



**Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal  
towards the Employee Assistance Programme**

**By**

**Nonkululeko Happiness Mkhize**

**212509661**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**Master of Social Science (Social Work)**

**in the College of Humanities**

**School of Applied Human Sciences**

**at the**

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Supervised by**

**Dr Livhuwani Ramphabana**

**November 2024**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby affirm that the dissertation presented is the product of my own efforts in both its design and execution. It has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other institution. Furthermore, I have provided proper acknowledgement of all sources utilised in this research.



---

**Nonkululeko Happiness Mkhize**

---

**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the memory of my beloved parents, Ms. Khanyisile Anna Ngcongco and Mr. Lindani Emmanuel Mkhize. Their enduring inspiration and wisdom continue to resonate with me.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

GOD first! It would not have been possible without Him. Thank you, Lord.

Moreover, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals:

- My supervisor, Dr Livhuwani Ramphabana, for his constant guidance and support. His unwavering patience and commitment served as a source of encouragement and motivation, propelling me towards the successful completion of this study.
- The employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal for their patience and willingness to participate in the study.
- I want to acknowledge myself for persevering and completing this thesis while navigating pregnancy.
- Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my fiancé, Mr. Mthobisi Madiba, for being my steadfast anchor in moments when completing this endeavour.

## **ABSTRACT**

The EAP field is emerging; hence, not much research has been conducted at institutions of higher learning, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In a broader context, the EAP is a fairly new field in South Africa, as Terblanche (2018) reported that the concept of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was primarily introduced in South Africa in the early 1980s. The field has been refined over the years; however, there is still limited research and literature. The motivation for this study stemmed from the researcher's observations of being employed as a social worker at the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), a non-profit organisation in Durban. The researcher observed that from 2019 – 2022, there was a considerable number of clients from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and other surrounding institutions seeking SANCA services for either themselves or their significant others. Unexpectedly, most of the clients were not referred to by their in-house EAP. Out of curiosity, the researcher became motivated to explore the reasons why the employees at UKZN opted for self-referrals and not via their respective EAP programmes.

Through this research, the study aimed to explore the perceptions of the employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal regarding the employee assistance programmes, specifically focusing on the Howard Campus in Durban. The objectives of the study were to explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes, to explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN, to explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs, to explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs and to ascertain the accessibility of the EAP service

The study was conducted at the Howard campus only due to accessibility. The study was advertised through the University of KwaZulu- Natal electronic notice system. The research approach adopted for this study was qualitative, employing the exploratory research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 13 employees from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Howard Campus in Durban. It is important to note that participation in the study was voluntary, and no employees were coerced into taking part in the interviews. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and understanding of various aspects related to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Specifically, participants were asked about their awareness of the EAP, their perceptions of its functioning, their willingness to utilise the programme, and their experiences regarding its accessibility. The

use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the interview process, enabling participants to elaborate on their responses and provide rich, detailed insights into their perceptions and experiences with the EAP.

A theoretical background detailing the Employee Assistance Programme was provided through literature. In the literature, the goals, objectives and intentions of EAP were discussed. The study further detailed existing legislation guiding the EAP in South Africa. The aspects of EAP which are critical for EAP effectiveness were also explored and discussed. These include the purpose of the EAP, accessibility of the EAP, and roles of EAP as per EAP core technologies.

The findings were presented through in-depth analysis and interpretation through a detailed report in accordance with the five objectives of the study. The study generally found that participants shared that they have a limited awareness of the available EAP service at the university of KwaZulu-Natal. Secondly, most participants reported that they perceived the EAP as a mental health and counselling service only and had limited information about other services offered by the EAP. Thirdly, some participants indicated that they prefer to utilise external private services compared to their EAP service because they prefer to maintain privacy in the workplace. However, other participants expressed a positive willingness to utilise the EAP service, which provided improvements in marketing and visibility. Furthermore, there were participants who expressed reluctance to use the service due to concerns about confidentiality and protection of privacy. Lastly, most participants indicated that they were unaware of the physical location of the EAP office. Participants raised concerns about accessibility of the EAP programme.

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions and recommendations were made regarding the improvement of the EAP at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The recommendations were divided into two categories, namely, recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research. The recommendations to improve practice include conducting educational initiatives to improve the general awareness of the EAP and service provisions. Secondly, improving marketing and visibility strategies are recommended in order to include those who do not have access to the university's virtual advertising platform. Finally, it was recommended that employees be reassured about confidentiality and privacy through training and seminars in order to encourage them to utilise the service in confidence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                 |          |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
| DECLARATION .....                               | I        |
| DEDICATION .....                                | II       |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                          | III      |
| ABSTRACT .....                                  | IV       |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS .....                         | VII      |
| LIST OF ANNEXURES .....                         | X        |
| LIST OF TABLES .....                            | X        |
| LIST OF ACRONYMS .....                          | XI       |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION .....</b>         | <b>1</b> |
| 1.1 Introduction .....                          | 1        |
| 1.2 Background and Rationale of the Study ..... | 2        |
| 1.3 Research problem statement .....            | 3        |
| 1.4 Aims and Objectives .....                   | 3        |
| 1.4.1 Aim .....                                 | 3        |
| 1.4.2 Objectives .....                          | 4        |
| 1.5 Underlying Assumptions of the Study .....   | 4        |
| 1.6 Location of the Study .....                 | 4        |
| 1.7 Theoretical Framework of the Study .....    | 4        |
| 1.8 Operational definition concepts .....       | 6        |
| 1.9 Research methodology overview .....         | 6        |
| 1.9.1 Research Paradigm .....                   | 6        |
| 1.9.2 Research Design .....                     | 7        |
| 1.9.3 Sampling .....                            | 7        |
| 1.10 Data collection .....                      | 7        |
| 1.11 Data Analysis .....                        | 8        |
| 1.12 Trustworthiness .....                      | 8        |
| 1.13 Ethical considerations .....               | 9        |
| 1.14 Limitations of the Study .....             | 9        |
| 1.15 Outline of the research chapters .....     | 10       |
| 1.16 Conclusion .....                           | 11       |

|                                                                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>                                          | <b>12</b> |
| 2.1 Introduction .....                                                                | 12        |
| 2.2 Origins of the Employee Assistance Programme.....                                 | 12        |
| 2.3 Contestations on the definition of EAP .....                                      | 13        |
| 2.4 Purpose of the Employee Assistance Programme .....                                | 14        |
| 2.5 Accessibility of the Employee Assistance Programme .....                          | 15        |
| 2.6 Core Technologies of the EAP .....                                                | 16        |
| 2.6.1 Training and development .....                                                  | 16        |
| 2.6.2 Marketing.....                                                                  | 17        |
| 2.6.3 Case management .....                                                           | 18        |
| 2.6.4 Consultation with work organisations .....                                      | 18        |
| 2.6.5 Stakeholder management .....                                                    | 19        |
| 2.6.6 Monitoring and evaluation.....                                                  | 19        |
| 2.7 Legal framework to strengthen the EAP .....                                       | 20        |
| 2.7.1 Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995.....                                            | 20        |
| 2.7.2 Employment Equity Act 58 of 1998 .....                                          | 21        |
| 2.7.3 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000.... | 23        |
| 2.7.4 Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 .....                             | 24        |
| 2.8 Utilisation of the EAP .....                                                      | 26        |
| 2.8.1 Factors influencing underutilisation of the EAP.....                            | 27        |
| 2.9 Conclusion.....                                                                   | 29        |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>                                     | <b>30</b> |
| 3.1 Introduction .....                                                                | 30        |
| 3.2 Research Paradigm .....                                                           | 30        |
| 3.3 Research Approach .....                                                           | 31        |
| 3.4 Research Design .....                                                             | 31        |
| 3.5 Population and Sampling Strategies .....                                          | 32        |
| 3.5.1 Study population .....                                                          | 32        |
| 3.5.2 Sampling method .....                                                           | 32        |
| 3.5.3 Sampling strategies .....                                                       | 33        |
| 3.5.4 Inclusion criteria .....                                                        | 34        |
| 3.5.5 Exclusion criteria .....                                                        | 34        |
| 3.6 Data Collection.....                                                              | 34        |

