

**EXECUTION OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME IN THE INDIAN
WORKPLACE**

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ABSTRACT

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) appeared in the United States, (Dickman, 1985) gained astounding impetus in countries like UK, Australia, Canada and is gaining momentum in India. However, EAP has not grown in India like other European countries largely due to lack of knowledge on its importance. Employers in the West offer EAP services to their employees to help them to overcome personal, family and work related problems that could impair job performance. Some of the European countries have even mandated EAP services in the workplace. EAP is a valuable resource in the workplace that could benefit the employer, the employees and their immediate family members. Though a few global organisations in India have started offering EAP services, many organisations are still unaware of EAP. EAP services are provided free of cost to the employees and their immediate family members which are available 24*7. Employers outsource this service with EAP consultancies and the EAP practitioners drawn from social workers, psychologists, and licensed counsellors. EAP services can be implemented at all workplaces; it believes that instead of firing underperformers, assisting them to enhance their work performance would be a better strategy (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008). Perhaps ascribing to this fact, several Indian organizations have started to offer EAP services to help employees to cope with a wide variety of problems, (Nalini, 2011). Formerly this programme was known as OAP (Occupational Alcoholism Programme) as it was addressing only alcoholism. Professionals offering EAP service should bound by a code of conduct and they keep the information of employees and their family members as confidential, except when disclosure is authorized by the client/required by law, incase of intended suicide/child abuse (Segal, Gerdes, & Steiner, 2007). This paper aims to elaborate on learning the importance of EAP and implementing its services in the Indian workplace.

Keywords: Employee Assistance Programme, EAP, Work Performance, India, Workplace

Introduction

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is employer sponsored programme. Employees are encouraged to avail it without the hesitation of cost factor. EAP services are provided to employees in order to improve their work performance. It could resolve personal, work related and family problems faced by the employees. It is purely voluntary; no one can compel the employee to avail EAP services. EAP services may either be provided in the workplace or outside the workplace as it varies from organization to organization. Those offering EAP services could be qualified social workers, Psychologists or licensed counselors. EAP services are not only restricted to the employees but also extended to the immediate family members. The services are purely based on the trust of the employees and confidentiality is one of the most important aspects in EAP. EAP services differed from organization to organization and the basic services include assessment, referral, short-term counselling (Sinha, 2007). EAP believes that the employee cannot leave work related problems at their homes and the personal problems at company gate.

Steps to establish Employee Assistance Programme:

There are a few steps to launch EAP and certain facts that should be known by the organizations before designing it. They are as follows:

1. Making Policy

The first and foremost step in launching EAP is policy making. Organization intended to offer EAP services has to develop a written statement stating the purpose, beneficiaries, roles and responsibilities of personnel associated with this plan

2. Creating awareness

The best EAPs are rooted in dissemination of knowledge about EAP to its beneficiaries. The employees need to be educated on the meaning of EAP, its purpose, features, principles, benefits, applicability, mode of availing, time of availing, place of availing, channel to avail EAP, problems that could be resolved by EAP, services offered by EAP and the EAP practitioner. This awareness programme should be conducted on a periodical basis in order to educate new entrants, to reeducate the old employees to get more insights, and to discuss the issues in availing

EAP, if any. Generating awareness to its beneficiaries is the most crucial step in establishing EAP and it is a continuous process.

