

Exploring perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that “Exploring perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality of Limpopo Province” (dissertation) hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of social work has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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13.09.2022

Date

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my three sons, Tsunduka, Fumani, and Murisi, who gave me a purpose to further my studies. I wish them to make education fashionable and always remember that, they are the masters of their own fate.

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ABSTRACT

Social workers are working with vulnerable, marginalised and abused clients on a daily basis. Hence, Employee Assistance Programme services are vital to nurture the emotional well-being of employees. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of social workers regarding utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in the Greater Giyani Municipality of Limpopo Province. The objectives of the study were to determine social workers' awareness of Employee Assistance Programme services available to them and to establish factors that contribute to the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services. The study adopted a qualitative approach and used face-to-face interviews aided by a semi-structured interview schedule to collect data. Non-probability sampling and purposive sample technique were used to select the participants. Moreover, exploratory design was used as a blue print of the study to obtain insight about the perception of social workers of the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret data. The findings show that participants are not taking advantage of the available psychosocial services within the Department of Social Development. The study also found that participants had never used the EAP, despite the fact that the majority of them had felt the need to seek professional help at some point. Furthermore, participants do not believe in the credibility of the Employee Assistance Programme resulting in them not utilising the available services. Participants expressed concerns about confidentiality, a lack of office space, resources, and poor marketing. The study has concluded that social workers based at the Greater Giyani Municipality of Limpopo Province, have a negative perception regarding the use of EAP services, hence the programme is under-utilised.

Keywords: Employee Assistance Programme, perceptions, social workers and utilisation.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and motivation of the study

The wellness of employees has gained momentum since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Almost all industries in South Africa, including mining, manufacturing, technology, customer service, and finance, are currently implementing Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) including the public sector (Govender & Vandayar, 2018). This programme is regarded as a workplace strategy that addresses both personal and work-related issues that employees and organisations face (Joseph & Walker, 2017). According to the Employee Assistance Profession Association (EAPA), EAPs serve organisations and their employees in a variety of ways, ranging from strategic consultation about issues with organisation wide implications to employees and family members experiencing personal difficulties. According to the researcher, having an EAP does not imply the smooth management of employees' wellness. The commitment of both employers and employees in ensuring the effectiveness of the EAP is imperative. Metsing (2015) states that EAPs have a good record in terms of their growth and development, particularly in the United States of America.

According to McRee (2017), more than 70% of the United States of America (USA) employers offer EAP benefits to employees and their families. According to Govender and Vandayar (2018), the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa, has been a major reason for the emergence and development of EAPs in both the public and private sectors. Furthermore, the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS led to the implementation of a comprehensive EAP strategy that offers a wide range of services. The Department of Public Service and Administration (2001) required government agencies to establish and implement EAPs for the benefit of public service employees and their families. As a result, in 2013, the South African Department of Social Development began implementing the programme in response to the mandate. In Limpopo, the programme began at the provincial level and was later decentralised to district offices such as Mopani District in 2017. According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (2012), the success of the strategy to promote employee

wellness for public employees is dependent on organisational support structures and optimal programme utilisation. The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of social workers of the use of EAP services. Dipela (2016), Gcwabe (2015) and Manganyi (2016) report under-utilisation of EAP amongst the sampled employees in their research studies. However, in the study findings conducted by Mundalamo (2015), 61% of the participants reported that they had participated in the EAP services. Studies conducted by Lodewyk (2011), Kenny (2014), Dawad and Hogue (2016), Linseman (2016), and Mashiane (2017) investigated employee perceptions of EAP use, focusing on EAP coordinators, financial and correctional service staff. The perceptions of social workers on the use of EAP services have not yet been investigated in this area of study. Therefore, this study focused on social workers as the recipients of EAP services.

1.2 Research problem

The researcher observed that social workers do not utilise EAP within the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani Municipality in the Mopani District. For example, the Limpopo Province Department of Social Development designated Wednesday as a sports day for all public servants. As a social worker in this district, the researcher observed that, social workers in the Mopani District of the Greater Giyani Municipality do not participate in sports activities organised by the EAP office. They carry on with their daily routines as if it were any other working day. According to the annual report for the fiscal year 2017/2018 of the Department of Social Development, Mopani District, none of the social workers, stationed in the Greater Giyani Municipality utilised EAP services since its inception until the end of reporting period. Dawad and Hoque (2016) state that employee perceptions influence the effectiveness of the EAP. This view was affirmed by Zou (2017) who states that most employees who have utilised EAPs have a positive perception about the programme. Consequently, EAP enhances organisational effectiveness and employees' well-being. Thomas and Morris (2017) state that the helping professions often provide services to clients with emotional pain, and thus carry their client's heavy burdens as well. Unfortunately, in some instances professionals in these professions do not receive any assistance in dealing with these burdens. The researcher is of the view that the competency of social workers to help others does not protect them from both work and personal stresses. This creates a need for social workers

as employees to also receive counselling. Failure to receive EAP services may result in negative consequences for the social workers who need such services, namely, stress, burnout, absenteeism and low morale. Furthermore, it may jeopardise the provision of high-quality services to clients. This could put the noble profession of social work and the organisations that employ them under criticism. Furthermore, social workers' perception of the EAP service play an important role in its implementation and its utilisation. This investigation was critical in providing empirical evidence about the factors contributing to the under-utilisation of EAP services in the area of this study.

1.3 Operationalisation of key concepts

The concepts below have the following meaning in this study:

1.3.1 Perception

Qiong (2017) defines perception as the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information through selection, organisation and interpretation. For the purpose of this study, perception refers to the interpretation, impressions and the meaning that social workers attach to EAP.

1.3.2 EAP utilisation

Mundalamo (2016) defines EAP utilisation as the number of new cases opened within a given time period divided by the total number of employees eligible for EAP services. In this study, EAP utilisation refers to social workers' overall voluntary participation as employees in all activities related to EAP services.

1.3.3 Employee Assistance Programme

Terblanche (2019) in Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius, and Tyson (2021) describes EAP as a strategic work-based intervention designed to enhance the psycho-social well-being of all individual employees and the wellbeing of the employer as corporate client towards improved workforce productivity. This definition has been embraced for the purpose of this research project.

1.4 Theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical framework serves as the foundation for the knowledge in research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The authors further indicated that, the role of theory is to structure and support the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance,

and the research questions. This study was guided by the Social Ecological Model shown below:

1.4.1 Social Ecological Model

In this study, the researcher adopted a Social Ecological Model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a way to recognise that individuals affect and are affected by a complex range of social influences. EAP is a wellness matter, the researcher chose to use the Social Ecological Model, which is drawn from social and behavioural theories. This model allows the researcher to investigate social workers' perception of the utilisation of EAP services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province. The Social Ecological Model focuses on multiple levels of influence with the view that behaviours are shaped and influenced by the social environment (Painter, Borba, Hynes, Mays & Glanz, 2008). Social workers assume different roles in all spheres of life; hence, they are more vulnerable to personal and work-related stresses. EAP services are instrumental in sustaining the wellbeing and production of employees. However, the perception of employees of the utilisation of EAP services is influenced by social and behavioural factors.

The study was guided by five levels of the Social Ecological Model. The model considers the complex interplay between the individual (the social worker's knowledge, skills and attitude), interpersonal (an employee's social network), organisational (how other employees view the utilisation of EAP), community (the influence of societal norms and values) and policy (organisational policy on EAP as a factors that determine the utilisation of EAP services). In relation to this study, the multiple levels of the Social Ecological Model aided the researcher in determining social workers' awareness of EAP services available to them, as well as factor that contribute to EAP under-utilisation. Societal factors influence social workers' decisions to seek professional assistance in times of need. The use of the Social Ecological Model has a strength in that, it requires working across multiple levels of the model at the same time, making this approach more appropriate for long-term prevention efforts than any single intervention. According to the researcher, social workers are equipped with assessment skills and are aware of the benefits of seeking professional assistance.

It is important to note that, social workers encourage their clients or service beneficiaries to seek all forms of assistance including psycho-social intervention when they are in need. However, they also need to be motivated to utilise such services. The diagram below demonstrates how factors at one level influence each other at another level (Glanz & Bishop, 2010.)

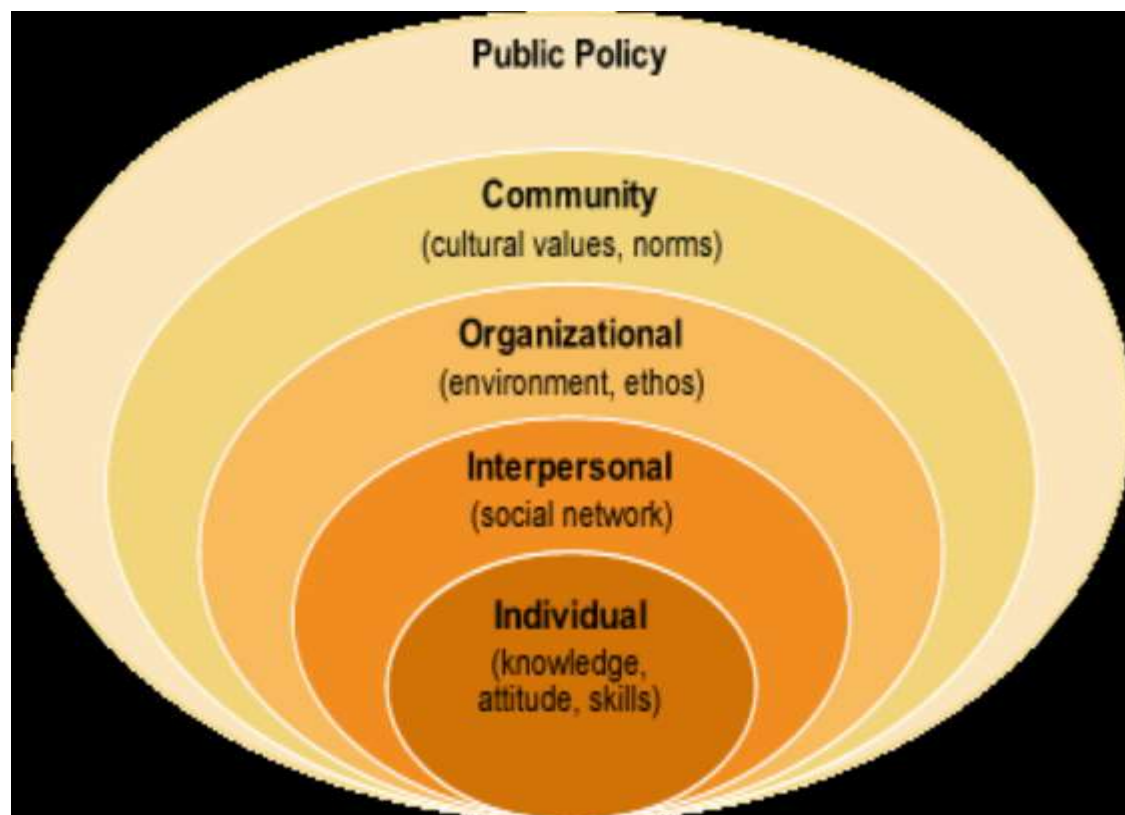


Figure 1: Social Ecological Model adopted from (Glanz& Bishop, 2010).

1.5 Purpose of the study

The main aim and objectives of this study are described in this section as follows:

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of the EAP services in the Greater Giyani Municipality.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided the focus of the study:

- To determine the social workers' awareness of EAP services available to them.

- To establish factors that contribute to the utilisation of EAP services.

1.5.3 Research question

The study seeks to answer the following question:

- How do social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality perceive the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme Services among themselves?

1.6 Research methodology

Ingwenagu (2016) defines research methodology as a collection of systematic techniques used in research to shed more light on the resources, limitations, assumptions, and consequences relating to the potentialities of the subject. Typically, the research methodology guide the way to systematically solve the research problem by logically adopting various steps (Patel & Patel, 2019). In order to better understand the methodology applied in this study, the researcher described, the research approach, research design, population and sampling, method of data collection and data analysis as follows:

1.6.1 Research approach

According to Tian (2018), the research approach is a plan and its procedures that stipulate the steps of research from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. On the other hand, Mohajan (2018:23) states that, every research must involve an explicit, disciplined and logical approach to obtain optimal results. The research approach applied in this study was qualitative in nature. The main reason for selecting a qualitative approach was to acquire in-depth information about the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of the EAP services directly from the participants. The approach was helpful in describing, interpreting, and generating theories about social interactions and individual encounters as they occur in natural situations (O'Brien, Harris & Beckman, 2014; Laumann, 2020).

1.6.2 Research design

The research design is a type of inquiry within research methods, which provides precise direction for research techniques. According to Akthur (2016), the research design assists the researcher in making a smooth navigation of the numerous research procedures, generating information with the least amount of effort and time, and producing a

professional report. The selection of a research design is critical in the research design process because it determines how relevant information for a study can be obtained (Indu & Vidhukumar, 2019). Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the exploratory research design was selected as a blueprint of the study. The researcher used the exploratory design to obtain insight about the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services. According to Reiter (2017), an exploratory research design provides a new version that was previously ignored by raising new questions and providing new clarifications of a given reality from a new perspective. In government agencies, the concept of EAPs as a workplace intervention is relatively new (Mugari, Mtapuri & Rangongo, 2014). Furthermore, the Department of Social Development in the Mopani District started to implement the programme only in 2017.

The researcher gained new insights about the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, as previous studies focused on the use of EAP rather than examining employees' perceptions of such services. It is critical for social workers to use EAP services in their line of duty, especially those who are directly exposed to distressing situations. According to the researcher, it is important to note that, social workers are both beneficiaries and service providers of EAP. Therefore, they cannot effectively assist distressed and vulnerable clients if they are distressed themselves. Failure to manage their wellness will compromise the quality of service delivery to their clients as well as their own wellbeing.

