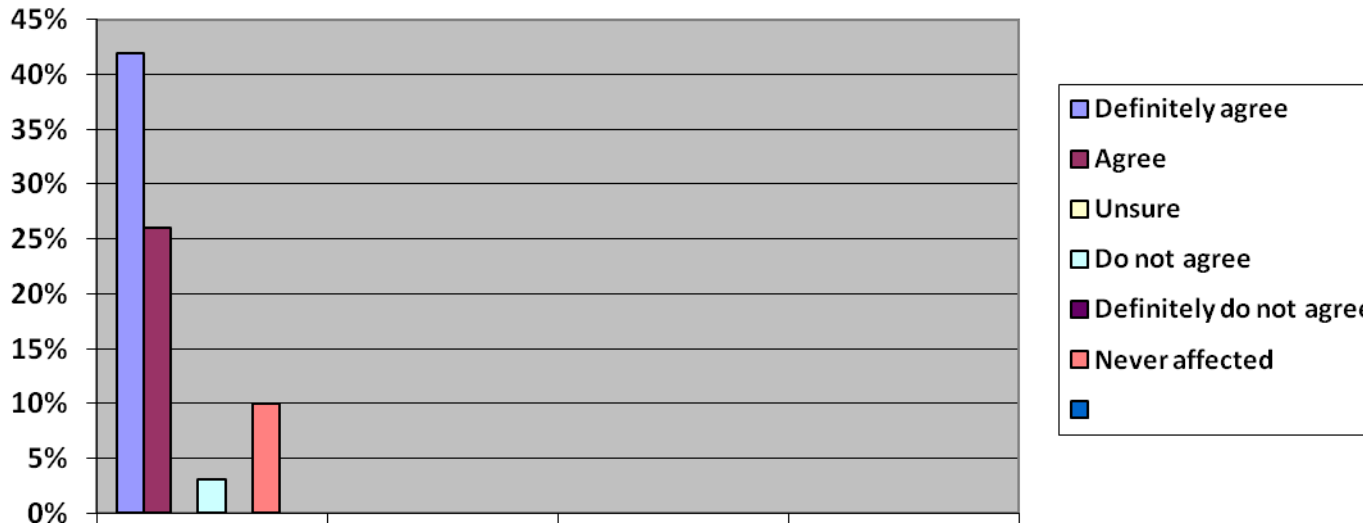


Figure 6.1: Enrichment of child/children relationships – Company One (N=24)

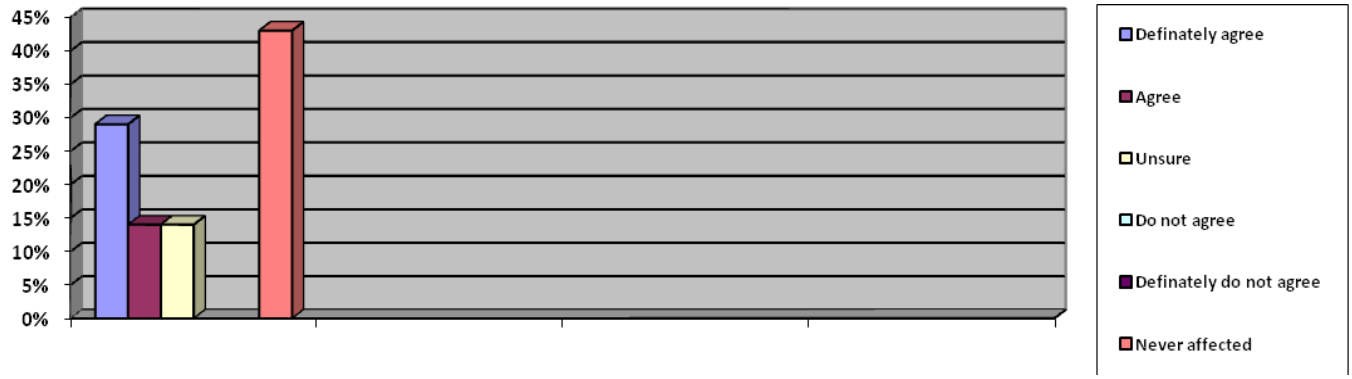


Figure 6.2: Enrichment of child/children relationships – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.7.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 6.1 and 6.2**

Sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents for Company One did not complete this section of the questionnaire. The same 16 % of respondents who did not complete the information for question 6/figure 4 also failed to complete it for figure 5. It is not clear whether these respondents are currently involved in relationships with partners or children as the questionnaire do not explore their family structure.

As in the previous response (question 5), the majority of respondents for Company One who completed this section are of the opinion that their relationships with their children improved after using the programme. When people are experiencing personal problems, they often experience mood swings. Mood swings often impact on the way people interact with others, thus having the potential to affect relationships negatively.

Within Company Two a significant percentage of respondents (42%) were of the opinion that their relationships with their children were never affected by their personal challenges. Forty three percent (43%) of respondents were of the impression that the intervention had a positive spin-off for their relationship with their children.

Berridge and Cooper (1994:5) defines EAPs as a programmatic intervention that have the potential of enabling individuals to attain full functioning in personal and work life. With an overwhelming majority of respondents indicating that their relationships with spouses and children improved since using the programme, the value-added claim made through the above definition seems to hold substantial value.

4.3.8 Impact of personal problems on work performance:

(Question 8)

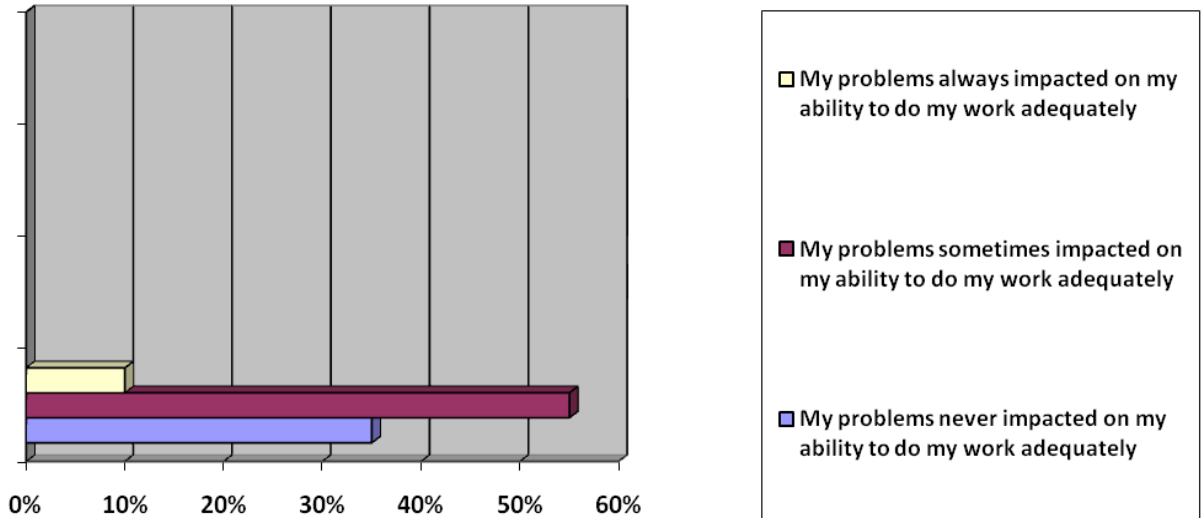


Figure 7.1: Impact of personal problems on work performance: Company One (n=29)

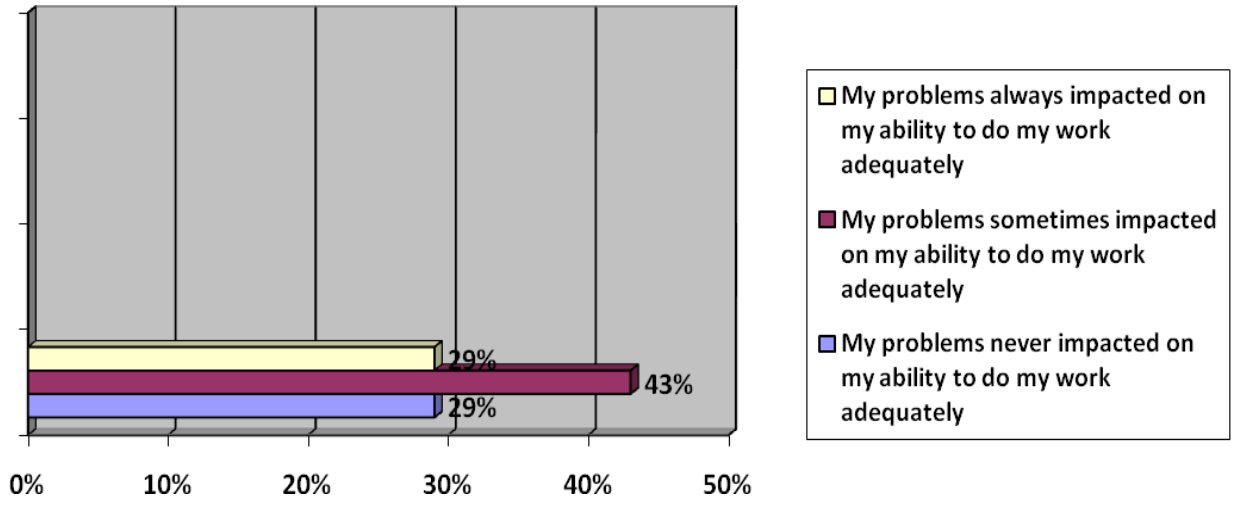


Figure 7.2: Impact of personal problems on work performance, Company Two (n=12)

4.3.8.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 7.1 and 7.2**

For 65% of the respondents from Company One, personal problems impacted on their work performance at some stage before using the programme. This percentage represents the respondents who indicated that their personal problems always or sometimes impacted on their work performance. For Company Two, 72% of the respondents are of the impression that their personal problems impacted on their work performance.

Earlier in this report (see section 1.1 of this report), the researcher reflected on different authors like Nissly and Mennen (2002), Berridge and Cooper (1994), Murphy (1995) and Mann and Kelly (1999) who, through their contribution to existing literature discuss the impact of personal problems like stress, depression, alcohol and drug abuse as major contributors to sickness, absenteeism and lowering job performance. The response of the respondents in the research supports the views of the above authors who are of the impression that mental health problems like stress, depression, and alcohol and drug abuse are major contributors to sickness, absenteeism and lowering job performance. Highley (1996:4) also indicates that 80 million working days are lost to mental illness every year and that 30-40 percent of all sick-leave use is due to mental or emotional disturbance.

The response, indicating that a significant number of respondents feel that their personal problems impacted on their work performance, also correlates with the views obtained through the qualitative data focusing on the financial impact of employee personal problems for companies, *(see section 5.8 of the report).* The responses in these two areas of investigation show a strong correlation between personal problems, its presentation in behavioural terms within the workplace and the financial implication of production losses.

4.3.9 Improvement in work performance since participating in the EAP. (Question 9)

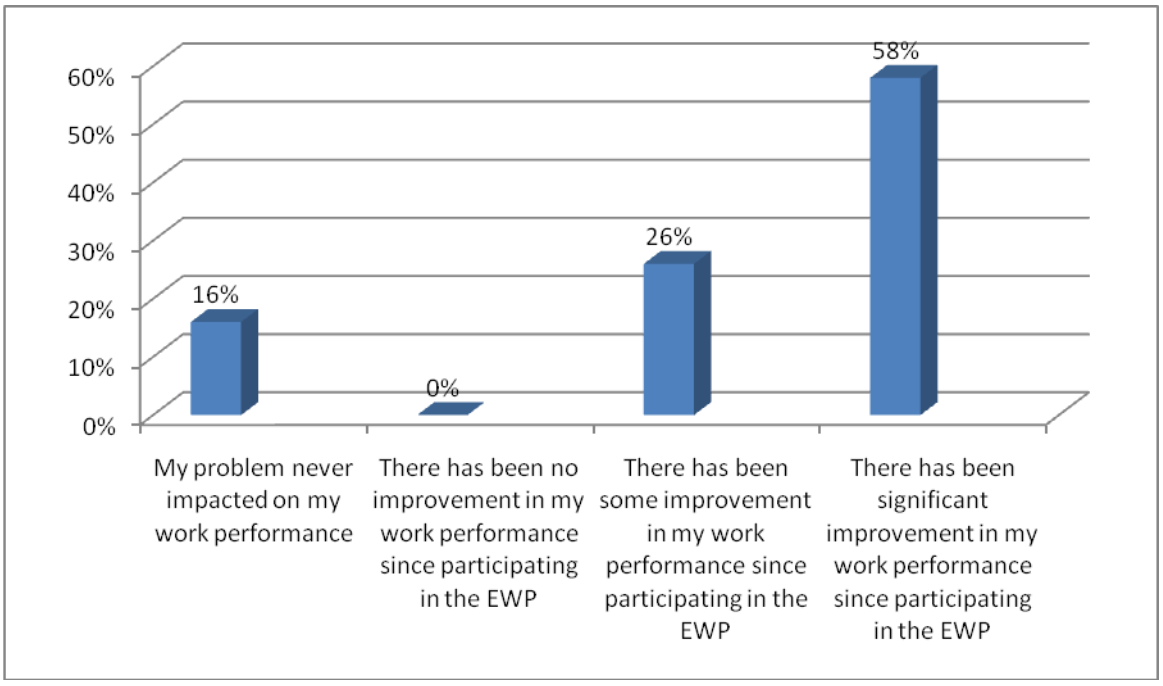


Figure 8.1: Impact of counselling on work performance – Company One (n 29)

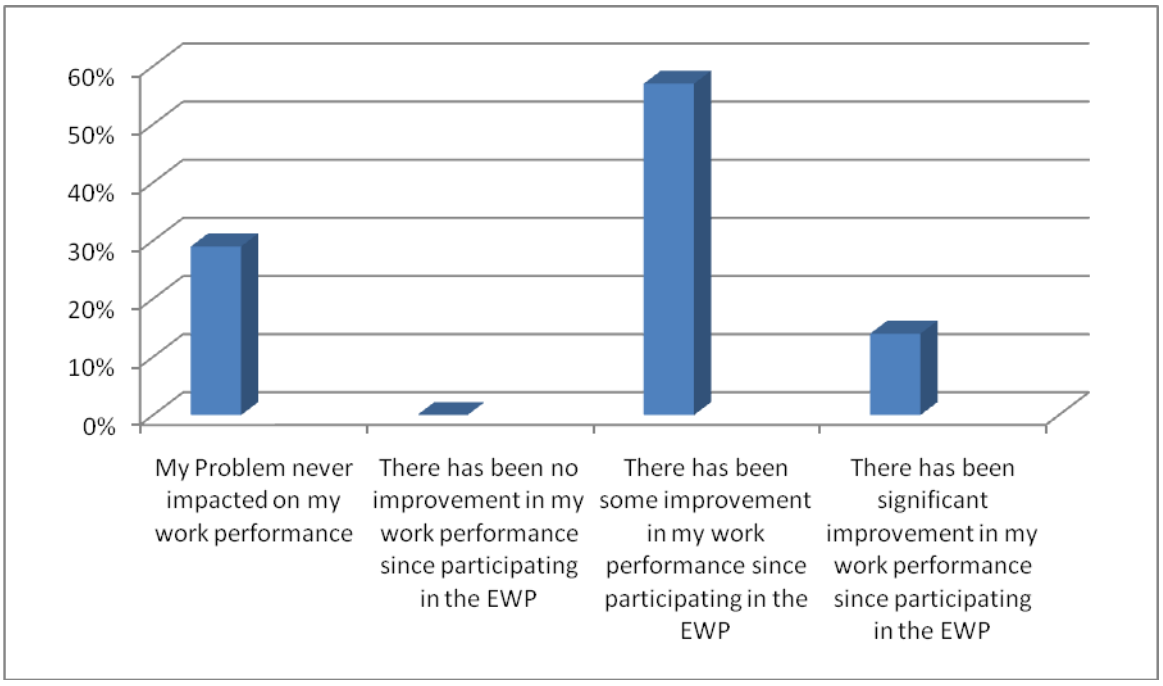


Figure 8.2: Impact of counselling on work performance – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.9.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 8.1 and 8.2**

The responses to this question for both companies indicate an overall perception that participation in the EAP contributed to improvement in respondents work performance.

Bellingham and Cohen (1987:74) is of the opinion that Employee Assistance Programmes contribute towards an improvement in employee productivity, thus making it a cost-effective part of a company's overall wellbeing strategy. The results from this group of respondents strongly support this notion. The data processed through the qualitative investigation also supports this view with respondents suggesting that change in work performance is visible for most people participating in the programme. (See 1.1 for international and 1.2 for local statistics on this).

4.3.10 Impact of personal problems on attendance

(Question 10):

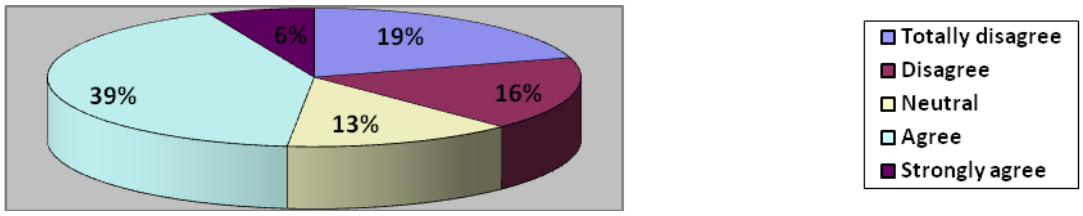


Figure 9.1: Impact of personal problems on work attendance – Company One (n=29)

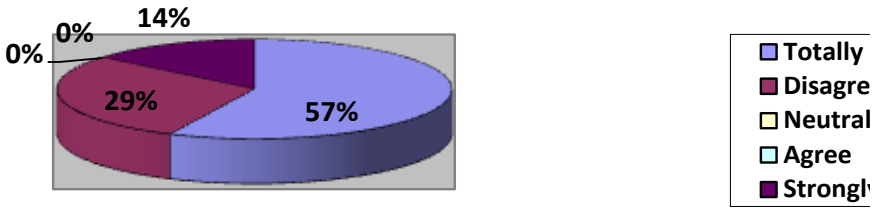


Figure 9.2: Impact of personal problems on work attendance – Company Two (n=12)

My personal problems had no impact on my attendance at work)- contrary to other questions in the survey this question was asked in the negative.

4.3.10.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 9.1 and 9.2**

Thirty-five percent (35% referring to 19 + 16% who disagreed) of the respondents for Company One were of the opinion that their personal problems impacted on their work attendance at some stage. This refers to the group who disagreed with the above statement, thus suggested that there is no positive relationship between their personal problems and increased absenteeism. Forty-five percent (45%) of the respondents were of the impression that has not affected their work attendance in any way. There were a significant number of respondents (16%) who were neutral in their opinion. The researcher is of the opinion that there may have been an element of uncertainty on how to interpret the question. For Company Two the results are significantly different and 86% (57 + 29%) of the respondents, disagreed, indicating that they are of the opinion that their personal problem resulted in absenteeism at work.

The overall responses to these questions for Company One reflects on a somewhat weaker numerical correlation between the qualitative and quantitative data. What is significant about the qualitative results may not be the numerical significance but rather the impact of absenteeism on supervisory staff, work teams and production results. For Company Two the correlation seems much stronger. (See discussion in section 5.9 of this report.)