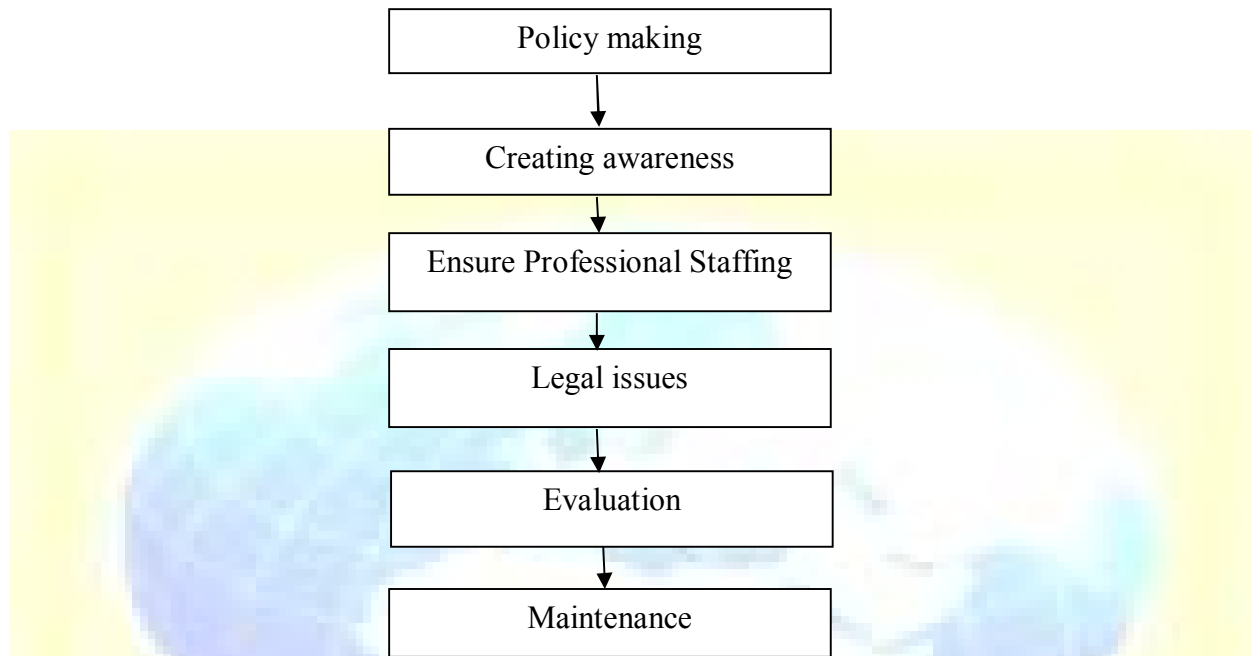


Figure 1: Steps in launching Employee Assistance Programme

3. Ensure professional staffing

Organization should make sure that the person who offers EAP (EAP practitioner) is adequately qualified. The professional offering EAP services could be social workers, psychologists, and licensed counsellors. As far as India is concerned, there is no forum that provides license to the counsellors. It is up to the organization to approve the candidature of EAP professionals.

4. Legal issues

Organizations interested to offer EAP services should be aware of legal issues. Since EAP services are confidential, the organization should not disclose the confidential information to anyone unless it is legally required by a court of law.

5. Evaluation

Organization may evaluate the programme periodically to ensure whether it fulfilled its objectives.

6. Maintenance

Everyone involved with the EAP must understand the importance of confidentiality. They should ensure that the accessibility of information is limited, identification of information is minimized and the files are locked.

Problems for which EAP services offered

EAP could resolve various human problems in the workplace. EAP is performance centric. Problem of any kind be it personal, family or work related that jeopardize the performance of the employees would be resolved by Employee Assistance Programme. The below table shows various problems that are dealt by EAP:

Table 1: Problems resolved by Employee Assistance Programme

Family Issues	Stress Management	Emotional Difficulties	Addictions	Life Transitions	Workplace Difficulties
Parent/Child Conflicts, Adolescence, Relationship, Marital Problems, Child care, Elder care,	Anxiety, Trouble Concentrating, Sleep Problems, Job Pressures, Family Stress, Relationship	Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Grief, Anger Management, Postpartum Depression	Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, Gambling, Food	Loss of Loved One, Job Loss, Empty Nesting, Mid-Life Issues, Marriage,	Lateness, Accidents, Conflicts with Co-Workers, Absenteeism, Trouble Concentratin

Legal/Financial Issues, Parenting Concerns,	Stress			Post-College Issues	g, Job Performance
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Source: ---. (---). *Supervisor Training Manual: Dealing with workplace Performance Problems*. Mines and Associates A National Business Psychology Firm. Retrieved November 14, 2011

Services offered by Employee Assistance Programme

EAP is closely associated with counselling. But EAP does not mean counselling. EAP consists of different types of services which are listed in the table 2. EAP is a kind of non-statutory welfare services in which counselling is also a part. Apart from counselling, there are different services, but unfortunately there is no much empirical data on different types of services offered in general and particularly in India.