1.6.3 Population of the study

In a qualitative study, the term population refers to the largest group of potential participants (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng-Abayie, 2017). The authors further asserted that, a proper population specification is critical because it guides others in assessing the credibility of the sample, sampling techniques, and research outcomes. The participants in this study were social workers employed by the Department of Social Development, based at Greater Giyani Municipality. This study investigated the perception of social workers of the utilisation of EAP. The researcher wanted to gain a clearer perception of how the social workers feel about the phenomenon. Greater Giyani Municipality has three

(03) social work supervisors, twenty-two (22) senior social workers and forty-three (43) junior social workers. This amounts to a total of 68 social workers.

1.6.4 Sampling

Sampling is the selection of a subset of individuals from a population to estimate the characteristics of the entire population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). On the other hand, Alvi (2016) describes a sample as a group of a relatively small number of people chosen from a population for the purpose of investigation. Sampling can be done by means of two methods, which include probability and non-probability sampling. Maunganidze (2020) indicates that researchers must be clear and precise about sampling techniques, given the greatness of qualitative data to be collected. In this study, the research participants were chosen using a non-probability sampling and purposive sample technique. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) describe non-probability sampling as a method where samples are collected in a way that does not ensure that all participants in the population have an equal chance of being selected. The authors also describe the purposive sampling technique as the deliberate selection of a participant based on the qualities of the participants.

The researcher conducted a briefing session with the target population prior to data collection. A sample of twenty (20) social workers who met the inclusion criteria were recruited to participate in the study. However, the researcher interviewed only participants who were willing to participate. During the data collection process, the researcher gathered rich and sufficient information from the participants. As a result, the sampling reached saturation point sooner than anticipated. Hence, the researcher interviewed a total of twelve (12) participants. Whitehead and Whitehead (2016) indicate that, there are no universal criteria for determining sample size. The richness of data is more important than the quantity of participants in qualitative research. According to Hornberger and Rangu (2020), focusing on the purpose of the study allows the researchers to create effective inclusion and exclusion criteria for collecting the most significant data.

➤ **Inclusion criteria**

The researcher needed specific characters that can separate the study groups from the rest of the population. The sample consisted of both male and female junior social workers stationed at the Greater Giyani Municipality in Limpopo Province. Junior social workers work directly with clients in distressing situations and are more prone to stress and burnout. The sample were permanent employees at the Department of Social Development, with 3 years and more working experience as social workers.

➤ **Exclusion criteria**

Senior social workers and supervisors were excluded in this study as they are less likely to deal with emotionally draining cases. They are more involved in supervision or managerial duties. The study also excluded junior social workers who were temporary employees at the Department of Social Development.

1.6.5 Data collection

Data collection is the process of collecting and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic manner that allows researchers to test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes (Kabir, 2016). Qualitative researchers typically collect data from a variety of data sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information rather than relying on a single data source, (Creswell, 2014). However, this study used only face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection. During the interviews the researcher used audio recording through smartphone to capture the data. The researcher chose audio recording as it allows the interviewer to focus on the interview rather than on writing notes. According to Barret and Tywcross (2018), the advantage of interviews is that, they provide the most direct, detailed, and rich data about a specific phenomenon. According to Schroder (2016), the physical presence of an interviewer during the interview can improve the quality of data collected. An interview guide was used as a research instrument for this study. The interview guide assisted the researcher to adhere to the main questions that were relevant to the purpose of the research project as suggested by Aldhaen (2020). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect detailed information about social workers' perceptions of the use of EAP. The method typically consists of a conversation between the researcher and the participant,

guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). As a result, the semi-structured interviews were beneficial in providing participants with a platform to share their own personal opinions about the topic under investigation.

1.6.6 Data analysis

There are numerous analytical methods that can be used to analyse qualitative data. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), the goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes and key patterns in data and then use these themes to say something about the topic under consideration. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found in a data set. Thematic analysis is an appropriate and cost-effective exploratory research method, particularly for analysing experiences, perceptions, and understanding (Herzog, Handke & Hitters, 2019). The primary goal of this study was to investigate social workers' perceptions of the utilisation of EAP services. Thematic analysis assisted the researcher in identifying and categorising key themes based on participant perceptions. Braun and Clarke (2006) documented six phases that guided the researcher in analysing this study. The phases are described as follows:

Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with one's data

This phase entails immersing oneself in the data by reading and re-reading textual data such as interview transcripts, qualitative study responses, and listening to audio recordings or watching video data. The researcher listened to the audio recordings several times while transcribing them word for word. This aided the researcher in becoming acquainted with the collected data.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

The researcher identified and coded any information relevant to the research question. In order to avoid having to go back through the entire data set, the researcher also coded the data of whose relevance she was unsure. The researcher wrote down the code and marked the text associated with it after identifying an extract of data to code.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

During this phase, the coded data is reviewed to identify areas of similarity that overlap between codes. The researcher investigated the relationship between themes and considered how themes could collaborate to tell a larger story about the data.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

This phase entails a recursive process in which the developed themes are compared to the coded data and the entire dataset. The researcher compared themes to data extracts and investigated whether the theme 'works' in relation to the data. The researcher also reread the entire data set to see if the set of themes captured the most important and relevant elements of the data and the overall tone of the data related to research question.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Each theme must be developed not only in its own right, but also in relation to the research question and other themes. The researcher gave each theme informative, concise, and relevant names, and conclusions were drawn from the overall analysis.

Phase 6: Producing the report

While the final phase of analysis is the production of a report, such as a journal article or a dissertation, it is not a phase that starts at the end. The report's goal is to tell a compelling "story" about data based on analysis. The researcher wrote a substantial report that is clear and grounded in scholarly literature.

1.7 Quality criteria

One of the most daunting challenges for qualitative researchers is ensuring the quality and credibility of their research studies (Mandal, 2018). Researchers can improve the transparency and quality of their studies by demonstrating the dependability and rigor of their data collection and data analysis methods (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016). To ensure the credibility of this study, the researcher employed elements of the quality criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln in Treharne and Riggs (2015). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are among the

criteria used. Furthermore, the applicability and relevance of quality criteria have been described in the following manner:

1.7.1 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility determines whether the research findings represent credible information derived from original data and correct participant interpretation. The researcher ensured credibility by presenting the perspectives of the participants in the data analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, the researcher gathered detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation from the social workers who were willing to participate, which improved the quality and credibility of the findings.

1.7.2 Transferability

The researcher provided extensive descriptive data on the methodology used as well as a literature review on the perception of social workers of the use of EAP services. The detailed description allows other researchers to replicate the study in other settings with similar conditions (Anney, 2014). Therefore, the researcher gathered extensive descriptive data, in order to ensure transferability.

1.7.3 Dependability

To validate the study's reliability, an audit trail strategy was used. The researcher provided a research file containing relevant documents such as sets of notes on decisions made during the research process, research materials used, the emergence of the findings, and data management information. This allows the study's assessors to examine the transparency of the research path as suggested by Korstjens and Moser (2018).

1.7.4 Conformability

The researcher ensured that the findings were recorded and that all research materials used during the research process were acknowledged. The study's supervisor and co-supervisor, as well as the researcher, verified and confirmed that the data collection methods and procedures were followed correctly.

1.8 Pilot study

A pilot study in research plays an important role to inform the investigators in similar fields about the best research process and likely outcomes (Majid, Mohamad, Lim, & Othman,

2018). The researcher piloted the study prior to conducting the main investigation. Piloting was done mainly to determine whether the procedures and techniques used were effective in achieving the goal of the study. For piloting, the researcher interviewed two social workers from the Greater Letaba Municipality in Mopani who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants who contributed to the pilot study were not included in the main investigation. The pre-testing of the interview schedule assisted the researcher to determine the reliability of the questions asked during data collection. Moreover, some of the questions that were unclear were reframed and revised prior to the main investigation.

1.9 Ethical considerations

According to Creswell (2014), researchers must consider ethical issues in their research plans and address them proactively. The researcher protected the participants throughout the study by following appropriate ethical principles. This study was guided by the following ethical considerations:

1.9.1 Permission to conduct the study

Research necessitates collaboration and coordination among various people, disciplines, institutions, and ethical standards (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). This usually entails requesting permission from the relevant authorities and participants, outlining the contributions and significance of the proposed study. Ethical approval was sought and granted from two main research ethics committees: the University of Limpopo Research and Ethical Committee and the Limpopo Department of Social Development research ethics and evaluation committee.

1.9.2 Informed consent

According to Arifin (2018), the process of obtaining consent entails participants' voluntary participation and comprehension of the subject under investigation. The researcher informed the participants about the nature of the study, the significance of the research, the data collection process, and the dissemination of findings. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection process if they felt uncomfortable. It was also stressed that their participation was entirely voluntary. The researcher asked the participants to consent to their participation in this study by

signing consent forms before the interviews, and this was done without putting them under any pressure.

1.9.3 Anonymity

The principle of anonymity requires that the identities of participants in a research project be protected. The researcher did not use the participants' real names in the research to ensure that their identities were not revealed during the study. To protect their identities, each participant was given a pseudonym. This was communicated to the participants during recruitment, and they were assured that their real names would not be used during the research process or during the interviews. Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality, the true identities of participants were not revealed during data analysis

1.9.4 Confidentiality

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), any research study involving people must respect participants' right to privacy. To protect the participants, this research project ensures confidentiality. The employer or other people who were not involved in the study will not have access to the participants' personal information or their specific contribution to the study. This included all transcripts and records. The information can only be shared if the participant has granted a written permission.

1.9.5 Deception of participants

The researcher should not deceive or pressurise participants to participate in the study in terms of ethical standards. In this study, the researcher was open about the project's goal and the data collection process. The participants were informed ahead of time that there would be no reimbursements or incentives for taking part in the study. The participants used their own judgment to contribute to the study, without being manipulated or pressurised.

1.9.6 Avoidance of harm

The research design must consider the possibility of harm to the participants, institution, and community (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). In this study, the researcher avoided causing the participants harm by assuring them that their contributions would not result in any form of victimisation or stigma. To avoid any form of harm, the interviews were

conducted in private settings. In addition, the researcher treated all participants professionally during the interviews by creating a conducive environment. Even though this study is not overly intrusive, the researcher was aware that some participants may experience emotional distress as a result of sharing painful memories of dealing with cases that would have required them to consult EAP practitioners. During the data collection phase, the researcher did not have a case that required the services of a social worker or psychologist for counselling.

1.9.7 Respect and dignity

As a professional, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to uphold the principle of respect and dignity for participants. In terms of the subject under investigation, the researcher did not judge or discredit the participants' perspectives. The opinions of the participants were faithfully recorded and taken into account during the evaluation. Personal and private issues were avoided in order to respect the participants' dignity. Furthermore, participants were treated with dignity and respect throughout their interactions with the researcher.

1.10. Significance of the study

Research assists in the formulation of various government policies; nearly all government policies and budgets are planned and implemented with the assistance of researchers (Patel & Patel, 2019). In addition, research is important in studying social relationships and seeking answers to various social problems (Kabir, 2016). This study will add knowledge to the EAP field and may be useful to EAP providers in understanding social workers' perceptions concerning EAP service utilisation. The findings of the study may help the Department of Social Development develop an informed improvement plan for EAP service utilisation. Furthermore, when social workers take care of their own health, they are in better state to help the marginalised, destitute, and vulnerable population. The study may provide social workers with an opportunity to reflect on their perceptions of the programme as well as their own attitudes towards the utilisation of services. This can encourage them to recognise and value the availability of EAP services at their workplace. The study also made recommendations on how to improve the perceptions and utilisation of EAP services to benefit both employees and employers.

1.11 Limitations of the study

Limitations are issues and incidents that arise during a study that are beyond the researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013; Dimitrios, & Antigoni, 2019). The researcher went to great lengths to minimise the study's potential limitations. The study focused on social workers' perceptions of the use of EAP. However, the researcher chose junior social workers as participants of this study; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to include other categories of social workers, as their perceptions regarding the topic were not explored. The perception of participants of the utilisation of EAP might not be a true reflection, as some EAP services are confidential in nature and their utilisation may not be easily seen. Ideally, the researcher had the intention to interview at least half of the targeted population. However, the interviews reached saturation point earlier than anticipated. Hence, a sample size of 12 was interviewed. It is important to note that, the EAP office is located in the Mopani district and it is responsible for providing EAP services to five (5) municipalities, including the Greater Giyani municipality where the study was conducted. Due to financial constraints, the study was limited to the Greater Giyani Municipality.

1.12. Dissertation chapter layout

1.13.1. Chapter 1: The general orientation of the study

1.13.2. Chapter 2: Perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme

1.13.3. Chapter 3: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

1.13.4. Chapter 4: Summary of major findings, conclusion and recommendations of the

CHAPTER 2

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS OF THE UTILISATION OF EAP SERVICES

2.1 Introduction

The success of the Employee Assistance Programme is dependent on service utilisation and the mutual commitment of both employers and employees. The employer's commitment alone will not achieve the EAP's goal. The perceptions of social workers of the EAP services determine the programme's use and success. Positive perceptions of social workers of the EAP services can enhance the utilisation of the programme, whereas negative perceptions of such services can prevent employees from embracing and utilising EAP services as a personal resource. The literature on social workers' attitudes toward the use of EAP services has been reviewed in this chapter. The chapter concentrated on the following topics: the rationale for using EAP, the principles of EAP, the services provided by EAP, models of EAP, core technologies of EAP, potential determinants of social workers' perceptions of EAP utilisation, and barriers to EAP utilisation among social workers. Other topics to be covered include the advantages of using EAP services and the consequences of not using EAP services as well as key elements of the EAP best practice.

2.2 Rationale of utilising Employee Assistance Programme

Traditionally, EAP is regarded as the first door to be knocked on when employees face life challenges. EAPs are critical tools for addressing employee well-being and achieving key organisational milestones such as performance and productivity (Bophela, 2015). According to Mazantsana (2013), it is widely assumed that the primary rationale for EAP is cost savings for the organisation in terms of lost productivity, medical expenses, and sick leave abuse. Kenny (2014) indicates that EAP is cost effective for employers to use, such as when rehabilitating a worker costs less than training a new employee. Keet and Terblanche (2013), pointed out that there has been a significant increase in company investment in employee well-being. The majority of EAP service providers have a workplace trauma programme in place (Terblanche & Van Wyk, 2014). According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPISA, 2012) Employee Health and Wellness Programmes in the public sector are rapidly changing the nature of holistic

support provided to employees as a way to ensure risk management, occupational health, safety, productivity, and wellness of government employees and their families. These programmes ensure the safety of citizens in the public sector. In light of the foregoing, the researcher contended that a healthy workforce strives for peak performance. Employee assistance programmes (EAPs) can boost employee morale while also preventing social issues that could jeopardize productivity and general well-being.