|                                                                    |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 3.7 Data Analysis .....                                            | 35        |
| 3.7.1 Data collection ethical considerations .....                 | 36        |
| 3.8 Organisation of Qualitative Data .....                         | 36        |
| 3.9 Trustworthiness .....                                          | 39        |
| 3.10 Ethical Considerations.....                                   | 42        |
| 3.10.1 Permission to conduct study .....                           | 42        |
| 3.10.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation .....          | 42        |
| 3.10.3 Right to withdraw .....                                     | 43        |
| 3.10.4 Confidentiality .....                                       | 44        |
| 3.10.5 Anonymity .....                                             | 45        |
| 3.10.6 Reducing the risk of unanticipated harm .....               | 45        |
| 3.10.7 Release and publication of the findings .....               | 46        |
| 3.11 Value of the study .....                                      | 46        |
| 3.12 Conclusion .....                                              | 46        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR : FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....</b>                   | <b>47</b> |
| 4.1 Introduction .....                                             | 47        |
| 4.2 Data Presentation .....                                        | 47        |
| 4.2.1 Data collection .....                                        | 47        |
| 4.3 Qualitative Analysis.....                                      | 50        |
| 4.3.1 Identification of Main Themes.....                           | 51        |
| 4.4 Conclusion.....                                                | 67        |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b> | <b>68</b> |
| 5.1 Introduction .....                                             | 68        |
| 5.2 A summary of findings based on objectives .....                | 68        |
| 5.3 Recommendations of the study.....                              | 70        |
| 5.4 For future research: .....                                     | 72        |
| 5.5 Conclusion.....                                                | 73        |
| REFERENCES .....                                                   | 73        |
| ANNEXURES .....                                                    | 85        |

## **LIST OF ANNEXURES**

|                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Annexure 1 Gatekeeper's letter .....                           | 86 |
| Annexure 2 Gatekeepers permission to conduct study letter..... | 87 |
| Annexure 3 Ethical clearance letter .....                      | 88 |
| Annexure 4 Semi -structured interview guideline .....          | 89 |
| Annexure 5 Information sheet .....                             | 90 |
| Annexure 6 Consent to participate in the study form .....      | 92 |
| Annexure 7 Language editing certificate .....                  | 94 |

## **LIST OF TABLES**

|                                                                     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 4.1 <i>Brief profile of the participants</i> .....            | 48 |
| Table 4.2 objectives, sub-themes and main themes of the study ..... | 50 |

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|         |                                                               |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| EAP     | Employee Assistance Programme                                 |
| EAPA    | Employee Assistance Professionals Association                 |
| EAPA SA | Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa |
| UKZN    | University of KwaZulu-Natal                                   |

# **CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The field of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is emerging, and relatively limited research has been conducted at institutions of higher learning, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This observation underscores the importance of investigating the implementation, effectiveness, and impact of EAPs within academic settings. By exploring this topic, researchers can contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of organisational psychology, human resources management, and workplace well-being.

Given the unique context of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, there is a need to understand how EAPs are perceived, utilised, and supported within the university community. Factors such as cultural norms, organisational structures, and the diverse needs of faculty, staff, and students may influence the design and implementation of EAPs in this context. Research conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal can provide valuable insights into best practices for promoting employee well-being, addressing work-related stressors, and fostering a supportive organisational culture.

By filling this research gap, studies conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal can inform policy development, programme implementation, and resource allocation aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of EAPs and promoting the overall health and well-being of university employees and students. Additionally, findings from such research may have broader implications for other academic institutions and organisations seeking to establish or improve their EAPs. Therefore, conducting research on EAPs at the University of KwaZulu-Natal holds the potential to make significant contributions to both academic scholarship and practical interventions in the workplace.

In a broader context, the EAP is a fairly new field in South Africa as Terblanche (2018) reported that the concept of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was primarily introduced in South Africa in the early 1980s. The field has been refined over the years; however, there is still limited research and literature. It is against this background that this study sought to explore the perceptions of the employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the employee assistance programmes.

## **1.2 Background and Rationale of the Study**

The evolution of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) has continuously emphasised the significance of the relationship between employee wellbeing and corporate productivity. The Employee Assistance Programme Association defines EAP as a workplace programme designed to assist work organisations in addressing productivity issues and clients in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance (EAPA, 2009). This international definition speaks closely to our South African definition by EAPA-SA, which states that it is the work organisation's resource based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues (EAPA-SA, 2009).

Manzini and Taute (2007) argue that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Employment Equity Act 58 of 1998, and the Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 made it necessary for the employer to investigate, assess and assist employees with problems relating to substance abuse or incapacity. These acts formed a solid basis for implementing the EAP.

The EAP is a mutually beneficial programme for both employer and employee. Nunes, Richmond, Pampel and Wood (2018) state that personal and work-related stressors experienced by employees can result in substantial costs to employers in the form of employee absenteeism; therefore, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) provide an important vehicle to assist employees with health issues, personal concerns, and work-related problems that impact employee absenteeism. The researcher is of the opinion that effective utilisation of the programme yields positive results for both the employer and employee.

Joseph, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2018) found that utilising EAPs enhances employee outcomes and improves levels of absenteeism and functioning. This shows that the EAP not only improves presenteeism but also assists in increasing employees' productivity levels. EAP does, in general, have a significant role to play in the well-being of employees; nonetheless, the effectiveness of the programme is dependent on employee utilisation. Hence, the researcher developed an interest in exploring the perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the programme.

### **1.3 Research problem statement**

Research conducted in the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) field has yielded intriguing outcomes and provided valuable recommendations for organisations aiming to enhance employee well-being and organisational effectiveness. For example, in the study conducted by Manzini and Taute (2009), it was identified that the EAP is merely viewed as a counselling service, hence posing limitations to the use of the programme. The same study further identified that employees viewed EAP as part of the disciplinary process, therefore losing trust on the programme. This demonstrates that the association of the EAP with other structures or processes causes confusion amongst employees, resulting in refraining from using the programme. The study conducted by Manzini and Taute (2009) explored a quantitative approach, which deals with quantities of things, usually in the form of numbers subjected to statistical analysis (Jolley, 2010), whereas the EAP embraces a holistic and preventative approach to employee wellness (Van Wyk, 2016). The researcher argues that quantifying human experiences to numerical value misses an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of employees resulting in misplaced recommendations, posing a limitation to the study.