4.3.11 Personal problems resulting in on-the-job absenteeism

Question 11:

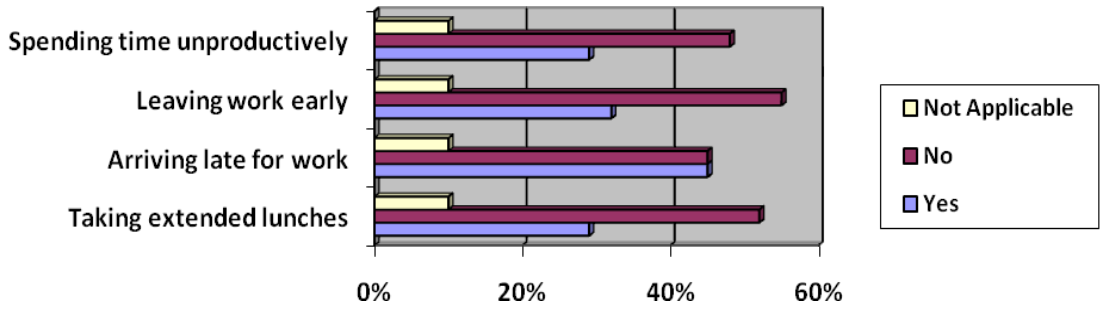


Figure 10.1: Impact of personal problems on on-the-job absenteeism – Company One (n=29)

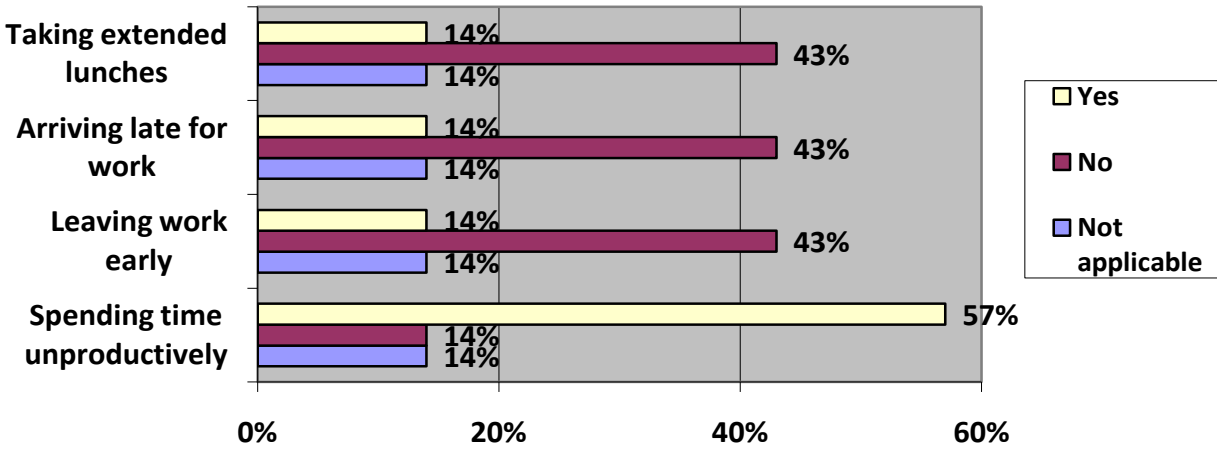


Figure 10.2: Impact of personal problems on on-the-job absenteeism – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.11.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 10.1 and 10.2**

The above figures refer to the relationship between personal problems and on-the-job absenteeism. Presenteeism is a term used for workers coming to work even when they are unable to function optimally. The negative impact on the bottom line and overall productivity of the workplace can be subtle and hard to track effectively. Within a work environment where movement is closely monitored through clock-in cards or similar processes, it may be easier to track the amount of time lost through employee on-the-job absenteeism. These types of measures are often used in production driven workplaces. This would particularly be true for the areas of arriving late and leaving early, as well as taking extended lunches.

For these four areas of investigation the majority of respondents from both companies gave a negative response, meaning that their personal problems did not contribute to significant on-the-job absenteeism. Indicators that are notable in terms of cost factors are:

- Leaving work early, (32%) – Company One.
- Arriving late for work, (45%) – Company One.
- Spending time unproductively, (57%) – Company Two.

The above data indicate that there is a weak correlation between people's personal problems and on-the-job absenteeism. If compared with the data obtained from the qualitative component of this report (see page 194), the initial interpretation may also reflect a weak correlation between the two sets of data. What is significant about the data from the qualitative component is its reflection on the financial implication for companies when employees do present with on-the-job absenteeism.

4.3.12 Consideration to leave company before use of EAP

Question 12:

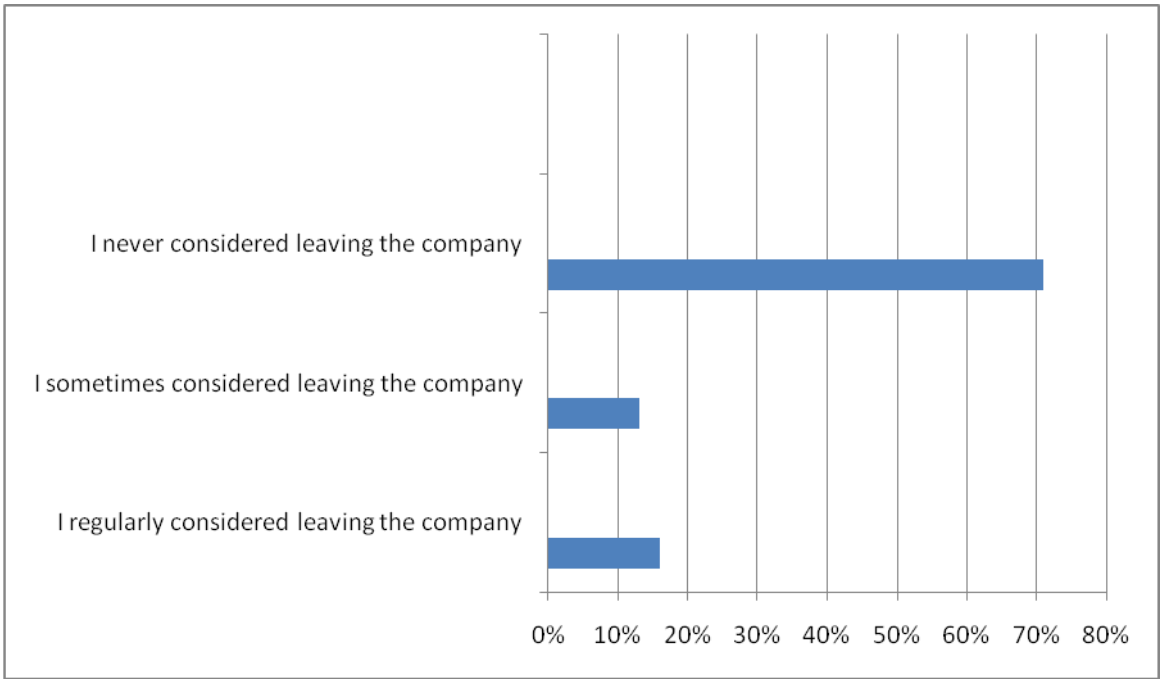


Figure 11.1: Potential impact of personal problems on people considering leaving the company – Company One (n=29)

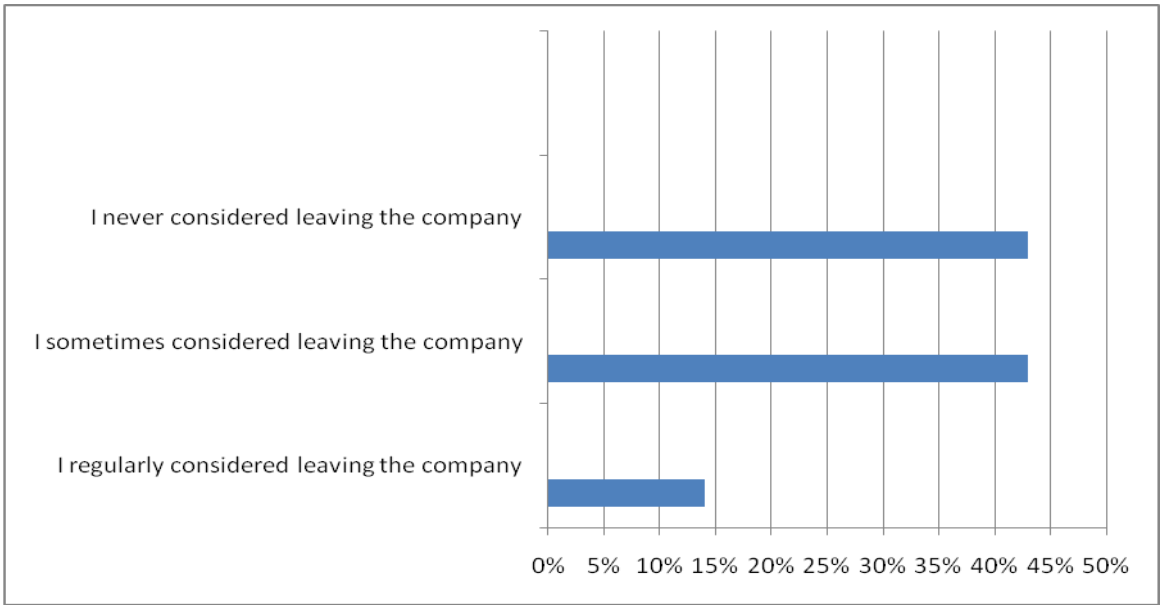


Figure 11.2: Potential impact of personal problems on people considering leaving the company – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.12.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 11.1 and 11.2**

From the information derived from this question, there seems to be a weak correlation between personal problems and staff turn-over for Company One with only 29% of respondents indicating that they have considered leaving the company at some stage. For Company Two the correlation is somewhat stronger with 43% of the respondents indicating that they sometimes considered leaving the company. This investigation, however, does not cover the area of employees who already left the company and had a documented history of personal problems.

Cascio (1982:20) is of the impression that many companies are unaware of the actual cost of staff turnover. He provides a detailed breakdown of cost elements of separation costs, replacement costs and training costs. (*see –section 2.5.2 of this report). Recruitment and training of new staff involves a significant amount of direct costs as well as the indirect costs involved in new staff not performing optimally.* If staff turn-over was presented as an area of concern for the respondents in this study, the companies would need to address staff turn-over as a related cost element.

4.3.13 Involvement in performance counselling and/or disciplinary action before using the EAP

Question 13:

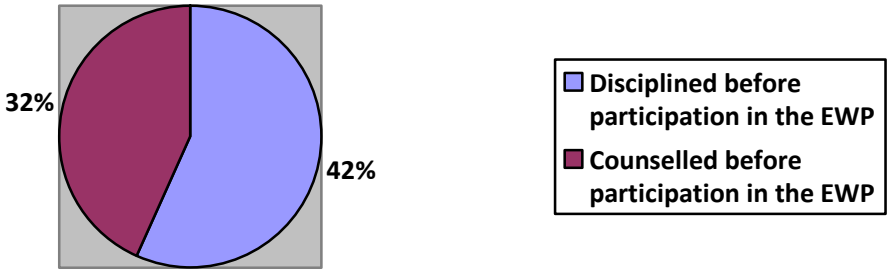


Figure 12.1: Involvement in performance counselling and/or discipline before participation in EWP – Company One (n=12)

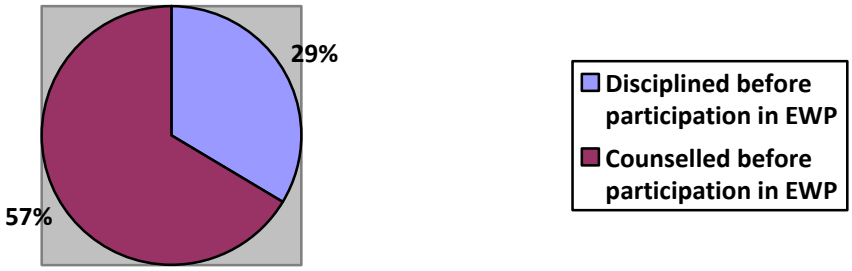


Figure 12.2: Involvement in performance counselling and/or discipline before participation in EWP – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.13.1 **Discussion of data: Figure 12.1 and 12.2**

The responses to the above question indicate a strong relationship between employees' personal problems and formal processes in the workplace. Forty-two (42%) percent of the respondents for Company One indicated that they had disciplinary action against them before use of the EAP while 32% indicated that they have been counselled by their respective line-managers before referral to the EAP. This brings to 74% of respondents in Company One indicating that some form of formal process preceded their referral to the programme.

For Company Two it is equally significant, with 57% of respondents indicating that they have been counselled by their line managers before referral and 29% indicating that they have undergone disciplinary processes.

Most organisations follow a procedure of progressive discipline proceeding from an oral warning to a written warning and possible dismissal (Cascio1998:534). Labour relations legislation determines that fair processes need to be followed throughout the disciplinary process. These 'fair processes' entails consultation with the affected employee where at least two staff members (the employee and line manager), and often a human resource representative and union representative needs to be present. If we use a similar argument than what Cascio (1982:20) did when he calculated staff turn-over costs, the time spend by these staff members attending counselling or disciplinary procedures, means salaries paid for activities other than the production focus of the company. These costs become the hidden costs of employee disciplinary processes.

4.3.14 Perceived benefits derived from participation in the programme (respondents could tick as many as they felt applied to them)

Question 14:

	NO IMPROVEMENT	*MODERATE IMPROVEMENT*	*REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT*
Personal relationships	10%	23%	55%
Work relationships	16%	29%	48%
Work performance	6%	39%	45%
Self image	3%	26%	48%
Coping skills	10%	19%	48%
Attendance at work	6%	16%	61%
Mistakes in the workplace	16%	19%	29%
Number of work related accidents/incidents	19%	19%	26%

Table 4.3: Benefits derived from participation in the EAP – Company One (n=29)

	NO IMPROVEMENT	*MODERATE IMPROVEMENT*	*REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT*
Personal relationships	14%	71%	29%
Work relationships		57%	29%
Work performance	14%	29%	43%
Self image	14%	29%	29%
Coping skills		14%	86%
Attendance at work	29%		29%
Mistakes in the workplace	43%		29%
Number of work related accidents	43%		29%

Table 4.4: Benefits derived from participation in the EWP – Company Two (n=12)

4.3.14.1 **Discussion of data: Table 4.3 and 4.4**

Within both companies, the majority of respondents have indicated at least moderate to significant improvement in most of the areas. The areas where the most significant improvement took place have been relational, generalised work performance and life skills (self image and coping skills). It is interesting to note that areas related to work related mistakes and accidents for both companies did not show remarkable improvement. While the significant financial and brand impact of accidents and mistakes have been discussed in detail by the referral agents interviewed for this study, actual incidents has not been reported. This may play a role in the results recorded in the two above tables.

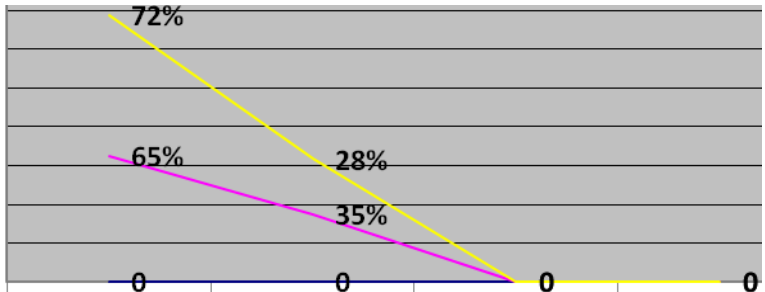
Of significance is the indication that the majority of respondents were able to identify improvement after participation in the program. The improvements identified by them also correlate with the positive changes being identified by referral agents.

4.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE TWO COMPANIES

The two companies used for this research are very different in the nature of their business. They are also situated in different provinces with the only similarity being that they are both coastal towns. The company situated in Durban is a motor manufacturing operation while the company situated in Cape Town operates in the insurance market. Both companies make provision for on-site facilities from where their EAP/EWP services are rendered. Employees thus have an option to see a therapist on-site or off-site, in the therapists' private practice.

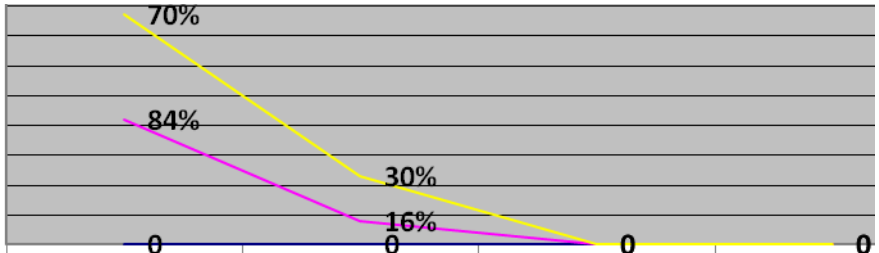
Areas within the two companies that show strong comparisons/correlation are the following:

Figure 13: Personal problems impacting on work performance



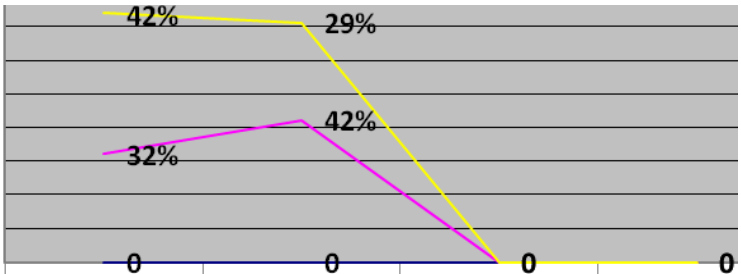
	Impact on work performance	No impact on work performance		
Company Two	72%	28%		
Company One	65%	35%		

Figure 14: Improvement in work performance after participating in program



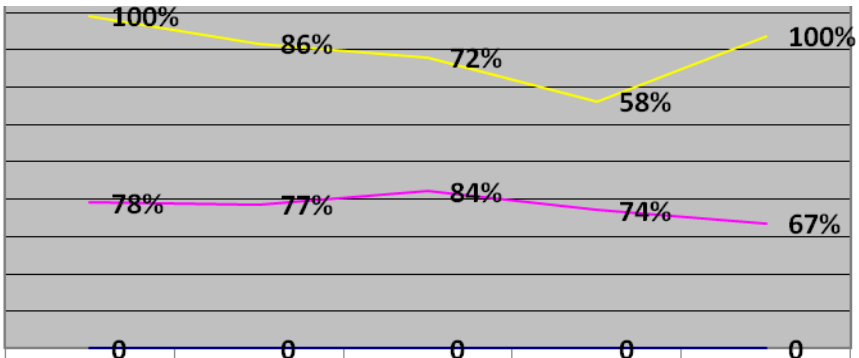
	Improvement after participation	No improvement after participation		
Company Two	70%	30%		
Company One	84%	16%		

Figure 15: Performance counselling and disciplinary action



	Counselled before participation	Disciplined before participation		
Company Two	42%	29%		
Company One	32%	42%		

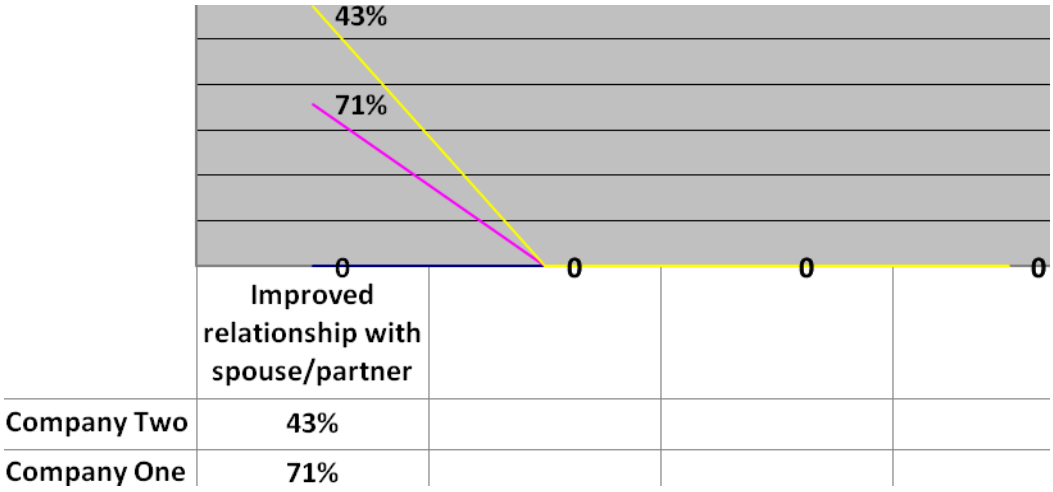
Figure 16: Perceived benefits deriving from participation in program



	Personal relations	Work relations	Work performance	Self image	Coping skills
Company Two	100%	86%	72%	58%	100%
Company One	78%	77%	84%	74%	67%

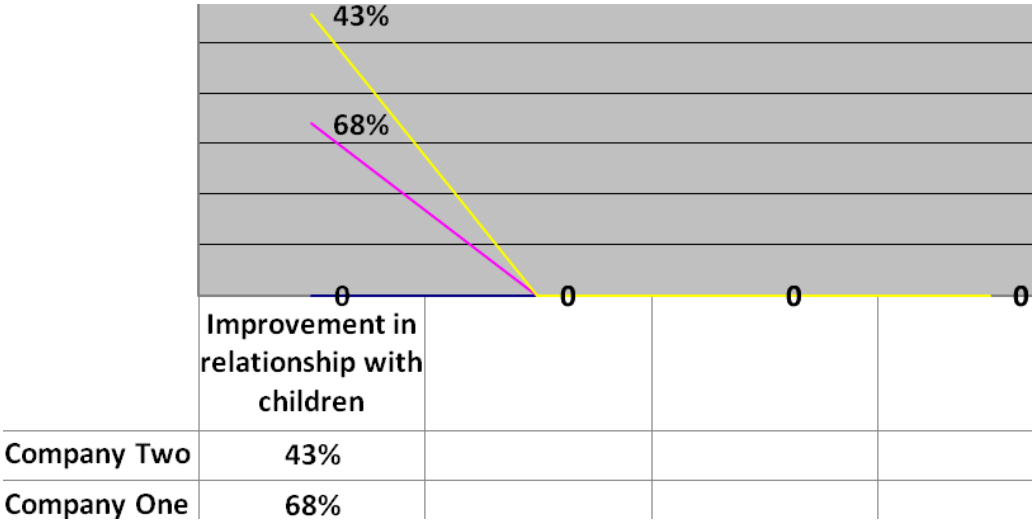
Areas within the two companies that do not show a strong correlation are the following:

Figure 17: Improvement in partner relationship



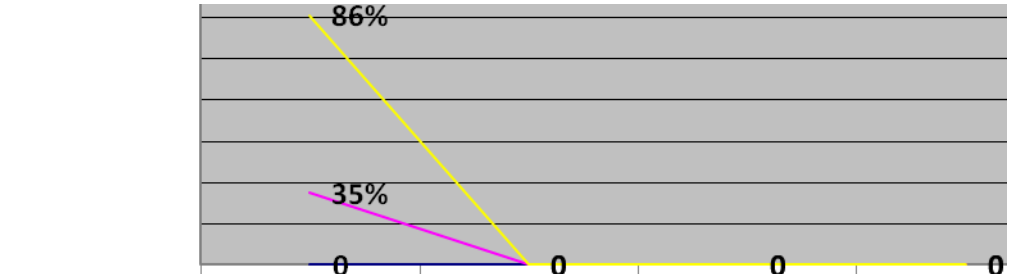
	Improved relationship with spouse/partner
Company Two	43%
Company One	71%

Figure 18: Improvement in relationship with children



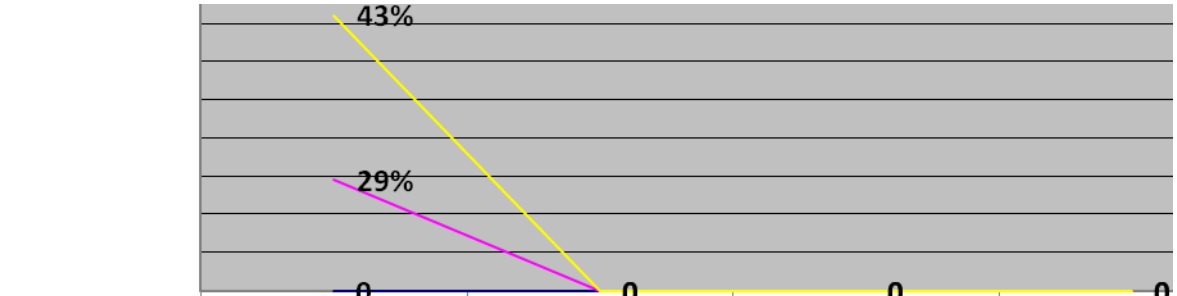
	Improvement in relationship with children
Company Two	43%
Company One	68%

Figure 19: Attendance being affected by personal problems



	Work attendance affected
Company Two	86%
Company One	35%

Figure 20: Staff retention



	considered leaving the company while experiencing personal problems
Company Two	43%
Company One	29%

4.5 **Conclusion**

The results from the quantitative survey reflect an acknowledgement form respondents that their personal problems at some stage did impact on areas of their work life. These findings correlate with findings of previous studies, as reflected on in the literature study. There seems to be clear evidence of impact on work-life from both companies participating in this research.