2.3 The principles of the Employee Assistance Programme

2.3.1 Awareness and marketing of EAP

Employee awareness of EAP is a critical component to EAP service utilisation. The programme can go unnoticed and under-utilised, when it is not adequately promoted. This can be done through promotional mailings at workplaces and to employees' homes (Shepps & Greer, 2018). The target population of EAP should be made aware of the programme. Lack of information about the existence of the programme, may result in the under-utilisation of services and thus have a negative impact on the organisation. According to Bajorek and Kinder (2017a), one of the most common reasons why employees did not use their EAP was a lack of service promotion. As a result, employees tend to be clueless about the scope of services and support available to them. The EAP staff's primary responsibility is to inform all employees about the availability of the EAP at the workplace. This should be done on a continuous basis because many organisations frequently hire new employees who may be unaware of the programme.

It is customary for EAPs to be in charge of presenting various campaigns and promotional materials in order to increase programme visibility (Shepps & Greer, 2018). EAP should be promoted through employee orientation programmes, company and union bulletin boards, newsletters, and employee meetings (EAP-SA, 2015). According to Baloyi (2014), EAP was most effective when marketing strategies and activities were combined. According to Smith (2019), effective marketing may increase employee use of EAP services and alleviate workplace stress, thereby positively influencing social change by assisting in the cultivation of a healthy workforce. The researcher indicates that EAP practitioners should market the programme; when employees are well informed about EAP services, they are more likely to recognise the value of the programme and take the

responsibility for nurturing their wellness. Lack of information about the extent of available EAP services and poor promotion of the programme is regarded as a barrier that limit the usage of the EAP (UK EAPA, 2016).

2.3.2 Voluntary participation

Voluntarism is a self-initiated request for assistance by the employees who are eligible for EAP services (Mugari, 2011; Siyangaphi, 2018). An employee may either contact an EAP voluntarily, or it may be attached to disciplinary action (Bajorek, 2016). Employees typically request EAP services, and an intake professional assesses their issues (Courtney, 2019). An employee's motivation and perceptions are factors that can influence the possibility of seeking EAP services voluntarily in a time of need (Milot, 2019). The researcher agrees with the author; employees must be motivated, or they will not seek professional help voluntarily, except through mandatory referral. A person who is motivated to change is more likely to benefit from the helping process from a psychological standpoint.

Manganyi (2016) points out that, as much as EAP participation is voluntary, employees should not reject the recommendations and referrals made by the management and supervisors. Training and educational procedures need to be available in order to motivate employees to use the EAP (Dipela, 2016). The programme design should entice and make employees feel comfortable to use EAP services without being forced.

2.3.3 Accessibility of EAP

According to Manganyi (2016), the physical location of an EAP office may influence client utilisation of the programme. Dipela (2016) indicates that accessible service is one that is close to the employees, open at convenient hours, and has shorter waiting lists. Furthermore, it should have the necessary practitioners, resources, settings, and policies to make employees feel welcome. Some EAP providers have resources for employees that are underutilised due to a lack of access and awareness of programme offerings (Perez, 2019). The location of EAP services could contribute to the perceived level of stigma associated with seeking EAP services (Courtney, 2019). The researcher agrees with this, namely, that if the EAP office is located near or in the middle of fellow employees' workstations, it may be difficult for a troubled employee to visit the EAP for assistance.

Mundalamo (2015) states that if employees are properly empowered and assured of the confidentiality of EAP services, it will be easier for them to use the EAP services. Moreover, the ability to communicate to employees what services are available through the company's EAP and what steps employees must take to access these services is critical to a successful EAP. Therefore, it is critical that EAP be promoted in order to increase employee utilisation of the services (Sithole & Khorombi, 2009; Manganyi, 2016).

2.3.4 Confidentiality

The principle of confidentiality refers to practitioners' ethical obligation to protect information entrusted to them by clients with whom they have a professional relationship. This includes the obligation to safeguard data against unauthorised access, disclosure, modification, loss, and theft (EAPA, 2015). The disclosure of information to unauthorised individuals is considered a serious violation of many professions' codes of conduct and is illegal (Rajin, 2012). Confidentiality is the foundation of the EAP, thus it is critical that precautionary measures are always taken to safeguard the programme; this may also determine the utilisation of services (Manganyi, 2016). Furthermore, personal information shared by employees during counselling sessions should always be kept confidential; otherwise, employees will not fully trust the credibility of EAP services.

The nature of EAP confidentiality give employees the opportunity to share their problems and discuss issues that affect them (Mugari, Mtapuri & Rangongo, 2014). However, in the study conducted by Dawad and Hogue (2016) employees cited confidentiality and trustworthiness as reasons for not participating in a wellness programme. Employees may choose not to use the EAP if confidentiality is not guaranteed (Masi, 2005; Mugari, 2011; Mundalamo, 2015). Protection of confidentiality is difficult, yet it should not be limited to protecting clients' personal information. The environment of the EAP office should be conducive to therapeutic sessions and not expose the clients who have consulted the office to their employer or colleagues.

2.3.5 Accountability of EAP

Management or leadership at a workplace is responsible for encouraging and referring employees to EAP when they notice a drop in morale or work performance (Kenny, 2014).

According to (Dipela, 2016), it is paramount to conduct accountability evaluation of EAP. Accountability evaluation implies that the programme's worth must be reported and thus demonstrated if it is to continue receiving legislative, financial, and public support. Supervisors should be observant and capable of identifying troubled employees who exhibit obvious signs of distress as well as those who are capable of concealing their emotions. Dipela (2016) state that organisations should assume responsibility for the economic and programmatic use of resources when the programme is implemented. The researcher argue that supervisors must account to the wellness of employees by ensuring that troubled employees receive the necessary assistance as soon as possible before their situations worsen.

2.4 Services offered by the Employee Assistance Programme

According to Bajorek (2016) the scope of EAPs can vary; for example, some will cover employee families and a wide range of issues, including those unrelated to work, whereas others may be limited solely to those issues that have an impact on work performance. The EAP typically provides screening, assessments, brief interventions, referrals to other services, and case management with longitudinal follow-up for mental health concerns and substance abuse problems (Attridge, Amaral, Bjornson, Goplerud, Herlihy, McPherson, Paul, Routledge, Sharar, Stephenson, and Teems, 2010; Sandys, 2012). Employees can choose from a variety of EAP services, including face-to-face visits with counsellors, telephone calls available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, online resources, and onsite workplace gatherings (Attridge, Cahill, Granberry & Herlhy, 2013). EAPs offer a variety of counseling and support services aimed at assisting employees in the workplace, promoting individual wellness, and reducing the likelihood of personal or work-related issues negatively impacting the workplace (Bajorek, 2016). Furthermore, alcohol misuse, grief, job growth, disabilities, family problems, financial guidance, legal challenges, retirement, physical fitness, and violence are just a few of the issues that can be addressed through counseling. Most EAPs include clinical and non-clinical services intended to support employees on a broad range of personal and work-related issues. According to Kubheka (2015), it is critical that services be implemented in accordance with the established standards, as these standards serve as the foundation or driving

force of the EAP. The EAP can also proactively reduce an organisation's medical expenses for mental health issues (Ledimo & Martins, 2018). EAPA-SA (2015) outlined clinical, non-clinical and proactive services as a guideline for EAP services to be implemented by any organisation providing an EAP. The services offered by the EAP are described in the table below:

Clinical services	
Types of services	Services offered
➤ Critical incident Management	The EAP offers trauma defusing and trauma debriefing services for employees, family members and the organisation in case of critical incidents
Crisis intervention	The EAP offers intervention services for employees, family members and the organisation in crisis situations
Case assessment	EAP professionals conduct an assessment to identify problems on the part of an employee and/or a family member and/or an organisation and develop a plan of action or treatment.
Referral	Clients are referred to an appropriate resource according to their unique needs revealed by the assessment.
Short-term intervention	EAP professionals provide short-term intervention services
Case monitoring and Evaluation	The therapeutic process is monitored to ensure progress.
Aftercare and	The EAP ensure that EAP clients

Reintegration	receive aftercare and reintegration Services.
Non-clinical services	
Types of services	Services offered
organisational consultation	The EAP professional provides advice and consultation to minimise risk and promote organisational effectiveness.
EAP management and supervisory training	The EAP uses training as an intervention strategy.
Marketing	EAP practitioners develop and implement an appropriate marketing strategy
Proactive services	
The EAP will develop holistic, proactive Interventions	

Table 2.4.1: Services offered by EAP, Adopted from EAPA-SA (2015).

In light of the above, EAP has the potential to render comprehensive services to the beneficiaries of services. Clinical services are concerned with issues affecting the well-being of employees and their families, whereas non-clinical services are concerned with organisational logistics that promote the effectiveness of the EAP. Moreover, the proponents of the Social Ecological Model suggest that wellness programme interventions are most likely to be effective if they embrace an ecological perspective. Interventions should not only be targeted at individuals but should also affect interpersonal, organisational, and environmental factors (Glanz & Bishop, 2010). Furthermore, this model suggests multiple levels of intervention rather than a single approach. According to the researchers, comprehensive EAP services could promote a healthy lifestyle and self-care practice among employees.

2.5 Employee Assistance Programme core technology

EAPA (2010) has developed eight (8) EAP core technologies, which include the following:

- (1) Consultation with, training of, and assistance to work organisation leadership (managers, supervisors, and union officials) seeking to manage troubled employees, enhance the work environment, and improve employee job performance;
- (2) Active promotion of the availability of Employee Assistance services to employees, their family members, and the work organisation.
- (3) Confidential and timely problem identification/assessment services for employee clients with personal concerns that may affect job performance.
- (4) Use of constructive confrontation, motivation, and short-term intervention with employee clients to address problems that affect job performance.
- (5) Referral of employee clients for diagnosis, treatment, and assistance, as well as case monitoring and follow-up services.
- (6) Assisting work organisations in establishing and maintaining effective relations with treatment and other service providers, and in managing provider contracts.
- (7) Consultation offered to work organisations to encourage availability of and employee access to health benefits covering medical and behavioural problems including, but not limited to, alcoholism, drug abuse, and mental and emotional disorders; and
- (8) Evaluation of the effects of Employee Assistance services on work organisations and individual job performance.

2.6 Models of Employee Assistance Programme

Bajorek (2016) suggests that EAPs differ depending on whether an organisation chooses to implement internal or external provision. When choosing an EAP, there are three models to consider: internal, external, and hybrid/blended services. The following sections provide information on the variations of each EAP model:

2.6.1 Internal model

Internal EAPs typically employ full-time or part-time counsellors who are regular-status employees of the work organisation and provide on-site counselling and management consultation services (Frey, Pompe, Sharar, Imboden & Bloom, 2018; Sandys, 2012). Internal EAPs are expected to provide quick responses and insights into organisational culture, as well as to have influence more on a macro level across the organisation than as a whole. When compared to external vendors, the internal model has the distinct advantage of allowing staff to develop a greater understanding and knowledge of an organisation (Sharar, Pompe & Attridge, 2013). As a result, high-quality services tailored to that organisation's needs can be provided.

2.6.2 External model

An external model is defined primarily in terms of an outside vendor that is contracted to provide most or all aspects of the EAP (Sharar, Pompe & Attridge, 2013). According to Pompe, Jacobson, Sharar, Imboden, and Bloom (2017), because external EAPs are less expensive and easier to purchase and administer, many employees are more willing to seek personal services away from the workplace. Various external service providers partner with internal EAPs to extend their services (Govender & Vandayar, 2018). One reason for outsourcing external service is that many workplaces lack the resources to implement a full-fledged EAP (Masi, 2020).

2.6.3 Hybrid model

The hybrid model incorporates elements of both models and typically employs EAP personnel at the employer's workplace or at multiple locations within the organisation; it also employs external contract personnel who provide EAP services in multiple locations (Sharar et al, 2013). Understanding the work organisational and managerial variables impacting the stability of such difficulties and the viability of these programs in the future of the EAP sector begins with learning about the experiences of internal and internal/external EAP managers (Frey, Pompe, Sharar Bloom, Imboden, 2018). Hybrid services may include EAP staff and resources from within the organisation as well as services obtained from outside EAP providers. Many internal EAPs in South Africa are hybrids that combine elements of internal and external models, depending on access to professional resources and funding (Govender, & Vandayar, 2018). Experiences with

internal and external service provision, serve as a foundation for understanding work organisational and managerial factors. It has an impact on the stability and sustainability of these programmes in the EAP industry's future (Frey et al, 2017).

Based on the above-mentioned discussion, it is possible to conclude that all EAP models are important, depending on the programme design and the specific needs of each organisation and individual employee. Some employees may prefer specific model or a combination of models. Thus, it is critical for employers to be adaptable when it comes to providing EAP models. This may improve EAP's positive perception as well as its utilisation.

2.7 Possible determinants of social workers' utilisation of Employee Assistance Programmes

2.7.1 Professional identity

Social workers have traditionally been the preferred profession for EAPs due to their diverse skills and ability to address both the macro issues of the organisation as well as helping employees on a personal level (Gurumoorthi & Nalin, 2014; Sandys, 2015). Human service professionals see themselves as helpers and believe it is inappropriate to seek assistance (Linseman, 2016; Kukihara & Yamawaki, 2018). In addition, they see professional help as a sign of weakness and professional incompetence, which jeopardise their professional identity.