The motivation for this study stems from the researcher's observations while employed as a social worker at the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), a Non-Profit Organisation in Durban. The researcher observed that from 2019 – 2022, there was a considerable number of clients from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and other surrounding institutions seeking SANCA services for either themselves or their significant others. Unexpectedly, most of the clients were not referred to by their in-house EAP. Out of curiosity, the researcher became motivated to explore the reasons why the employees at UKZN opted for self-referrals and not via their respective EAPs.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

#### **1.4.1 Aim**

The study aimed to explore the perceptions of the employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the employee assistance programmes.

### **1.4.2 Objectives**

- To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes
- To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN
- To explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs
- To explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs
- To ascertain the accessibility of the EAP service

## **1.5 Underlying Assumptions of the Study**

1.5.1. Employees underutilise EAP services offered by UKZN

1.5.2. Employees prefer self-referrals instead of EAP referrals in order to keep their lives private in the workplace

## **1.6 Location of the Study**

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is an institution of higher learning located within the borders of the KwaZulu-Natal province. UKZN has three campuses in different cities: Howard College campus, Westville campus and Nelson Mandela School of Medicine campus located in the city of Durban and Edgewood campus in Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg campus. The researcher decided to focus on Howard College campus based on accessibility.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

### **The systems theory**

The systems theory is defined as a conceptual framework based on the principle that the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of the relationships with each other and with other systems rather than in isolation (Wilkinson, 2011). The systems theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy [1901-1972] originates from the general systems theory (Adams, Hester & Bradley, 2013). The whole is greater than the sum of its parts; the approach describes patterns in phenomena of interest using non-summitativity as a point of departure (Hanson, 1995). The theory speaks to the co-existence of phenomena in any system where one is a result of the other and vice versa. One asserts that humans are part of systems where these systems largely influence development and behaviour. Hammond (2010) argues that the

evolution of general systems theory was closely related to the development of behavioural sciences, which integrated biology, psychology, and the social sciences to understand human behaviour. The concept that social systems are not static, but instead are purposive, goal directed, and in constant states of interchange with their environments is important to keep in mind when problem-solving and determining possibilities for intervention and change (Greene, 2017: 215).

On the other hand, the EAP workplace programme is designed to assist work organisations in addressing productivity issues and clients in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance (EAPA, 2009). According to Greene (2017), people are products of complex systems rather than individuals who act in isolation. One settles with this concept as it acknowledges the lived realities of humanity. The researcher's social work background has allowed one to gain profound knowledge of the importance of understanding human complexities; hence, a holistic approach to understanding human behaviour is of significance. The systems theory acknowledges that while humans are autonomous, they are still part of a complex system. This theory speaks closely to human capital concurrently existing in a work environment and in a family setting. The researcher asserts that behaviours presented by employees in a work setting are influenced by systems around them, such as family, marital problems, and so forth. This aligns closely with the study's chosen theoretical framework, systems theory. According to systems theory, social systems are not fixed; they are active and aim to achieve specific goals. These systems are always interacting with their environments, adjusting and changing based on different influences. This ability to adapt is important for their success, helping them respond to challenges while working toward their objectives (Greene, 2017). Understanding this framework is essential when it comes to problem-solving and identifying potential areas for intervention and change. It encourages a holistic view of organisational dynamics, highlighting the importance of considering the interconnectedness of various elements within the workplace. By recognising these relationships, the EAP can develop strategies that not only address immediate concerns but also promote long-term improvements in employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

## **1.8 Operational definition concepts**

### **Employee Assistance Programme**

“An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a strategic work-based intervention programme designed to enhance the psycho-social well-being of all individual employees and the well-being of the employer as a corporate client towards improved productivity of the workforce at large. The goal is to provide proactive and reactive interventions through the application of acknowledged core technologies for the early identification and/or resolution of both work and personal challenges that may adversely affect performance and well-being. These challenges and issues may include, but are not limited to relationships, health, trauma, substance abuse, gambling and other addictions, financial problems, mental and psychiatric disorders, communication, legal, structural and transformational issues” (Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius & Tyson, 2021:18). The definitions above are evidence of how the EAP has evolved and grown from strength to strength.

### **Employee**

“An employee is anyone, other than an independent contractor, who works for another person or who assists in conducting the business of an employer” (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995)

### **Awareness**

“Knowledge or perception of a situation or fact” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989.)

### **Perception**

“Perception is conceived as a process intervening between stimuli and responses.”

(Garner & Eriksen, 1956)

## **1.9 Research methodology overview**

### **1.9.1 Research Paradigm**

The study applied the interpretive paradigm, which is the belief that knowledge can only be obtained by deep interpretation of the subject. On the same note, Krauss (2005) avers that the complexity of meaning in the lives of people has much to do with how meaning is attributed to different objects, people and life events.

### **1.9.2 Research Design**

For this study, the researcher utilised an exploratory research design to gain an in-depth understanding of employee perceptions towards the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. According to Stebbins (2001), exploring a phenomenon in a broader sense is essential for gaining comprehensive insights into its nature. The exploratory research approach enabled the researcher to delve deeply into the perceptions and experiences of employees regarding the EAP, facilitating a thorough understanding of this subject within the university context. This design allowed for flexibility and openness in exploring diverse perspectives and uncovering underlying factors that influence employee perceptions of the EAP.

### **1.9.3 Sampling**

The study employed purposive sampling to engage participants who were willing to share insights on the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The inclusion criteria encompassed male and female employees of all ages, whether they had or had not utilised the EAP services at UKZN. Participants needed to be employed by UKZN, including permanent, contract-based, or internship employees. Exclusion criteria comprised individuals from the EAP department, students of UKZN, relatives or significant others of UKZN employees (even if eligible for EAP services), and employees who refused to provide informed consent, regardless of meeting the inclusion criteria. The researcher interviewed 15 participants, with the determination of reaching saturation serving as a decisive factor regarding population size. This approach allowed for targeted participant selection, ensuring diverse perspectives relevant to the study's objectives were captured through qualitative data collection methods such as interviews.

### **1.10 Data collection**

This study used semi-structured interviews to gather detailed personal insights from participants. Interviews, defined as one-on-one discussions, can take place in person or by phone, allowing for a deeper understanding of specific topics. The researcher employed an audio recorder to accurately capture the discussions, ensuring that participants could express themselves in their own words. Permission was obtained from participants before recording the sessions.

## 1.11 Data Analysis

According to Lacy and Luff (2001), key steps in this process include organizing data, familiarizing oneself with it, coding, and creating themes. Thematic analysis focuses on identifying patterns in texts or transcripts, with codes generated from careful examination of the data. This inductive approach relies on the content of the texts rather than pre-set categories (Neuendorf, 2018). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for recognizing and analysing meaningful patterns in a dataset. In this study, the researcher used thematic content analysis and NVivo software to organise and analyse the data, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase process for thematic analysis.

## 1.12 Trustworthiness

Pilot and Beck (2014) state that trustworthiness is regarded as the degree of confidence to which a study is conducted and interpreted to ensure the quality of the study. The researcher aimed to ensure credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability in the qualitative research process through various strategies:

**Credibility:** Stahl, James, Norman, and King (2020) emphasised that credibility is achieved by understanding how reported findings relate to each other. The researcher utilised member checks as a technique to enhance credibility, as described by Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016). This involved returning to participants after data collection and analysis to confirm the accuracy of reported information, ensuring the credibility of data interpretation.

**Transferability:** Qualitative researchers, as noted by Stahl and King (2020), suggest that patterns and descriptions from one context may apply to another. To enhance transferability, the researcher provided comprehensive details of the research methodology in the final report. This "thick description," as described by Anney (2014), enables replication of the study under similar conditions in different contexts or settings.