The following section will be an analysis of the qualitative data (semi-structured interviews with line managers/referral agents). After detailed discussions of the data, the researcher will once again highlight the areas where there are strong correlations between the data from the different data-gathering processes, as well as those where a weak correlation exist.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT VALUE OF THE EAP ACCORDING TO THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

De Vos (2005:357) indicates that for the qualitative approach the procedures are not as strictly formalised as in quantification and a more philosophical mode of operation is used. In the context of this study the qualitative approach was utilised when interviewing line managers who referred employees into the programme. The line managers chosen were the referral agents for the employees identified for the quantitative component of the survey. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised that allowed for consistency in the opinions sought but was also open to growth build on the participant responses. Interviews were taped while manual transcription was used to support the process. Transcribing was also used to process the auditory information.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) defines qualitative research as a multi-perspective approach to social interaction, aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing interaction in terms of the meaning that the subjects attach to it.

The interaction with referral agents generated valuable information. It highlighted potential risks for companies through financial losses, accidents, litigation and losing credibility in their niche market. This kind of information opens the debate for the type of risk questions that should form part of the assessment tools when troubled employees enter their company-paid EAP. The type of information generated through pre- and post intervention assessment must contribute to measurement taking place effortlessly. Through the qualitative component the researcher aimed to understand how referral agents interpret employees' emotional problems impacting on their productivity, how performance problems are documented within their workplace, what their expectation is of the programme and their perception of

improvement regarding productivity indicators. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised for this purpose.

Supervisors and line managers are an important component of the population utilising the programme and the information generated from them adds value to this study at two levels. Firstly their experience of the programme is more objective than that of the person being referred, thus adding value to the quantitative component of the study. Secondly, qualitative information has been generated from this part of the investigation by documenting referral agent experience of how performance challenges are recorded in the workplace, how this information is communicated when referring employees into the EAP as well as their experience of how the intervention contributed to improved performance specifically. The views of referral agents are particularly important, as this population provides a value judgement to top management about the impact of the programme on productivity.

This section thus represents the semi-structured interviews held with line-managers, also referred to as referral agents in the EAP. The researcher is making use of a randomized longitudinal survey as the research design for this study (Grinnel & Williams: 1990:159). The longitudinal design maintains a focus on behavioural changes over a period of time and its impact on the company financial bottom-line. For Company One twelve participants were selected and for Company Two another twelve participants were selected. Participants selected for the study were line managers to the employees who participated in the quantitative part of the study and were responsible for their referral into the program.

The researcher did a **qualitative content analysis**. Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Shaw (1995:288) indicate that in this instance the emphasis is more on meaning rather than on quantification. Patton (2002:453) states that content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes volumes of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings. Themes had been identified from data obtained through means of semi-structured interviews.

The following format is utilised in discussing the themes derived from the

responses during the interviews:

- *Interpretation of data*
- *Quotations from discussions*
- *Theory-control*
- *Conclusion*

The following themes were identified from the discussion deriving from the semi-structured interviews :

- *Lack of specific training*
- *Progressive discipline*
- *Identification of deteriorating work performance*
- *The referral process*
- *Documentation*
- *Financial implication of lower productivity*
- *The social impact of lower productivity*
- *Expectation of improved performance vs. real change*
- *Consistency of change*

The above themes reflect areas of interest that stretches further than a pure cost benefit analysis. The first, second, fourth and fifth themes highlight areas that are valuable for program development in general. Participants in this part of the study contributed both from a subjective (part of the organisation who experience the service), and an objective (not recipient of clinical services) view. Their contributions illustrate their experience of the value of the program as well as their needs for program enhancement.

5.2 **PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS**

The table below provides a profile of the participants involved in the qualitative study. There has been a varying degree of experience in terms of their role as

referral agents. The responses of the participants together with other demographic information will be presented in a table form.

Table 5.1: Profile of participants from Company One

Participant	Number of years in line management position	Age	Gender	Educational qualifications	Line manager / supervisors
1	12 years	45 years	Male	Matric	Line manager
2	Since inception	43 years	Male	Matric	Supervisor
3	3 years	51 years	Male	Matric	Supervisor
4	1 ½ year	33 years	Male	Post Matric	Supervisor
5	28 years	58 years	Male	Matric	Line manager
6	15 years	47 years	Male	Matric	Line manager
7	10 years	42 years	Male	Matric	Line manager
8	4 years	47 years	Male	Matric	Line manager
9	Since start of EAP	54 years	Male	Matric	Supervisor
10	5 years	32 years	Male	Post Matric	Supervisor
11	9 years	43 years	Male	Post Matric	Line manage
12	10 years	57 years	Male	Matric	Line manager

According to the programme manager at the company the programme has been in operation for the last 13 years. Two of the respondents indicated their involvement in the programme to exceed the total years the programme has been in operation. It is possible that they misunderstood the question and interpreted it as referring to their role as supervisors/line managers rather than acting as referral agents.

The table below provides a profile of the participants from Company Two involved in the qualitative study. There has been a varying degree of experience in terms of their role as referral agents. The responses of the twelve respondents together with other demographic information will be presented in a table form.

Table 5.2: Profile of participants from Company Two

Participants	**Number of years in position**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Educational qualifications**	**Line manager / supervisors**
1	2 years	49	Male	Post matric	Team manager
2	12 years	39	Male	Post matric	Team manager
3	10 years	36	Female	Post matric	Department manager
4	2 ½ year	36	Female	Post matric	Team manager
5	3 years	43	Female	Post matric	Department manager
6	13 years	39	Female	Post matric	Department manager
7	10 years	29	Female	Post matric	Team manager
8	11 years	50	Female	Post matric	Team manager

9	7 years	34	Male	Post matric	Department manager
10	5 years	30	Female	Post matric	Team manager
11	13 years	36	Female	Post matric	Team manager
12	3 ½ years	37	Female	Post matric	Department manager

5.3 **Lack of specific training:**

5.3.1 **Quotations from discussions on supervisory training: Company One**

- *Participants 1, 3, 6, 7 and 11: confirmed training which was provided. ' Yes, we had training more in managing employee effectiveness where you are given the human resource benefits status and understanding the (PNP- a course helping you to manage people effectively) and the proper referral if an employee becomes a problematic child, types of referral and why you would refer.(Participant 1)*
- *Participants 3: Yes, there is a course we do at a lower level, called: Managing People Effectively. It taught us to identify troubled employees, e.g. absenteeism on repeated and specific days.*
- *Participants 6: Yes, you sort of build what they teach you there and you start pick it up in people, their related problems, for example, if he is on drugs and he is not his normal self.*
- *Participants 1: We have been to a couple of in-house training on how to check for guys for attendance, look at absence on Mondays/Fridays, coming under the influence, signs to look out for.*
- *Participants 2: No referral agent training. What we were shown is the company policy and procedure and the EAP referral form.*
- *Participants 4: No, you move into the role of supervisor and you do not get in-depth training on how to work with people. We do training courses but this is*

basic to help you slot into the job. On the job you encounter real life situations and you feel you do not have what it takes.

- *Participants 9: Have not been involved in EAP training. Have been involved in management training where a focus was also on how to identify troubled employees, etc.*
- *Participants 10: No formal training. I had training whereby we had to do courses on problem solving, performance management, quality, safety, and all those courses. These courses did not specifically help to use the programme, even though they would touch on should you have employees who gives you trouble in terms of absenteeism, poor performance, but not to help you as a supervisor to identify if someone has a problem or are performing poorly. It is now with my experience that I can see if a person's performance is not good.*
- *Participants 8: Had no formal training, just the company (PNP) in terms of helping you with hearings, ext. Training would have helped and is critical. I have supervisors reporting to me who are also not sure how the programme works. I sit in on hearings and sometimes also chair hearings. It is strange how people get referred, a recent guy was referred and never attended and committed an offense again. If supervisors are trained a bit more it could prevent such things from happening again.*

5.3.2 **Interpretation of data on supervisory training: Company One**

This theme is linked to the second and third areas of the interview schedule. From the responses it seems as if the majority of the participants were exposed to training in their capacity to manage the productivity of subordinates. The training programme referred to by these respondents are called "managing employees effectively". The programme manager at the worksite describes this programme as follows:

> "*It is a course which gives basic information on how to deal with employees incapacities, how the disciplinary processes work and how EAP services support the supervisors and managers in maintaining good discipline, performance and attendance".*

Participants 1, 3, 6, 7 and 11 of Company One regard this training as sufficient to enhance their skills in using the EAP effectively. This group of participants was able to identify aspects of the referral process and identification of troubled employees through behavioural patterns in this more generalised training programme. There is a perception that the training allows them to address policy requirements in the event of employees presenting with performance challenges in a humane and fair manner.

Participants 2, 4, 9, 10 & 8 were of the impression that training offered did not address their needs as referral agents using the programme. These participants were of the opinion that this programme did not provide them with the skills of how to deal with people when they are troubled and when faced with real life challenges. They often feel at a loss of effective people management tools. They see an indirect link with employee performance challenges through other courses but regard it as insufficient in guiding referral agents on how to use the programme effectively. This perception thus ties up with the view that more specialised training would give supervisors and managers the tools to help troubled employees more effectively.

5.3.3 **Quotations from discussion on supervisory training: Company Two:**

- *Participants 1: The training did not address my questions about the EWP and how I can effectively use it.* "referring to the section covered in the Industrial Relations training"
- *Participants 2: In my opinion there is a need to equip first line managers today with some of the most recent issues and developments and social issues people are bringing to work with them.*
- *I think it would be of great value as part of the induction plan in each business. Participants 3.*
- *I picked up my knowledge of the program through my own exposure to it. Participants 4.*

- *We had training twice for managers on how to use the program. It was a few years ago. It took us through the benefits of the program and how managers can use it. A further need would be to give some feedback on success stories. Participant 5*
- *I have not yet been exposed to training but the helpdesk has been very helpful and the process went smoothly. Participant 8*
- *Within the Industrial relations training EWP was covered and the three hour session was helpful. Participant 9*
- *The intranet has clear guidelines on how to use the program. Participant 6.*
- *It should be part of every manager's compulsory training. Managers should have an understanding of emotional challenges. Participant 12*
- *If there is more training for managers they would use it more appropriately. Maybe that is where the key lies. Train people how to use it more effectively and not only when they do not have a choice – put in the human side a bit more. Participant 4*

5.3.4 **Interpretation of data on supervisory training: Company Two:**

Participants varied in their perceptions of their exposure to supervisory training and the value of the training they have been exposed to. Participants 5 and 9 refer to specific "EWP training for managers" which took place a few years ago. They found this training valuable at the time. There have been suggestions by participant 2 that training today should include social issues that people are bringing to work with them, especially the younger generation who enter the job market. These issues include substance abuse, an understanding of the impact of different life events on individuals and a broader understanding of pathologies. Participant 12 were particularly perturbed by the lack of sensitivity with which she saw managers at a management forum discussed issues around bipolar disorder.

Generally participants have been exposed to a “module” on EWP within their IR training. Participant 9 is of the impression that this was sufficient to help them understand and use the EWP when confronted with troubled employees. The clustering of EWP training with the general Industrial Relations training may however mean that EWP as an independent component is not covered sufficiently. Participant 3 was of the opinion that EWP training should be part of the induction plan for each business unit. A very valuable comment made in the second mini-conference where the results of this research were presented, was the reasons why participants experience a lack of supervisory training. In many cases supervisory training is not receiving the attention that it should have while in other situations the actual participation in training sessions is problematic. This phenomenon creates the question whether the time is ripe for alternative training models.

5.3.5 **‘Theory regarding supervisory training’**

Tiner (2006:25) is of the impression that supervisory training remains an essential element of the training curriculum offered by Employee Assistance Programmes. Many EAPs however seems to find it hard to deliver a regular programme of training that will not only improve supervisors and managers awareness of EA services but will help them to better understand how to use the programme as a vital tool in dealing with troubled employees. Cagney (2006:18) supports this view and is of the impression that supervisory training, which prepares supervisors to become an effective early intervention and prevention agent, has been either abandoned or minimised in many EAPs.

Cagney believes that despite supervisory referrals and constructive confrontation being some of the core components of most EAPs, there have been problems with implementation and practice from the very beginning. As a result supervisory referral rates appear to run well below estimates of the prevalence of problems in the workplace. These types of referrals seem to be relatively high in newly implemented programmes but it generally decline rapidly thereafter.

Management consultation and supervisory training are part of the components that distinguish EAPs from common mental health services. Supervisors and managers refer employees to the programme due to a pattern of deteriorating work performance established through observation and documentation. Traditionally, supervisors and managers were trained to confront employees with evidence of unsatisfactory job performance and coach them on ways of improving their work while also emphasising the consequences of continued poor performance. Cagney is of the impression that this model however do not seem to interconnect with the reality of many current programmes. The issue of documentation also seems to be neglected and confrontation is rarely related to job performance. Instead, confrontation is often preceded by a triggering event.

Beidel (2006:29) take the value of supervisory training to another level by referring to the connection between the EAP's mission and the organization's business objectives. Whether viewed as a traditional performance management resource or a work-life enhancement, the EAP contributes to the organisation by providing a resource to deal with performance issues when all other strategies seem to fail.

5.3.6 **Conclusion:**

The theory related to supervisory training uses terms like constructive confrontation, identification of deteriorating performance through observation and documentation and management consultation as being unique to the field of EAPs. These terms are very specific to training programmes designed for referral agents and its significance may be lost when it becomes part of a more generalised training programme, hence the experience by the majority of the respondents that they were not trained on how to use the programme effectively. The existing theory seems to highlight a decline in referral agent training in general and cite this as one of the reasons why there seems to be an international trend towards a drop in supervisory referrals.

5.4 Progressive discipline

5.4.1 Quotations from discussions on progressive discipline: Company One

- *As a line manager, we try to call them up one by one and talk to them, give verbal warnings, explain that performance is bad, time keeping is bad and motivate them to talk to us if they need assistance and that we can refer them to the EAP. Participant 1.*
- *We first try to help someone and refer them to the EAP for assistance. If no positive change, we will call employees and make them aware that they are not pulling their socks and then we will start following the steps. There are three or four steps, depending on the offenses. Participant 1.*
- *My first step is that I personally counsel the guy, give him advice and give him a date to review the situation. I then monitor his as time goes by, it may be going well during review period. If three/four months along the line we pick up pattern again, talk to him. He may be finding excuses, blaming others but we suggest he need to find professional help. We then refer to EAP. Participant 12.You identify there is a problem, find that the employee's performance is affecting operational requirements. You sit the employee down and may go down the counselling route. You often find that there is an underlying problem and then approach the EAP. Participant 4.*

5.4.2 Interpretation of data on progressive discipline: Company One

Progressive discipline is linked to the fourth and fifth area of investigation in the qualitative component of this research. Participants described a process of problem identification, informal discussions, verbal warnings, written warnings and eventually final written warnings. They seem to keep in mind the employee as a human being who sometimes, during the course of their working life has personal problems that may impact on his/her performance.

All participants in this part of the investigation seem to have a sound knowledge of their company's principles of progressive discipline. They follow this process when they are encountering deterioration in employee work performance. Offences seem to be clustered into categories, depending on its severity.

- Category 1 (counselling)
- Category 2 (counselling and first written warning)
- Category 3 (final written warning)
- Category 4 (dismissal [excessive absenteeism, mistakes that can close business, drunk at work])

Discussions with the troubled employee are a tool that is used throughout the progressive discipline process and it creates an ongoing opportunity for the employee to address his problems through the necessary means. EAP services are offered at any stage of the discipline process and depend on the nature of the performance problem as well as the referral agent's management of the process.

5.4.3 **Quotations from discussions on progressive discipline:**

Company Two

- *The EWP is one of the management tools. I very seldom choose the IR process. Our IR consultants would often ask whether you used the EWP. It is generally seen as more humane. Participant 6.*
- *I think the EWP should not supplement or derail performance management and the latter should still continue. I however think it becomes a very important tool in the performance management process. Participant 2.*

- *"Indien ons nie die roete gegaan het nie sou sy die IR proses moes deurgaan. Ons het die meer menslike roete gegaan. EWP en IR het hand aan hand gegaan. Participant 8.*
- *The EWP is an integral part of the industrial relations process. Participant 12.*
- *One of the processes is that you must inform them and tell them they have access to EWP. EWP is offered in the document that they sign and I read it out to them so that there is clarity on what they sign. Participant 5.*
- *I had my disciplinary processes in place but the EWP actually reverted all the others which I should have followed. Participant 1*

5.4.4 **Interpretation of data on progressive discipline: Company Two**

Participants from Company Two describe an Industrial Relations process that clearly defines and guides the performance management process. The company has a five-point rating scale and if a person obtains a score of two and lower, he/she must be put on formal poor performance management with a referral to whatever mechanism to help the individual. This can include the referral to the EWP. The company follows a standardised performance management process and the manner it is set out in the Industrial Relations process is seen as methodical, clearly describing the relevant steps from the first to the final. Participant 11 described the process she followed to include the following steps:

- Step one: an informal discussion that was documented and signed by the affected employee.
- Step two: a formal enquiry that led to a first written warning valid for six months.

- Step three: a second formal enquiry with a final written warning valid for six months. This process involved union representation for the affected employee with a senior staff member as the judge.
- Step four: a formal enquiry leading to a dismissal.
- Step five: internal appeal process.
- Step six: (external process), use of the CCMA.

Although the above reflects a clearly defined process, participants seem to vary in their approach to its use. The views of participants (see quotes from participants' 2 and 8 and 1) differs significantly with one holding a view that the role of EWP should be complimentary and not replacing the Industrial Relations process and the other had the experience that the option to use the program prevented them from either starting or following through the IR process. Participants are of the opinion that a referral to the EWP, or at least a suggestion to use it becomes an almost essential part of the whole performance management process and if not considered, it can cast doubt that the employer has done everything in their power to address the problem, (see quotes from participant 6, 5 and 12).

5.4.5 **Theory regarding progressive discipline**

McGill (1994:45) describe the progressive disciplinary process as consisting of the following commonly known processes:

- *The oral warning*. This process is immediate and is generally used for first or minor offences in the workplace, or when a worker has failed to respond positively to a correctional discussion.
- *The written warning*. This action alerts the employee to the consequences if they fail to make the relevant changes following the oral warning. It is also used in the event of more serious offenses. A step not described by McGill but that is generally used in the corporate environment is the final written

warning, giving an employee a further opportunity to change the problem behaviour.

- *Suspension*. This action removes the employee from the worksite and is generally used for offenses of a serious nature.

Cascio (1998:535) adds the following dimensions to the process and indicate that discipline should be;

- *Immediate*, so that there can be no misunderstanding about why discipline was imposed.
- *With warning*, as employees needs to know what the consequences of undesirable work behaviour will be.
- *Consistent*, for discipline to be perceived as fair.
- *Impersonal*, not to allow for favouritism by disciplining some employees and not those whom they seem to favour.