Table 2: EAP services

The "traditional" EAP package is believed to contain the following components	EAPs come in a wide variety of forms, most of them contain some or all of the following components
(i) assessment, (ii) referral, (iii) aftercare/follow-up, (iv) management consultation, (v) supervisory training, (vi) employee education, (vii) motivational Counselling and (viii) policy development.	(i) referral, (ii) training of managers, (iii) employee education, (iv) individual Counselling, (v) a hot line and group counselling.

Source: Marin, R. J., Lynch, F. J., McLeod, J., Millar, W., Saunders, M., & Coakeley, S. (1990)

Role of Human Resource Department in implementing EAP services

Human resource executives are considered as policy makers of the organization. The decision of implementing EAP lies in the hands of human resource department. So, the executives working in HR department should be aware of EAP and its benefits. Though it is up to them to decide the implementation of EAP services, it would be good if they understand EAP and its features. Anything that happens in the industry either it is good or bad, the HR department that is responsible for the same. EAPs support the strategic objectives of HRM in a developmental manner for both individuals and organizations (Berridge & Cooper, 1994). In a few organizations, EAP services is coordinated by the medical department. The existing literature confirm that the EAP services is coordinated by either human resource or medical department. However, as policy makers, human resource department plays a key role in executing EAP services.

Conditions that make Employee Assistance Programme successful

The success of EAP lies in the hands of both the employees and the organization. After implementing EAP, the organization should try to spread the programme across the hierarchy through various avenues like notice board, e-communication, awareness programme, to name a few. Trust is more crucial to avail EAP services. Employees who are in need of EAP services may come forward to avail it and therefore the organization would think of offering services continuously. Moreover, the most important principle of EAP i.e., confidentiality should be maintained that would build the confidence among the employees to avail EAP services. Regular review of EAP services would assist to ensure to understand whether the services fulfilled its intended function.

Models of EAP

There are various models of EAP. These models were designed to offer EAP services based on the nature of the organizations and based on their interest. The organizations may adopt any of the following models to offer EAP services. The model of EAP differs from organization to organization.