**Confirmability:** Stahl et al. (2020) highlighted confirmability as achieving neutrality and closeness to objective reality in qualitative research. Anney (2014) explained confirmability as the degree of neutrality in research findings, avoiding personal perceptions and biases during analysis. The researcher ensured confirmability by relying on the interview guidelines during interviews and utilising member checks to verify credibility of the findings.

**Dependability:** Bitsch (2005) described dependability as the constancy of data collected over time. The researcher applied a code-recode strategy, as suggested by Anney (2014), where data was coded twice with a gap of one to two weeks between coding sessions. This strategy helped maintain consistency and dependability of identified themes throughout the research process.

### **1.13 Ethical considerations**

**To ensure informed consent and voluntary participation,** the researcher ensured that participants received sufficient information about the study by providing a thorough explanation of the purpose of the research and how their participation could contribute to the EAP field. A detailed consent form was provided to participants to give written consent. The right to withdraw was explained to participants, giving them an opportunity to withdraw participation should they feel uncomfortable continuing with the study. The concept of confidentiality was explained to the participants before the interview began. Furthermore, the researcher ensured anonymity to protect the participants' identities.

### **1.14 Limitations of the Study**

The study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative studies aim to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). The findings of the study cannot be utilised to generalise the status quo on the usage of the EAP at UKZN. Furthermore, the information shared by the selected population is a representation of the whole population at UKZN, as Mantzoukas (2004) argues that representation in a qualitative study can lead to misinterpretation, resulting in an inadequate depiction of the community being researched. Out of the 13 participants, 2 did not consent to recording their interviews. This led to reliance on handwritten notes, which may be less comprehensive and prone to interpretation errors compared to verbatim recordings. The participants had different levels of understanding about the EAP, ranging from vague awareness to detailed knowledge. This variability can affect the consistency of responses and may influence the overall findings.

Some participants had limited or no direct experience with the EAP, which might have impacted their ability to provide informed opinions about its effectiveness and value. Participants expressed concerns about confidentiality and trust regarding the EAP. These concerns might affect how openly participants discussed their true opinions and experiences, potentially impacting the findings. The study might lack detailed contextual information about

the organizational environment and the specific implementation of the EAP, which can influence the generalisability of the findings.

### **1.15 Outline of the research chapters**

In Chapter 1 of the research project, the aims and objectives were defined to establish the purpose and scope of the study. The aims outlined the broad, overarching goals of the research, while the objectives specified specific, measurable steps or outcomes to achieve these aims. Research questions were formulated to guide the investigation and address specific aspects of the research topic. Additionally, an overview of the methodology was provided, outlining the approach and methods used in the research. This section included details on research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The methodology overview served as a roadmap for the research, ensuring transparency and reliability in the research process.

In Chapter 2, the literature review was conducted to examine and synthesize existing research and scholarship relevant to the research topic. This review aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge in the field, identify gaps or areas requiring further investigation, and establish the theoretical framework for the study. Key concepts, theories, and findings from relevant studies were critically analysed and synthesised to contextualize the research questions and support the development of hypotheses or propositions. The literature review served as the foundation for the research by informing the theoretical framework and guiding the interpretation of results within the broader academic discourse.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology was outlined and described in detail, as well as the approach and procedures used to conduct the study. This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, and any ethical considerations involved in the research process. The chosen methodology was justified based on its alignment with the research objectives and the nature of the research questions. Detailed explanations of how data was collected, managed, and analyzed were provided to ensure transparency and replicability of the study. This chapter served as a guide for the implementation of the research, allowing readers to understand the rationale behind the chosen methods and the steps taken to ensure rigour and validity in the study.

In Chapter 4, the research findings were presented and discussed based on the data collected and analyzed during the study. This chapter summarised the key outcomes, patterns, and insights derived from the research. Findings were organised and presented logically, often using tables, figures, or descriptive narratives to convey results effectively. The research findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions or hypotheses, and comparisons with existing literature were made to contextualise the significance of the results. Any unexpected or noteworthy findings were highlighted and discussed, along with limitations and implications for future research. This chapter aimed to provide a clear and detailed account of the study's outcomes, contributing to the overall understanding of the research topic.

In Chapter 5, the conclusions and recommendations of the research study were presented. This chapter summarised the key findings and discussed their implications in relation to the research objectives and broader literature. Conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of research findings, addressing the initial research questions or hypotheses. The significance of the study's outcomes was discussed, highlighting contributions to the field and areas for further exploration. Recommendations were provided based on the conclusions drawn, offering practical suggestions for future research, policy development, or practice. This chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive and insightful conclusion to the research, emphasising the implications and potential impact of the study's outcomes.

## **1.16 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study represents a significant endeavour aimed at addressing a critical gap in the literature regarding employee perceptions towards the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The research problem statement articulates the pressing need to gain comprehensive insights into EAP utilisation and effectiveness in addressing work-related stress and mental health issues within the university's context. Despite the prevalence of such challenges in contemporary workplaces, there remains a paucity of empirical research examining the perceptions and experiences of employees regarding EAP services, particularly within the specific organizational setting of UKZN. The chapter discussed the background and rationale behind the study, as well as its purpose, aims, and objectives. In conclusion, this study represents a timely and important contribution to the burgeoning field of workplace support services.

## **CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will explore existing literature on the EAP and embark on the origins, roles, and legal framework for strengthening the programme. Furthermore, the literature extends to the background that informs the various viewpoints on the utilisation of the EAP.

### **2.2 Origins of the Employee Assistance Programme**

The EAP was introduced to the USA around 1960 after an American company began assisting their employees, initially via the internal EAP (Masi, 2005). The EAP developed around the middle 1980s in the United Kingdom (*Ibid.*). The EAP developed from being used as a method of dealing with employees who suffered from substance abuse and mental health problems, which affected their work performance, to a combination of assessment and referral methods to assist with employee wellbeing (Masi & Teems, 1983). The EAP in the South African context was introduced in the 1980s by social workers and psychologists who were knowledgeable about international EAP (Maiden, 1992). However, it is acknowledged that the EAP is an emerging field in South Africa, with little research in history books (Terblanche, 1992). Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) have grown tremendously in South Africa since the inception of the first formal EAP by the Chamber of Mines in 1986 (Terblanche, 2011). The history of the EAP is largely associated with the development of occupational social work (Masi, 2011). The two fields have similar characteristics as they aim to address workplace problems faced by employees. Modern-day EAP has evolved and continues to evolve as per the needs of organisations, as Sharar (2009) argued that there has been a change in how the EAP services are rendered, specifically the type of services requested by the employers, the manner in which services are provided and lastly who provides the service, an internal or external EAP. Employers have identified the underutilisation of the EAP and are requesting services needed by employees.

According to Masi (2011), the origins of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) can be traced back to the 1940s through the 1960s, when the focus was primarily on occupational alcoholism. In the following decades, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, EAPs expanded to address mental health issues and other problems beyond alcohol use. By 1985, they had

evolved into an integrated model of managed care. This evolution led to the development of proactive services within EAPs that promote a healthy work-life balance. Such proactive initiatives may include awareness campaigns, wellness days, informational posters, workshops, seminars, training sessions, health consultations, and health risk screenings (EAPA-SA, 2015). The significance of these proactive services is further emphasised in a survey conducted by Lawrence, Boxer, and Tarakeshwar (2002), which indicated a demand for services that go beyond traditional individual or family therapy, focusing on issues like workplace conflict, communication skills, and various family and health concerns.