According to Tsakissiris (2015), professional identity has two interrelated components: the interpersonal, which is related to the culture, knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs of a profession that a person has learned. On the other hand, the intrapersonal component refers to the individual's perception of themselves in terms of their occupation. The researcher is of the opinion that, social workers are among the helping professionals who have the skills and competence to provide EAP; for this reason, it may be difficult for them to seek professional help because they are counsellors themselves.

2.7.2 Employee's attitude

Employee attitudes and perceptions influence the effectiveness of EAP programmes. According to Dawad and Hogue (2016) positive attitude is associated with use of EAP

services. An employee's pre-existing attitude influences help-seeking behaviour (Kumcagiz, 2013). Sipon and Yaacob (2014) state that, help seeking is frequently perceived as a threat to one's self-esteem, as people often internalise seeking help as being inferior; this may be a contributing factor for people to withdraw from seeking help, even when experiencing psychological distress. Furthermore, many professionals perceive counselling as a difficult, uncomfortable, and risky process in which to participate; such perceptions instill a fear of seeking professional help in many employees who require such services.

Chandrasekara (2016) states that the most frequently reported barrier to seeking psychological help is stigmatising attitudes. The author further indicates that, public and self-stigmatizing attitudes create shame, which delays the identification of the problem and the seeking of assistance. The belief that one can solve problems without the assistance of others, as well as the unwillingness to share problems with an expert, were identified as factors impeding psychological help (Topkaya, 2015).

2.7.3 Work environment

Physical factors and getting along with work colleagues are typical working conditions that employees come across. Temperature, humidity, ventilation, illumination, and noise can have a substantial impact on employee performance with regard to productivity, quality service, and accidents (Bophela & Govender, 2015). Each welfare state is framed within the larger framework of a public sector management and restructuring of infrastructure, which influences employee perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours (King, 2016). In any organisation, the quality of the working environment is a serious issue that can significantly influence employee motivation, performance, and productivity (Eluka & Okafor, 2014; Parvin & Kabir, 2011). Dikavar (2015) states that a work environment is healthy when employees regard health as a priority. According to Alkubaisi (2015), employees in any profession frequently experience distress and frustration as a result of poor working conditions. Furthermore, exposure to environmental stressors at work can jeopardise the success of wellness programmes, as people who are experiencing high general life stress are less likely to use wellness programmes. Lack of supervisor's support, productivity demands, and client resistance to treatment are all environmental

factors that influence professional counselors. According to the Social Ecological Model, even when people are highly motivated, their behaviour can be limited by their surroundings and people's perceptions (Glanz & Bishop, 2010).

2.7.4 Organisational culture

Organisational culture serves as a meaningful mechanism that directs and shapes employees' attitudes and behaviours (Thaba, 2019, Saad & Abbas, 2018). According to Moabelo (2018), organisational culture can either build or destroy employee morale, which can in turn have far-reaching consequences in the organisation if not recognised or managed properly. Negative attitudes of some social workers could lead to an unacceptable organisational culture, in which both new and experienced employees may disregard EAP activities. Weak cultures do not foster socialisation toward shared superordinate values, thus leaving employees to rely on values developed outside of the organisation, most notably their own (Lyons, Schweitzer, Urick & Kuron, 2019). Culture change is critical for providing better service in the organisation, influencing employee behaviour, and meeting specific organisational objectives and goals (O'Riordan, 2015). According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (2012), organisational wellness promotes culture that values individual and work-life balance in order to improve the success and efficacy of the organisation.

2.7.5 Social norms and values

Social norms are unwritten, informal rules that define acceptable, suitable, and mandatory actions in a given group or society (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018). The ability of social norms to influence behavior has been reflected in numerous behavioral change theories and theoretical frameworks (Cotterill, Powell, Rhodes, Brown, Roberts, Tang, & Wilkinson, 2019). According to Levin (2017), social norms are classified into two types. The first are descriptive norms, which explain how a given practice is typically done or how people behave in relation to the group around them. The other type of norm is injunctive, which defines what is generally accepted or what behaviours are acceptable. Social stigma and negative feedback from family and friends are potential inhibiting factors to seek professional psychological help (Madianos & Zartaloudi, 2010; Milot, 2019).

Understanding the impact of one or more norms on a specific practice should be a top priority for effective intervention design (Cislaghi & Heise, 2018).

2.7.6 Influence of public policy

There is a public policy in place regarding the use of the EAP. In 1999 the Department of Public Service and Administration developed and implemented an Employee Assistance EAP within the public service (Taute & Manzini, 2009). All government departments were required to implement EAP services within their working institutions as directed by the Department of Public Service and Administration (2001). This would encourage utilisation of the EAP services and ultimately enhance productivity and morale in the workplace. The EAP policy should be developed in a democratic manner and widely distributed. This would encourage people to use the EAP services, which would boost productivity and morale in the company (Mugari, Mtapuri and Rangongo, 2014). A clearly-written policy will ensure consistent application of the rules and regulations of the EAP (EAPA, 2015). Furthermore, the policy should make provision for matters such as:

- Employee and dependent access, this include offering EAP with the language of employees and their cultures.
- Specifying the different conditions that may affect job performance, employee functioning and quality of life;
- Securing job status, which will not be jeopardised as a consequence of accessing EAP services, except when mandated by law;
- Specifying that employees who use an EAP are expected to adhere to the job performance requirements of the employer;
- Clinical records that must be kept strictly confidential to the extent provided for by law and/or regulation, and which will not be noted in any official company record or in the employee's personnel file;
- All clinical data should be stored for a minimum of five years;

The Social Ecological Theory is being used to identify potential determinants of social workers' use of EAP. The societal and behavioral issues that social workers face at work influence their decision to use EAP services. Social Ecological Models assume that, there are multiple levels of influence, and that these levels are interactive and mutually

reinforcing (Golden & Earp, 2012). Thus, a broad understanding of the key factors and models for behaviour change can serve as a foundation for wellness programmes, as well as to identify influential factors that hinder the use of EAP. Furthermore, these may allow EAP providers to focus on the most important issues that could improve EAP service utilisation (Glanz & Bishop, 2010).

2.8. Barriers to Employee Assistance Programme service utilisation

2.8.1 Lack of confidence in the credibility of EAP

The general trust in the EAP plays an important role in programme utilisation. Organisations that have implemented EAPs have encountered trust and confidentiality issues at some point (Kenny, 2014). The acceptability of the EAP would be influenced by the organisation's integrity, predictability, and evidence demonstrating that it possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully manage such a programme (Spence, 2015). Maintaining confidentiality is critical to the success and credibility of the EAP; failure to do so may discourage employees from trusting and using EAP services (Mundalamo, 2015). It is always critical to ensure that all proper processes and guidelines as stipulated by EAP professional bodies were followed prior to the programme's implementation. This will increase programme acceptance and clarify the purpose of the EAP to all stakeholders, particularly service recipients.

2.8.2 Fear of stigma

According to Milot (2019), the EAP treatment stigma refers to stigmatised individuals who seek help from EAP counselling services for distressing personal challenges. According to Adamson, Agee, and Elder (2018), counsellors may contribute to the negative perception or stigma associated with counselling and mental health concerns in organisations. Counsellors are the face of EAP services; therefore, it is critical that they uphold the principles and ethics that guide their work. Failure to adhere to the profession's core values may influence service recipients' negative attitudes toward seeking help. Employees may not use EAP unless they are assured that there will be zero tolerance for stigma and discrimination against EAP service users in the workplace (Mundalamo, 2016; Attridge et al, 2010). In times of overwhelming personal challenges, an employee's perception of stigma may influence the decision to access and use EAP services.

According to Courtney (2019), employees may be concerned that using EAP services will negatively impact their employer's or coworkers' perception of them. It is critical for managers and supervisors to frequently endorse the utilisation of EAP to employees, in order to mitigate stigma (Manganyi, 2016; UK EAPA, 2019).

2.8.3 Insufficient EAP practitioners and credentials

The majority of EAP professionals have degrees in social work or psychology. The accreditation process for EAPs was designed to ensure that minimum qualification requirements and basic workplace knowledge are met in order to provide high-quality service (Courtney, 2019, Masi, 2020). Nonetheless, despite the growing popularity of EAP, the field is suffering from a lack of training (Manganyi, 2016). Cameron, Duraisingam, Kostadinov, Roche, and McEntee (2018) proposed that EAP personnel should have a specific level of education, typically a master's degree. In addition, the staff should have the necessary licence as well as at least two years of experience in substance abuse and other addictions. Substance abuse and other addictions are common social ills that affect the majority of employees. Therefore, EAP practitioners require advanced training in restorative services issues. Such level of education may result in employees developing trust and confidence in the effectiveness of the programme.

2.8.5 Lack of resources

EAP resources also include financial support and leadership involvement to improve employee well-being (Manier, 2013). Employees who are aware that there are insufficient resources are less likely to participate in wellness initiatives. Providing resources to all employees may boost participation and improve the programme's effectiveness (Nichol, 2015). It is critical for organisations that provide EAP to devote sufficient resources to employee satisfaction programmes (Mafini & Pooe, 2013). It is critical that resources and budget be allocated to the programme before the implementation of EAP services. These may increase an employee's willingness to participate in EAP services. Furthermore, management must provide the necessary support and resources to ensure the success of the programme.

2.8.6 Lack of management support

Managers are critical to the EAP because they are the first to notice any deterioration in an employee's performance and well-being. They may recognize deteriorating performance while ignoring the cause, as long as the cause is not work-related (Mabindisa, 2013). When clear leadership support and strategic communication are not visible, it may limit the motivation required to be appropriate motivation. Both personal and work-related problems should be given equal attention in terms of intervention. When an employee is dealing with a personal issue, it can have an impact on his or her work performance. The provision of EAP services would allow for the development of positive organisational change, improved employee performance, and the facilitation of effective management practices and positive leadership (Adamson, Agee & Elder, 2018). According to Joseph and Walker (2017) organisations that provide EAP services may be perceived as meeting employees' psychological needs and well-being.

2.8.7 Lack of proper programme design

According to Lacey and Street (2018), practitioners have a tendency to use a “one-size-fits-all” approach, with cost, rather than engagement and results, being the primary driver of programme selection. This “one-size-fits-all” approach frequently fails to cater for employee interest and engagement. According to Roche *et al.* (2018), all EAPs eventually strive to improve the well-being and productivity of employees. However, there are variations in how such concepts are defined, prioritised, and operationalised. According to Nichol (2015), it is critical for organisations to care for their employees' health and well-being; however, it is critical to determine employees' perceptions of the use of EAP, as this may determine their involvement. According to EAPA (2010), programme design must take into account the following organisational issues:

- Type of organisation
- Types of jobs/work products
- Organisational mission
- Size and demographic makeup of workforce, including racial, ethnic, gender, And cultural diversity

- Number and dispersion of work sites, including remote and teleworking employees
- Collective bargaining agreements

It can be concluded that employers should fully commit to the existence of EAP by providing adequate resources in order to enhance service utilisation. These include organisational issues such as staff capacity, marketing strategy, confidentiality protection, and stigmatisation must be considered. Strategic planning for the programme before its implementation is essential. Failure to support the programme holistically could serve as a barrier for EAP utilisation.

2.9 The benefits of Employee Assistance Programme utilisation

Utilisation of the EAP services is free of charge to employees and their families in some organisations and thus enhances staff utilisation of the programme (Dipela, 2016). The advantages of EAP are cost-effective since they address the root causes of poor performance (Bophela, 2015). The researcher believes that the EAP benefits both employers and employees equally. However, simply implementing the programme does not always result in a positive outcome. Therefore, mutual commitment on the part of both the employer and the employees is critical in providing effective EAP services. The benefits for both the employer and the employees are listed below.

2.9.1 Prevention and early intervention

Implementing EAPs helps employers identify troubled employees and health threats before they become a crisis; early intervention can save money (Mazantsana, 2013). The EAP should create holistic, proactive interventions and activities like awareness campaigns, wellness days, promotional materials, capacity building, information sessions, seminars, and training. Health promotion programmes in the workplace are regarded as an important tool to prevent serious social ills.

2.9.2 Improve performance and productivity

According to UK EAPA (2019), the EAP is a professional service intended to maintain workplace productivity and health by providing specialised knowledge and skills about human behaviour and mental health. Masi (2020) indicates that EAP is purposefully designed to maintain and improve employee well-being and productivity, as well as to

retain employees who have experienced social or health problems. Employees who use EAP have a sense of well-being, which boosts morale, job satisfaction, and lowers staff turnover (Bophela & Govender, 2015). The authors further state that EAP should protect employee wellness in order to maintain a healthy working environment and retain healthy employees. It is critical to note that when employees' well-being is prioritised, they are more productive and perform better. For this reason, EAP should be implemented with the employees' best interests in mind.

EAP has evolved into an important and widely used institutional mechanism in a variety of organisations to promote health, emotional well-being, and performance enhancement (Sipon & Yaacob, 2014). According to Bophela and Govender (2015), EAP can also be a valuable business approach that offers a variety of services to improve overall organisational performance, such as quality assurance and effective service delivery.

2.9.3 Improve organisational wellness

Employees have positive perceptions of organisations that value their contributions or care about their well-being; this has been shown to produce positive outcomes for both employees and employers (Elsenberger, Malonen & Presson, 2016; Dipela, 2016). Organisations that strive to initiate work engagement and organisational commitment gain long-term benefits and positive outcomes. Low productivity is linked to low morale and other issues like absenteeism, turnover, stress, and burnout (Manganyi, 2016). Organisations have an obligation to keep their workplaces healthy and productive by providing effective support to professionals, including physical, social, and resource support, as well as emotional support (Adamson, Agee, & Elder, 2018), which includes providing EAP to employees who need it.

2.9.4 Enhance self-care and wellness

According to Kaverova (2017), in a global context, helping professionals' self-care is regarded as an important requirement for their ability to assist their clients more effectively. Furthermore, it is linked to higher levels of job performance, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy. Self-care also prevents helping professionals from developing negative effects from seeking help in the first place. The National Association of Social Workers (2016), states that, healthy social workers may have higher job satisfaction, lower

absenteeism and turnover rates, have fewer physical health problems, and develop a new model of practice that balances quality care for others and self-care. Counsellors who practice self-care improve both themselves and their practice (Coaston, 2017). According to National Association of Social Workers (2016) healthy social workers may experience more job satisfaction, reduce absenteeism and turnover rates; have few physical health problems and create a new model of practice in which, quality care of others and self-care is balanced. When counsellors decide to practice self-care, they enhance themselves and their practice (Coaston, 2017).

