EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP): AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR BANK UTAMA (M) BERHAD

By

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This Project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement to obtain the Master of Science in Human Resource Development from the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
This Project entitled Employee Assistance Program (EAP): An exploratory study on the Needs Analysis for Bank Utama (M) Berhad was prepared by Irmawati Osman and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development for the partial fulfillment of the requirement to obtain the Master of Science in Human Resource Development.

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ABSTRAK

Program Sokongan Pekerja (PSP) : Satu Kajian Eksplorasi Analisa Keperluan di Bank Utama (M) Berhad

Irmawati Osman

Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan ialah untuk membentuk model Employee Assistance Program (EAP) yang sesuai untuk Bank Utama (M) Berhad. Kajian ini mengenalpasti persepsi pihak pengurusan, kesatuan sekerja dan pekerja terhadap pelaksanaan EAP. Masalah yang dikaji terbahagi kepada dua bahagian iaitu masalah peribadi dan pekerjaan. Masalah peribadi terdiri daripada kesehatan, kewangan, keluarga, konflik diri, kerohanian dan tekanan manakala masalah pekerjaan terdiri daripada masalah kerja, kerjaya, hubungan interpersonal di tempat kerja dan persekitaran fizikal kerja. Borang soal sidik Employee Need Assessment Inventory (ENAI) dan kaedah temuramah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 237 orang pekerja. Melalui penentuan min skor, didapati bahawa kesemua jenis masalah peribadi dan pekerjaan yang dikaji perlu diberi perhatian dalam perancangan intervensi Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Hasil analisa Kolerasi Pearson mendapati bahawa wujud perkaitan yang signifikan antara semua jenis masalah yang dihadapi oleh pekerja. Hasil analisa Cross-tab pula mendapati bahawa wujud perbezaan antara kategori umur, tempoh perkhidmatan dan taraf pendidikan dengan setiap jenis masalah yang dihadapi oleh pekerja. Hasil temuramah dengan pihak pengurusan dan kesatuan sekerja mendapati bahawa kesemua daripada mereka menyokong agar EAP diwujudkan di Bank Utama (M) Berhad. Pengkaji telah mencadangkan satu model Employee Assistance Program (EAP) untuk Bank Utama (M) Berhad yang merangkumi objektif EAP, sumber pengamal EAP, elemen yang perlu ditekankan dalam EAP, penempatan bilik perundingan EAP, penglibatan kesatuan sekerja dalam EAP dan pentadbiran EAP.
ABSTRACT

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) : An Exploratory Study on the Needs Analysis for Bank Utama (M) Berhad

Irmawati Osman

The purpose of this research is to develop a suitable Employee Assistance Program (EAP) model for Bank Utama (M) Berhad. This research identified the perceptions of the management, the union and the employees towards EAP. Problems were divided into 2 sections, which were personal problems and work-related problems. Personal problems included health, financial, family, self-conflict, spirituality and stress while work-related problems included work, career, interpersonal relationship at the workplace and physical work environment. Employee Needs Assessment Inventory (ENAI) questionnaire and interview methodology were used in this research. The research sample consisted of 237 employees. All personal and work-related problems to be highlighted in the intervention planning of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) were determined by the mean scores. The result of Pearson Correlation analysis showed the existence of significant relationship among all problems faced by the employees. The result of Cross-tab analysis showed the differences between the age category, service duration and education level with each problems faced by the employees. The result of interviews with the management and the union showed that all of them supported the implementation of EAP in Bank Utama (M) Berhad. The researcher has suggested an EAP model for Bank Utama (M) Berhad, whereas the model includes the EAP objectives, EAP practitioner resources, elements to be emphasized in EAP, the placement of EAP consultation room, the union involvement in EAP and the administration of EAP.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Many organizations in the world recognize that personal problems may detract and interfere in an employee’s work effectiveness. Such problems such as alcohol abuse, drug abuse, stress, depression, emotional illness, family crisis, marital, financial, medical and legal difficulties and other personal matters can affect behaviour and result in deteriorating job efficiency. Thus, it has become a policy in many US organizations to introduce, implement and maintain an effective Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help employees secure treatment of personal problems that may adversely affect their job performance.

Megranahan (1995) defines EAP as a confidential and professional service provided as an employee benefit which complements and extends in-company resources in the constructive and supportive Management of people impacted by concerns in their personal and work lives.