5.4.6 **Conclusion re progressive discipline**

Both companies seem to have a sound progressive disciplinary process with clear guidelines of what offenses necessitate what response within the disciplinary process. The categories as described by the participants are similar to those described in the relevant theory. These are:

- Category 1 (counselling)
- Category 2 (counselling and first written warning)
- Category 3 (final written warning)
- Category 4 (dismissal [excessive absenteeism, mistakes that can close business, drunk at work])

The referral to the EAP is not really tied to any specific category and the programme is offered at any stage deemed appropriate. The referral agents' attitudes, employee openness to the process as well as the nature of the

problem determine how the progressive disciplinary process and the company EAP is used as interrelated units to help employees improve impaired performance.

5.5 Identification of deteriorating work performance

5.5.1 Quotations from discussions on identification of deteriorating work performance: Company One

- *Person present with excessive absenteeism, lack of concentration on the job, withdrawn to themselves, if you give them an instruction they are unwilling to carry it out. The person may come late and leave the line early. You can see if they have been drinking the night before. Participant 2.*
- *... employee is leading to the route where absenteeism is higher and work is not consistent. Participant 7.*
- *If I find that a person keeps missing a defect we record it and have a discussion with the person and show them where they went wrong. Participant 11*
- *... if you pick up this person is absent every Friday. Participant 10...*
- *... while in their job they slack and make mistakes. Participant 3.*
- *You identify there is a problem, find that the employee's performance is affecting operational requirements. Participant 4.*
- *I watch the patterns of absenteeism and his performance on the job and get feedback from team leaders. Participant 5.*
- *Person has been one of my high-flyers. Despite giving him off, his work was just going down. He could not cope with the thought that his wife was going to divorce him at some stage. He started abusing alcohol a lot. Participant 12*

5.5.2 Interpretation of data re identification of deteriorating work performance: Company One

This theme refers to the fourth and fifth area of investigation in the qualitative enquiry. Company One is a production orientated plant and impaired performance by individuals in many sections have a direct impact on the production of motor vehicles. Work teams have very clear output requirements and as a result, performance is closely monitored.

Within this company reference is made to **indicators of decline** in work performance rather than **perceived personal problems**. This element helps managers and supervisors to remain factual in their dealings with employees and not falling into the management trap of becoming a therapist rather than a manager of good performance. Examples of deterioration in performance are:

- employees missing a defect;
- a pattern of absenteeism and excessive sick leave;
- performance affecting operational requirements;
- lack of concentration on the job; and
- consistent pattern of arriving late and leaving early.

Responses by participants1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 12 present a more personalized approach to the decline in work performance with a focus on employee relational problems and substance use outside of the workplace. It is not within the scope of this investigation to determine the impact of this approach and the researcher will rely on the views highlighted in popular literature indicating that this is the less appropriate approach.

5.5.3 Quotations from discussions on identification of deteriorating work performance: Company Two

- *The employee was absent more frequently and could manage consistency only for short periods of time. She would come later and leave work early. Participant 11*
- *This is a call centre environment and we found an employee swearing at a client, not understanding the client's context. Participant 9.*
- *The quality of the work deteriorates. We are operating in a letter-writing environment to clients and regulatory bodies. You can pick up a lack of focus through a superficial response and bad grammar. Participant 6*
- *It manifest itself in poor attendance, this is probably your most frequent warning sign. Adherence to schedule is another challenge. Participant 2*
- *It also comes through in people's tone of voice on the phone, being listless, lack of energy and losing their temper easily. This is a call centre space and we can pick it up easily. We then have clients demanding to speak to a manager. Participant 2*
- *Employee became emotional and made many mistakes. Participant 8*
- *You can pick it up in the posture changing, their energy levels down, leaving work early and an increase in mistakes. Participant 12*
- *Over time you see people slip and slip and they don't see that their performance is dropping. Participant 5*
- *I would say that their personal problems impacts very hard on production, their attitude, especially those people in a financial crisis. Participant 1*

5.5.4 Interpretation of data: identification of deteriorating work performance: Company Two

Participants within Company Two are generally of the impression that employee personal problems contributes significantly to a decline in their work performance. They identified a cluster of behaviour that is often visible when a decline is setting in. Typical behaviour is a lack of consistency and follow-through on tasks that needs to be performed. The quality of the work they produce can also deteriorate, with mistakes being made due to a lack of concentration. Participant 5 is of the opinion that junior staff members are especially vulnerable to having their personal problems spilling over to their workplace.

Within both the call centre environment and other product specific departments, the experience is that employees' attitude within the workplace are significantly affected by their personal problems. Their behaviour often becomes erratic and they present with short-temperedness. Within a call centre environment, employees' ability to interact with clients on the telephone is an integral part of the product they deliver. Deterioration in performance can often be identified through their tone of voice, the quality of the conversation and an inability to manage the needs of the caller. This can result in an increase of customer complaints.

Different forms of absenteeism is also identified as one of the most frequent warning signs of deteriorating work performance with the depletion of all forms of leave early in the leave cycle, arriving late for work and leaving work early as the most prominent pointers.

5.5.5 Theory regarding identification of deteriorating work performance

When people experiences personal problems, it does not automatically earn them the title of troubled employees. It is only when an employee's personal problems interfere with his/her work performance that it should become a concern for a supervisor or line manager.

Cascio (1999:586) reflects on the historical changes in the role of supervisors when dealing with troubled employees. In the traditional alcoholism treatment programme the supervisor looked for symptoms of alcoholism and then diagnosed the problem. Under the modern EAP however, the supervisor is responsible only for identifying declining work performance. If normal corrective measures fail, the supervisor confronts the employee with evidence of his or her poor performance and offers the EAP.

Examples of a visible deterioration of work performance are:

- Insubordination;
- Conflict with other employees or with the supervisor;
- Reduced output;
- Increased errors or defects;
- Unexcused absences;
- Unexcused tardiness;
- Leaving workstation without permission;
- Dress code violations;
- Safety rules violations;
- Concealing or consuming drugs or alcohol on company premises; and
- Involvement with the law, garnishing orders or drug trafficking.

5.5.6 **Conclusion re identification of deteriorating work performance**

The referral agents who participated in this study seem to focus on the decline in work performance rather than a premature or timeous involvement in employees' personal problems. Company One is a production-orientated environment and employees need to be on-site according to a structured schedule. Deterioration in work performance will immediately put pressure on the team, and especially the team leader. It would almost certainly have an impact on the daily targets of the

team. As a result the structure of the work environment supports the early detection of impaired work performance.

The company has a zero-tolerance policy on substance abuse. When an individual shows signs of intoxication, the relevant on-site tests are done, the relevant disciplinary steps taken and a referral to the EAP is made, with or without any other signs of deteriorating work performance. The following two statements from participants refer to the above statement:

- *If person comes to work under the influence of alcohol, he will be sent to the programme.*
- *If a person is found in possession of substance or has a work-related problem, action needs to be taken.*

Although Company Two has a different industrial focus, deterioration in performance can also be identified relatively early in its presentation. The organisation works according to strict return dates. If these are violated, it can result in complaints from customers and penalties may need to be paid. Team managers are thus monitoring their team performance and are able to identify individuals who fall behind consistently.

5.6 **The referral process**

5.6.1 **Quotations from discussions on the referral process: Company One**

- *Participants 7. The employee may feel it is a disgrace to be send to the EAP and we have to convince him it is not an ugly place and privacy and confidentiality is protected. He is worried that other workers may find out.*
- *Clients may think that going to the social worker will affect them negatively and will contribute to them being disciplined at a later stage. Participant 1*

- *It depends on the situation whether just counselling or whether a combination of counselling and EAP. Participant 4*
- *...outside the EAP the normal performance process will follow...Participant 6*
- *I call person in with his team leader, discuss deterioration and offer EAP. If they say no, we leave it at that but start monitor. If enough facts, we call him back, talk about performance and offer EAP again. If he still refuses, it is his choice but we will start the disciplinary process with counselling, first written warning and final written warning. Participant 3*
- *If someone refuses to use the programme, we cannot force him. Participant 9*
- *If they do not cooperate they can get into trouble... I will take the necessary disciplinary steps which can lead to dismissal. Participant 2*

5.6.2 **Interpretation of data regarding the referral process: Company One**

The referral of troubled employees into the EAP seems to be guided by the type of problem the employee present with, the employee's willingness to participate and his/her trust in the confidentiality of the process. Participant 7 are of the impression that employees sometimes regard it as a shame to be sent to the EAP and that they are particularly worried about privacy and confidentiality. While the latter two concepts are generally included in the marketing strategy, as well as the policy statement of any EAP, employees may still question the level of privacy they will enjoy when using a programme sponsored by their workplace.

The referral into the EAP remains a personal decision by the employee. During the course of discussing impaired performance, the line manager would suggest the use of the EAP as a formal or informal process. Participant 9 suggests that he would call in the employee, refer to the deterioration of performance and suggest the use of the programme. For him, the use of the EAP does not replace the normal disciplinary processes. He experienced that sometimes troubled employees would initially refuse the use of the programme. However, when they are confronted with a final written warning, they are more likely to agree to a referral. Participant 2, 3 and 11 regard the referral into the EAP as a first step that may prevent a disciplinary

process from taking place while participant 12 regards it as a tool that, if used in conjunction with the disciplinary process, may prevent the implementation of severe action steps. While individual participants have slight differences in how they use the referral process, it seems that there are broad guidelines within which all these differences take place.

Participants generally agree that the interrelatedness of the disciplinary process and the referral to the EAP is largely guided by the nature of the problem. Someone found under the influence of substances will for instance receive a final written warning as well as a formal referral to the EAP. When a mild deterioration of work performance is detected the person may be counselled first and if failing to improve, the use of the EAP is suggested.

5.6.3 **Quotations from discussion on the referral process: Company Two**

- *Typically we do one-on-ones monthly and when there is a personal issue affecting their performance, we recommend the EWP and more often than not they do. Participant 2*
- *A person should be very careful under what circumstances do you force someone to go to the programme because the minute you force the person, you breed a whole lot of negativity. Participant 4*
- *I used the helpline for all the referrals I did. The people on the phone were good, understood the urgency of the issue and tried to be as compassionate as they could be. They asked appropriate questions to lead them to the correct therapist. Participant 5*
- *There is generally an informal or a formal discussion about performance before referral. It is not necessarily a documented process. Participant 12*
- *The referral process is well-defined and explained on the group-net. Participant 10*

- *Die verwysingsproses het glad verloop. Ek het die tolvrye nommer geskakel en hulle was baie behulpsaam. Indien ons nie die EWP roete gegaan het nie sou sy die IR roete gegaan het. Ons het die meer menslike roete geneem. EWP en IR het hand aan hand gegaan. Participant 8*
- *The referral to the EWP is generally problem-related. Participant 6*
- *We first need to get consent from the staff member, if he accepts to go there it is the management's duty to get the contact numbers, we contact our helpdesk and they set an appointment in place for us. Participant 1*
- *As employer we have the onus to ensure that you try all means before you go the end route of dismissing someone for poor performance. The referral is a powerful tool where a neutral person comes in. The referral puts feeling into the process of poor performance management. Participant 3*

5.6.4 **Interpretation of data regarding the referral process: Company Two**

The referral to the EWP is presented as an integral part of this company's Industrial Relations process. The EWP is seen as an important management tool that puts a more humane touch to the whole Industrial Relations process. There seems to be an expectation within the IR process that a person be given the option of a referral to the EWP and that it may be an indictment to the management style if they fail to do so. For some participants like 1 and 12 the referral to the EWP can potentially revert the IR processes while others like participant 2 see these processes as running concurrently.

The decision when to refer an employee to the EWP seems to be dependent on the nature of the problem as well as the judgement of the particular manager and is not an option linked to a specific step in the Industrial Relations process. This referral is also dependent on the acceptance from the employee as the individual still has the right to refuse it. Participant 4 experienced the referral to have been forced on the specific employee as part of the IR process. For this participant the

interrelatedness of the two processes had a negative spin-off and the value of the program has been diluted. Participants 2 and 6 indicated that the EWP as a resource is discussed with employees within their monthly one-on-one discussions. It is when a person who clearly has personal problems impacting on their performance, does not take up the option, that the manager step in and make the referral.

Concerns about confidentiality have been highlighted as an element that negatively affects referral into the wellbeing programme.

Participants 5, 12, 1 and 8 find the helpdesk very helpful and experienced professional guidance when phoning to refer an employee. The guidelines to follow when making a referral are also available on the internal intranet site. A few participants find this helpful while the majority of them found the actual referral through the helpdesk as more effective.

5.6.5 **Theory regarding the referral process:**

Sonnenstuhl and Trice (1995:20) is of the opinion that employee education is important to familiarise employees with the EAP policy and programme. If employees are unfamiliar with the scope of the EAP, they are likely to be resistant and not trust the value of the programme. Employee education can take place on more than one platform. The traditional form of training would be having groups of employees together for lunchtime training sessions. Training can also be incorporated in orientation programmes for new employees. Line managers and supervisors also play an important role in educating employees on the scope and value of the programme. What is important is that the training covers all the important elements that will help employees to “buy in” to the value of mental health services, as well as developing an understanding of how it is offered by the workplace.

Rue and Byars (1989:235) discusses the general counselling process and the referral of the troubled employee as an interrelated process. They indicate that the confrontation between the supervisor and the troubled employee should consist

primarily of three steps; a performance review, referral to counselling and assistance, and a discussion of the consequences of the employee's actions. Their discussion thus refers to a general guideline of basic elements that should be part of the referral process. Sonnenstuhl and Trice (1995:28) takes this argument a step further and uses the concepts of constructive confrontation and progressive discipline interchangeably as skills used by the line manager/supervisor to address performance challenges of troubled employees. They refer to it as follows:

> "*For constructive confrontation to be effective, a supervisor may need to hold a number of discussions with an employee whose performance is unacceptable. In the confrontational part of the initial discussion, the employee is given the specifics of unacceptable work performance and warned that continued unacceptable performance is likely to lead to formal discipline. In the constructive part, supervisors remind employees that practical assistance is available through the EAP. Subsequent steps in the process depend on the response of the employee. If performance improves, nothing happens; if unacceptable performance continues, several more informal discussions may follow."*

The constructive part of these discussions conveys emotional support for the employee's wellbeing while the confrontational part restates the expectations of work performance. These two concepts thus create a healthy balance between care for the employee as well as protecting the financial bottom-line of the organisation.

5.6.6 **Conclusion regarding the referral process**

The referral process for both companies seems to be influenced by factors like the nature of the problem, employee willingness to participate and the process as adopted by specific line managers/supervisors. What is important is a sound knowledge of the company EAP policy and procedures. This knowledge base will help both employees and line managers/supervisors to use the programme effectively within the performance management process. The concepts of constructive confrontation and progressive discipline should be a central part of the training programme for line managers/supervisors.

5.7 Documentation

5.7.1 Quotations from discussions on 'documentation': Company One

- *Participants 11. We keep record cards and I could pick up a pattern and called him in. After a couple of discussions we pick up what the problems are and refer him into the EAP.*
- *We work on an hourly score card and you can see from the foreman's feedback that this person cannot make it and you then know that something is wrong. Participant 5*
- *We do not necessarily have documented records of performance challenges but try to fill in as much as possible on the EAP form. We keep records of absenteeism and sick leave, etc. Need to pick up a pattern before referring to the programme. Participant 6*
- *I do keep documentation of the performance challenges. Participant 3*
- *The seniors want to see my performance like looking at absenteeism, how you are doing in the job, including the productivity. We report monthly on how many people were absent, how many people have you counselled, how many received warning forms, how many minor accidents happened in the department. Participant 10*

5.7.2 Interpretation of data on documentation: Company One

Participants mentioned the importance of documentation, as part of the progressive disciplinary process. Documentation allows the supervisor/line manager the opportunity to pick up a pattern of consistent work performance challenges and discuss these with the troubled employee.

There seems to be some discrepancy amongst the perceptions of some participants 6 and others like 11, 5 and 3 as to whether performance challenges are documented or not, as seen in the quotations above. The form of documentation

furthermore does not seem standardised amongst different departments and the focus is rather on having a system that fits in to the operational requirements of the specific department. What seems to be the synthesis within the description of documentation for these respondents are the purpose of documented evidence. Participant 10 made an interesting comment on documentation when he stated that documentation is not only for the purpose of tracking employee performance, but that it also serve the purpose of departmental performance reporting to senior management.

Documentation is also not described in much detail in these discussions, but because of the importance thereof, the researcher is highlighting it as a separate theme.

5.7.3 **Quotations from discussions on 'documentation': Company Two**

- *Participants 3. You get a five-point rating scale and if a person gets a two and lower, he/she must be put on formal poor performance management with referral to whatever mechanism to help that person.*
- *The IR processes are methodical. You have to do one, two and three and there are no emotional support build into these. Participant 11*
- *You get a form that you must issue to the person to say that they have or are about to exceed their sick leave. One of the expectations is that you must inform them and tell them they have access to EWP. Participant 5*
- *We have informal or formal discussions about performance before referral. It is not necessarily a documented process. Participant 12*
- *You can go back to your discussions on record and show them where they indicated "things are not going well at home, ext". Then you can offer them the EWP as a lifeline. Participant 1*
- *In this case we looked at his time recording system against mine and it did not add up. I prepared an IR process but due to circumstances I referred him to EWP before going through the disciplinary process. Participant 6*

5.7.4 **Interpretation of data on documentation: Company Two**

Participants from Company Two showed inconsistency in their views towards documented performance management processes before referral to the Employee Wellbeing Program. Participant 12 specifically indicated that the formal referral of employees is not necessarily linked to a documented process.

All participants however link the formal referral of troubled employees with the Industrial Relations process. The latter, by nature, is a documented process as any labour dispute without clearly recorded processes, will be harmful to the employer. Participant 11 referred to the IR process as methodical with clearly defined steps following each other. When the referral thus takes place as part of the IR process, documented evidence of performance challenges should thus be available.

5.7.5 **Theory regarding documentation**

According to Marr and Roessler (1994:107) reduction in work quality occurs because the individual fails to notice the pattern of deterioration. They are made aware of it through feedback from supervisors or line managers. The supervisor should however confront the employee with specific evidence of poor performance. Rue and Byars (1989:235) is of the opinion that reviewing available documentation with the employee is a healthy approach as he/she realises through this that there is documented evidence of poor work performance. Without the necessary documented evidence, the employee can challenge the factuality of statements made by the supervisor/line-manager.

Boghosian (2006:10) is of the opinion that workplace productivity, liability and morale depend to a large extend on the quality of people's communication. In the event of dealing with a troubled employee, it is even more important that there be no confusion about what constitutes poor performance, when incidences occurred and what the expectations for improvement are. Flanagan and Finger (2000:271)

make a further important comment about written records. As the "Access to Information Legislation" allows individuals to have access to any recorded details about them, it is just good practice that these records be objective and not prejudicial in any way. It is also good practice to ask employees to sign the records at meetings.

> *Documentation is a fact of organizational life for most managers. While such paperwork is never pleasant, it is necessary, and in the case of performance-related incidents should conform to the following guidelines:*
>
> 1. *Describe what led up to the incident – the problem and the setting. Is this a first offense or part of a pattern?*
> 2. *Describe what actually happened, and be specific: that is, include names, dates, times, witnesses, and other pertinent facts.*
> 3. *Describe what must be done to correct the situation.*
> 4. *State the consequences of further violations. (Cascio 1998:536)*

5.7.6 **Conclusion re documentation**

It may be problematic if documentation of declined work performance is not standardized within an organisation. This may lead to some employees being overseen for some violations while other employees are disciplined for similar offenses. Documentation also strengthens the case of any line manager/supervisor who needs to confront an employee with evidence of impaired performance.

It is one of the guiding principles of any good EAP that constructive confrontation should be accompanied by documented evidence of declined work performance. Training programmes that focus on skills development for referral agents should ideally have a significant coverage of the importance of documented evidence. The researcher is also of the opinion that standardisation within organizations would contribute significantly towards fairness and effectiveness of the practice.