Organisational wellness programmes can improve employees' health and well-being (Manier, 2013). Investigating how social workers perceive and practice self-care has the potential to improve job retention, supplement training, and improve job satisfaction and overall professional quality of life among social workers (Bloomquist, Wood, Trainer, & Won Kim, 2015). Structuring self-care as a proactive rather than a reactive practice improve professional values, attitudes, and norms that prioritize self-care (Lee & Miller, 2013). Self-care enhance the potential to work with healthy employees rather than employees in need of healing. In addition, it serves as an empowering tool that enables practitioners to take holistic responsibility for their health and well-being, by taking into account both personal and professional lives.

2.9.5 Enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction

Every employee joins the organization with the expectation of better opportunities and the fulfillment of social and psychological needs. Employers are expected to meet the desired needs of their employees in the ideal world (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). According to Roos (2015), the way employees perceive their work and work environment can influence their motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational performance. Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that EAP utilisation has a positive impact on employees and organisations when properly implemented. Employees who practice self-care are more likely to be happy and productive at work.

2.10. Possible consequences of Employee Assistance Programme under-utilisation

2.10.1 Stress and burnout

The practice of social work presents unique challenges that are both rewarding and emotionally draining for workers (Kwong, 2016). The social work profession relies on capable and energetic employees. Nonetheless, they are regarded as having a high risk of job stress and burnout (Travis, Lizano, Mo barak, 2015). According to Ligege (2016), one of the most common outcomes is related to unattended health and wellness issues. Stress is more likely to affect employees working at the grassroots level, where they have little control over their work situation. According to the researcher, cases are normally assigned to subordinates by their supervisors without giving them option to choose. Social workers are at a high risk of developing work-related stress due to their increased exposure to vicarious trauma in their field of work (Coleman, Martensen, & Scott, 2016; Stockwell, 2017).

Counselors may experience stress in their personal and professional lives if they do not practice self-care, which may lead to burnout (Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles & Hemming, 2017). According to the findings of a study conducted by Blount, Taylor, Lambie, and Anwell (2016), stressors such as personal and cultural issues, addictions, burnout, and other counselling-related occupational challenges may negatively influence wellbeing. Burnout's negative effects and consequences highlight the importance of assisting professionals in taking proactive steps to address their personal needs and self-care in order to avoid burnout-related symptoms (Weeks, 2014). According to the researcher, after being exposed to a traumatic situation, social workers will need to use EAP services in the form of debriefing sessions.

2.10.2 Lack of self-care

According to Stalnaker-Shofner (2014), self-care and wellness are concerns for both counselling professionals and the people who receive their services. Self-care has recently come to the attention of researchers, professionals, and educators, who have discovered that individuals in the counseling profession do not engage in self-care (Nelson, *et al.* 2017). Even so, balancing the multifaceted scopes of wellness can be

difficult. Furthermore, lack of self-care can be associated with the gradual development of those negative psychological consequences of helping (Kaverova, 2017). In an effort to enhance the well-being of all clients through policy-practice, advocacy, and therapeutic interventions, greater physical, mental, and emotional stress ultimately leads to reduced self-care interventions along with a lowered quality of life (NASW, 2016).

2.10.3 Absenteeism

Absenteeism costs employers a lot of money because of the lost productivity caused by the employee's absence (Cloete, 2015). Lost work time due to illness and injury far outnumbers lost time due to labour disputes. Some people believe that absenteeism is a withdrawal response to perceived or actual adverse working conditions; however, this may be a reaction only at one end of a continuum of responses that can affect work performance, concentration, safety, and participation. EAPs are designed to help people reflect on specific issues, so businesses may consider outsourcing this function to have control over their organisation and to be competitive especially, when focus is on maximising organisational efficiency and reducing absenteeism (Bophela & Govender, 2015). Moreover, given the high cost of absenteeism to organisations, employers are concerned about assisting their employees in addressing behavioural health issues and job-related stressors that lead to increased absenteeism and lost productivity.

2.10.4 Presenteeism

When an employee is physically present at work but not performing at a normal level due to a health or personal issue, this is referred to as presenteeism (Cancelliere et al, 2011; Attridge, Sharar, Veder, & Steenstra, 2020). Presenteeism is linked to lost productivity as a result of employee health issues such as allergies, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic back pain, and so on. Because these health issues are not severe, the employees report for duty, but their productivity is in vain. Based on the foregoing discussion, it is clear that underutilised EAP services have a negative impact on the workplace. If an employee is stressed or burnout, he or she will be unable to perform his or her duties effectively. Furthermore, employees who fail to report to work due to personal issues impede their clients' ability to receive services.

2.11 Key elements of the Employee Assistance Programme best practice

To achieve and maintain employee wellness, an EAP must be implemented effectively (Mugari, Mtapuli & Rangongo, 2014). Hence, it is critical to prepare EAP readiness prior to implementation. The researcher proposes five (5) key elements for EAP best practices.

2.11.1 Establishment of an advisory committee

The advisory committee's role is to ensure that all relevant organisational role players, such as top management, employees, supervisors, and union members, contribute to the effective design and operation of EAP (Metsing, 2016). According to EAPA (2010), the advisory committee must provide advice and recommendations on the following topics:

- EAP goals and objectives, design, development, implementation, planning, promotion, operations and evaluation
- Utilisation of EAP services
- EAP confidentiality issues and limits of confidentiality
- How to take into account the unique characteristics of the organisation and its employees

2.11.2 EAP leadership involvement

Leadership is critical to the organisation's orientation and direction. It is in charge of outlining the organisation's vision and mission for others to follow (Meraku, 2017). According to Mathafena and Hewitt (2018), management can have a high-quality influence on employees by providing support, motivation, and opportunities to develop and participate in wellbeing enhancement. According to the UK EAPA (2016), line managers have an important role in organisations to develop a positive employment relationship with those who report to them, to assist in employee personal development and to be aware of the health and wellbeing of those they manage. Makgato (2016) indicates that, management assists in obtaining the resources required for the wellness programme and in communicating the importance of EAP to employees. Managers should be encouraged to take the lead in the promotion and positioning of EAP (Bajorek & Kinder, 2017b). Moreover, they must reassure employees that the primary goal of EAP is prevention.

2.11.3 Promotion of the programme

If EAPs are not sufficiently promoted in the workplace, they can become invisible and underutilised (Greer & Shepps, 2018). Furthermore, promotional methods are an important component in increasing EAP utilisation. Teaching employees and their families about EAP is an important factor in promoting the programme and increasing service utilisation because potential users may not understand what the function is (Brown & Csiernik, 2015).

2.11.4 Utilisation of EAP

There is very little information about EAP utilisation rates in the literature. Furthermore, it is frequently unclear how utilisation rates are determined and what the denominator is when they are supplied (Courtney, 2019). EAP providers should show a figure for the utilisation of the programme as part of management records (UK EAPA, 2019). There are several methods for measuring utilisation, and organisations should be clear about which method they are employing. Increasing understanding of employees' beliefs and perceptions increases participation rates and may aid organisations in implementing wellness interventions (Ott-Holland, Shepherd, & Ryan, 2017).

2.11.5 Evaluation of the programme

The programme can be improved by evaluating the implementation process on a regular basis in order to comply with regulations, improve business operations, and boost productivity, and impact growth as well as sustainability (Perez, 2019). On the other hand, evaluations can be used as a historical reference point, a rough estimate of current base cases, or a way to set future objectives (Mugari, Mtapuri and Rangongo, 2014). Methods of EAP evaluation include quarterly meetings with providers to discuss performance and programme improvements, as well as reviewing usage reports across various modes of service provision, including face-to-face, telephone, and website use (UK EAPA, 2016). The outcomes of the process and the impact of the EAP should be obtained and analysed in order to guide the development of the programme (EAPA-SA, 2015).

According to the preceding discussion, EAPs cannot be implemented at random for the sake of compliance. Before implementing an EAP, key elements of best practice must be considered. This could increase the use of EAP services. The evaluation findings provide

more opportunities for service firms to consider EAPs seriously in order to achieve their growth goals (Bophela, 2015). If an EAP programme is to achieve its goal of aiding employees, it must be implemented effectively.

2.12 Conclusion

Many employers use EAP as a fundamental strategy to restore the well-being and performance of troubled employees. EAP assists organisations and government agencies in maintaining high standards for their institutions, such as productivity, image, growth, and efficiency. This chapter reviewed the scope of perception of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services. The literature has showed a link between the levels of Social Ecological Model theory and the utilisation of EAP services. The chapter also reviewed factors that may contribute to the under-utilisation of EAP services.

The next chapter will provide a data presentation, the analysis and interpretation of the data on the perception of social workers of the utilisation of EAP. The literature will be used to complement and support the participant's arguments.

CHAPTER 3

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical findings of the study. The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services. Social workers from the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani municipality participated in the study. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) each qualitative research approach has specific techniques for conducting data analysis processes. In this study, the researcher analysed the data qualitatively using thematic analysis. Moreover, the researcher was guided by six phases documented by Braun and Clarke, (2006) to analyse data. These include: familiarising oneself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes as well as producing the report. Furthermore, the chapter presents the demographic characteristics of the participants as well as themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

3.2 Demographic information

This section primarily focuses on the demographic information of the participants. The purpose of this section is to present the profile of the participants. The study is qualitative in nature; however, the researcher analysed demographic data quantitatively. This was done to provide a clear description of the study population. The population of the study were social workers employed by Department of Social Development. This section only entails four demographic aspects, namely: the age, gender, working experience and service points of participants.

The table below provides the age, gender, working experience and service points of participants

Table 3.1: Demographic information of the participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Working experience as social worker	Service point
A	35	Female	5 years	Giyani office
B	33	Male	5 years	Giyani office
C	33	Female	5 years	Giyani office
D	30	Female	3 years	Giyani office
E	30	Female	3 years	Basani office
F	28	Female	3 years	Giyani office
G	31	Female	4 years	Hlaneki office
H	29	Female	4 years	Giyani office
I	30	Female	3 years	Giyani office
J	32	Female	5 years	Giyani office
K	35	Male	5 years	Giyani office
L	35	Female	5 years	Giyani office

Table 3.1: Demographic information of the participants

The table above depicts the ages, gender, working experience and service points of participants. The researcher did not use the real names of the participants in order to conceal their identities. Instead, she used letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K and L. The researcher interviewed twelve (12) social workers. All of the participants were between the ages of 28 and 35. There were ten (10) females and two (2) males among the participants. The majority of participants were females, as opposed to their male counterparts. According to the literature, the social work profession in South Africa has been dominated by women (Kasiram & Naidoo, 2006; Dahle, 2012; Thobela, 2020). EAPs, on the other hand, are thought to be equally available and beneficial to all employees in need of such services (Bartram, Atanackovic, Runnels, Bourgeault, Fournier, Kovacina, Contant, MacDonald, Porteous, & Renaud, 2020).

All participants had between 3 to 5 years of working experience. Because of the participants' level of experience, they may be aware of the phenomenon under investigation; as well as of the exposure to traumatic cases that necessitated the use of EAP services. The local office of Giyani provided ten (10) participants. One participant came from the Hlaneki service point and one from the Basani office. Based on this finding, the majority of participants stand a better chance to utilise the EAP service, as their service points are located nearby the Mopani district EAP office.

3.3 Themes

Theme is an abstract entity that explains and identifies a recurring experience and its various manifestations (Moules, Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017). The researcher developed themes from the data gathered through participant interviews. In this study, some of the themes have subthemes as subdivisions to obtain a comprehensive view of the data and to uncover a pattern in the participants' account as indicated by Jones, Turunen, Snelgrove and Vaismoradi (2016). The themes that emerged during discussion include the following: the knowledge of participants about EAP, the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services, the importance of the EAP service, perceptions of social workers of EAP service providers, barriers to EAP utilisation, and the effects of EAP under-utilisation as well as the evaluation of EAP services.

3.3.1 Theme 1: Knowledge of participants about EAP services

A lack of knowledge regarding the availability of EAP services may lead employees to perceive services as unavailable and this could reduce the utilisation of the EAP service (Smith, 2019). Providing regular information about EAP to employees increases awareness of factors that affect personal well-being and its impact on job performance (EAPA, 2015).

3.3.1.1 Sub-theme: Purpose of EAP

It is critical for employees to understand the overall goal of EAP implementation in the workplace. According to Joseph and Walker (2017), identifying the purpose of EAP allows for a better understanding of why and how the programme is implemented to influence modern workplaces. The main discussion in this section was to determine whether the participants understood the reason of EAP implementation in the workplace. Below are some of statements made by participants B, D and E:

The purpose of EAP is to assist employees to deal with social, marital, financial problems that could be detrimental to work performance if not addressed.

The purpose of EAP in the workplace is to assist employees regarding their personal problems that they might be experiencing in their lifetime, which could have an impact at the workplace. The programme also assist the employees to become highly effective.

As far as I know the purpose of EAP, is to help employees to balance their personal issues and workload in order to enhance the work performance.

Understanding the purpose of having EAP at the workplace plays an important role in motivating employees to embrace and support the programme. Participants A, C, F, G, H, I, J, K and L, shared a similar sentiment with the above by indicating that: EAP is a critical tool for addressing work-related and personal issues with the goal of improving work performance and overall employee well-being as well as maintaining a healthy and productive workforce. Based on the findings, all participants had a general understanding about the purpose of EAP services in the workplace. They stated that EAP is a critical tool for addressing work-related and personal issues with the goal of improving work performance and overall employee well-being. The researcher's assumption is that social

workers are more likely to understand the general purpose of EAP, even if the programme is not visible enough, due to their educational background. Sipon and Yaacob (2014) pointed out that EAP services are intended to assist employees who are dealing with problems that may have a negative impact on their work.