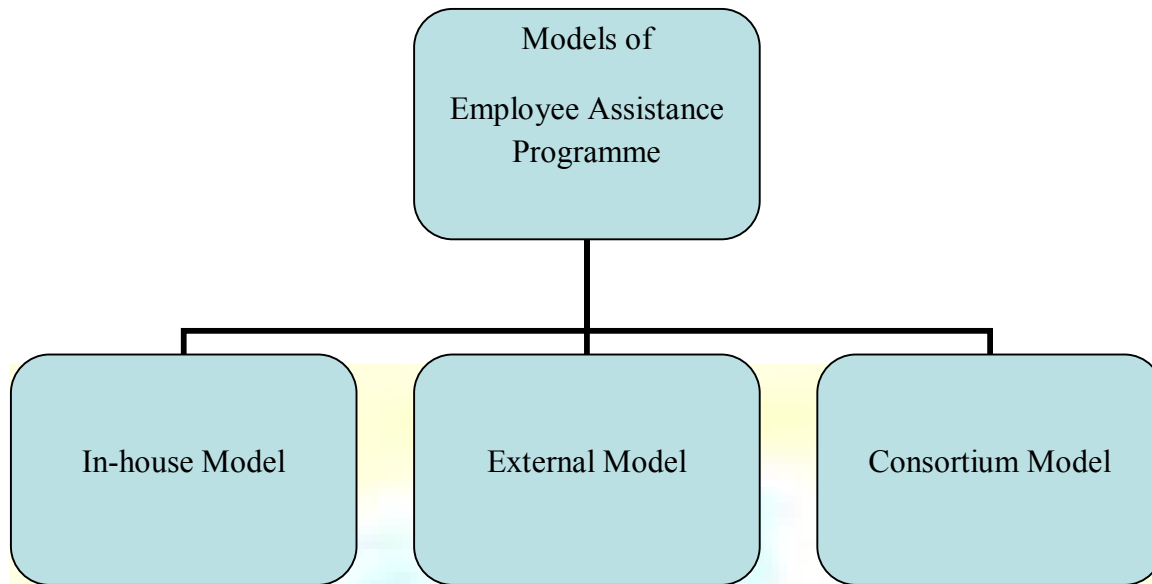


Figure 2: Models of Employee Assistance Programme

1. In-house Model

Large organizations used to follow this model in offering EAP services. EAP practitioner is employed by the organization. The services will be offered in the workplace and the practitioner would be available in the organization. If this model is followed, the location should be far away from the workplace to avoid reluctance among the employees.

2. External Model

Organization contracts with the EAP consultancies. EAP consultancies are the one who provides EAP services to various organizations. Usually, the services would be provided in the office of EAP practitioner, but sometimes the practitioner will also come to the organization to offer EAP services. It depends upon the organization and the nature of EAP services. This model would avoid the reluctance among employees in availing EAP.

3. Consortium Model

This would be followed by small and medium scale industries. Organizations that are not able to either employ EAP practitioner or contract with the EAP consultancy on their own due to economic reason, would come forward to pool their resources to and develop a collaborative

programme. It decreases the costs of organization and it would be easier to maintain the confidentiality among employees

Employee Assistance Programme in India

As discussed earlier, Employee Assistance Programme is in its infancy stage in India. Albeit, a few multinational companies are offering EAP services, the Indian organizations offering EAP services are countable. The organizations are not aware of EAP services and its benefits. As policy makers of the organization the executives in HR department need to know about EAP. Moreover, as far as India is concerned, there are not much empirical data that validate the importance and benefits of EAP.

So, the research on EAP should be encouraged in Indian context. The educational institutions offering MSW (Human Resource Management) and MBA (Human Resource Management) have to teach about EAP to the students who are the future pillars of HR department. The institutions may include about EAP services in their course curriculum as EAP is one of the recent human resource practices of the organization. Some of the consultancies offer EAP services in India are as follows: (i) Santulan EAP, New Delhi, PPC Worldwide, Bangalore, Continuing Education and Training Centre, Mumbai, to name a few.

Benefits of EAP

Some of the benefits of EAP are listed in the below table. EAP services emphasize work performance. EAP services benefit the organization, employees and their family members

Table 3: Benefits of EAP

EAPs help the organization to	EAPs help the employees to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce employee attrition • minimize employee absenteeism • improve employee morale • enhance job performance and productivity, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live a healthy and peaceful life, • face the life challenges, • build good rapport with others, • solve their wide range of problems,

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase organizational well-being • prevent accidents thereby decrease compensation claims • retain the existing employees and attract new employees, • develop workforce cooperation • increase sense of belongingness of employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the future needs, • be happy with family and community, • make the environment happier, • balance work and personal life • improve their well-being • enhance social relationships |
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Conclusion

EAP is one of the most valuable tools of Human Resource Management. Offering services would demonstrate the employer's respect towards their employees. Due to lack of awareness, most of the Indian organizations are not offering EAP services. The success of EAP lies in the hands of all the stakeholders like EAP beneficiaries, EAP practitioners, EAP consultancies and the organizations. Indian organizations may think upon adopting this service in order to promote employee well-being and to improve their work performance.

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