EAP started out as avenues for troubled employees with industrial alcoholism problems. Hartwell in EAPA (1995) mentioned that by 1974, the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse in America had adopted the term employee assistance program to describe job performance-based intervention programs in the workplace. The Institute noted that while deterioration in job performance could most often be attributed to the misuse of alcohol, it could also be related to other personal problems. Thus, EAPs broadened the scope of employer involvement beyond alcohol misuse and have evolved into multi-service programs to address all types of personal problems, including illicit drug use, family and mental problems that affect job performance, and the general personal welfare of employees.

EAP is gaining momentum in most parts of the world due to its ability in assisting employees with problems and organizations all over the world are contemplating the implementation of the said program in the workplace.

Most organizations introduce EAPs in their workplace primarily as a response to perceived needs of employees (stress, workload, personal problems, drug and alcohol problems) as well as a demonstration that they are caring and responsible organizations. Another secondary reason is the need to decrease absenteeism and/or improve productivity.

Regardless of the various reasons why Management of certain organizations believe that EAP should be implemented in their organizations, it is important to emphasise that these programs are capable of increasing employee productivity while at the same time, reducing overall operational costs.
Once implemented, EAPs must be run in the most professional and efficient manner with great emphasis on confidentiality aspects, in order for the programs to be a success. One CEO claimed that a well-run EAP would return a minimum of three dollars for every dollar spent on the program (Mondy & Noe, 1996).

This, however, cannot happen unless and otherwise the employer is committed to the success of the program. Therefore, the employer must ensure that all employees, regardless of their ranks, play their role in order to fully realize and utilize the benefits of EAP.

1.1 Background of the Research

In Malaysia, employee assistance programs are starting to become the emerging agenda in many large corporations. Mohan Krishnan (2001) described EAPs as still being a new concept in Malaysia even though the actual concept is quite familiar to many companies.

One giant telecommunication conglomerate – Telekom Malaysia Berhad – implemented its EAP in July 2000. Amongst its main purposes, the EAP was aimed at providing confidential assistance and guideline services to employees by focusing on industrial and organizational counseling and helping valued employees whose job performance are affected by personal problems, by motivating them to seek help. Telekom Malaysia Berhad also aimed to provide mediation service in the workplace for better employer-employee and employee-supervisor relationship and encourage the implementation of efforts to reduce workplace problem and to effectively manage the company’s medical expenditure especially pertaining to employees and their dependants’ health usage through health improvement. It also functions as a “gate keeper” in employees’ use of health care, cost for absence, family problems and other related costs, improve employees’ morale and increase company’s productivity, and reflect a caring image as one of the organisation’s culture (Mohan Krishnan, 2001).

EAPs may not be deemed as a profit-generating area but it is important to note that they can definitely assist employees during any organizational changes such as mergers, acquisitions, redeployment, etc.

In order to introduce or implement an EAP Model in Bank Utama (M) Berhad, it is essential that the Management look at the main objectives and needs of having an EAP in the Bank. Thus, the Management would need to consider and analyse every important aspects of the employees’ readiness, perception and reception towards implementing EAP in the Bank. Hence, a research to address existing and potential problems, concerns and the EAP needs would need to be conducted at Bank Utama (M) Berhad to ensure that their investments are beneficial to the employees as well as the Management of the Bank.
1.2 Problem Statement

Employees, regardless of their ranks, tend to face certain problems, either work-related or personal, in their lives in one way or another. It is the ability of the employees to cope with these problems that is becoming a prevailing issue for most organizations. At times, employees are unable to handle or resolve their problems and thus, lead to low productivity and poor job performance, which would lead to increasing operational costs for the organization.

It is commonplace today to say that stress is a part of everyday life. Berridge (1994) commented that it has become fashionable to be stressed emotionally and physically by the demands of the hard-driving organization, the challenging professional job, the dual-career partnership, the working mother or even the caring father role, and so on.

It is essential for any organizations, whether large or small, to help their employees who are facing some form of problems by having an avenue or program that the employees can voluntarily participate in so as to resolve their problems. In doing this, organizations can be assured that when their employees are being cared for and their problems resolved, then the organization would also be helping themselves in terms of having high productivity and increased employees' performance (Banta & Tennant, 1989).