3.3.1.2 Sub-theme: Awareness of social workers about EAP services

According to Manganyi (2016), employee overall knowledge of the EAP, familiarity with EAP accessibility, and perceptions of service confidentiality can either inhibit or increase usage. Milot (2019) pointed out that, increased worker familiarity with EAPs is positively correlated with the likelihood of EAP use. Employee awareness of EAP is a necessary component of using EAP services. This section determined whether the participants were aware of the existence of EAP within the Department of Social Development. Participants A, F and H made the following statements during discussions:

I'm aware of the programme, but I'm not sure which service are being rendered, as it was not officially introduced to employees properly.

No, I cannot say I'm aware about the programme, because it was not formally introduced to us, I just heard the rumors from other colleagues that there is new appointed EAP officer who is based at district office.

Yes, I'm aware that there is this programme, but I haven't utilise the service myself.

Based on these findings, the researcher indicates that, when organisations plan to implement EAP services; it is essential to launch the programme officially and invite all employees and stakeholders. This may bring about positive perception of the utilisation of the programme from the onset. Participants B, C, D, E, G, J, K and L, shared similar sentiments by indicating that, employees who are not well educated like social workers within the department, may be unaware of the existence or purpose of the programme, since the programme was never introduced to employees. The researcher's argument is that, social workers who work in the Giyani area, where the EAP office is located, had a better chance of learning about the service than other social workers who work far from the EAP office.

Based on these findings, the majority of participants stated that they were aware of the availability of EAP within the Department of Social Development. However, they were not specifically oriented on how EAP within their workplace operates. This finding clearly indicates that there is no continuous promotion of EAP services within in the Department of Social Development in the Mopani District.

3.3.1.3 Sub-theme: Services offered by EAP

EAPs currently are inclined to be more holistic, using a more ecological approach than their predecessors, recognising the wide range of emotional, physical, familial, and organisational issues that influence an employee's performance (Sandys, 2015). The main topic under this sub-theme was to seek clarity about the kinds of EAP services available within the Department of Social Development. The following are some of the explanations given by participants A, C and J.

I 'am not really sure about the other services, I have noticed sports activities but sometimes they invite other stakeholders to educate employees about health issues, such as cancer and tuberculosis.

I 'am only aware about the physical activities, where people engage in different sports code on Wednesdays such as soccer, netball and aerobics. I also heard about individual counselling, but I have never utilised it myself and I do not know someone who have utilised it before.

I haven't seen any other activities except sports activities but in my knowledge I know that we should also have debriefing sessions but I haven't noticed or observed other activities except sports activities

Based on the above findings, the participants were skeptical about mentioning the EAP services available within their department. This also clearly indicates that the participants were giving explanations based on observation instead of their encounters with the programme. Participants B, D, E, F, G, H and I state that sports activities are the main focus of the programme, and other activities such as debriefing sessions, team building and bereavement are not getting the attention they deserve. Participant K gave a different view by indicating that counselling is one of the services being rendered and seen. Based

on the findings, the majority of participants show a lack of knowledge about the types of services provided by their EAP. These findings suggest that participants are not effectively utilising EAP services. Furthermore, the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani Municipality offers limited EAP services.

3.3.2 Theme 2: Perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services.

Employers who provide EAP service frequently use utilisation rates as a measure of EAP success (Naicker & Fouche, 2003; Manganyi, 2016). This section determined the perceptions of participants on the use of EAP services. Below are views expressed by Participants A, C and I:

There is sports activities that is being done, but only few officials partake in the activities. In my estimation I can say out of 100% only 20% social workers partake on sports activities.

Participation of social workers on EAP activities is very poor. It's only few who participate on sports activities.

As far as I have seen, majority of social workers are not paying attention to this programme, they just focus on servicing their clients.

Based on the findings above, social workers seem to be uninterested in the programme, instead they prioritise rendering social services to their clients. These findings suggest that they place a higher value on work than on their own wellness. This correlates with literature, Thomas and Morris (2017) found that few practitioners have well-developed, flexible, and adaptive self-care plans that they consistently implement. Participants B,D,E,F,G,H J,K and L supported the above statements by indicating that the participation of employees on in the EAP is not good due to the limited activities that are being rendered. They indicated that the dominant EAP activities that are being implemented at in the Greater Giyani Municipality are sports activities. These findings suggest that there is a strong need to provide comprehensive EAP services in order to cater for the various needs of service beneficiaries. According to the findings of this study, the majority of social workers show low participation in EAP activities. The above findings are in line with the literature, namely, that Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) in

South African organisations are underutilised as employees were generally unaware of accessibility of such services (Sierberhagen, 2008; Koortzen & Baloyi, 2004; Dipela, 2016; Manganyi & Mogorosi, 2021). However, Blount, Taylor, Lambie and Anwell (2016) emphasise that counselling professionals must adhere to guidelines that support the wellness paradigm.

3.3.3 Theme 3: Importance of EAP service utilisation

This theme determined the perceptions of participants on the importance of using EAP services. The following are some of the sentiments shared by participants C, F and H with regard to the importance of utilising EAP services.

It is important to utilise the programme, the production of work will be high and there will be no burnout. One will enjoy coming to work. There is a saying that says all work no play makes jack a dull boy.

As social workers, we come across difficult cases and our own life challenges as well. I think utilising the programme could assist us to perform well at work and managing our personal life.

The programme helps the employees in dealing with their problems, which may affect their daily routine and production at work. Utilising the service can assist the social workers to render their service effectively.

Participants A, B, D, E, G, I, J and K share the same sentiments with the above statements. They expressed that, EAP is an important service that has the potential to improve the work performance and general well-being of employees. According to the researcher, EAP is important and required in the social work fraternity. Social workers deal with traumatic cases on a daily basis, which is emotionally draining and stressful. Hence, services such as debriefing sessions, sports activities, and team building are essential for them to recoup and perform at their utmost best. Based on the study's findings, all participants shared the same opinion about the importance of using EAP services. These findings clearly indicate that, participants understand the importance of and acknowledge the value of using EAP as a professionals. The findings are consistent with the literature, for example, according to Joseph and Walker (2017), using EAP to

reduce risk was identified as a priority and regarded as critical in reducing financial costs and unfavourable organisational outcomes associated with risk management.

3.3.3.1 Sub-theme: The need for EAP service utilisation

When one considers the myriad of problems that employees may face, the need for an EAP becomes clear; even viewing the benefit of addressing only one problem can justify the use of the service (Leon, 2012). This section determined whether participants have ever felt the need to use EAP services or not. The following are some of the views expressed by participants B, D and F.

I once had a personal problem, but unfortunately, at that moment I was not aware about the programme, so I did not utilise the service.

Yes, I was tempted to utilise it, but I did not utilise because, I always feel that my confidentiality will be invaded. The personnel who are offering service is not well equipped or capacitated to render the service. I will be more comfortable to be helped by someone who obtained special training like master of EAP or social worker.

I have felt a need to seek professional help, so many times, but I could not consult with the EAP personnel .because I prefer to engage with someone whom I don't know.

Based on the findings above, the participants were confronted with situations that needed the intervention of the EAP service. However, they did not take the initiative to seek assistance. These findings clearly indicate that the participants have a negative perception of the programme. The researcher is of the opinion that participants require positive reinforcement to value and trust the credibility of EAP services. This can be accomplished through EAP marketing. Participant A, C, E, G and H supported the above statements by indicating that they have never utilised the programme, because they believe that it is better to engage with someone whom they are not familiar with. However, participants I, K and L had different views and they indicated the following:

No, I haven't felt a need so far, but I would not utilise the service, even if the need arises, the EAP practitioner is a person whom I'm very familiar with and I don't feel comfortable to consult the office.

So far, I haven't come across a challenge that needed EAP assistance.

For now, I haven't felt the need to utilise the service

Based on the findings above, the participants were not ready yet to embrace and support the programme. Some of the explanations clearly show that participants were hesitant to use EAP services at their workplace. Based on the study findings, the majority of participants confronted challenges that needed the intervention of EAP services, but they did not utilise the service. These findings support the views of Social Ecological theorist, Stokols (1996), who states that efforts to persuade a person to adopt improved health practices may go unheeded if that person is unprepared or unmotivated to carry out the suggested behavior. This show that employees must use EAP services or risk giving the impression that the service is not needed.

3.3.4 Theme 4: Perceptions of social workers towards EAP service providers

Social workers serve as both service providers of EAP and service beneficiaries. Hence, understanding the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of the programme is imperative .Under this section, the discussion was based on how the participants feel about seeking professional help from fellow a social worker or any other helping professional. Below are some of the opinions articulated by participants B, L, and K.

I' am little beat skeptical to be helped by the fellow social worker. I need someone whom I do not know as EAP officer to assist me. Based on my observation with my colleagues the issue of the confidentiality is lacking within the profession as a whole. Sometimes you share information with someone and all of sudden there is third party involved in your issues without your knowledge.

I do not have confidence in my fellow social worker, because of the culture of my department as I have indicated earlier, to preserve a personal issue of the fellow employee is a difficult task to my colleagues, hence I opted to seek service outside the department.

I will be very comfortable to seek help from a fellow social worker, but it should be someone whom I don't know. It will be much easier to disclose my problems without doubting the issues of confidentiality.

According to the above findings, participants are not willing to seek professional help from fellow social workers. These findings clearly indicate that if EAP service is rendered by a social worker, whom the participants are familiar with, the EAP service will never get the attention of the employees in the Greater Giyani Municipality. Participants A, B, C, D, H and I state that seeking help within their workplace can compromise their confidentiality. For that reason, they prefer to seek assistance from other helping professionals rather than social workers. Moreover, participants indicated that they would be comfortable being assisted by a fellow social worker who possessed additional qualifications such as a master's degree in addition to years of working experience.

The findings clearly indicate that participants are more concerned about confidentiality, and they regard other helping professionals as more ethical and suitable to provide EAP services than their fellow social workers. According to the researcher, employees use their own experience and observations of how the confidentiality principle is handled in their workplace to decide whether or not to use EAP services. Participants, E, F and G had different views and stated that they can seek help from a fellow social worker, preferably if the practitioner is not from their local areas. They claimed that it is much easier to open up to someone with whom you are unfamiliar.

Based on the study findings, the majority of participants show a negative perception about seeking help from fellow social workers within their workplace. The participants cited lack of confidentiality as the organisational culture that discouraged them from seeking help from fellow social workers. It is important to note that the confidentiality principle is critical to the success of EAP services. Therefore, failure to uphold the principle can severely tarnish the image of the EAP. According to Bajorek (2016), confidentiality is one of the aspects to ensure the success of an EAP service; wherein, employees can seek assistance without the involvement of managers and with the guarantee that their matters will not be shared with the organisation.

3.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Preferences of social workers in terms of EAP models

EAP has various models of service providers, hence is important to always select models that best suit a particular workplace and employees. This section discussed about the preferred EAP models, which best suit the needs of participants. During discussions participants A, E, and G made the following comments.

I am reluctant about internal service, personally, I will prefer external service provider, as I will be more comfortable to disclose my issues without fear of being judged or exposed.

I will prefer external services; it will make me more comfortable as it is easier to consult to someone who you are more comfortable.

I will prefer external EAP service, with external I will be more comfortable to express myself without worrying about confidentiality issues.

Based on the findings presented, the participants seem to be uncomfortable to utilise the available EAP service within the department. They cited that, the external service provider would be more comfortable to utilise without having worry about being judged or exposed. It is important to note that, the Department of Social Development is currently offering internal EAP services to their employees. These findings clearly indicate that internal service is not being used, as the majority of participants are in favour of an external model instead of the internal EAP services. Participants B, C, D, H, I, J, K and L perceive the external EAP model as an ideal for effective use of the programme. From the participants' point of view, they believe their confidential issues can be protected with the external models. These findings suggest that the participants do not trust the credibility of EAP within the Department of Social Development.

Participant F shared a different view and stated that:

I prefer both, even if it is internal I have no problem, I have a full confidence with the EAP. I believe the practitioner is guided by principles of confidentiality as professional.

Participant H, stated that:

I can prefer internal service provider for work related issues and external service provider for my personal issues.

Based on the above findings, it is important for the organisations rendering EAP services to determine the needs of employees and offer the EAP models that best suit the interests of the employees. Therefore, providing relevant services to employees could enhance the utilisation of the programme. Failure to consider this may only jeopardise the success of EAP services. According to the study findings, the majority of participants would prefer to utilise external EAP models, instead of the internal service that is currently offered by the Department of Social Development. These findings are consistent with the literature. External EAPs can provide many benefits to organisations, including confidentiality and independence of the service (Bajorek, 2016). EAPs are intended to reflect on particular matters and for this reason organisations may consider the outsourcing of this function in order to have control over their organisation and to be competitive, specifically when emphasis is on maximising organisational effectiveness and decreasing absenteeism (Sithole & Khorombi, 2009; Bophela & Govender, 2015).

3.3.5 Theme 5: Barriers of EAP utilisation

Milot (2019) indicates that employee 's perceptions of stigma may be a barrier to the use of EAPs, and that some workers who could benefit from an EAP may choose not to use one due to perceived stigma in relation to receiving help. This section discussed factors that contribute to the under-utilisation of EAP. The researcher established the factors that discourage employees from using available EAP services within the Department of Social Development. Participants B, C and H expressed the following statements:

I think my colleagues will stigmatise me for consulting the office, they will notice that I'm having challenges.

The department does not fully support the programme and it discourages the employees to participate, because at the end of the day employees are required to contribute money for sports items.

Office space is not conducive and issues of confidentiality might be compromised, as the EAP practitioner is sharing office with other staff members, it is discouraging for me to seek assistance from EAP office under the current circumstances.