5.8 Financial implication of decreased productivity

5.8.1 Quotations from the discussions on the financial implication of decreased productivity: Company One

- *Participant 3. The team leader must stand in for the absent person and I have to stand in for the team leader, who is going to do my job?*
- *Participant 9. The process is set up for you to have a specific amount of people working in one area. If one person is absent, the link is broken and the other employees cannot meet their targets because it is set up to accommodate a specific amount of team members to fulfil that task.*
- *...you are not achieving a stable production, your absenteeism has gone high, so it is a chain reaction and the next number must work double high because this person is absent and they must do two people's job. Participant 12.*
- *Must put team leader in that position and the team leader cannot look after the amount of people he's got and check the quality and relieve those people to go to the toilet and see if they are doing the standardized work. Participant 2*
- *Sometimes we have to do reworks to make up for the scraps and this must be done through overtime work. Thus have rejects that cannot be used, use new parts to rebuild the part and have to pay people overtime to build the part. We look at about thousands and thousands of rands. One component may cost you R800 and sometimes you have 10 per month, so you talk about R8000 only on one line and you have 9 different lines. Apart from the parts being scraped, what about the labour costs. Then you have a smash-up and you smash the tool because the guy did not put the component in correctly. It then damages the machine and it can go up to R30 000. Participant 1*
- *We are in the financial department and we pay suppliers. If we do not pay suppliers in time, they can stop delivery and stop production on the plant, especially big suppliers. Participant 12*
- *We have a TATT time. Within each process the line moves within 99 seconds and if you delay and you stop a line for about five minutes, 99 seconds is like a minute and a half, so you lose like four vehicles in about five minutes. This is quite a severe impact. Participant 11*

- *...it puts a lot of pressure on the rest of the department to make sure that the work is done and we then have to work overtime and other people who stand in for others start falling behind on their own work. Sometimes even have to get in a temp. It means the company has to pay extra on salary as the person absent produce a sick note and also have to pay the temp. Participant 6*
- *It is not a one-player environment, it is a team environment and absence will affect the whole team. If one person do not pitch you have another person who must do two people's work. It you have two break-downs the person must fix his own and then move on to another person's breakdown. These result in down-time – thus having a knock-on effect, meaning you are not building cars and thus losing money. Participant 8*
- *If I have to build 100 cars I have to and not 95. Loss of production means loss of customers, up to 5 customers per day. Cars are made per order and not to store. It is detrimental to sales and we are thus not meeting market demand. We do have an annual market share and if I do not meet daily targets, the company cannot meet market sale. One customer means they speak to others, thus a loss of future customers. One vehicle cost about R200 000 and you thus struggle to make a profit. Participant 7*
- *Engine cost between R50 000 and R60 000 and if I damage it, replacement is expensive. You also play with people's lives, especially customer lives. Replacement is also not too easy as it work in a sequence. I buy parts from other departments and if I damage I have to buy it again. It causes delays and we work on a TATT time on one and a half minute for a vehicle to come off the production line. If I stop for 10 minutes it affects the delivery of 6 cars. These are SUV's of about R300 000 rand each. Participant 3*
- *(If we were having a score of 280 and we only made 260, we are missing 20 units and we have to work overtime for 36 people for an hour at time and a half. It works out to a lot of money. Participant 2*

5.8.2 Interpretation of data on financial implication of decreased productivity: Company One

The participants overwhelmingly are of the impression that decreased productivity has a substantial impact on the productivity of the organisation. The organisational risks are identified and presented in four significant sub-themes:

- **Increased absenteeism of troubled employees puts pressure on team leaders and supervisors** whose role it is to oversee the quality and delivery of their production line. These senior members then have to stand in for absent members and this compromise their supervisory role. Absenteeism also puts added pressure on other members of the team who generally are present and produce work of a good standard. These members build up resistance, as they feel overwhelmed with the extra pressure being put on them.
- **Absenteeism and faults on the production line have a significant impact on the delivery of parts and eventually the delivery of vehicles to the public**. The unit costs to these vehicles can easily be estimated in access of R300 000 per unit. The damage of parts as a result of decreased concentration levels of a troubled employee is also costly and this cost can vary from between R800 to about R60 000 . These losses are dependent on whether loss results from a damaged part that needs replacement or whether machinery has been damaged in the process.
- **Labour costs also increases in all departments that was covered through this study.** In both the production driven sections and the non-production driven sections absenteeism of members puts pressure on other members to work overtime or result in the hiring of temporary staff. This increases labour costs significantly and departmental budgets as well as the overall financial stability of the organisation is affected.
- **The impact on customer relations is also noteworthy in this context.** Within the non-production driven units, the non- or late payment of suppliers may result in them stopping the supply to the company. Lack of supplies has a direct impact on the delivery of vehicles to the public. Participants from the production-driven section of the company is also of the view that they risk losing customers if they are unable to deliver vehicles as per orders, thus decreasing the profits of the

organisation and negatively affecting the company's market share. Faulty parts can also put the public's lives at risk and this will filter through to the image of the company being negative affected.

5.8.3 Quotations from the discussions on the financial implication of decreased productivity: Company Two

- *Participant 1. Most months we sit with a lot of write-offs of which the company has to bear the costs. Yearly write-offs are in the region of millions in this area and that is merely due to a lack of concentration.*
- *Participant 7. We build relationships with our clients and they expect us to perform according to set deadlines. It can cost up to R90 000 a month in lost contracts and the department can close down as a result.*
- *If we put someone in the wrong investment portfolio and they lose money as a result, we have to refund him the loss. Participant 8*
- *We work with regulatory bodies as there are funds involved. The company's reputation will be damaged and you cannot measure that. Participant 6 and 12*
- *We accept risk on behalf of the company as we underwrite policies for people. Mistakes can put the company at risk of millions of rands….It is important for people to have good focus, feel confident about the decisions they make and know that they have followed all the steps and feel comfortable about these steps. Participant 5*
- *If an individual are paid 5 days late and their debit orders bounced, there is costs involved. We have to refund them for their bank charges. It is thus not only the actual embarrassment but also the costs attached to this. Participant 4*
- *If we have to quantify time, I had to use my time in heart to heart discussions with the employee about productivity both if she is late or do not arrive in time. Participant 2*

5.8.4 Interpretation of data on financial implication of decreased productivity: Company Two

Participants from Company Two were all in agreement that lower performance has a significant impact on the financial bottom line of the company. They were able to identify the financial inference on different levels. These are:

- *The cost of paying the salary of an absent employee.*
- *Overtime worked by other employees to compensate for the absent worker. These workers than often lack the concentration or time to focus on their own tasks effectively. In some instances the expense of temporary staff also needs to be taken in consideration.*
- *The salary paid to a manager who spends a significant amount of time counselling a troubled employee instead of focusing on his other tasks.*
- *The cost of actual mistakes ranging from the following:*
    - *Salaries that are paid late may result in people's debit orders being rejected. The company becomes liable for this cost.*
    - *Mistakes on life cover pay-outs that can result in millions of rands of losses. Placing a client in the incorrect portfolio may also mean that a person loses money and the company becomes liable to pay this person back. This can range between R1000 to R100 000.*
    - *Penalties from regulatory bodies for missed deadlines and poor quality. This is currently charged at a fee of R3000.*
- *Missing deadlines that can range from R3000 to R90 000 per month in penalties or lost contracts. In the case of lost contracts it may mean that the department can no longer be sustained and people may face the risk of job losses.*

- *The company's reputation also suffers due to the damage in its brand name and it compromises their position with their competitors. This cost is often not measurable but generally substantial.*

5.8.5 **Theory regarding the financial implication of decreased productivity**

The impact of lower productivity has been recognized and assessed in the South African job market for some time already. This is illustrated by the newspaper article (Rapport Loopbane 2 July 2006). Within this article, published in 2006, the financial impact of absenteeism per day for an employee earning R5000.00 a month was estimated at about R200 direct cost and R600 if indirect costs are included. At the time it was estimated that absenteeism cost the South African economy at least R20 milliard per year. Coppens (1997:10) further reiterates that any costs of absenteeism and low productivity above 4% of the general payroll can be regarded as excessive, (see *section 1.3.2 of report)*. The responses from participants in this study correlates with these published results and provides an even more detailed breakdown of the types of financial losses a company can incur as a result of production losses.

The responses of participants also highlighted the strain that absent team members put on the supervisory role. When they have to stand in for absent team members, they divert from their core functions. Rue and Byars (1989:14) describe the role of a supervisor/line manager as follows:

> *"The work of a supervisor is often categorized into five areas: planning, organizing, staffing, motivating and controlling. Planning involves determining the most effective means for achieving the work of the unit. Organizing involves distributing the work among the employees in the work group and arranging the work so that it flows smoothly. Staffing is concerned with obtaining and developing good people. Motivating involves getting employees to put forth maximum effort while doing their job. Controlling determines how well the work is being done compared with what was planned".*

The supervisor/line manager thus has a significant responsibility, as well as a vested interest in the performance of the team and the individuals operating in the team. If their attention is diverted into having to perform the tasks of their subordinates, they are not able to execute their supervisory role effectively and the productivity of the team suffers as a result.

5.8.6 **Conclusion re financial implication of decreased productivity**

It can be concluded that the financial impact of a decrease in productivity is significant for companies. Some of these costs can be easily measured, especially in production driven environments. Other costs may not be as easy to detect through the supervisory monitoring process. Losses occur at different levels and from the information obtained from participants, it is evident that losses in one department almost always have a spiralling effect, impacting on the delivery of final production units.

Supervisors and line managers are part of the key links to sustain the profitability of the company through healthy production lines. These staff members should be valued, supported and equipped through the relevant resources and training to help them optimise their function. Rue and Byars (1989:12) say that the primary measure used to determine a supervisor's success or failure is the productivity of the supervisor's work unit. Successful supervision requires the knowledge of, and ability to use, a multitude of skills.

5.9 The social impact of lower performance and changes after participation in the EAP

5.9.1 Quotations from discussions on the social impact of lower performance and changes after participation in the EAP: Company One

Impact:

- *It impacts a lot and there end up being no team work. We get complaints from the team and the person tends to fight with everybody. Participant 10*
- *Person with personal problems tend not to mingle with other people. Participant 6*
- *You find that the person with personal problems pulls himself away from the crowd and is not so social anymore. Participant 5*
- *People he works with tend to think he is a bad person and he experience that everybody is nitpicking on him. Participant 11*
- *Generally people socialize in groups but not the unhappy ones. Participant 1*
- *People withdraw and prefer not to be in the company of others. Generally we all need someone to talk to and open up. Participant 12*
- *People with problems will abuse whatever is available at social gatherings and destroy the social togetherness. Participant 7*

Changes after participation:

- *Once the person started on the program, you can see a change in his social performance. Participant 10*

- *You notice a big change, the person will socialize again and will not indulge in the wrong things. Participant 6*
- *We can see a change as they start mixing with the rest of the group and the guys who had an alcohol problem do not run away over lunchtime anymore, they start attending meetings like union meetings, ext. Participant 5*
- *I can pick up a difference and if you are monitoring and talk to other people, you get feedback that the person is doing much better. Participant 11*
- *People become more interactive with other people. Participant 1*
- *I see a change – before the person would not participate in social functions and now they are able to attend these functions without having to use alcohol or anything else. Participant 12*
- *We do see the change. Sometimes we expect change immediately and do not understand that it is a process. Sometimes our supervisors do not always understand what to look for and that is why training is important. We must have an understanding not only how to refer, but also understand how change takes place. Participant 8*
- *Previously troubled employees tend to be more relaxed and at social gatherings can pick up on other troubled employees and talk to and motivate them to use the program. Participant 7*

5.9.2 **Interpretation of data: Company One**

Participants from Company One are overwhelmingly of the opinion that people who experience personal problems do have a negative impact on their work teams. This impact varies from isolation from the team, conflict with team members, and avoidance of social functions because of their own fear of abusing alcohol at these events and in some instances negatively influencing team members when being disciplined for bad performance.

All the participants being interviewed was of the impression that employees' participation in the program yielded positive results for them. They reported an improvement in employees' interaction with team members. Previously troubled employees are generally more willing to participate in social events and are able to enjoy themselves without indulging in alcohol. Participant 7 also witnessed previously troubled employees being able identify other team members having problems and motivate them to use the program.

5.9.3 Quotations from discussions on the social impact of lower performance and changes after participation in the EWP: Company Two

Impact

- *Because of mood changes in individuals, we often came close to physical fights in the building. People are generally friends, but at that time your jokes are not welcome. Participant 1*
- *You see isolation from other people over lunchtimes. Participant 1*
- *At a team level there is a lack of sympathy for the person, a lack of understanding. So it affects team dynamics. Participant 2*
- *Because other team members feel the pressure, they become angry with the person and pick on him/her. They expect the manager to do something about it. Participant 5*
- *It has a huge negative impact. We do a climate survey where we test what the staff feels and it comes up in a big way because people are pressurized and they need to focus. They thus need everybody to pull their weight. Participant 5*
- *For staff it may appear that management is not doing anything about the troubled employee and they will be irritated by it. Participant 11*

- *It causes frustration for the team because although they understand what the person goes through, they do get to a point where they say this is just not on anymore, we have been picking up the slack for the person not being here but it is becoming too much. Participant 4*

Changes after participation

- *She can still become emotional but she deal with things better, it is as if she has a stronger cry. Participant 12*
- *With the person I referred, I could see his mood changed. Participant 1*
- *After a few counselling sessions, we can see a difference. It differs depending on the type of problem, with financial problems change can be seen quicker. Participant 9*
- *I have seen with one individual, where team members came and said that they notice change and are now showing more compassion to the person. Participant 5*
- *You do see a change as the person's emotional state changes and what they portray in the team is more positive. Participant 4*

5.9.4 **Interpretation of data: Company Two**

Generally, when a staff member's performance is compromised, the rest of the team is pressurised by fulfilling duties earmarked for the troubled member. Frustration is sometimes geared towards the manager whom they perceive as not doing enough to address the issues. Participant 1 witnessed withdrawal from the team and exhibited increased emotional sensitivity.

Participants from Company Two were overwhelmingly of the opinion that individuals who were able to address their personal problems through the Employee Wellbeing

Programme, have a positive impact on their social environment. In some instances these employees were able to identify other troubled employees and suggest the program to them. This indicates that the person who was once cut off from the other members of the team is now a lot more tuned into the needs of other members.

5.9.5 Theory regarding the social impact of lower performance and changes after participation in the EAP/EWP

Within both the workplaces where the research took place, employees generally operate in work units. Different units/departments are responsible for performing specific tasks and individual output translate into departmental output for which a line manager or supervisor takes overall responsibility. Within these units workers forms primary relationships with those they share a common purpose with (Schellenberg 1974:221). From the responses derived from participants from both work organisations there are evidence that employees with personal problems often seems to withdraw from these social groups they previously identified with. Their lower performance also puts undue pressure on other team members and the frustration that derives from this may cause further distance in their relationships within their primary work teams.

5.9.6 Conclusion regarding the social impact of lower performance and changes after participation in the EAP:

The social impact of employee under-performance is not easy to measure in monetary terms. However, from the feedback received from supervisors and line managers it is evident that they experience it as having a significant impact on teams and how teams operate. It seems that as much as what individuals are influenced by their social environment, the environment is influenced by the individuals operating within it.

5.10 Expectation of improved performance versus observed change:

5.10.1 Quotations from discussions on expectation of improved performance versus observed change: Company One

Expectations:

- *It depends on the person. Some people we send are not serious about their problems and some are put on the right track and some do not want to participate. Participant 2*
- *I expect that the individual's problems can be addressed in the best possible way and that he can understand that it is in his best interest. Participant 9*
- *As a manager I expect the person to participate in the programme and that they benefit. The person must understand the seriousness of his actions and must be able to turn himself around. Participant 8*
- *I can only help a person to a certain level. If I refer him to a professional, I expect professional help. I am thus expecting positive change. Participant 12*
- *I expect them to come back and improve their time-keeping, their performance, their wellbeing and their family life. Participant 1*

Observed change:

- *I definitely see an impact, example, one person was on the verge of termination due to alcoholism, I referred him ..... he is now a new man. Participant 5*
- *It is also my experienced that people change. I also like the fact that after attending the programme, they are monitored through the EAP. Participant 6*
- *For people with a liquor problem, you can **see** the improvement. The people with personal problems, it is hard to see whether there is an improvement. Participant 10*
- *I have seen positive changes in the people I have referred. I think it is a positive system. Participant 11*

- *People come back and they perform better, their time-keeping has improved and you find they no longer have something heavy on the chest. Participant 1*
- *Generally I can see a change in people's productivity after participating in the programme, example, and no absenteeism now and only take leave when he must. Participant 12*
- *Definitely improvement. I am busy now with someone with .... problems and I referred him and can see a major improvement in his work and his attitude towards work. I see a positive change in the majority of people, not all people but generally. Participant 9*
- *We do see the change. Often as supervisors and managers we do not always understand the goals of the programme. Sometimes we expect change immediately and do not understand that it is a process. Sometimes our supervisors do not always understand what to look for and that is why training is so important on this programme. Must have an understanding not only how to refer but also understand how change takes place. Participant 8*

5.10.2 **Interpretation of data re expectation of improved performance versus observed change: Company One**

All participants were clear that upon referral to the EAP they expect positive change from troubled employees. Of interest is a view held by most of the participants that change is dependent on the motivation levels of the referred employee (participants 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10). These views underlie the notion that change is not externally determined but is dependent on an internal motivational process taking place within the individual. It is a view that supports the development of emotional insight, a term that refers to a deep understanding of your personal challenges. Participant 12 expressed an awareness of his own limitations when employees present with personal problems and regard the programme as consisting of professionally-skilled people who are able to provide the relevant mental health services. Participant 8 has an expectation that the EAP should not only address mental health issues, but should also address performance issues so that individuals can understand the link between their problems and performance. Participant 11 elaborated on the link

between the EAP and job requirements and stated that time frames for employee participation as well as his progress should be clearly communicated to referral agents.

There seems to be an overwhelming perception that positive change takes place when employees participate in the EAP. Participants generally have a positive view of the impact of the EAP. They are able to detect visible change in work performance and commented on an improvement in attitude, attendance and levels of responsibility. Not all employees seem to have responded positively to the programme, yet it is interesting to see that participants as mentioned above regard the lack of positive responses as failures that lie with the individuals rather than with the quality of the programme.

5.10.3 **Quotations from discussion regarding expectations of improved performance versus observed change: Company Two**

Expectations:

- *I understand I cannot get feedback about the sessions, but I would like to know at the end of it, did the person feel that the outcome was valuable. Participant 4*
- *My expectation is that the person can learn something from the program and that they could talk in a protected environment. Participant 5*
- *My expectation is that employees get the relevant help, to change their perception of the problem. Participant12*
- *From a business perspective we want to see improvement. If the trend was absenteeism or poor performance, we will monitor to see changes in the trend. Participant 1*
- *I do not really want to know what the problems are and what was being done about it, all I want to see is tangible improvement in performance. Participant 2*

- *I would like to see the person's problem being solved. The program must be able to touch the emotional side of the employee. Participant 9*
- *My expectations are that the person would receive help and that his performance and the quality of his work would improve. Participant 6*

Observed change:

- *The employee could share and unlock painful experiences. Participant 11*
- *The people I referred to the program at least came out with another view of their problem. The program is not the solution to everything but it helps you to get perspective and you can make other choices. Participant 3*
- *The person I referred improved her performance, she tries harder and is more able to keep to her due dates. Participant 7*
- *An employee I referred had previous suicide attempt, person became more empowered as a human being and was very thankful for the assistance. Participant 12*
- *I have seen positive changes in the individuals and they are keen to talk to me about it. Participant 5*
- *All the cases that I have referred went well. Participant 9*
- *There have been definite change, it is up to the person what they make of the program. The program is short, maximum 8 sessions and if a program has build up for years, it may not be enough. Participant 10*
- *In this case the intervention was too late to change the route of the person's relationship problems but work-wise there have been changes and the person would come to me and give me feedback. Participant 1*
- *I had a person here the other day that I referred a year ago, this was one of the success stories. Person could talk about her experiences and how she is definitely more empowered now. Participant 2*

- *Change happened much quicker than what I thought. I was surprised. The employee soon realized what she had to do and became more empowered. Participant 8*
- *In this instance the referral prevented the problem to progress further and limited its impact on her performance. Participant 10*

5.10.4 **Interpretation of data re expectation of improved performance versus observed change: Company Two**

There seem to be a very realistic expectations of what the program can offer. Participants 4, 12 and 9 verbalised expectations of a professional clinical intervention that would have a positive impact on employee emotional wellbeing as well as performance. Participants 6, 2 and 1 expects improved performance, a decrease in mistakes, improved attendance and enhanced participation in teams. There has been an expressed need for effective communication without violation of confidentiality that will assist them with their managerial evaluation of performance.

There has been an overwhelming impression that the program helps and they have seen positive changes taking place. Participants 4, 7 and 11 found that not all participation of referred employees did not result in improved performance in the workplace. In these instances, the reasons cited were an incorrect referral to the program as well as the presence of chronic substance abuse problems. In one of these cases, the participants were also of the impression that although the employee did not manage to sustain sobriety, the process created an opportunity to deal with deep-rooted issues. There is a view that coincide with views from company one that the program works best if the individual opens him/herself to the process. They also show insight that different pathologies respond differently to clinical intervention and that a blanket approach is not possible.

Although there has been some instances where positive change did not take place, all participants are of the opinion that the program is able to and generally has yielded positive results. As with Company One, participants are of the opinion that

the motivation levels of the referred employees remain the most important element for positive change.

5.10.5 Theory regarding expectation of improved performance versus observed change

Van den Berg (1995:845) reflects on international studies that reported on significant changes in people's work performance after participation in their company's EAP. Equitable Life Assurance found the absenteeism of alcoholic employees dropped from 8% to 4% after EAP referral to and treatment by alcohol programmes. 3M Company data suggested that 80% of the employees who used the EAP showed improved attendance, greater productivity, and enhanced family and community relations.