Management is also faced with various employee problems. Corneil in Carroll (1996) stated that majority of employers believe that it is the social responsibility of any corporation to make available EAP services to all their employees in the organization. As a whole, the cost of EAP services is solely borne by the employers (Mohd Razali & Sharul Azman, 2001).

Trade Unions, on the other hand, see a majority of problems faced by their members as being caused by Management. According to Frunzi and Savini (1997) in Salamon (1998), Trade Unions can assist in providing employee satisfaction in various aspects such as self-esteem, social and development needs. Most of the time, Trade Unions would try to fulfill needs, which are in general contradictory with Management rules and regulations.

Davis and Gibson (1994) stressed that some form of assessment must essentially be carried out before an EAP is designed for any organization. These assessments must take into consideration factors such as the organization cultures, background and structure of the organization, characteristics of the workforce, communication and decision-making policies, human resource policies, record keeping systems, grievance handling, disciplinary procedures, Management-union relations and the financial and physical resources of the organization.

The introduction and implementation of EAP in any workplace can be seen as one of the best ways to deal with employee problems.
1.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of conducting this research in Bank Utama (M) Berhad is primarily to identify the perceptions and needs of the Management and employees of Bank Utama (M) Berhad towards the introduction and implementation of an Employee Assistance Program in the Bank. The findings of the research would enable us to ascertain what are the important components needed to be included when developing a suitable EAP for Bank Utama (M) Berhad.

Carroll (1996) in his article quoted that 76 per cent of employers view counseling as a caring facility; 70 per cent view counseling as helping employees deal with workplace change; while 57 per cent view counseling as a means of managing stress. Thus, it is imperative that we look at the findings of the research to determine the reasons why Bank Utama (M) Berhad should introduce EAP in the workplace.

With the completion of the merger talks between Bank Utama (M) Berhad and RHB Bank Berhad coupled by the impending relocation of the Head Office from Kuching to Kuala Lumpur as well as the impending redeployment of employees to various locations, it is the opportune time to assess the needs of introducing and implementing an effective EAP to Bank Utama (M) Berhad so as to assist employees to cope with the stresses and uncertainties that come with any organizational changes.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives will be stated in general and specific.

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to determine and propose the best or the most suitable EAP model for Bank Utama (M) Berhad to adopt based on the study carried out at the Bank.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

a. To identify the perceptions of the Top Management towards the introduction and implementation of EAP in the Bank.

b. To identify the Union’s perceptions as well as receptions with regards to the introduction and implementation of EAP in the Bank.

c. To identify the employees’ perceptions as well as receptions with regards to the introduction and implementation of EAP in the Bank.
To suggest the best or the most suitable EAP model for Bank Utama (M) Berhad based on the assessment and research findings that will be carried out in the various branches and divisions in the Bank.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The research would identify and outline the perceptions of the Top Management, the Union and the employees towards the proposed EAP Model for Bank Utama (M) Berhad. It is important that the views and opinions of all three parties are to be taken into consideration when coming up with the proposed EAP Model in order to ensure that the EAP is received with overwhelming positive response when it is introduced and implemented in the Bank.

The conceptual framework that can be drawn for this research is derived based on the statement of Grisson, Baldadian, and Swisher in Cunnigham (1994) whereby they stated the importance of viewing the system and human needs because of the differing perceptions between Managers and employees. The feedback obtained from employees would be their perception on the importance of EAP being introduced in the workplace, while the feedback from Managers would be based on how the organization would advantage should they implement the EAP.

Figure 1.0: Conceptual Framework
1.6 Importance of the Research

This research is important for the Management of Bank Utama (M) Berhad in their endeavour to develop the best EAP Model for all their employees in the workplace. The research must ensure that accurate and reliable data are captured with regards to employees’ perception as well as reception of EAPs. This is to ensure the successful introduction and implementation of the EAP Model by all levels of employees upon its inception.

This research is vital and would be an important factor for the Management to be focused and keep on the right track when they develop the EAP Model. It is without a doubt a good start for the Bank as it is necessary for all levels of employees to take a serious view of the EAP in order for it to be a successful and effective one.

Grisson, Baldadian and Swisher (1994) in Azzahrah Annuar (2003) stated the importance of having clear views with regards to the overall organization system so as to be able to countercheck the differing perceptions among the Top Management and the employees. Therefore, Top Management must possess an in-depth understanding of EAP before the said service can be effectively implemented.