Regarding the above responses, there are numerous factors that discourage the participants to utilise the EAP service. Lack of management support, confidentiality and resources such as office space are some of the factors that were mentioned by the participants as a hindrance to EAP utilisation. This study found that there are no resources in place to ensure that the programme runs smoothly, for example, participants were expected to contribute money to purchase some of the sports items. However, Courtney (2019) pointed out that, EAPs provide free emotional and practical support to employees and their family members in order to mediate factors that may hinder employee work performance. The researcher argues that the above finding clearly suggests that the EAP office is not prioritised in terms of resources and budget allocation. Moreover, the programme cannot successfully execute its mandate without resources.

Participants I, J, K and L mentioned confidentiality as the main factor that contributes to the under-utilisation of EAP. The participants indicated that the issue of confidentiality is the biggest concern in their work place. They pointed out that the EAP officer is sharing an office with officials who are not helping professionals. These could compromise the confidential information of EAP beneficiaries. The researcher believes that if employees do not have confidence in the programme's credibility, it is inevitable that they will not use EAP services. Furthermore, it is essential to identify and address factors that hinder the utilisation of the EAP. The findings of the study indicate that the majority of participants cited lack of confidentiality and resources as well as stigma as the main factors that discourage them from using EAP services at their workplace. According to the Social Ecological Model, it is critical to create an environment that allows for change while also facilitating the adoption of healthy behaviors (Glanz & Bishop, 2010).

3.3.5.1 Sub-theme: Accessibility of EAP services

According to Milot (2019), the accessibility of EAP services determines its usage; if employees find it difficult to get the service, they are more likely to refrain from seeking assistance or participating. This section discussed the perception of participants in

relation to the accessibility of EAP services within their workplace. The researcher determined the accessibility of EAP services to all social workers who require them. The following are some of the comments made by participants G, L and J.

Currently we have only one EAP officer who is responsible for five (05) municipalities of Mopani district. It is difficult to access the service, when she is on leave or she went out to other municipalities, it means the employees will not access the service.

Our service is centralised at district office, social workers are struggling with tools of trade including vehicle, and we are battling with a vehicle to do the actual work, so it will be impossible for the officers to travel to Giyani to get access to EAP.

It is not accessible, because there are employees who are not even aware about the programme.

Based on these findings, the EAP services are not easily accessible to the beneficiaries of the service. The researcher argues that accessing EAP services is a complex matter, it is not merely being able to easily reach the location of the office. There are critical factors that need to be taken into consideration to make EAP services more convenient and available to employees who may require it. These include access to EAP information, adequate staff to carry out the EAP mandate, the availability of essential resources to render effective service as well as the accessibility of the office, both physically and electronically. Participants C, E, G, H and I supported the statements made above by indicating that the EAP service is not easily accessible to social workers who are geographically distributed. They cited that the EAPs within the Department of Social Development in Greater Giyani Municipality are more convenient to social workers who work nearby the EAP central office. However, participants B, F and K shared a different perspective by indicating that the EAP service is accessible to all employees, including social workers.

According to the findings, the majority of participants stated that the EAP service is not accessible to all social workers. The participants cited that social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality rely on EAP services provided by the central office, which is located in the Mopani District and is coordinated by one (01) official, and this makes it difficult for

the office to serve all service beneficiaries of EAP. Milton, Sinclair and Vakalahi (2017) in Smith (2019) pointed out that, employees may associate perceptions of limited access to information, people or resources with isolation in the workplace, and such feelings of isolation may hinder an employee's 'engagement and participation in the use of EAP. The researcher believes that the isolation of the EAP office can make it difficult for employees to easily access the services. Every employee has equal rights to access and benefit from EAP services, despite the location of workstation.

3.3.5.2 Sub-theme: Marketing of EAP

According to the findings of a study conducted by the UK Employee Assistance Programme Association (2016), one of the most frequently cited reasons why employees did not use their EAP was a lack of service promotion, particularly when employees were unaware of the EAP or the scope of services and support available. This section deliberated on the marketing of EAP service within the Department of Social Development. The following are some of the comments made by participants C, B and D during discussions:

The programme is not well marketed, as there is minimal engagement between facilitators and employees.

The programme is not well marketed, it is not visible, and to be honest we hardly noticed its existence within the department.

Since I joined the department, I have never heard or seen invite for us to attend road shows, workshops or meetings concerning EAP. I have never seen posters, banners and signage board to locate the office. You cannot tell that, there is EAP services within our department.

Based on the findings indicated above, there are no visible EAP activities to promote the programme. The participants cited that, the EAP office is not active, as they hardly ever see promotional activities for the programme. Lack of posters, banners, roadshows and signage boards also suggest that the service is not well marketed. Marketing of EAP plays an important role in attracting and convincing the employees to utilise the service. The researcher asserts that a lack of EAP marketing can have a negative impact on service

utilisation; employees may be unmotivated to use the programme if little is known about the services.

Participants E, G, H, I, J, K and L concurred with the views expressed in the above statements: the service is not marketed, other employees who are not informed, may not even aware of the existence and functioning of the EAP services. In contrast, participant F had a different view concerning the question and indicated that:

In terms of marketing, I think the office is trying its level best to market the programme, but the response from the ground is not positive, maybe they don't feel comfortable to utilise the programme as it is within their workplace premise.

The EAP should be marketed in employee-orientation programmes, on company and union bulletin boards, newsletters and employee meetings (EAP-SA, 2015). Regarding the findings of the study, the majority of participants indicated that the EAP service provided by the Department of Social Development in Greater Giyani is not well marketed. Poor marketing of the service deprives employees who need EAP intervention, to receive assistance. The programme needs to be marketed; employees should know where, why, how and what the programme is offering. Employees must be aware of the types of services available, hours of operation as well as the benefits of the EAP. Furthermore, EAP service marketing clarifies all of the concerns that employees may have about participating in the programme. According to Shepps and Greer (2018), if the EAP is not promoted in the workplace, it may be ignored and under-utilised.

3.3.6 Theme 6: Effects of EAP under-utilisation

The primary aim to implement EAP for many organisations is productivity, which implies that employees have to perform to the best of their abilities so that the expected production can be achieved (Rakepa, 2012). These can only be achieved if the employees are able to address their own challenges through the EAP. This theme discussed about the consequences of EAP under-utilisation on employees. The following are some of the statements made by participants A, K and L.

Many things could happen, when a person is battling with challenges that are not being dealt with. It could lead to suicide, car accident, domestic violence that could have prevented, if EAP service has been utilised.

If we have employees with family and work-related issues but not utilising this kind of service, the department will end up having majority of employees who are polluted or using substances, absenteeism. Stressed employees will not do their work effectively and economically.

If social workers are not attending to their issues it will affect their work performance, for example I'm a social worker based at child and youth care worker, I'm working with children. If I have issues which are not addressed, I can take out my anger to the children, by shouting or even beating them.

The above findings clearly indicate that the participants understood the consequences of not utilising EAP services. Hence, they reiterated the importance of seeking assistance in order to render effective service delivery to their clients. Participants declared that employees who are facing problems but do not diligently address them, may experience deterioration in work performance and general wellbeing. Participants C, G, H and I supported the above statements by mentioning that burnout and absenteeism are possible outcomes of not utilising the EAP service. It is important to note that social workers are likely to work under distressing environments; hence, it is critical for them to manage their wellness and promote self-care. The participants further indicated that, absenteeism, suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse and gambling could be prevented if employees were keen to utilise EAP services as both prevention and remedial intervention. This finding correlates with the literature. According to Nunes, Richmond, Pampel, and Wood (2017), employees who use EAP services have fewer sick days after services than employees who experience similar psychological and work-related distress but do not use EAP services.

The researcher deems that services such as team building, debriefing sessions, sports activities, and health awareness can also benefit the wellbeing of social workers. Based on the findings of the study all participants were unanimous in their belief that if social workers could utilise EAP services as their personal resource, social ills and work related

challenges such as poor performance, burnout, absenteeism, suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, gambling may be avoided. According to Kanjere, Thaba, and Makgato (2014), EAPs are a valuable asset to business and industry in terms of reducing absenteeism, workplace accidents, substance abuse, and loss of productivity. According to National Association of Social Workers (NASW), (2016) the mission of social work is best realised when social workers engage in healthy behaviours, which improves their mood states and stress management abilities. Additionally, opportunities for social connections may increase, lowering the risk of burnout. According to Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles, and Hemming (2017), having a general disposition of care and concern for clients is an important characteristic of counsellors; however, an important practice that counsellors must learn is to turn that care and concern toward themselves. In addition, counsellors may experience stress in their personal and professional lives if they do not learn to care for themselves.

3.3.7 Theme 7: Evaluation of EAP services

The purpose of EAP is to provide counselling and other supportive services to employees, which can assist them to better manage their problems (McRee, 2017). Hence, it is important to continuously evaluate the progress of the programme, specifically the utilisation of EAP services. During discussion the participants reflected on the EAP services within the Department of Social Development and share their thoughts. This theme assisted the researcher to determine whether the EAP is achieving the main purpose of its implementation. The following are some of the comments that were highlighted by participants:

Participant A, said that:

I think it is not achieving its purpose, because employees are not utilising the service, some employees are not even aware about the existence of the programme. Even those who are aware, about the service they are not utilising it.

Based on the findings above, there are employees who are aware of the EAP and some who are not even aware of its existence. This finding suggests that there is no constant

correspondence between the EAP office and employees. As a result, an organisations may not accomplish its goal.

Participant D, expressed that:

I believe the department is implementing this programme for compliance and not doing it for the best interest of employees, because the programme is mainly focusing on sports activities and turn a blind eye on other crucial EAP services.

The researcher agrees with the above findings. The Department of Social Development seems to deliberately offer limited services to the employees with the intention of saving costs. In addition, the programme will not achieve its intended purpose by focusing on few services. Introducing a variety of EAP service may enhance the utilisation of the programme. The researcher further pointed out that organisations who are offering the EAP in the interest of employees will often review the programme's state of affairs in order to improve the service.

Participant L, made the following statement:

At my personal level, I have noted that there are employees with challenges that need the EAP intervention but they are not getting assistance. The other thing is that as employees we share our issues, majority of social workers does not trust the office. Hence, they are not utilising it. So I can say the department is not achieving its intended purpose in terms providing EAP services.

The researcher agrees with the above statement as the researcher is a social worker based in the Greater Giyani, Municipality has observed fellow social workers suffering from gambling, and substance abuse and financial constraints. These officers have never received EAP interventions. Some of them have ended up taking early retirement due to lack of support from the programme. Participants B, C, E, G and H supported the above statements, they indicated that the department is not achieving its purpose as the programme is not active. They also indicated that, there is minimal activities within the programme. However participant F and K had a different opinion from the views expressed above and they indicated that the department is trying its best to achieve the purpose of EAP, in terms of a prevention service.

In response to this question, the majority of participants stated that the Department of Social Development in Greater Giyani Municipality is not achieving the intended purpose for rendering EAP services. Based on the findings, the researcher believes that the programme was implemented without checking its state of readiness to operate. When organisations have intention to render successful EAP to their employees, it is crucial to develop an operational plan and a good marketing strategy in order to win the trust of employees. Hasty implementation of the programme without proper preparation could only result in failure.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter gave a presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data of the study which was on the perceptions of social workers of the utilisation of EAP services. According to the findings, the researcher discovered that EAP services have not gained momentum in terms of usage. Social workers require EAP services; however, a number of factors impede their effective use. The department should collaborate with employees and other stakeholders to address the challenges alluded to by participants, in order to improve the provision of EAP services.

CHAPTER 4

A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is to present an overview of the study by restating the motivation of the study, the research problem, its aim and objectives. Furthermore, it summarises the major findings drawn from the study. The study conducted an investigation into the perception social workers regarding utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in the Greater Giyani Municipality of Limpopo Province. The literature was used to supplement and support the arguments of the participants. The presented findings were examined in light of the research goal and objectives to determine if the research goal was met. Finally, the chapter aimed to present conclusions drawn from the findings as well as making recommendations for future studies.

4.2 Re-statement of the motivation of the study

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is currently being implemented in the majority of public and private sector institutions. Having an EAP, however, does not imply that employee wellness can be managed smoothly. The Department of Public Service and Administration (2001) required all government departments, including the Department of Social Development, to provide EAP services to employees. In the Department of Social Development, the programme was originally based at the provincial office. It was subsequently, decentralised to district offices, including the Mopani district in 2017.

According to the DPSA (2012), the success of the strategy for promoting employee wellness in the public sector depends on organisational support structures and optimal utilisation of the programme. This study focused on the perceptions of social workers about the utilisation of EAP services. Dipela (2016), Gcwabe (2015) and Manganyi (2016) reported under-utilisation of EAP services amongst the sampled employees in their research studies. However, in the study findings conducted by Mundalamo (2015) 61% of the sampled participants reported that they had participated in the EAP services. Studies conducted by Lodewyk (2011), Kenny (2014), Dawad and Hogue (2016), Linseman (2016), and Mashiane (2017) focused on the perceptions of general employees

who are not necessarily social workers regarding the utilisation of EAP. Consequently, the perceptions of social workers towards the utilisation of EAP services have not yet been investigated. In this study, the focus was on social workers as beneficiaries of EAP services. This is motivated by the fact that it is critically important for helping social welfare professionals to utilise EAP services just as any other employees.

4.3 Re-statement of the problem

The researcher observed that social workers do not utilise EAP services within the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani Municipality in the Mopani District. For example, the Limpopo Provincial Department of Social Development designated Wednesday as a sports day for all public servants. As a social worker in this district, the researcher observed that, social workers in the Mopani District of the Greater Giyani Municipality do not participate in sports activities organised by the EAP office. They carry on with their daily routines as if it were any other working day. According to the annual report for the fiscal year 2017/2018 of the Department of Social Development, Mopani District, none of the social workers stationed in the Greater Giyani Municipality utilised EAP services since its inception until the end of the reporting period. Dawad and Hoque (2016) state that employee perceptions influence the effectiveness of the EAP. This view was affirmed by Zou (2017) who states that most employees who have utilised EAPs have a positive perception about the programme. Consequently, EAP enhances the organisational effectiveness and employees' well-being.