The McDonnell Douglas study, often quoted as an example of a cost-effectiveness study, also determined that alcoholism treated through EAP was more effective (Masi 1994:158) *(see more detailed discussion in chapter one of this report).*

Langlieb and Kahn (2005:1104) is of the opinion that research is overwhelmingly demonstrating that treatment of mental health problems leads to an improvement in work productivity and reduction in utilisation and costs of general medical services. One study looking at the impact of treating people with depressive symptoms indicated that treated individuals' days of missed work because of illness was only one-third as great when compared with those with persistent depression. Another study cited by the same authors focusing on patients with depression indicated a 5% decrease in outpatient visits and an 85% decrease in hospital days when receiving the relevant treatment.

5.10.6 Conclusion re expectation of improved performance versus observed change

The viewpoints of respondents from these worksites seem to ego the views from different authors that the participation of troubled employees in mental health

programmes can yield positive results. Because people's personal problems can potentially present itself in behavioural terms, the worksite becomes vulnerable to this presentation in the form of lower productivity.

An overwhelming number of participants are of the impression that there has been visible change in the work performance of most employees after participation in the programme. These participants have insight only into the work performance indicators of individual employees and not the presentation of behaviour in their personal space.

There is also a positive relationship between the above view and the data gathered through the quantitative component of this study. Eighty four percent (84%) of the respondents participating in the quantitative component of the study indicated that there has been an improvement in their work performance since participating in the EAP, 67% indicated that their coping skills improved, 77% indicated that their attendance improved, 48% indicated that mistakes within the workplace reduced and 45% indicated work related accidents reduced. This view is supported by the respondents participating in the quantitative component of the study where there is also an overwhelming perception that positive changes in work performance is visible for most of the employees they have referred into the EAP.

5.11 **Consistency of change**

5.11.1 **Quotations from discussions on the consistency of change: Company One**

- *Within my five years I have never experienced someone having changed and falling back again. Participant 10*
- *I never had a person relapsing and the guys who went through the program responded well. Participant 6*

- *I had a person who relapsed after eight months and I had to talk to him to help pick him up. Generally people are able to sustain their changed behaviour. Participant 5*
- *All the people I have send I saw a positive change. It also depends on how the group leader manage the person and the amount of effort you put into helping the person. Participant 11*
- *A group of them is ok, you can see the difference. Some people do fall back after a few months. I do not think it is a weakness of the program, rather it depends on different people. Participant 1*
- *People are more empowered but it is also a matter of choice. Most of the people who changed through the program were able to sustain that change. Participant 8*
- *When an employee is referred to the EAP and they can confidentially help other people, you have a strong changed person. They do sustain change and are able to identify other people with problems. Participant 7*
- *What I see is that people tend to maintain their positive attitude. You do get the individual who relapse, but that is in the minimum. Participant 9*

5.11.2 **Interpretation of date on consistency of change: Company One**

Participants from this company have an overall perception that positive change they have observed taking place within individuals are consistent. Participant 9,1 and 5 have experienced some relapses and in most of these cases the affected employees were referred back into the program. As with the view expressed under "observed change", there continue to be the opinion that relapses are as a result of individual motivation levels rather than the quality of the program.

Participant 7 is of the opinion that employees who are able to sustain their change manage not only to uphold their improved performance but are also able to be of

assistance to other troubled employees. By implication they are thus more empowered and can act in an advocacy role for the program. Participants 11 and 4 agree that consistent change is more likely if the aftercare support from the supervisor/manager or the program is good.

5.11.3 Quotations from the discussions on the consistency of change: Company Two

- *I have seen the sustainability of change to be forever. Once you break that barrier it becomes sustainable. Participant 12*
- *In this instance I have seen no regress. Internal empowerment took place. Participant 8*
- *Going forward the client was still faced with major challenges and if she did not receive help that that point she would have had a major breakdown. Participant 5*
- *The person had a good experience after two – three sessions. The person had consistent change. Participant 11*
- *There had been consistence and the person's performance was taken up a notch. The insight the person obtained cannot be abandoned. Participant 3*
- *In this case I felt the person started losing it again. I am talking to the person again. Participant 6*
- *In the case I referred it was negative as the person never believed she had a problem in the first place. Participant 4*
- *Consistency of change depends on the person and the situation. Participant 10*
- *Consistency of change depends on the support the person receives. Participant 9*

5.11.4 Interpretation of data on consistency of change: Company Two

Participants from this company seems to share the views of those from the first company to a large extend. They are generally of the opinion that employees who are able to make positive changes to how they deal with personal problems are able to sustain these changes. Participants 11, 8 and 12 share the view that when an individual develop insight, they break the barriers to their own limitations and as a result, changes of a more permanent nature takes place.

Participants 4 and 6 experienced that the referral did not yield positive change for the troubled employees. As is the view of participants from the first company, they are of the opinion that the lack of success is as a result of the employees' levels of motivation as well as the situation they find themselves in and not a weakness in the program itself.

5.11.5 Theory regarding the consistency of change

Wright, (2008) reiterated that the short term solution focussed model in itself is a positive and goal directed approach intended to make a difference on a long term basis. The ability of the therapist plays a paramount role in this regard. Some of the important elements in the approach that can be highlighted are the fact that it is solution focused rather than problem focused as is the case with the more traditional approaches. As a result, people are empowered over a shorter period of time. Some people are generally more ready for change than others. However when employees has been formally referred and stand a chance to lose their job, they feel bad and are often more ready for change. The empathy reflected by the therapist can contribute to more sustainable change. Some problems can effectively be addressed through the solution focused approach while some problems need a longer-term intervention.

Kgalema, (2008) is of the impression that sustainability in change is made possible by the creation of insight that allows the employee to understand themselves and

their work environment better and the realisation that personal issues is spilling over to the workplace. The existence of the program creates a sense of emotional security and trust that the workplace has put in place a program to take care of them.

Movuka, (2008) she also reiterates to a large extend the reflections of the above practitioners. She focused extensively on the role and skills of the therapist, the ability to hold the boundary between self and the client, ability to encourage them, reflect on their progress and explore their ability to deal with future relapses. Exploration of the learning for the client throughout their experience, to help them recognise what got them to a better space, thus giving them a tool to hold on to, is an essential skill of the solution focused therapist to ensure sustainability. She is also of the impression that the readiness and determination of the client to maintain changed behaviour plays a significant role.

Reflections from the three practitioners interviewed ties in closely with the existing literature referred to in this report. It reiterates the fact that the counselling approach is scientifically grounded and thus able to facilitate sustainable change.

5.11.6 **Conclusions regarding the consistency of change**

The findings of this research project indicate a view that changes taking place through EAP therapeutic intervention shows a high level of consistency. In the cases where changes were not sustainable, participants had the view that it was individual failures rather than program failures. Due to the structure of EAP's, the solution-focused brief therapy is the intervention of choice. The views of practitioners in the field correlate with the available literature, indicating that this intervention and the structure of the EAP's is geared towards a strength based approach and can effectively address many personal challenges.

5.12 Qualitative Comparative Analysis:

The researcher included this reflective section as it creates the opportunity to compare the views as shared by two different groups of participants from two different companies in two different provinces in South Africa. The only similarities between these two groups of people are:

- They made use of the same vendor company for their EAP/EWP service.
- The individuals in both groups are responsible for performance management of subordinates.
- They have used the program from both a subjective (experience value) point as an objective point (not direct recipients of the clinical service for the purpose of this study).

The researcher will highlight the themes used for this discussion and briefly highlight the similarities as it presented itself in the study:

5.12.1 Supervisory training:

Both groups of supervisors/line managers highlighted a lack of regular referral agent training and where it has been part of a broader Industrial Relations training program, some individuals within both groups were of the opinion that it takes away the significance of this developmental aspect. The view that the training should include elements helping managers understand the presentation of relevant mental health problems, why and how it present itself in the workplace and a reasonable understanding of recovery processes, creates opportunity. This study highlighted that this group of employees (line managers and supervisors) have a wealth of experience due to their positioning in the organisation. The Wellbeing Industry will thus benefit by developing a designated focus on them as the interface between the program and the employee population in general.

5.12.2 **Progressive discipline:**

The groups from both companies presented a sound knowledge about their company's progressive disciplinary processes. Interestingly individuals from both companies varied in how they define the relationship between the disciplinary process and referral of employees into the program. Both groups do not relate to a specific stage in the disciplinary process when a formal referral will take place, and referrals generally take place at any stage in the process.

5.12.3 **Indicators of decline in work performance:**

Both groups of participants could relate to specific workplace indicators. Labelling of these indicators is generally guided by the nature of the industry but all seems to have a significant impact on service delivery, financial bottom-line of the company and the functioning of work teams.

5.12.4 **The referral process:**

Both groups of participants are of the impression that the referral process is mainly guided by the nature of the problem. Within both groups there are differences in opinion, with some individuals being of the impression that the referral into the program can replace or revert the disciplinary process, and others who regard the two processes as running concurrently.

5.12.5 **Documentation:**

Despite the fact that Industrial Relations processes should by its nature be well documented, there seems to be a lack of consistency within both groups of participants regarding the importance of documentation of performance problems. Documentation styles is also not standardised and differs within participant groups.

5.12.6 **Financial implication:**

For both groups of participants the financial implication of performance challenges is huge. Generally these cost factors is grouped in:

- Staff costs
- Cost of service failure
- Reputational costs
- Penalties, and
- Direct accidents / mistakes

5.12.7 **Social impact:**

Both groups of participants are of the opinion that employee personal problems impact significantly on work teams and if not addressed, create a compromised image of the effectiveness of management. There is also a consistency in views shared that employees who participated in their EAP shows improved social skills.

5.12.8 **Observed improvement in performance after participation in the EAP:**

Participants from both companies have expectations of improvement when they refer employees into their company EAP/EWP. Both these groups have generally observed positive change in individuals who participated in the program. Of further interest is the fact that participants from both companies are of the opinion that the failure to respond to the therapeutic intervention has been due to a lack of personal commitment rather than a failure of the program. Participants generally understand the importance of confidentiality and the need for effective communication/feedback has been raised in both groups at this backdrop.

Generally, both groups of participants hold the views that change is consistent for the majority of referred employees. Reference is made to the ability to break personal barriers and develop real insight. These individual often become trusted resources to the company.

5.13 TESTING FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher utilized Guba's model from Krefling (1990:221) to test the information for trustworthiness. Guba's model focuses on four elements of trustworthiness and they are, truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

- *Truth-value / Credibility* focuses on whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants and context. Truth-value was established through triangulation of data sources, in this instance groups of individual interviews with line managers/ referral agents from two different corporate clients. The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule allowed for the same areas being investigated with all participants.

- *Applicability / Transferability* refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other context and settings or with other groups. In this instance it can be tested by comparison of the characteristics of the participants to the biographical information available. All participants are line managers directly responsible for the performance of work teams in their organizations. The consistency of data between the two sets of participants also contributes to the concept of applicability. The forgoing section (5.11) reflects consistency of data for the two groups of participants in all the areas being explored.

- *Consistency / Dependability* considers whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. This study utilised different data collection methods and chapter six deals with the process of triangulation of these data-sources. The study further duplicated the three main data collection methods with two corporate clients, thus contributing to the dependability testing of the data. This process thus supports the view of

Krefling (1990:221), suggesting that a stepwise replication technique must be build into the design of a qualitative study to enhance dependability. One of the weaknesses of this study is that very limited statistical information has been received from the second corporate client as the majority of the respondents were not comfortable to give their permission to do so.

- *Neutrality / Confirmability* refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perceptions. In this instance the researcher do not have control over the impact of other programs operating within the two corporate companies and how these impact on employee performance. The triangulation of data sources (two sets of participants from different companies with similar characteristics) however confirms viewpoints of the impact of personal problems of employees on organisational bottom-line and the ability of the EAP/EWP to make a positive contribution.

5.14 **Conclusions:**

The qualitative component of this study resulted in a rich exploration of the experience of line managers who use the company EAP/EWP as a tool in their performance management process. The interviews highlighted a need for a designated training focus for managers. The view has been highlighted that a lack of training often results in the incorrect use of the program, as well as unrealistic expectations. There is also a viewpoint that the lack of a basic mental health understanding contributes to insensitive behaviour and attitudes amongst line managers.

The value-add potential of the program has been raised strongly by both groups of participants and they were able to refer to many examples to support this view. This view is particularly important when measured against the potential risks of lower performance as highlighted by both groups.

The consistency of viewpoints of both groups of participants also serves to strengthen the value of the information gathered through this part of the study.

The following chapter will focus on the return on investment calculation of data as well as triangulation of different data-gathering methods. It also includes the findings of previous similar studies, thus using the literature study as a fourth set of data-collection /data-validation.

CHAPTER 6

TRIANGULATION OF DIFFERENT DATA SOURCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this research project a quantitative-descriptive (survey) design is used and data were collected through a combination **of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and analysis of statistical data.** The literature review also reflects on different studies in the international arena indicating a positive return on investment for EAP's The researcher uses triangulation as an approach within this study and the infusion takes place at the point of data collection. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection from different research populations using the EAP allows for the generation of information from different role-players in the program. Data is gathered from both subjective and objective sources. Creswell (1994:7) is of the impression that triangulation uses an assumption that any bias inherent in any particular data source and research approach can be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources, researchers and research approaches. His view is supported by authors like LaSala (1997:55) who indicate that the credibility of client satisfaction surveys can strengthened through the use of multiple data sources. Creswell further indicates that triangulation in its most common form:

- Seeks convergence of a study's results.
- Is complementary, in that overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon may emerge (peeling off layers).
- Can be used developmentally, wherein the first research approach is used sequentially to help inform the second approach.
- May provide contradictions of the results between the two research approaches and may provide a fresh perspective, and
- Adds breadth and depth to a single research study.

The researcher in this instance used data triangulation. According to De Vos (2005:362) this refers to more than one data source within a single study, in this instance the use of interviews, archival materials and semi-structured interviews. The researcher made use of the dominant-less-dominant design of triangulation as described by Creswell in De Vos. As indicated in section 1.6 of this report, the study also has elements of a mixed-model approach. Although programme evaluation as a comprehensive study lends itself to the two-phase model because it can accommodate a qualitative evaluability assessment leading to a more sophisticated quantitative impact evaluation, this study looks at the latter part (impact study) of evaluative studies mainly. The intended structure was planned around an essentially quantitative study based on testing a theory with a small qualitative interview component in the data collection phase. What transpired is a study consisting of all the intended parts but with the qualitative component generating a significant amount of information that not only reflect consistency with data generated through the quantitative measures but also generate up to date information on the industrial risks of compromised work performance. Although qualitative research in the context of return on investment studies will continue to be frowned upon, in this study it shows itself as having the potential to generate a rich source of opinions and thoughts that cannot be detected through a quantitative exercise. Noteworthy are also the striking similarities in thoughts and opinions of participants from the same company and also between participants from the two different companies.

De Vos (2005:370) is of the impression that different phases of program evaluation are more aligned to either of the two research approaches and that cost-effectiveness and cost benefit analysis is generally geared towards the quantitative approach. The therapist in this study however in this study uses triangulation of the two approaches. This study started off with the Dominant-Less Dominant Model where the quantitative component is presented as the dominant approach. During the data collection process the information obtained from the qualitative component of the study proofed to be of significant value and the researcher is of the impression that it serves as an important voice for the experience of middle to senior management of the contribution of the EAP/EWP to the company bottom line.

This research study thus also leans towards a Mixed-Model style and within the data collection and data analysis phases, the data from both approaches are presented for its informative significance and correlative value.

This chapter focuses on the comparison of the data and identifies areas of strong correlation and well as areas where the correlation of data is not as strong as anticipated.

The comparison of data will be graphically illustrated and is a combination of four sources, namely the employee questionnaires, the interviews with referral agents, statistical analysis and a literature review. The chapter will also cover a brief description of the first three sources which entailed active data-gathering in this study.

The researcher will first give an illustration of the statistical data received from company one. Unfortunately, the permission received from respondents from company two did not allow for effective use of this medium as data-source. However, the researcher is of the impression that sufficient data has been generated to indicate the value-add of the program.

6.2 RETURN ON INVESTMENT CALCULATION ON INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE: STATISTICAL DATA – COMPANY ONE

Absenteeism Indicators

Respondent	Days absent 2007 (prior intervention)	Days absent 2008 (post intervention)	Estimate cost difference per year for absenteeism	ROI per Absenteeism savings
1	17	2	R4095	R15.5 per R1 spend
2	1	3	R550 (increase)	No savings
3	26	3	R6325	R23.16 per R1 spend
Respondent	**Days absent 2007 (prior intervention)**	**Days absent 2008 (post intervention)**	**Estimate cost difference per year for absenteeism**	**ROI per absenteeism savings**
4	12	0	R3300	R12.05 per R1 spend
5	30	10	R5430	R20.56 per R1 spend
6	1	0	R273	R1.03 per R1 spend
7	7	0	R1911	R7 per R1 spend
8	26	2	R6552	R23.73 per R1 spend
9	2	18	R4368(increase)	No savings
10	7	6	R273	R1 per R1 spend (no savings)
11	3	0	R819	R3 per R1 spend
12	4	5	R273(increase)	No savings
13	30	27	R7371	R27 per R1 spend
14	25	1	R6552	R24 per R1 spend
15	1	2	R273(increase)	No savings
16	23	3	R5460	R20 per R1 spend
17	16	9	R1943	R7.11 per R1 spend
18	9	9		No savings

19	40	14	R7098	R26 per R1 spend
20	11	2	R2457	R9 per R1 spend
Return on investment calculation as per individual absenteeism records:				R14.68 **saving** per every rand spend ***(where absenteeism decreased)***

(Table 6.1: Statistical Data focusing on Absenteeism : Company One)

Disciplinary actions

Respondent	**Disciplinary action 2007 (prior intervention)**	**Disciplinary action 2008 (post intervention)**	**Estimate cost difference per year for one disciplinary action (3hrs overall per person [employee/line manager & HR officer)**
1	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
2	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
3	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
4	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
5	None	None	None
6	Yes	Yes	None
7	None	None	None
8	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend

9	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
10	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
11	None	None	None
12	Yes	None	R8.30 per R1 spend
13	None	None	None
14	Yes	Yes	None
15	Yes	Yes	None
16	Yes	Yes	None
17	No	No	None
18	Yes	Yes	None
19	Yes	No	R8.30 per R1 spend
20	No	No	None

(Table 6.2: Statistical Data focusing on Disciplinaries : Company One)

6.2.1 **Discussion of data**

Statistical data has been received for 69% of the respondents from Company One and none from Company Two. The above ROI calculations are for individual performance differences only and are not measured against the overall program costs. It is however measured against the annual fee of R22 per person.

An increase of absenteeism was present for three of the respondents while one respondent maintained the same amount of absenteeism for the two periods reflected. Only one of these respondents showed a significant increase in absenteeism. The study did not cover an investigation to the nature of this absenteeism. Two other respondents showed a minimal decrease. Thirteen of the respondents showed a decrease in absenteeism and for this group of employees that relates to a decrease of seventy five days between the periods 2007 and 2008.

With an average daily rate of R273, this saving for this limited group of employees relates to a saving of R60 128, However the cost of absenteeism for the few people who showed an increase were R5191,00 and thus reduced the overall savings to R54 937. The above costs only refer to the visible cost of paying someone for work not done. It is not calculating the salient costs attached to salaries of employees and line managers who have to stand in for the absent worker.

For the employee who shows the greatest reduction in absenteeism the savings reflects R7371 vs. R168 per year (@R14 per person) or R264 (@ R22 per person). The return on investment on one variable only is thus significant. Even in the cases where there has been an increase in absenteeism in the second period, there has been a decrease in disciplinary procedures, thus showing a saving in another variable. For disciplinary action to take place, taking in consideration the involvement of three staff members, namely the employee, direct manager/supervisor and HR officer, the hourly rate of each staff member calculated against the hours spend on the activity, indicates a cost on activities not directly linked to company production. At an average daily rate of R273 per person multiplied by three hours' involvement (preparation, paperwork plus actual session(s), the cost of one disciplinary can be estimated to R2 457. This is a very conservative calculation as the hourly rate of line managers and HR officers may vary from that of the employee and the actual time spend can be significantly higher.

6.3 Return on Investment Value Calculation for Company One

Client company one provided the most comprehensive amount of information related to this study. A significant amount of employees gave permission for statistical performance related information to be made available and as a result a three-tire comparison is possible. Following is an attempt to calculate the overall return on investment value of the EAP for this company for the period.

- Company spend about R1m annually on their entire EAP program: This includes:

- An on-site clinic with medical and counselling facilities.
- 24 hr call centre access.
- Corporate Wellbeing Consultation services
- A 1-8 session model for psycho-social counselling (the main focus on intervention for this study.
- Legal and financial advice services.
- HIV/AIDS work-base program.
- A management referral and consultation support program.

- The company success indicators on EAP participation indicated 78% success rate.
- 65% of the respondents for this research who used the programme over that period indicated that their performance were affected by their personal problems.