1.7 Limitation of the Research

This research involved only randomly selected employees taken as participants during the administration of the questionnaires and interviews. In this particular study, the participants of the questionnaires were basically employees from the thirty-five (35) branches of Bank Utama while those involved in the interviews were Management members from the Head Office as well as some Union representatives.

Although the involvement of all members of employees from different levels would greatly benefit the objective of the research, it was quite difficult, and impossible, to garner the full participations from all employees due to work exigencies and the like.

In order to ensure that the participants understand what EAP is all about, it was important to educate them on the basic information of EAP by inserting a short but detailed write-up on the first page of the questionnaire. Although this may not provide them a full understanding of EAP, but they would at least have some understanding of EAP when they are given the questionnaires to fill up.

In addition, the researcher was unable to look at the Organizational Culture in the Bank in view of the time constraint. Amongst the areas that the researcher did not have the opportunity to look into were problems faced by the employer and the Trade Unions.

An important point to note was that the research was done prior to the merger between Bank Utama and RHB Bank. Therefore, the views and perceptions obtained from the research were those of Bank Utama only.
1.8 Definition of Concepts and Operations

The following are definitions of the various concepts and operations used in this study.

1.8.1 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Concept
An Employee Assistant Program (EAP) refers to a program, which provides direct service to an organization's employees who are experiencing many different types of problems in their personal, or work lives (Cunningham, 1994).

Operation
A proposed EAP Model would be formulated in this research.

1.8.2 Organization

Concept
Organizations are social entities with strategic directions and constructed to have a system of structured and well-arranged activities as well as having relationships with the external environment (Daft, 1998).

Operation
This research is aimed at formulating an EAP Model for the organization that is being researched.

1.8.3 Problem Employees

Concept
According to Brou (1999), problem employees are those employees who do not show maximum productivity as required by their employers.

Operation
Problem employees in this research refer to the employees who are faced with personal and work problems.

1.8.4 Spirituality

Concept
Spirituality is a word used to explain the human need for a more meaningful life as well as their desire to relate to extraordinary powers (Clinebell, 1995 in Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999).
Spirituality problems in this research refer to the relationship of the individual's religious beliefs and the problems faced by the individual while at the workplace.

1.8.5 Health

Concept
Pruitt & Stein (1994) states that the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as the overall physical, mental and social states and not only related to illness.

Operation
This research refers to the various types of personal problems faced by the employees, which influences the productivity of the employees in the organization being researched.

1.8.6 Stress

Concept
According to Seyle (1976) in Zuraidah (1995), stress is the non-specific respond of the body to any demand made upon it. This means that stress involves using all systems available in the body over its limits. The individual concerned find it difficult to adapt to the situation and requires more effort to create a balance between himself and the environment.

Operation
In this research, stress refers to the stress faced by the individual which relates to personal problems. Stress is common and is one of the many common problems faced by employees in any organization.

1.8.7 Financial

Concept
Financial can be defined as the art and science of money management (Gitman, 1991).

Operation
In this research, financial refer to the financial problem faced by employees which can deter the performance and productivity of the employees.

1.8.8 Family

Concept
Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) explained that family is a unit comprising various interactions such as the interactional system.
In this research, family refers to the relationship problems faced by the employee with family members.

1.8.9 Career

Concept
Career can be defined as the arrangement of positions related to one’s work, role, activity and experience (Arnold, Cooper and Robertson, 1998).

Operation
Career problems arise when an employee fails to obtain satisfaction from the work that he is currently doing. This research aims to identify career problems faced by the employees.

1.8.10 Work

Concept
According to the definition in the International Standard ISO/DIS 6385 which was developed by the Geneva International Standard Organization, work is the result of a work system comprising of a combination of the individual and equipment which acts together to achieve a certain level of output at the workplace and the work environment (Fraser, 1989).

Operation
In this research, work refers to the various work problems faced by the employees in the organization that is being studied.

1.8.11 Physical Work Environment

Concept
Physical work environment includes available resources to perform the job and the equipment designed for employee to perform the job. Performance would be affected if one of the factors were not available or not complete (Bullock, 1981; Rummler & Brache, 1990 in Ostrom, 1993).

Operation
The physical work environment can influence the employee’s work performance. This research will identify the physical work environment problems faced by the employees in the organization that is being studied.