### **2.3 Contestations on the definition of EAP**

The term employee assistance programme is defined differently by different authors. Masi (2011) argues that the definition of an EAP is largely dependent on the location of the country and the type of standards being applied in that particular area. In other words, the EAP differs for different countries, which means that the main characteristics of the definition are derived from the needs of that particular location; for example, training and development might be a vital component of location A, whilst counselling and referral might be significant for location B. The definitions of these two locations might emphasise different components of the EAP. The following definitions include the main points describing an EAP.

Bennett (1999) defines the EAP as a workplace-linked counselling structure that benefits both employers and employees. This definition gave the EAP a foundation for growth and expansion. An Employee Assistance Programme is an organised, professional counselling and information service that deals with a range of issues, both personal and work-related, either through telephone or face-to-face sessions (EAPA-SA, 2010).

The Employee Assistance Programmes Association - EAPA (2010) states that the EAPs serve organisations and their employees in various ways, ranging from consultation at the management strategic level about issues of the organisation to individual assistance amongst employees and family members experiencing personal difficulties. The EAPA is an international association which birthed the EAPA-SA, which defines the EAP as the work organisation's resource based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues (EAPA-SA, 2010). Both EAPA and EAPA-SA definitions emphasize the

importance of providing support to employees facing personal challenges. The EAPA-SA has further incorporated prevention services, which has expanded the scope of EAP in South Africa.

The development of the EAP scope has led to an improved definition of the EAP. For the purposes of the paper, the researcher subscribed to the definition below:

“An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a strategic work-based intervention programme designed to enhance the psycho-social well-being of all individual employees and the well-being of the employer as a corporate client towards improved productivity of the workforce at large. The goal is to provide proactive and reactive interventions, through the application of acknowledged core technologies, for the early identification and/or resolution of both work and personal challenges that may adversely affect performance and well-being. These challenges and issues may include, but are not limited to relationships, health, trauma, substance abuse, gambling and other addictions, financial problems, mental and psychiatric disorders, communication, legal, structural and transformational issues” (Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius & Tyson, 2021:18). The definitions above are evidence of how the EAP has evolved and grown from strength to strength. The researcher prefers the above definition because it encapsulates all significant components of an EAP. Furthermore, it is in line with the core technologies that guide the operations of the EAP in South Africa. It also gives the EAP room to function at a preventative, as well as a treatment level. Lastly, the definition allows for expansion and growth as it does not limit issues faced by employees.

## **2.4 Purpose of the Employee Assistance Programme**

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is developed with the purpose of assisting employers in handling issues and creating a conducive environment in which managers and supervisors assume the roles of assessing employees' behaviours and relation to their productivity (Mugari, Mtapuri & Rangongo, 2014). After such assessments, they then refer them to receiving suitable support and care. Maiden (1992) states that the ultimate goal is to keep employees performing up to their best level and to be able to manage problems that could hinder their efficiency. The EAP motivates employees to reach out for help before their problems escalate to an uncontrollable condition, which may negatively affect their abilities to perform their job well (Holosko & Feit, 1988). Furthermore, (EAPA-SA, 2015) states that an EAP enhances wellness

by addressing personal and workplace issues through preventative and treatment measures. It also helps them reestablish their productivity and allows them to have fulfilling lives while they are keeping up with their daily duties in the workplace.

Maiden, Paul and Thompson (2006) put forward that in the past, employers did not pay attention to the personal issues faced by their employees. This created a sense that employers did not care about their employees' well-being. Presently, employers are bound to have an EAP in the workplace in order to develop the lives of their employees (Mugari, Mtapuri & Rangongo, 2014). If there is such a programme in the workplace, the employees feel honoured and appreciated as they know their employers are concerned about their wellbeing. Maiden (1992) submits that the Employee Assistance Programme is a vital resource for employers in the sense that employees are expected to carry out duties so that their employers can achieve their larger organisational goals. It is, therefore, imperative that employers preserve a striving team of employees who will contribute fully to the vision of the organisation (Maiden, Paul & Thompson, 2006). Many aspects of employees' lives need to be cared for. Hence Dipela and Sithole (2021) emphasise that in order to ensure that employees are assisted holistically, the EAP is not only focusing on issues arising in the workplace but also encompasses financial education, career guidance, and services that promote wellness, such as smoke cessation, fitness and weight reduction activities.

## **2.5 Accessibility of the Employee Assistance Programme**

The accessibility of EAP is one of the important factors as it determines the utilisation of this service in the workplace (Maiden, 1992). In a study conducted by Dipela and Sithole, the majority of participants stated that they were close to the EAP offices, which means it was easier for them to access the office (Dipela & Sithole, 2021). Similarly, Holosko and Feit (1988) stated that employees who have to travel long distances to access the EAP services are less likely to report their issues because of the distance. This compels them to use other points of EAP services that are much closer to their reach. Sinclair and O'Regan (2007) also echoed that it is advisable to have an accessible EAP office within convenient walking distance. Contrary to this, Mugari, Mtapuri and Rangongo (2014) contended that the short distance between the employee and the Employee Assistance Programme office does not guarantee the use of this service as some employees may feel uncomfortable being seen using EAP services. Therefore, besides physical accessibility, privacy needs to be taken into consideration.

Sinclair and O'Regan (2007) submitted that with the evolving world of technological advancement, new models to conduct Employee Assistance Programme have been employed. These include online counselling and telephonic counselling. There are applications that have been developed for employees to download to their cellphones, and they have links to articles that explore work-life and mental health issues. Makola and Tabane (2022) agree by stating that this method allows employees to use such knowledge individually and also share it with other co-workers, friends and family members. It facilitates the spread of information regarding promoting the health and wellness of employees and their immediate acquaintances.

## **2.6 Core Technologies of the EAP**

The functions of EAP are derived from a document developed by a custodian of the EAP in the South African context. The role of the EAP practitioner is guided and benchmarked by these core technologies, which influence the functioning and success of the EAP. These are known as EAP Core Technologies and entail the following:

### **2.6.1 Training and development**

Training is defined as an intentional process of acquiring knowledge and skills through structured learning experiences (Noe, 2017). Training and development in EAP is an important component of the EAP as it allows employees the opportunity to gain an understanding of the programme. Masi (2011) states that it is imperative that the EAP professional provides training in leadership and management of the organisation. This is in line with EAPA-SA (2015) standards emphasising the training and development of and assistance for work organisations and stakeholders. The training of supervisors ensures effective support to employees as supervisors are the main gatekeepers of employee wellbeing and productivity. In a study conducted by Weiss (2003) it was identified that in addition to the distribution of written policy and adequate staffing, supervisory training remained the highest contributor to EAP utilisation. In addition, Boone (1995) states that the training of supervisors has been historically a bond for EAPs and success stories in the workplace. Furthermore, it serves as an added tool for supervisors and encourages EAP support from supervisors and middle management. This shows that the effective utilisation of the EAP is also dependent on supervisor awareness and endorsement of the programme. (Colan, 1992) found in a study conducted amongst supervisors that a group of trained supervisors referred to a significantly higher number of employees

compared to the control group of untrained supervisors. There is a clear relationship between the training of supervisors and EAP referrals, as Bennet and Lehman (2002) share that it is possible to increase supervisor referrals through team-orientated prevention training. Supervisors are likely to refer employees once they confidently understand their role in the EAP.