- The average income (as per respondents to this study) is R6000 per month = R72 000 annually.
- International benchmarks indicate that organizations loose 28 – 35% of a troubled employee's income due to lower productivity.
  - R72 000 divided by 28% = R20 160 (lower limit loss)
  - R72 000 divided by 35% = R 25 200 (higher limit loss)
- Savings to company.
  - R20 169 x 1060 = R21 379140 @ 28% productivity loss
  - 25 200 x 1060 = R26 172000 @ 35% productivity loss
- ROI @ 28% productivity loss = R2.03 for every R1 spend
- ROI @ 35% productivity loss = R2.51 for every R1 spend

6.4 **Return on Investment Value Calculation for Company Two**

Client Company Two provided less comprehensive information related to individual employee performance recorded. Only three employees gave permission for statistical performance related information to be made available, and as a result the

data would not have been significant. Following is an attempt to calculate the overall return on investment value of the EAP for this company according to overall program performance for the period.

- Company spent about R2 970 000 annually on their entire EAP program: This includes:
  - An on-site clinic with medical and counselling facilities.
  - 24 hr call centre access.
  - Corporate Wellbeing Consultation services .
  - A 1-8 session model for psycho-social counselling (the main focus on intervention for this study.
  - Legal and financial advice services.
  - HIV/AIDS work-base program.
  - A management referral and consultation support program.

- The company success indicators on EAP participation indicated 78% success rate.
- 72% of the respondents for this research who used the programme over that period indicated that their performance were affected by their personal problems.
- The average income (as per respondents to this study) is R10 053.00 per month = R120 636 annually.
- International benchmarks indicate that organizations loose 28 – 35% of a troubled employee's income due to lower productivity.
  - R120 636 divided by 28% = R33 778 (lower limit loss)
  - R120 636 divided by 35% = R 42 222.60 (higher limit loss)
- Savings to company at 72% success rate:
  - R33 778 x 1687 = R56 983486 @ 28% productivity loss
  - R42 222.60 x 1687 = R71 295267 @ 35% productivity loss
- ROI @ 28% productivity loss = R1.81 for every R1 spend
- ROI @ 35% productivity loss = R2.30 for every R1 spend

6.5 Triangulation of data sources illustrating strong correlations

Relationships: personal and social

Questionnaires: Seventy one percent (71%) of respondents in Company One indicated that participation in the programme showed improvement in this area. Forty two percent (43%) of respondents in Company Two indicated similar results (42% of this company indicated that their relationships were never affected).
Interviews: Participants overwhelmingly indicated that personal problems affected employee social relationships. Isolation from the team, increased conflict, avoidance of social gatherings and increased emotional sensitivity has been identified. There is also a perception that employees show a significant improvement after participation in the program.
Statistical analysis: This area could not be verified.
Theoretical comparatives: Stout and Mc Cullough (1994:2) is of the opinion that relational problems respond well to Solution Focused Brief intervention, the therapeutic model used within the EAP field.

Observed decrease in work performance before participation and observed improvement after participation

Questionnaires: Sixty five percent of respondents in Company One indicated that their personal problems affected their performance at work. For Company Two the result was even more significant with 72% of respondents indicating that their performance was affected. Thirty five percent of respondents in Company One also reported an increase in their absenteeism at work while 86% of respondents from Company Two indicated that their attendance was negatively affected. There has been a significant reporting of improvement after participation in the programme for both companies with 84% of respondents from Company One and 71% of respondents from Company Two reporting improvement.
Interviews: Participants From both companies were able to identify very tangible indicators showing a decline in employee work performance. These ranges from missing defects, absenteeism and excessive sick leave, late coming and leaving work early, lack of concentration, not meeting operational requirements, negative

attitude imp acting on teams and customer service thus resulting in an increase in complaints. The financial implication of this is significant ranging from team leaders/supervisors having to stand in for absent workers, thus not being able to concentrate on their supervisory role effectively, spending time on staff counselling and disciplinaries. Faults affecting delivery of products (up to R300 000 per final products), damage to parts ranging from R800 – R60 000, mistakes on life cover pay-outs that can result in millions of rands losses, penalties form regulatory bodies and from missing deadlines, reputational damage and increase in labour costs has been cited by participants. Participants from both companies are of the impression that there has been visible improvement in performance after participation in the programme, increased levels of responsibility and team relationships. Employees who recovered successfully also seem to be more in tune with the needs of others and can handle increased levels of responsibility.

Statistical analysis: Statistical data received for company 1 indicated a reduction in absenteeism of 175 days (291 days absent before participation reduced to 116 days after). While this data was not retrieved for Company Two, because too few respondents gave permission, the data received via the questionnaires and interviews shows a significant correlation.

Theoretical comparatives: Shear (1995:21) found in a study at Burlington Northern that amongst other indicators that supervisory job performance rating increased for employees who used the EAP. The same study showed a decrease in absenteeism. accidents/injuries, medical costs and worker compensation. Collins (1998) in Csiernik 2004:26 in a study at Chevron Corporation also found that there has been a reduction in accidents, improvement in productivity and staff retention for employees who participated in the EAP.

Performance counselling and disciplinary action

Questionnaires: In Company One 32% of respondents indicated that they have undergone performance counselling before participation in the EAP while 42% were disciplined. For Company Two the figure was equally significant with 57% indicating performance counselling and 25% had disciplinaries.

Statistical analysis: From the statistical data available for Company One 70 % of the respondents who gave permission for this data to be made available had

disciplinaries before participation in the programme. Post intervention the number has been reduced to 20%.

General areas of improvement

Questionnaires: Respondents from Company One indicated significant improvement in the following areas: personal relationships (78%), work relationships (77%) work performance (84%), attendance (77%), self-esteem (74%) and coping skills (67%). For Company Two improvements were in personal relationships (100%), work relationships (86%), work performance (72%), self esteem (58%) and coping skills (100%)

Interviews: Participants from both companies are of the impression that participation of troubled employees in the EAP yielded positive results for the majority of people. They have witnessed positive changes in performance, time keeping, attendance. Attitude, approach to life, personal empowerment, ability to communicate and quality of life of most of the employees.

Theoretical comparatives: The Editorial Board (1993) in Csiernik 2004:26 indicated that the Mc Douglas study in the United States showed an improvement in attendance, retention rates and medical costs for EAP participants. Shear (1995:21) reflected on studies showing an improvement in attendance, accidents and injuries, performance and medical costs. Stephenson and Bingaman (1999) in Csiernik 2004:26 with a study at the United States Postal Services shows a benefit to costs ratio in the first year of 1.27 : 1 and 7.21: 1 in year five of the programme.

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6.6 Significance of triangulative comparisons

This research study makes use of different comparative analytical processes. **Comparisons are drawn between the following sets of data:**

- Triangulation of data-sources using the dominant-less dominant model with the quantitative component being set out to be the dominant and the qualitative component being the less dominant component. The quantitative process is presented through questionnaires and statistical analysis while the qualitative process is presented through semi-structured interviews. As

the study unfolded, the qualitative information proved to have more significance that what was originally anticipated and eventually elements of a mixed-model approach unfolded. Triangulation at this level has to a large extent neutralised the possible bias inherent in any particular data source.

- Comparative analysis also happens between the two corporate companies utilised in this study. Both the qualitative and the quantitative information are compared for its similarities and its lack of similarities in trends.
- The final set of comparative analysis is presented in this chapter and investigates the comparisons of data between the two quantitative strategies (questionnaires and statistical analysis), the qualitative strategy (semi-structured interviews) and the literature study (reflecting on previous studies yielding similar results).

The above sets of analysis have shown significant correlations, thus contributing to the credibility of the data being generated. Correlation of data has been significant in the following areas:

- **Between data sources:**
  - Relational problems within a personal and social context. Both the questionnaire and interview sections have shown that personal problems impact on relationships and those individuals, who participated in their company EAP/EWP's have improved significantly in this area. This data correlates with available literature. Within Company Two the quantitative data however did not reflect a strong impact on relationships while the qualitative data for the same company did reflect a strong view on this.
  - A decrease in performance when experiencing personal problems is an area with cost implications for companies and has been cited by the majority of respondents in the quantitative component of the study as well as participants in the quantitative component. The literature review also reflects on different studies and views that personal problems can potentially affect employee work performance.
  - Improvement in work performance after participation in the program is another area where there is a strong correlation in the information generated

through questionnaires, statistical analysis, interviews and the literature reviewed. From a cost savings point of view this is an encouraging set of information, reflecting on a positive spin-off for workplaces if employees choose to address their personal problems.

- A strong correlation also exists between the area of performance counselling and disciplinary action from the quantitative component of the study (questionnaires and statistical analysis) as well as the qualitative component. Once again there is a strong indication that addressing personal problems have a positive spin-off on this key performance indicator.
- The general areas of improvement referring to personal and work relationships, work performance and skills development also shows a positive correlation between all data sources (questionnaires, interviews, statistical analysis and the literature review).

- **Between company correlation:**
  - Quantitative:
    - The impact of personal problems on work performance is a key area with cost implications for any company. The data generated from the two different companies shows a strong correlation with 72% of the respondents in Company One being of the impression that personal problems impacted negatively on their work performance compared to 65% of the respondents in Company Two holding a similar view.
    - Improvement in work performance after participation in the company EAP/EWP also shows a positive correlation with 84% of respondents from Company One indicating that their performance improved after participation compared to 70% of respondents from Company Two.
    - Seventy four percent (74%) of respondents from Company One indicated that they were undergoing performance management of disciplinary action before participation in the program compared to 71% of the respondents from Company Two.
    - Overall perceived benefits from participation in the program that shows a positive correlation between the responses from the two companies are:

- Personal relationships (78% improvement for Company One and 100% improvement for Company Two).
- Work relationships (77% improvement for Company One and 86% for Company Two).
- Work performance (84% for Company One and 72% for Company Two).
- Self-image shows a 74% improvement for Company One and 58% improvement for Company Two.
- Coping skills shows a 67% improvement for Company One and a 100% improvement for Company Two.

The majority of the above indicators have cost implications for corporate companies and are measurable. The strong correlation between data from the two different companies can further be seen as adding truth value to the findings. These findings also correlate with information gathered through the literature review. The improvement in self-image and coping skills also contribute to an understanding why there are a general perception amongst participants in the qualitative component of this study that change is mostly consistent*. Improvement in these areas refers to a deeper level of insight-development for the individual involved and as a result the person tends to hold on to these changes long after the intervention.*

- **Qualitative:**
  - Within the qualitative component of this study the participants from both companies held very similar views on all themes identified. The themes could be classified under three broad areas, namely opportunities for program development through themes like *supervisory training, progressive discipline, the referral process and documentation of decline in performance,* cost implications through themes like *indicators of decline in work performance, financial implications, social impact and observed improvement after participation in the EAP/EWP* and finally *consistency of changes that took place through the intervention.*

The consistency of viewpoints from these two groups of participants and the amount of information being generated through this part of the study creates a view that a qualitative exploration of the value of an EAP/EWP may be as useful in a cost benefit analysis as what a quantitative exercise would be. Supervisors and line managers using the program as part of their performance management strategy, holds the value of an outside observer as well as a beneficiary of the program. Their contribution as a data source to this study holds enough significance as an independent resource.

6.7 **Conclusion:**

The data generated through different sources for this study has shown significant similarities. The researcher is of the impression that the correlation of views as described above is as important to this study than the actual figure in savings. The return on investment figures as illustrated in the report also confirms the hypothesis, claiming that participation in the EAP result in improvement in their psychosocial problems, thus improving their work performance. The next chapter will look at recommendations that will assist future studies to become more prevalent in the industry rather than just the academic field.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This study started off with an intention to measure the rand/cent savings a company receives from employees' improved performance after making use of their EAP/EWP to address their personal problems. The initial intention was also to build a qualitative data-source into the study as a **lesser** component to the overall exercise. As this study unfolded, the content and amount of information being generated through the qualitative component presented itself as more than having a comparative function against the quantitative constituent of this study. It has also presented itself as an independent unit, creating an entry point into the thought processes, needs and views of line manager and supervisors as objective beneficiaries of this program. The triangulation of different and inter-company data sources allows for an analysis of data generated through different methodologies within the same organisation, as well as similar methodologies within different organisations. This chapter concludes the findings of this research and offer recommendations for future return on investment studies.

7.2 Conclusions

Hudson in De Vos (2005:376) argues that despite the great interest in return on investment studies, it continues to be difficult to accomplish in the caring professions and will remain like this until people can understand and use the fairly simple concept of measured change (see section 1.8.3 of this report). Within both the quantitative and qualitative approaches used in this study, change in relationships (personal and work-related), change in performance indicators and essential life skills to facilitate inner transformation has been reported.

The **qualitative** data also overwhelmingly reflected a negative impact of employee personal problems on work teams and how it challenges the perceived effectiveness

of line managers. The statistical data received from Company One also provided valuable confirming information focusing on the changes in absenteeism and staff counselling and disciplinary patterns. The absence of similar data from the second company contributes to the argument that data management significantly enhance the effectiveness of programme evaluation.

Within both companies, the majority of respondents were of the opinion their work performance were negatively affected by their personal problems. There is a difference in the opinions whether this performance necessarily include absenteeism patterns and Company Two presented a stronger impact on attendance than is the case in Company One. Respondents from Company Two were generally of the opinion that their personal problems did not have an adverse effect on their personal relationships, however they do report an improvement in these relationships after participation in the program. One of the weaknesses of a study of this nature using employees who participated in the program as an essential population is the fact that those who left the company are not included in the measurement. As a result, it is possible that less-successful case studies are excluded from the measuring process. The self-reporting nature of this information remains a challenge. However, the general consistency of viewpoints amongst respondents from the same company as well as between the two different companies, to a large extend are able to neutralise the bias that can creep into this type of data generation.

The participants selected for the qualitative component of the study were also the line managers/supervisors responsible for the referral of the respondents into the EAP/EWP. As a result their views of changes in attitude and work performance added objectivity to the views as presented through the self-reporting component.

The **qualitative** data highlights some important issues. These are:

- There is a need for more consistent and comprehensive training amongst supervisors and line-managers as referral agents of this program. Participants were generally clear about the difference between their role and that of the clinical profession providing serviced in the program. However, they expressed a need to not only understand how to use the program, but also have an

understanding of mental health issues as well as a realistic understanding of how change present itself after therapeutic intervention and how they can best support these individuals. A question posed at the formal presentation of this report on 23 April 2009 opened the debate for alternative forms of management training that will enhance their participation. This view also considers the possibility that failure to attend training plays as much a role as a lack of training offered.

- Participants generally had a positive view of the impact of the programme and were consistent in their views that where employees were not able to make or sustain positive change, that this was due to personal dynamics rather than a failure of the program. As a result the manner in which the intervention is offered is seen as being sufficient.

- Participants in this part of the study also present the employee population closest to monitoring of workplace productivity. As a result, their views on troubled employees' interference in production and the resulting financial implication are of significant value to this study. These costs implications are visible, however it is not always measured against the presentation of personal problems in the workplace. The consistency of viewpoints amongst participants from both companies adds further value to the view on the financial and reputational risks of lower employee performance and opens a debate on the relationship between the company EAP and industry-related risk management strategies.

- Participants in this component of the study presented different and sometimes conflicting views about the process leading to a referral of troubled employees into the programme. They presented equally different views on the importance of documentation. The lack of consistency in these areas further highlights the need for consistent and comprehensive management support through training and coaching programs.

- Participants from both companies' holds strong and positive views on the consistency of changes taking place in troubled employees after participation in

the program. These views are consistent with the notion that Solution Focused therapy, the model used in this program and in EAP models generally, is able to bring about long-lasting change in an active, involved and time-efficient way (McCullough-Vaillant 1994:1).

- There is also consistency in the views amongst participants on the impact of troubled employees on their teams. Team cohesion can be adversely affected and the ability of management to intervene are generally scrutinised under these circumstances.

The information generated from the three main data sources for this study, namely the questionnaires, the semi-structured interviews as well as the statistical data from company one correlates with the findings of the studies referred to in the literature review. While different variables are used in the different studies, there is a general indication that troubled employees who address their problems through constructive intervention (in these instances through the company-sponsored EAP/EWP), most often becomes valuable assets to their companies again, thus minimising the financial and reputational risks they pose when performance is negatively affected.

The next section provides recommendations applicable to data-management for future cost-benefit studies.

7.3 **Recommendations**

Employee Assistance Programmes, as well as more comprehensive Employee Wellbeing Programmes through their operations, generate vast amounts of data. This data varies from trends related to mental health, physical health, financial health, strengths and challenges of management teams, ext. While crystal reporting is a key function of any data management system in the EAP field, there remains an untapped potential to use the existing data for different analytical purposes including cost benefit / return on investment studies.

One of the challenges conducting a study of this nature for academic purposes, is the fact that it is lengthy, reliant on the permission from both vendor companies, corporate clients and the individuals who are part of the research population. Even when the relevant permission is received, the researcher(s) still have to be very cautious about conducting the study in a non-intrusive manner. One of the challenges of this particular study has been the fact that while the majority of respondents from one company were comfortable with statistical data being made available, respondents from the second company were not comfortable with this and as a result, this information was omitted for one set of respondents.

There is a general trend amongst vendor companies to provide corporate clients with quarterly reports, providing valuable information regarding utilisation, program activities, presenting physical and mental health trends and outcomes. Return on Investment information should ideally be part of these reporting structures rather than isolated studies conducted for academic or corporate purposes. This can be possible if the generation of data is structured to serve this purpose. The following recommendations can create the environment where studies of this nature can be made easier.

7.3.1 **Baseline Assessments**

All EAP and EWP contracts should include baseline assessments at the inception of the program. These assessments would provide profiles of employee health and wellbeing and how it translates into productivity indicators in the workplace. These assessment models should thus include individual and group assessment components as well as organizational trends like absenteeism trends, medical benefit utilisation trends, performance management trends, and ext.

7.3.2 **Individual Assessment Tools**

Individual assessment tools used at the pre-intervention phase should include targeted questions that allows for the exploration of contractually agreed upon performance

indicators. In 2007 the researcher looked at the assessment tools of two local and one international EAP vendors and found that assessment tools are generally not designed to generate return on investment data. Because of the clinical nature of the intervention, the focus is on the generation of clinical data with limited exploration on how it impacts on work performance indicators.

7.3.3 **Post Intervention Assessment Tools**

Post-intervention assessment tools should be part of any intervention and be designed to measure change in contractually agreed-upon indicators.

7.3.4 **Management Consultation Models**

Management consultation models should also include targeted assessment of performance indicators with pre and post intervention components. The data generated through these interactions can potentially be used independently in return on investment (ROI) studies or in conjunction with self-reporting data generated through individual assessment tools. It's strength as an independent data-source is seen through the consistency of viewpoints between line-managers from the two client companies used in this study.

The input from clinical service providers (not used in this study), can also be used as independent or complimentary data sources in ROI studies.

Access to statistical data for analytical purposes should be agreed upon at program inception. This data source is very objective but is also reliant on good record-keeping within the company. The qualitative data-generation in this study showed inconsistency in the views of line managers regarding the importance of record-keeping. For statistical data to be used effectively in a study of this nature, it is thus essential that record keeping systems be in place and adhered to by all relevant role players.

7.3.5 **Programme Evaluation**

Programme evaluation components with its relevant time-frames needs to be agreed upon at the point of inception. The IMPE (Integrated Model of Programme Evaluation) as discussed in De Vos (2005:368) provides a workable structure through which evaluation can take place. A needs assessment/baseline assessment provides a clear indication of the challenges prevalent in the company that needs to be addressed. It thus allows for targeted interventions as opposed to a "one size fits all" approach. An evaluability assessment of the program should also be done at the onset. This should be two-fold, namely:

- The architecture of the product, referring to the systems in place on the side of the vendor that enables evaluation. The data-management system operating on the side of the vendor is one such example.
- The data-management system / level of record-keeping on the side of the corporate client, including absenteeism and disciplinary action records. Access to these records for evaluation purposes should be agreed upon.

Utilisation evaluation is currently one of the areas of evaluation already included in quarterly reporting to corporate clients. Client satisfaction evaluation is also not a structurally difficult component but is often neglected due to time constrains. Components of impact evaluation is also included in current reporting and is usually presented in general terms like "problem areas improved". It is only when this data is analysed in terms of its effect on work performance indicators and measured against program cost elements that cost-effectiveness evaluation takes place.

Access to statistical data for analytical purposes should be agreed upon at program inception. This data source is very objective but is also reliant on good record-keeping within the company. The qualitative data-generation in this study showed inconsistency in the views of line managers regarding the importance of record-keeping. For statistical data to be used effectively in a study of this nature, it is thus essential that record keeping systems be in place and adhered to by all relevant role players.

7.3.6 **Data Management System**

The design and maintenance of a good data-management system is thus crucial to the evaluation of an EAP program. Because a program of this nature intervenes on a very crucial area of human life it's interventions can potentially be harmful if not monitored for effectiveness. It also operates in a business environment as a soft-skill intervention and as a result is vulnerable to be discarded during financial crunch times. An effective evaluation system build into the design of the program can ensure that defects be detected and addressed. It further allows for its purpose and impact to be communicated through a business orientated vocabulary, appropriate for boardroom discussions.

7.4 **Implication of this study for practice**

This study in essence highlights the importance of program evaluation for accountability and developmental purposes. The mental health intervention in the lives of vulnerable people through workplace programs like an EAP as well as in the broader social context where social workers plays a role needs to be evaluated on a regular basis. This is important because it is only through clinical supervision and program evaluation that mental health practitioners active in these fields can sustain accountability. The financial investors of programs of this nature will continue to ask whether programs operate in the manner it is intended to and whether the outcomes is desirable.