Thomas and Morris (2017) stated that the helping professions often provide services to clients with emotional pain, and thus carry their clients' heavy burdens. Unfortunately, in some instances professionals in these professions do not receive any assistance in dealing with these burdens. The researcher is of the view that, the competency of social workers to help others, does not automatically protect them from both work and personal stresses. This creates a need for social workers as employees to also receive counselling. Failure to receive EAP services by social workers who need such services may result in negative consequences such as stress, burnout, absenteeism, and low morale. Furthermore, it may jeopardise the provision of high-quality services to clients. This could put the noble profession of social work and the organisations that employ them under

criticism. Furthermore, social workers' perceptions of the EAP service play an important role in its implementation and its utilisation. This investigation was critical in providing empirical evidence about the factors contributing to the under-utilisation of EAP services in the area of study.

4.4 Re-statement of the aims, objectives and research questions

4.4.1. Aims of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of social workers regarding utilisation of the EAP services in the Greater Giyani Municipality.

4.4.2. Objectives of the study

- To determine the social workers' awareness of the EAP services available to them.

This objective was achieved, and it was supported by the findings described in the preceding chapter. Based on the findings under sub-section 3.3.1.1 social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality understand the general purpose of EAP services at the workplace. The participants stated that EAP is a critical tool for addressing work-related and personal issues with the goal of improving work performance and the general well-being of employees. They further elaborated that the goal of EAP is to keep employees healthy and productive.

According to the findings under sub-section 3.3.1.2, the majority of participants were aware about the availability of EAP within the Department of Social Development; however, the participants were not well informed about the operational details of the services. The participants averred that the programme was not formally introduced to employees. It just started operating without a proper launch. According to participants, the majority of employees who are not well informed, in the Department of Social Development, might not be aware of the existence of the programme. From the participants' point of view, EAP service is known to the employees who work in the vicinity of Giyani. The findings under Sub-section 3.3.1.3, the participants have noticed sports activities and health awareness campaigns but are not aware of any additional services. These findings show that the majority of participants are not knowledgeable about the types of services provided by the EAP within their workplace. This was demonstrated by

the hesitancy and doubtful attitude of participants when mentioning the EAP services within the Department of Social Development.

- To establish factors that contribute to the utilisation of EAP services.

This objective was achieved, and it was backed up by a number of findings. It is important to note that the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of social workers about utilisation of EAP service; hence, establishing factors that contribute to the utilisation of EAP is important. Under section 3.3.5 participants reported a lack of management support and the lack of resources such as office space as factors that deter them from making use of the EAP. Moreover, confidentiality was reiterated as the main factor that contributes to the under-utilisation of EAP. The participants indicated that the issue of confidentiality is the biggest concern in their work place. They mentioned that EAP office is being shared with officials who are not part of the helping professionals. For this reason, confidential information of the service beneficiaries could be compromised. In addition, the majority of participants alluded that confidentiality, lack of resources, and stigma are the main factors that discourage participants and Social workers from using EAP services within the Department of Social Development.

Under Section 3.3.4 the majority of participants indicated that they are not comfortable to seek professional help from a fellow social worker. They further elaborated that they would be comfortable seeking professional help from other external helping professionals. On the other hand, the majority of participants under sub-section 3.3.4.1 indicated that they would prefer to use external EAP instead of internal service provider. According to the views of participants, it is better to be assisted by an EAP officer, who is unfamiliar with their working environment. This finding clearly indicates that the EAP services in the Greater Giyani Municipality are not being utilised. The researcher believes that EAP service providers need to consider different models of EAP in their organisations. Employees experience different challenges; however, each case is unique some cases may be better addressed by either internal or external models, as well as a combination of the two. Based on the findings under sub-section 3.3.5.1, the majority of participants stated that the EAP service is not accessible to all social workers. The participants mentioned that social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality rely on EAP services

provided by the central office located in the Mopani District. The programme is coordinated by one (01) official, which makes it difficult for the office to serve all service beneficiaries of EAP. In addition, the participants indicated that social workers who are stationed at areas that are geographically distanced from district office are struggling to access EAP services.

According to the perceptions of participants in sub-section 3.3.5.2 the majority of participants believe that the EAP service provided by the Department of Social Development in Greater Giyani is poorly marketed. From the participants' point of view, the majority of employees are not aware of the existence of the programme, let alone the services that are provided. Other participants stated that the EAP office is not visible and that they rarely see promotional activities for the programme. Based on the above findings, the researcher identified factors that contribute to EAP underutilisation.

4.4.3 Research question

The study sought to answer the following question:

- How do social workers in Greater Giyani Municipality perceive the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme Services among themselves?

4.5 Summary of the major findings

This section summarises the findings of the study. The findings show social workers' perceptions toward the use of EAP services in the Greater Giyani Municipality. Most importantly, the findings revealed additional barriers to the use of EAP services. Moreover, the findings demonstrate the worth and significance of utilising EAP services among helping professionals.

The following were the major findings of the study:

- Social workers at the Greater Giyani Municipality show understanding about the general purpose of EAP services at workplace.
- Participants were aware about the availability of the EAP within the Department of Social Development. However, they were not oriented specifically, on how the programme operates. The participants reported that the programme was not formally introduced to them.

- Participants show a lack of knowledge about the types of services provided by their EAP. They were hesitant in mentioning the kinds of EAP services offered within their workplace.
- Participants reported low utilisation of EAP services by social workers. They focus on serving their clients, instead of attending to wellness activities.
- The participants acknowledged and valued the importance of utilising EAP services as helping professionals. They stated that the EAP has the potential to improve work performance and the general well-being of employees.
- The participants have encountered challenges that needed EAP services, but they chose not to utilise the programme.
- Participants show a negative perception about seeking help from a fellow social worker within their workplace. They reported lack of confidentiality as the organisational culture that discouraged them from seeking help from fellow social workers.
- Participants preferred to utilise external EAP models instead of the internal service that is currently offered by the Department of Social Development. The participants believe their confidential issues can be protected with the external EAP model.
- Participants reported a lack of confidentiality and resources as well as stigma as the main factors that discourage employees from utilising EAP services within their workplace.
- The EAP service is not accessible to all social workers. Social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality rely on EAP services provided by the central office, which is located in the Mopani District and is coordinated by one (01) official, and this makes it difficult for the office to serve all service beneficiaries of the EAP. Furthermore, the EAP service is not easily accessible to social workers who are geographically distributed in comparison to social workers who work nearby EAP central office.
- The EAP service within the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani is not well marketed. Participants reported a lack of EAP promotional activities such as roadshows, posters, banners, and signage board to locate the office.

- All participants were unanimous in their belief that if social workers could utilise EAP services as their personal resource; social ills and work related challenges such as poor performance, burnout, suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, gambling and absenteeism can be avoided.
- The majority of participants stated that the Department of Social Development in the Greater Giyani Municipality is not achieving its intended purpose for rendering EAP services.
- The majority of participants stated that they would be more comfortable seeking professional assistance from other helping professionals rather than from their fellow social workers. The main concerns were confidentiality and a lack of trust in the ability to provide effective and ethical services; thus, other helping professionals were perceived as suitable practitioners to provide EAP services.
- The majority of participants preferred an external EAP model over an internal service. According to the researcher, it is critical for the EAP to consider different models of EAP because some employees may not feel comfortable seeking help in their working environment, which could have a negative impact on service utilisation and employee wellness.

4.6 Conclusion

Based on the above findings, the study can conclude that, social workers in the Greater Giyani Municipality are not utilising the EAP services optimally and some of them are not yet informed about how the EAP within their workplace operates. It is undeniable that EAP plays an important role in the improvement of work performance and wellbeing of employees. Nevertheless, employees encounter challenges that hinder them from participating in EAP activities. From the findings of this study, it seems that social workers do not trust the credibility of the programme. They reported a lack of confidentiality, stigma and resources as the factors that discourage them to use EAP services. It was also reported that, the EAP services are not well marketed; hence, there is a need for continual promotion of the programme.

The Department of Social Development needs to show its commitment to EAP. This includes providing resources, adequate personnel and encouraging active participation

to EAP role players, specifically employees. This may paint a different picture of the significance of utilising EAP services. The study also concluded that the Department of Social Development is not offering a different range of EAP services; it dwells much on prevention services such as sports and health awareness programmes, which are also not active. Further, participants expressed the need for more EAP services such as debriefing, team building and counselling services. Another factor cited is connected with the gap in assisting employees who are no longer coping and thus unable to live a normal life. Referral procedures need to be strengthened. The employees need to be motivated to voluntarily take a stand for their own wellness. This may prevent, absenteeism, staff turnover and burnout.

4.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following is recommended:

- The Department of Social Development should ensure that all employees are aware about the availability of the EAP and how it operates. Moreover, EAP office should strengthen its marketing activities through continuous engagement with employees. It also needs to be promoted continuously through provision of promotional materials such as, banners, road shows and signage board.
- The Department of Social Development should provide more services to add on the services that is being offered, in order promote the wellness of employees. The EAP should also provide debriefing sessions, counselling, team building and excellence awards for outstanding performance of employees.
- The Department of Social Development should organise a workshop to empower social workers about wellness and self-care practice.
- The Department of Social Development should allocate budget for EAP services and provide adequate resources for the effectiveness of the programme.
- The EAP office should give assurance to employees about the protection of confidentiality and stigma. Informed consent should be signed by both EAP practitioners and employees to safeguard the confidentiality principle. Confidentiality is very critical in EAP services; it should be strengthened to enhance the credibility of the programme.

- The Department of Social Development should ensure that EAP services are accessible timeously to all service beneficiaries, irrespective of their profession or workstation. The Appointment of additional EAP practitioners is needed; each sub-district should have at least one (1) EAP practitioner who is responsible for employee wellness on a daily basis and reports to the Mopani District EAP central office. This will enhance the accessibility of the programme to all employees.
- The Department of Social Development should provide both internal and external services, as some employees are not comfortable in seeking help offered by internal service providers.
- This study focused on a small group of social workers at the Greater Giyani Municipality which caters in the Mopani District in Limpopo Province. More research should be conducted when considering the impact of EAP service utilisation and the psycho-social factors influencing work performance and the productivity of employees.

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The Head of Department

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0700

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: Request to conduct academic research at the Department of Social Development, Limpopo province of South Africa.

I Makhubele Tlangeleni Glory (the researcher), registered for the degree Master of Social Work at University of Limpopo request permission to conduct research in your department as part of the requirements of my studies. The title of the study is "Exploring perceptions of social workers towards the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province. The proposed study hopes to benefit the department and its employees in improving the utilisation of EAP services.

Hoping for a positive response

Yours faithfully,

.....

.....

Makhubele Tlangeleni Glory

Date

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Part I: Cover letter

Dear participant

I Makhubele Tlangeleni Glory (the researcher), registered for the degree Master of Social Work at University of Limpopo. The title of the study is “Exploring perceptions of social workers towards the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province. I hereby request your permission to participate in the research project. The purpose of this study is to explore how social workers perceive the utilisation EAP by social workers as their personal tool to resolve personal and work related challenges. As a participant you will be requested to avail yourself to be interviewed as a Social Worker who meets the sampling characteristics.

Kindly be assured that the information to be gathered will be treated with confidentiality and will be protected to anyone for use against you. Be advised that you have the right to withdraw any time should you feel uncomfortable in participating further in the study.

Thank you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

.....

Makhubele Tlangeleni Glory

.....

Date

Part II: Consent Form

I..... consent to participating in the study, “Exploring perceptions of social workers towards the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province.”

The researcher explained the aim and objectives of the proposed study, I was given an opportunity to ask questions in order to understand what is required of me and that I can withdraw my participation with no consequence.

Signature of the Participant.....

Date.....

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS OF THE UTILISATION OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME SERVICES IN GREATER GIYANI MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

1. Can you tell me your biographic information in terms of your gender, working experience and your service point office?
2. What is the purpose of Employee Assistance programme as far as you know?
3. Are you aware of the availability of EAP within your department?
4. Do you think it is important for social workers to utilise EAP services
5. Have you felt a need to utilised EAP services within the department?
6. As a Social Worker do you feel comfortable about seeking professional help from fellow social worker or any other helping professionals?
7. What are the factors that might discourage you from utilising EAP services in your department?
8. What could be the effects of not utilising EAP services by social workers who are in need of assistance
9. Do you think your department is achieving its purpose in terms of the implementation of EAP?
10. What is your recommendations regarding the utilisation of EAP services and its effectiveness



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ref : S4/3/2
Enq : MJ Moloisi
Tel : 015 230 4381 / 082 457 7120
Email : MoloisiMJ@dsd.limpopo.gov.za

Ms Makhubele TG
Box 5815
Giyani
0826

Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY

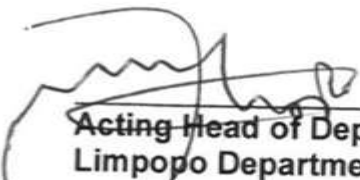
The above matter has reference.

This certifies that Ms TG Makhubele has been granted permission to conduct a study titled: "Exploring the perceptions of Social Workers towards the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province". Her research proposal was granted full approval and ethical clearance by the Limpopo Provincial Research and Ethics committees which sit at the Office of the Premier.

The study is significant because it is intended to explore the perceptions towards the use of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) by Social Workers employed by the Department of Social Development. It is also intended to provide a platform for these Social Workers themselves to reflect on their own perceptions towards EAP and in the process value the availability of EAP services.

The study will take a face to face interview approach, in which a sample of Social Workers who are the current employees of the department in the Greater Giyani Municipality in Mopani District are expected to participate.

In view of the above, this letter grants Ms TG Makhubele permission to conduct interviews with Social Workers in Greater Giyani Municipality at the offices of the Department of Social Development in Limpopo Province.


Acting Head of Department
Limpopo Department of Social Development

21/10/2020
Date



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 10 July 2020
PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/132/2020: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Exploring perceptions of social workers towards the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in Greater Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province
Researcher: TG Makhubele
Supervisor: Mrs DT Seloana
Co-Supervisor/s: Mrs JM Mokone
School: Social Sciences
Degree: Master of Social Work

PROF P MASOKO

CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for