Moreover, Noe (2017) emphasises how training in the EAP field enhances the overall well-being and performance of employees. It is critical to train employees in order to enhance awareness. Goetzel, Ozminkowski, Sederer and Mark (2008) state that it is important to train employees about EAP services as they may not be aware of what is available to them. Lack of EAP awareness may result in employees seeking external assistance externally. Training equips employees with knowledge on how to access help when in need (Noe, 2017), allowing employees to gain confidence in seeking help at their nearest EAP office. Chapman (2012) ascertains that training employees enhances proactive well-being where employees can learn practical life skills such as stress management techniques, conflict resolution and work-life balance strategies.

### **2.6.2 Marketing**

EAPA-SA (2015) clarified the role of an EAP practitioner in this standard, which is to promote EAP services to employees and their significant others. Intentional and strategic ways of alerting employees that the use of the EAP service is not limited to them but open to their immediate significant others can improve the utilisation of the programme. In a study conducted by Mnisi (2007), it was emphasised that there is a great need to improve the EAP internal marketing strategy in order to increase awareness of the different components and services of the programme.

Marketing not only improves awareness but should also encourage confidentiality (EAPA-SA, 2015). Confidentiality is an important component of marketing, and it should clearly state what it means for employees to access the programme. An EAP practitioner can make use of the marketing mixture when marketing services are offered and also acquire assistance from the organisation's marketing department. The practitioner should, however, guide the marketing department on how the information is conveyed, and include important components such as confidentiality. The marketing mix consists of seven “Ps” which help marketers to organise

their decision making, namely, pricing, product, promotion, place, packaging, people and process (Gunya, 2018). For example, a poster in the elevator stating services offered and pricing if it is a paid service, confidentiality and clearly stating the process of accessing the services can be an impactful way to alert employees of the EAP.

### **2.6.3 Case management**

Case management is client-centred and interdisciplinary, where various professionals and agencies deliver rounded support to a specific client. (Mallahy. 2013). Similarly, EAPA-SA (2015) describes this as activities conducted by the EAP practitioner to begin the process of assisting the employee, and these include assessment, short-term counselling, referral and re-integration into the work environment. Case management in the context of EAP involves a structured approach to addressing individual issues of well-being and productivity in the workplace. For most organisations, this is the most important service provision.

In a study conducted by Attridge and Burke (2011), employers referred to counselling as the most valuable EAP service. Employers recognising the value of counselling services in EAPs may prioritise promoting awareness of these services among their workforce. Encouraging employees to utilise counselling resources and destigmatising seeking help for personal challenges can contribute to a healthier and more supportive work environment.

### **2.6.4 Consultation with work organisations**

No man is an island. It is important for the EAP practitioner to consult with the organisation to address trends proactively and establish prevention programmes to address issues faced by individuals and the organisation (EAPA-SA: 2015). Consultation is a continuation of a needs assessment, where the EAP practitioner continuously researches the needs of the organisation in order to influence the type of service rendered. This includes encouraging the organisation to have medical aid plans that are not limited to substance abuse and mental disorders but also include behavioural disorders (Bhoodram, 2010). Consulting with the organisation includes regular consultation with the EAP advisory committee, which is defined in the EAPA-SA (2010) standards as an internal committee represented by all segments of the workforce. The committee influences the buy-in of the organisation and assists with establishing a true reflection of the needs of the workforce. It is, therefore, vital for the success of the EAP that the practitioner networks with the various internal departments (Bhoodram, 2010).

### **2.6.5 Stakeholder management**

The EAP practitioner has a role to establish and maintain effective relations with internal and external role-players and service providers (EAPA-SA: 2015). Furthermore, Gunya (2018) shares that EAP practitioners are at times required to refer clients for further services; therefore, it is important for them to build professional relations within the organisation or community where they operate and be able to work within an interdisciplinary team. The researcher is of the view that it is vital that the EAP practitioner compiles files for both internal and external stakeholders. Gunya (2018) suggests that community and organisational profiles are key strategies to maintain and nurture stakeholder management. Furthermore, EAPA-SA (2015) stipulates stakeholder management as one of EAP standards, emphasising the importance of maintaining a good relationship with stakeholders in order to assist employees to gain access to services provided by these stakeholders.

### **2.6.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring is the continuous assessment of a programme in relation to the agreed implementation schedule, while evaluation draws on data and information gathered from monitoring in order to identify trends and the impact of the programme (Otieno, 2000). Monitoring and evaluation of the EAP is conducted to determine the value, success and impact of EAP services (EAPA-SA: 2015). Gunya (2018) shares the same sentiments by stating that monitoring and evaluation is a systematic process that allows the organisation to judge progress and usefulness and identify the need for any programme modification.

Naidoo (2017) argues that the EAP is embedded in humanities and the helping profession; therefore, no tangible areas can be evaluated. However, EAPs need to prove return on investment or return on value on the organisations they serve. The EAP should demonstrate value and measurable impact as per EAPA-SA standards (2015). By the same token, Naidoo (2017) identified three factors that influence evaluation. Firstly, process evaluation makes use of documentation such as pre- and post-assessments, which measure the practitioner's abilities displayed in the programme. Secondly, outcome evaluation measures absenteeism, sick leave and lack of productivity, which requires that the employer keeps accurate records prior to the commencement of the programme. Some organisations do not keep accurate records of such, which makes it difficult to evaluate the programme. Lastly, the concept of utilisation. While

this could be an indicator of the effectiveness of the programme, it is important to note that there is no formula to measure utilisation as it depends on whether the focus is on new cases follow-up interviews with or without significant others. It is clear that the EAP field does not have a standardised tool for monitoring and evaluation. However, Caleni (2017) argues that the EAP practitioner should be in a position to develop a strict record-keeping system that safeguards the clients' identity and provides ready access to statistical information. This is in line with Naidoo (2017), who recommends that it is necessary to monitor and evaluate the programme consistently. The researcher recommends that EAPA develops a standardised tool for EAPs to benchmark as this will offer a comprehensive return on investment for organisations served by EAPs.

## **2.7 Legal framework to strengthen the EAP**

The practice and development of the EAP is guided by South African legislation. Employers are recognising the importance of EAPs to maintain and improve productivity and to help them meet the requirements of recent legislation (Naidoo & Jano, 2003).

### **2.7.1 Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995**

The Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995 is seen as comprehensively reforming and extending the previous legislative system with the purpose of advancing economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace (Naidoo & Jano, 2003:12). One may argue that the nature of the revised act takes a stance in protecting employees in a workplace setting and encourages the implementation of employee rights. The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 aims to reinforce the employment relationship. It provides rights to employers and employees and gives instructions as to how employers conduct themselves in labour relationships. For instance, employees have an option to affiliate themselves with trade unions (Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995). It also provides boundaries for how trade unions are organised and perform their duties. The act deals with strikes, lockout of employees and conflict resolutions through the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration - CCMA (Subramanien & Joseph, 2019) and failure to comply with the Act may lead to financial costs to the business.

Much of the law developed by the Commission and the Industrial Court was compiled in the Labour Relations Act, which was passed in 1995 (Kruger & Tshoose, 2013). Before 1995, an

employee could be dismissed from work based on the contract of employment, which allowed any reason for dismissal. Since 1995, an employee may be dismissed based on valid reasons such as misconduct, operational reasons and incapacity (Subramanien & Joseph, 2019). The Labour Relations Act 1995 is essential as it recognizes the need for efficient access to justice in labour-related matters.