Difficulties encountered in this study highlights the importance of evaluability measures to be build into the design of each program. It emphasizes the need for EAP coordinators as well as social workers in the broader societal context to have program evaluation skills. The need for program accountability will not fade away, instead the demand for feedback of this nature will grow and in financial crunch-times it will become even more important for programs of this nature to proof its' value through impact analysis.

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Annexure one: Cover letter for questionnaire

To Whom It May Concern:

UP LOGO

Date:

Ref: Prof L S Terblanche

Tel. 012 420-3292
Fax. 012 420-2093
Email: lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za

Dear Respondent

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Thank you for your participation in this project. The purpose of the research is to determine whether the EAP service made a positive contribution to your life, as well as your organisation as a whole.

For that purpose, this study is investigating your experience of the impact of the EAP on your personal problems. To do this, the researcher needs to obtain participation from you on two levels. The first is the completion of this questionnaire. The second level is a request for permission to view your personnel file, kept by your HR department. The latter part will allow the researcher to obtain objective information indicating relevant changes that your participation in the programme may have had on aspects like absenteeism and use of sick leave.

Confidentiality is guaranteed, as only the researcher and your EAP coordinator will be aware of your participation in the research programme. The information obtained from you will be utilised by the researcher only, for the purpose of this study and no personal information will be made available in the final report. Your participation in the research programme will not reflect any confidential information shared by you with the therapist you were involved with. Your name does not appear on the questionnaire, but is contained in a coding system held by the researcher. The coding system helps the researcher to link the questionnaire with the information from personnel files.

You have the right to stop your participation in the programme at any time you wish to do so.

The questionnaire is short and should not take more than 30 minutes of your time.

Please feel free to contact the researcher at any time should you have questions while completing this questionnaire.
Thank you for your participation.

Yours Faithfully

ANNELINE KEET (Ms)
RESEARCHER

Anneline Keet is a D Phil-student at The University of Pretoria and a contracted affiliate to *The Careways Group.*

Tel: 0827827502
E-mail: annelinekeet@gmail.com

PO Box 10578
Vorna Valley
Midrand
1686

Editor: Jenny Immelman

Annexure 2: Zulu translated cover letter for questionnaire

To Whom It May Concern:

UP LOGO

Date:

Ref: Prof L S Terblanche

Tel. 012 420-3292

Fax. 012 420-2093

Email: lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za

Dear Respondent

UKUBAMBA IQHAZA KUHLELO LOCWANINGO

Siyabonga ngokubamba iqhaza kwakho kuloluhlelo. Inhloso yalulu cwaningo ukuhlaziya nokuthola ukuthi uhlelo lwezokunakelelwa kwabasebenzi linomthelala omuhle yini empilweni yakho kanye nenkampani ngokubanzi.

Ngokwezinjongo loluhlelo luphenya ngesipiliyoni sakho ngendlela loluhlelo olwenze umehluko ngayo ezinkingeni zakho. Ukwenza lokhu umncwaningi kufanele othole iqhaza olumbaxambili kuwena

Okokuqala ukugcwaliswa koluhlu lwemibuzo. Okwesibili ukuthola imvume yokufikelela nokubona ifayela lakho eligcinwa umnyango wezindaba zabasebenzi. Lokhu kuzosiza umcwaningi ukuthi athole ulwazi oluqondile mayelana no shitsho nendima edlalwe iqhaza olibambile kuloluhlelo , ukufanekisa nje, izimo ezi njengokuphutha emsebenzi noma ikhefu ngenxa yokugula

Iqhaza nokuzibandakanya kwakho kuloluhlelo kuyogcinwa kuyimfihlo njengoba umcwangi nomlawuli wohlelo lwe zokunakelwa kwabasenzi kuphela abaziyo ngalo. Ulwazi oluyotholaka luzosentshenziswa umcwaningi kuphela ukufeza izinjongo ze sifundo cwaningo, alukho ulwazi oliqondene ngqo nawe oluyodalulwa kwi rephothi

Iqhaza nokuzibandakanya kwakho kuloluhlelo ngeke kube nemithelela izintweni eziyimfihlo neziqondene nawe ngqo. ozikhulume nomeluleki wakho ngokomoya.

Igama lakho ngeke livezwe ohleni lwemibuzo kodwa imininingwane ifakwe ngokuhlelo lwamkhodi esentshenziswe yagcinwa umcwaningi. Uhlelo lwamakhodi

lusiza umcwaningi ukuze akwazi ukuhlanganisa izimpendulo zohla lwe mibizo yokuqala neyesibili ndawonye kanye futhi nolwazi olutholakale kwifayela lakho.

Unelungelo lokumisa ukubamba iqhaza kuloluhlelo noma ngabe kunini uma ufisa kube njalo

Uhla lwemibuzo lufishane , lungathatha nje isikhathi esingange mizuzu engamashumi amathathu kuphela yesikhathi sakho.

Uyacelwa ukuba ukhululeke uthintane nomcwaningi noma ngabe kunini uma unemibuza uma usagcwalisa uhla lwemibuzo.

Please feel free to contact the researcher at any time should you have questions while completing this questionnaire.

Siyabonga ngeqhaza olibambile

Ozithobayo

ANNELINE KEET (Ms)

UMCWANINGI

U Anneline Keet umfundi usikhungweni semfundo ephakeme I university of Pretoria ezingeni le D Phil, kanti futhi usenzisana ne Careways group

Tel: 0827827502

E-mail: annelinekeet@yahoo.com

PO Box 10578

Vorna Valley

Midrand

1686

Editor: Jenny Immelman

Annexure 3: Employee Questionnaire

A study on
The ROI (Return on Investment) of Employee Assistance Programmes among the corporate clients of
The Careways Group

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE:

Instructions for completion:

1. Please read carefully before you answer the questions.
2. Be as thorough as possible.
3. Submit the completed questionnaire to……
4. This questionnaire is the first of two to be completed over a period of three months.

Note: Confidentiality is guaranteed.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

1.	How many years have you been working for the company?	
2.	How old are you?	
3.	What is your monthly income before deductions (bruto)/ your basic hourly rate without overtime?	

4. Please tick the box relevant to the nature of your problem. You may tick more than one box

Substance related	
Marital or partner relations	
Stress	
Depression	
Bereavement	
Trauma	
Accident at work	
Financial	
Legal	
Parent-child	
Work-related problems	
Health-related problems	
Other – please specify	

5. How long, before utilising the EAP, have you experienced this problem?

0-3 months	
4-7 months	
8-12 months	
More than one year	

The following set of questions reflects on the impact of counselling on your relational/family functioning.

Please read the statements carefully and circle the number next to the response you agree with most.

Since I was involved in the counselling programme offered by the EAP:

6. My relationship with my spouse/partner has improved.

Definitely agree	2
Agree	1
Unsure	0
Do not agree	-1
Definitely do not agree	-2
Comments :(Indicate here if your relationship was never affected).	

7. Relationships with child/children have improved.

Definitely agree	2
Agree	1
Unsure	0
Do not agree	-1
Definitely do not agree	-2
Comments: (Indicate here if your relationship was never affected).	

.

The following set of questions refers to the impact of counselling on your work related activities.

Please answer the following questions by selecting the option that applies to you.

8. Are you of the opinion that your personal problems were impacting on your ability to perform your work adequately at the time of referral to the EAP? Please tick **x** in the box next to the statement that applies to you.

My problems **never** impacted on my ability to do my work adequately.	
My problems **sometimes** impacted on my ability to do my work adequately.	
My problems **always** impacted on my ability to do my work adequately.	

9. Has there been an improvement in your work performance since participating in the EAP? Please tick **x** in the box that applies to you.

My problem never impacted on my work performance.	
There has been **no improvement** in my work performance since participating in the EAP.	
There has been **some improvement** in my work performance since participating in the EAP.	
There has been significant **improvement** in my work performance since participating in the EAP.	

10. Rate the following statement according to the impact of your personal problems on your work attendance, where 1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

My personal problems had no impact on my attendance at work.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Indicate whether your personal problems – before participating in the EAP – resulted in the following:

	Yes	No	Not applicable
Taking extended lunches			
Arriving late for work			
Leaving work early			
Spending time unproductively			

12. Before referral to the EAP, were you considering leaving the company? Please tick **x** in the box that applies to you.

While experiencing personal problems I **never** considered leaving the company.	
While experiencing personal problems I **sometimes** considered leaving the company.	
While experiencing personal problems I **regularly** considered leaving the company.	

13. Indicate whether you were involved in performance counselling or disciplinary action before referral to the EAP. Please tick **x** in the box next to the statement that applies to you.

	Yes	No
I was disciplined before I was referred to the EAP.		
My line manager counselled me before I was referred to the EAP.		

14. Please indicate by ticking **x** in the relevant box(s) what you perceive

as having been the benefits derived from your participation in the EAP programme. You may tick as many as you feel apply to you.

	No improvement	Moderate improvement	Remarkable improvement
Personal relationships			
Work relationships			
Work performance			
Self image			
Coping skills			
Attendance at work			
Mistakes in the workplace			
Number of work related accidents/incidents /			

	Yes	**No**
I give the researcher permission to access my employment records.		

Please submit the questionnaire in the sealed envelope to:

- **the secretary at Reception (to specify)**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Editor: Jenny Immelman

Annexure 4: Employee Questionnaire, Zulu translated

A cost benefit analysis /return on investment study of Employee Assistance Programme amongst corporate clients of the The Careways Group.

Research Questionnaire / Inhloluvo Yocwaningo

Imigomo Yokugcwalisa

1. Uyacelwa ukuba ufundisise ngaphambi kokuphendula imibuzo
2. Naba ngokwanele.
3. Gcwalisa uthumele uhla lwemibuzo ku—
4. Lenhloluvo yocwaningo iyisigaba sokuqala kwezimbili .Kumele igcwaliswe isikhathini esinga ngesinyanga ezintathu

Qaphela: ***Zonke izimpendula ziyongcinwa ziyimfihlo***

Demographics minininingwane

1. Unesikathi esingakanani usebenza kulenkampani?	
2. Mingaki iminyaka yakho yokuzalwa	
3. Lingakanani iholo lakho (lingaphungulwa) / uhola malini (lingakaphungulwa)	

4. Faka uphawu uluhambelana nenkinga yakho. Ungafaka uphawu olulodwa nangaphezulu.

Izinkinkiga ezimayelana nezidakamizwa	
Umshado noma …..	
Ukuxineka	
Ukukhandleka kwengqondo	
Ukulahlekelwa / ukushonelwa	
Ukuhlukumezeka ngokomoya	
Ingozi emsebenzini	
Ezezimali	
Ezomthetho	
Umzali nontwana / nabantwana	
Izinkinga zasemsebenzini	
Izinkinga zezempilo	
Okunye – chaza	

5. Singakanani isikhathi unezinkinga ngaphambi kukusenzisa loluhlelo lokusiza abasebenzi.

0-3 wezinyanga	
4-7 wezinyanga	
8-12 wezinyanga	
Ngaphuzulu konyaka	

Uhla lwemibuzo elandelayo luzwakalisa ushintsho ulwenziwe ukwelulekwa kubudlelwano/ukuhleleka emndenini wakho
Uyacelwa ufundisise izitatimende kahle bese ufaka uphawu kuleyo mpendulo ovumelana nayo kakhulu.

Kusukela ekuzibandakanyeni kwami ohlelweni lwezokululekwa lokunakekela abasebenzi:

6. Bungcono ubudlelwano phakathi kwami nengiganene naye /engishade naye

Ngivumelana ngokuphelele	2
Ngiyavumelana	1
Akunasiqiniseko	0
Angivumelani	-1
Angivumelani ngokuphelele	-2
Beka imibono (Khombisa lapha uma ubudlelwano bakho bungazange buthinteke)	

7. Kunobungcono kubudlelwano phakathi kwabantwana

Ngivumelana ngokuphelele	2
Ngiyavumelana	1
Akunasiqiniseko	0
Angivumelani	-1
Angivumelani ngokuphelele	-2
Beka imibono (khombisa lapha uma ubudlelwano bakho bungazange buthinteke)	

ngokomsebenzi wakho. Phendula lemibuzo elandelayo ngokufaka uphawu lapho ubona kufanele.

8. Ngokubona kwakho izinkinga zakho ziphazamisile yini indlela owenza ngayo umsebenzi wakho ngesikhathi udluliselwa ohlelweni lukunakekelelwa kwabasebenzi. Khetha ibhokisi elinempendulo eqondene nawe.

Izinkinga zami azikaze zibe nomthelela ekwenzeni umsebenzi wami ngokwanele	
Izinkinga zami **ngesinye isikhathi** ziba nomthelela ekwenzeni umsebenzi wami	
Izinkinga zami **zihlezi ziba** nomthelela ekwenzeni umsebenzi wami ngokwanele	

9. Usuke wabona umehluko ongcono emsebenzini wakho selokhu ube yingxenye yezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi. Uyacelwa ufake uphawu ebhokisin elihambelana nawe

Inkinga yami ayizange ibe nomthelela emsebenzini wami	
Ukuzange kube khona umehluko ongcono emsebenzini wami selokhu ngibe yingxenye yezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi	
Kube khona umehluko ongcono kancane emsebenzini wami selokhu ngibe yingxenye yezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi	
Kube khiona umehluko obonakalayo emsebenzini wami selokhu ngibe yingxenye yezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi	

10. Qhathanisa izitatimende ezilzndelayo ngokwezinga iznkinga zakho ezibe nomthelela ngawo ukubeni khona kwakho emsebenzini .

Lapho kuno 1=ukungavumelani ngokuphelele.
2=awuvumelani
3= uphakathi nendawo nje
4=uyavumelana
5=uyavumelana ngokuqinisekile/ kakhulu

Izinkinga zami azikaze zibe nomthelela emsebenzini wami	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*

11. **Khombisa ukuthi izinkinga zakho zibe nawo yini umthelela kulezimo ezilandalayo – ngaphambi kukuba ube sohlelweni lezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi.**

Ukuthatha izikhathi ezingeziwe zekhefu	*Yebo*	*Cha*	
Ukufika emuva kwesikhathi emsebenzini			
Ukuhamba ngambambi kwesikhathi emsbenzini			

12. Ngaphambi kukuba yingxenye yohlelo lwezokunakekeleka kwabasebenzi,uke wacabanga ukushiya lenkampani.Faka uphawu ebhokisini elifanele.

Ngesikhathi nginezinkinga ***angizange ngicabange*** *ukushiya lenkampani*	
Ngesinye isikhathi uma nginezinkga ***ngike ngicabange*** *ukushiya lenkampani*	
Ngesikhathi nginezinkinga ***ngicabanga njalo*** *ukushiya lenkampani*	

13. Khombisa ukuthi uke waba yini ingxenye yokululekwa noma izinyathelo zokujeziswa ngokomsebenzi ngaphambi kokuba ube sohlelweni lwezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi.

	Yebo	Hayi
Ngike ngaya kwimfundiso yezokululeka ngaphambi kokuba ngidluliselwe kuloluhlelo lwezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi.		
My line manager counseled me before I was referred to the EAP		

14. Uyacelwa ufake Uphawu X ebhokisini/emabhokisini ocabanga ukuthi abe nezi nzuzo ozithola ngokuba ingxenye yohlelo lwezokunakekelwa kwabasebenzi. Ungabeka uphawu kuwo wonke amabhokisi ohambisana nawo.

	Hayi, awukho umehluko	Okahle umehluko	Obonakala yo Umehluko
Ubudlelwane nabantu			
Ubudlelwane emsebenzini			
Ikhono lokusebenza			
Izinga lokuzazi			
Izindlela namazinga okukhona			
Izinga lokubakhona emsebenzini			
Amaphutha emsebenzini			
Inani lezingozi/izehlakalo emsebenzini			

	Yebo	Hayi
Nginikeza umncwaningi ilungelo lokufikelela kwi fayela lami		

Uyacelwa ikuba uthumele lenhloluvo emvilophini evalwe ngci ku mabhalane endaweni yokufikela .

SIYAKUBONGA NGOKUBA INGXENYE YALOLUCWANINGO

Annexure 5: Invitation letter to managers

Dear Mr/Ms

"Company name"

Date: February 2008

Ref. Prof L S Terblanche
Tel. 012 4203292
Fax. 012 4202093
E-mail: lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I would herewith like to introduce to you a proposed research program to be conducted at the "company name" site, by Ms A Keet. She is presently involved in an academic research exercise as part of the requirements of the D Phil Social Science with the University of Pretoria. *The Careways Group* previously employed her as team leader for the Network Development and Management Department. She is currently an affiliate therapist to *The Careways Group*.

This research exercise is intended to evaluate whether the referral of troubled employees into the EWP programme contributes towards improved work performance and as a result impacts positively on the general well being of the company as a whole.

Employee Wellbeing Programmes are widely accepted as a workplace intervention that not only reflect the humanitarian intentions of an organisation, but have authentic cost-saving potential as well. Mental health problems such as: stress, depression, and alcohol and drug abuse are major contributors to sickness, absenteeism and poor productivity. A newspaper report *(Rapport Loopbane* 2 July 2006*)* indicated that absenteeism from the workplace cost the South African economy at least R20 milliard for the year 2006. The average cost of absenteeism per day for an employee who earns about R5 000 is estimated at R200 (direct costs) and up to R600 if indirect costs are included.

A cost benefit analysis, also called a return on investment study, is in essence a form of program evaluation, informing us whether the program is wielding the type of returns it intended to.

The focus of this study is to determine the return on investment of the Employee Wellbeing Programme to Old Mutual through the following procedure:

- Determining the impact of people's mental health problems on their productivity.
- Determining the financial impact of productivity indicators like sickness, absenteeism, lower job performance and staff turnover.
- Investigating whether the involvement in the EAP has a positive impact on productivity indicators as mentioned above.
- Measuring the costs savings of improved productivity indicators against the costs incurred by investing in the EAP.

The focus will be on employees who used the program through the formal referral process during 2007/2008. This will be done through the use of self-reporting questionnaires and existing statistical research. Permission will be obtained from these employees to have access to their personnel files for the statistical research component. The reason for this is to build in an objective component in the self-reporting exercise. This latter part (studying existing statistical information) is dependent on permission from both the employee and Old Mutual.

The qualitative component of the study involves the interviewing of line managers like you who referred employees into the program. The researcher aims to comprehend from your point of view how you interpret employee's emotional problems impacting on his/her productivity, what your expectation is of the program and your perception of improvement regarding productivity indicators after the intervention. Interviews with a schedule are utilised for this purpose. An added value of these interviews is its ability to capture your views as referring managers regarding different components of the program. Your contribution can help us further improve the EAP and evaluate the effect of the programme on the productivity of your staff.

The self-reporting questionnaires will be repeated after three months to determine consistency of changed behaviour. The researcher hopes to start the interactions (completion of the first round of questionnaires and the interviews) March 2008. Your participation in this exercise will be of great value. Employees would spend a maximum of 30 minutes completing the questionnaire, while an interview with referring managers would be conducted within a 30-45 minute time frame.

For purposes of confidentiality and a sense of comfort, the researcher would like to suggest that she send the employee questionnaires to you. You will only ask the employee whom you referred (she will provide the name to you only), to complete the questionnaire and hand it back to you. They have the option to decide whether they want to be part of the program. Their names do not appear on the questionnaires and the researcher works according to a coding system to be able to link the first and follow-up questionnaire with each other.

The rationale for the above is that these employees already have an existing relationship with you and you are aware of their participation in the program. They can then pick up the questionnaire from you, complete it and hand it back to you. The researcher will pick it up at the time of the interview.

If you have any questions about the research and its operating process, please feel free to contact the researcher directly – or alternatively her promoter, Prof L S Terblanche - at 082 768 1321 or e-mail: mailto: lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za

Contact details of Ms A Keet:

Cell phone number: 0827827502
E-mail address: annelinekeet@gmail.com

Yours faithfully

PROF L S TERBLANCHE
PROMOTER

Editor: Jenny Immelman

Annexure 6: Interview Schedule for referring managers and supervisors

A COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES AMONGST CORPORATE CLIENTS OF *THE CAREWAYS GROUP*

Semi-structured interview schedule for referring managers and supervisors

1. Have you been involved in EAP referral agent training in your company?

2. If yes, how did the training assist you in making use of the EAP?

3. Please describe the process leading to the actual referral of troubled employees to *The Careways Group*?

4. Do you take into consideration the existing company policy on performance appraisal, when referring troubled employees to *The Careways Group?*

5. Please motivate your answer to question 4.

6. Generally speaking, what is your perception of ***the impact of employees' personal problems***, on productivity in the workplace?

7. What are the financial implications of such productivity problems for the company?

8. Generally speaking, what is your perception of ***the impact of employees' personal problems*** on the social functioning of troubled employees?
9. What is your expectation of the EAP when referring troubled employees to the programme?

10. What is your perception of the productivity outcome of referring troubled employees to *The Careways Group* on their productivity?

11. What is your perception on the outcome of referring troubled employees to *The Careways Group* on their social functioning?