The purpose of the Labour Relations Act is to provide the framework for labour relations between employers and employees (Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995). It protects the rights of everyone in the workplace and promotes collective bargaining where everyone's voices are heard. It advances economic development and fair labour practices, and it clarifies the transfer of contracts between new and existing employers (Subramanien & Joseph, 2019). The Labour Relations Act sets out the laws regarding an employee's rights to freedom of association and the protection of the employees (Kruger & Tshoose, 2013). The act is effective in the sense that it promotes healthy relationships and settles labour disputes.

If applied fairly, the Labour Relations Act may yield positive results in the workplace. The employees' ability to partake in decision-making empowers them, and it makes them feel valued (Subramanien & Joseph, 2019). Nevertheless, in a research study conducted by Serapelwane and Manyedi on staff in healthcare facilities in the North West province of South Africa, the staff pointed out that some supervisors apply favouritism towards staff and that demotivates those who are ill-treated. They end up not doing their level best because they know they will not be given credit due to them. The participants suggested training their superiors as to how they are supposed to create healthy relationships in the workplace (Serapelwane & Manyedi, 2022). The Employee Assistance programmes put emphasis on adopting good workplace practices by the employers in order to achieve employee productivity (Mugari, Mtapuri and Rangongo, 2014). Additionally, Gobind, Du plesis and Ukpere (2012) suggest that the manner in which the managers and human resource representatives in a company interact with workers has a huge impact on workplace culture and increases productivity.

### **2.7.2 Employment Equity Act 58 of 1998**

Employment equity is seen as the achievement of workplace fairness in terms of the race, gender and state of health/fitness of employees (Naidoo & Jano, 2003). This act guides EAP practice in ensuring that decisions taken in the workplace are fair across all races and genders.

The Employment Equity Act states that employees who do the same work (work of equal value) must be paid equally with no discrimination based on gender in the workplace (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). It promotes equal opportunity and fair treatment in the workplace. It also protects employees from victimisation if they exercise the right granted to them by the act (Steenkamp, 2023). The positive impact of this act is that it promotes equal opportunity and fair treatment, which eradicates unfair discrimination on any grounds.

Employment Equity Act was assented to 12 October 1998 and was last amended in April 2023 (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). During the apartheid era, Black people, women and the disabled were regularly marginalised in labour practices (Mabunda, 2016). Hence, the introduction of the Act was aimed at allowing workers to enjoy fairness and equality in the workplace

The purpose of the act is to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment through the eradication of discrimination and applying affirmative action procedures to compensate for all the adversities in employment which were experienced by marginalised people (Nzima & Duma, 2014) to ensure their equal representation in all employment classifications and grades in the workforce (Steenkamp, 2023). The act strives to achieve a balanced demonstration that reflects the demographics of South African society, to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment of formerly disadvantaged people, namely, Black people, women and people with disabilities, except the South African National Defence Force, National Intelligence Agency, and South African Secret Services (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:5-6 cited in Mabunda (2016.)). The act is intended for specific previously deprived groups.

Classifications such as race, sex, HIV status, pregnancy and religion may be regarded as triggers of unfair discrimination in the workplace (Dickinson, 2003). The Employment Equity Act protects employees from unfair medical testing and assessments. It points out that medical testing of an employee is allowed only when it is a requirement from a court order or when there are valid reasons for such. Similarly, Psychological tests and other assessments are not allowed unless such tests are effective and reliable, and there would be no biases against any group (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). With this being highlighted, the Employee Wellness Programmes guidelines align with the Act since it gives employees a choice to utilise Employee Assistance Programme services voluntarily unless it is a referral affecting work performance by their superiors (Csiernik, 2003: 18 cited in Mangayi, 2015). However, the

utilisation of such services is highly recommended to facilitate productivity. Mangayi (2015) further states that the employees who utilise the Employee Assistance Programme services shall receive the same treatment as every employee and should not get privileges or disadvantages for their participation in the programme.

### **2.7.3 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000**

In-line with the South African Constitution, the Unfair Discrimination Act aims to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination and harassment, promote equality and eliminate unfair discrimination. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997 aims to guarantee that the working conditions of employees meet the minimum standards. This act puts in place the specific details of how employers should create good conditions for their employees for favourable outcomes. The Act also eradicates the employment of children and forced labour (Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997).

Formerly, there was no distinct policy standardising the employment of people in South Africa. As a consequence, there has been exploitation of employees in the sector in terms of meagre wages, unreasonable hours of service and other types of labour abuse without benefits (Sebola, 2014). The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 was a response to this crisis as was passed in 1997. Nonetheless, there were different responses in the labour market, which led to unfavourable results (Gobind et al., 2012). These compelled beneficiaries to accept what was offered to them without appropriate options from the policy.

The purpose of this Act is to improve social justice and economic development through achieving the main aims of the act, which are to reinforce and regulate the right to fair employment practices enshrined in section 23(1) of the South African constitution by implementing basic conditions of employment (Van Eck & Lombard, 2016). It specifically sets out the guidelines on hours of work, meal intervals and pays for work on Sundays, night shifts, public holidays, sick leave, annual leave and procedures regarding proof of incapacity (Republic of South Africa, 1997, cited in Gobind, Du Plessis and Ukpere, 2012). The rules and regulations are very specific, which clearly guide the employer on how to handle employment issues.

The employees are protected by this act in the sense that an employer may not make them obey rules that are not covered by this act. The employer cannot force employees to work under

conditions which are less favourable than those outlined in the act. If this happens, such conditions are illegal and invalid (Van Eck & Lombard, 2016). In the study conducted by Gobind, Du Plesis and Ukpere (2012) on domestic workers, the researchers found that employers are non-compliant. There is no justice between wages and working hours, and domestic workers are unaware of their right to a minimum wage (Gobind et al., 2012). Wages affect employee productivity in numerous ways, but the most important impact may be on worker motivation and commitment. Providing fair wages will increase employees' satisfaction as they will have enough to take care of their families. They will also be more motivated as they will see that their efforts are appreciated (Sebola, 2014). Employees who feel unappreciated go through a lot of emotions, and others may even develop mental issues (Serapelwane & Manyedi, 2022). They will feel no need to do their best but only do the bare minimum to get the job done with no interest in the quality or outcome. Dipela and Sithole (2021) submit that one of the strategies applied in the Employee Assistance programmes is empowering employees to know and stand up for their rights. They should be able to raise unfavourable conditions that are caused by their employers.

#### **2.7.4 Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997**

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997, emphasises the right to fair labour practices referred to in section 23(1) of the Constitution. The act speaks to protecting employee rights and ensuring that working conditions, job responsibilities, dress code, and time off, to mention a few, do not infringe on employee rights. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (also referred to as the Equality Act) aims to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination and harassment. It promotes equality, eliminates unfair discrimination and forbids hate speech. The Act also provides that the victims of these adversities receive therapies, and it measures to educate the public and raise public awareness of equality (Albertyn, Bruintjies, Finn, Jaftha, Malaudzi, Mate & Mudimba, 2021).

The Equality Act and the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, work in collaboration (Kok, 2008). Notably, the Equality Act differs from the Employment Equity Act in terms of the people that it protects (Mabunda 2016). The Equality Act provides for those excluded from the Employment Equity Act, thereby including the unemployed and members of the excluded governmental agencies, such as the National Defence Force (Albertyn et al., 2021). Mabunda

(2016) highlighted that The Equality Act can also be used by all the people of South Africa, including employers and employees, for disputes not provided for in the Employment Equity Act, such as hate speech.

The law was assented to on 2 February 2000 (Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000). Since the first democratic elections in 1994, the South African government has attempted to deflect a legacy of completely unsatisfactory provision of power and resources (Albertyn et al., 2021). In an attempt to eradicate oppression and marginalisation, the South African government introduced the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000. The Equality Act endeavours to facilitate the transition to a democratic society that is united in its diversity and guided by the principles of equality, fairness, equity, social progress, justice, human dignity and freedom (Mabunda, 2016). It puts accountability on government, non-governmental organisations, traditional councils and all members of society to promote equality. Albertyn et al. (2021) further elaborate that the Act provides that government agencies and people not included in the Employment Equity Act are qualified to apply this Act in conflicts involving unfair discrimination, harassment and hate speech. As South Africans, our rights are embedded and protected by the South African Constitution and its Bill of Rights. Mabunda (2016) puts forward that this Constitution calls for the promotion of equality and protection of previously disadvantaged categories of people who endured unfair discrimination.

The Act emphasises the responsibility of the employer in the implementation of the Act in the workplace. The Equality Act fills in the gaps left by the Employment Equity Act. It is clearly targeted at indirect responsibility for acts of discrimination by employees, workers and agents against other employees, co-workers, clients, customers, and contractors (Albertyn et al., 2021). In most cases, the effects of being discriminated against linger in the mind of the victim, and it ends up building up as serious mental issues (Serapelwane & Manyedi, 2022). One may even make hostile decisions, such as resigning due to the highest level of pressure and distress caused by discrimination. Some use negative coping mechanisms such as substance abuse or unhealthy behaviours in order to harm others in the workplace (Sharma & Mann, 2020). A research study conducted by Serapelwane and Manyedi on staff in healthcare facilities in the North West province of South Africa, the healthcare workers indicated that discrimination and

favouritism hindered them from obtaining better positions they had applied for as qualifying internal applicants in the facility (Serapelwane & Manyedi, 2022). The health workers voiced out that such treatment demotivates them, and they end up not performing to their maximum capacity. Sharma and Mann (2020) then emphasise that in such instances, the EAP informed by the Equality Act plays a vital role in tackling issues of discrimination through individual counselling and raising awareness in the workplace.

## **2.8 Utilisation of the EAP**

The development of an EAP relies on various factors, including how the employees perceive and make use of the programme. Mundalamo (2015) argued that the success of an EAP is largely dependent on the utilisation of the programme. Caleni (2017) argues that EAP utilisation is measured by the number of employees who accessed the programme and divided by the total number of employees eligible to use the programme. However, it is further noted that utilisation measurement in the EAP is inconsistent, and there is no standard definition. The EAP should contain a range of professionals such as social workers, psychologists, and nurses, to mention a few, needed by the EAP (Bailey & Troxler, 2009) where the organisation is required to maintain regular appointment standards to ensure that the professionals employed maintain ethical considerations of the EAP. This ensures that professionals in the EAP department are compliant and able to deliver services in a professional manner. Nakani (2016) supports and maintains that EAP staffing should represent the demographics and ethnic groups of the organisation. Representation plays a significant role in the utilisation of services, as employees prefer a familiar ethnic group to refrain from language and cultural understanding barriers.

The EAP can function at an individual level, where it focuses on personal difficulties such as substance abuse or at an organisational level, where it focuses on issues affecting employee performance, such as high absenteeism and excessive leave (Standards of EAPA-SA Committee, 2010; Chima, 2005).

Sharar (2009) argued that there has been a change in how the EAP services are rendered, specifically the type of services requested by the employers, the way services are provided and lastly, who provides the service, an internal or external EAP. Employers have identified the underutilisation of the EAP and are requesting services needed by employees.

The EAP has been accepted on a limited basis (Ledingwane, 2000), which might be a factor in underutilisation. This stems from organisations not being able to measure a tangible return on investment. Although organisations believe that there is a relationship between employee wellbeing and productivity, it is difficult to evaluate the EAP's financial viability towards the organisation.

## **2.8.1 Factors influencing underutilisation of the EAP**

### ***2.8.1.1 Awareness of the EAP***

Employee familiarity with EAP services is essential to their appropriate use (Frost, 1990:1). Comparable to other departments in the workplace, the EAP department should have a clear service offer enabling employees to understand when, why and how they can consult at the department. Agreeably, Mundalamo (2015) shares that awareness of EAP services includes the employees' familiarity with services and procedures, as well as confidentiality limitations, when utilising the programme. Mangayi (2015) argues that employees' exposure to the EAP differs from awareness of the programme. This is evident in the study conducted by Mundalamo (2015), where it was found that employees were aware of the EAP department but had no understanding of the scope of services offered. This shows that there is a difference between hearing about EAP offices and understanding what kind of assistance you may receive at those offices. If employees are unaware of the scope of practice, it may influence their utilisation, and they might end up using external services instead of their in-house EAP. Findings show that EAP services were underutilised, as targeted employees were largely unaware of the availability of such services (Dipela and Sithole, 2021). For programme improvement reach and effectiveness, the study recommended that there was a need to improve on aspects such as work supervisor training on what EAP's do, as well as the marketing of programme services in the workplace (Manganyi and Mogorosi, 2021).

### ***2.8.1.2 Misconceptions of EAP service offering***

According to Ledingwane (2000), the EAP adopted a broad brush approach to address workplace issues such as drug dependency, emotional disorders, financial pressures, mental health problems and so on. Research supports this as the EAP is commonly known as a treatment programme rather than a preventative measure. Similarly, Manzini (2007) found that the EAP is predominantly viewed as a counselling service, and this may pose limitations of the service as it is associated with chronic treatment of troubled employees. There is a great need

to raise awareness of EAP services in order to address the connotation that EAP services are designed for troubled employees only. The perception of what services and who should utilise the EAP exclude the preventative aspect of EAP, such as supervisory training, which is not limited to troubled employees.

#### ***2.8.1.3 EAP and Discipline***

The EAP practitioner is often stationed in the human resources department, which may confuse employees, unconsciously labelling the EAP practitioner as a tool to remedy law and order in the workplace. Manzini (2007) further reported that an association of the EAP with the disciplinary process was identified, therefore suggesting that staff would not trust the programme as it is viewed as a management tool. The employees find it difficult to take ownership of the EAP as it is related to disciplinary measures, resulting in issues of trust and questioned confidentiality. This might cause division amongst the EAP and employees, which might lead to underutilisation. (De Chalain, 2020) argues that management plays a vital role in ensuring that they do not use the EAP as a disciplinary tool but rather as a well-being support programme. This particularly relates to employees with issues of substance abuse, where the EAP is used as a disciplinary measure rather than a support structure to remedy the situation. This can lead to employees' misconceptions about the functions of an EAP, which can result in underutilisation.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by (Goulos, 2019), it was found that police officers underutilised the EAP because of the stigma attached to counselling and discipline. In the same breath, the study revealed that attending the EAP reflected an assumption of a disciplinary process. Employees fail to seek help with alcohol and drug abuse because of unhealthy work climates, stigma, and distrust in the Employee Assistance Programme (Bennett & Lehman, 2001). It is evident that if there is a lack of awareness and service provision, employees may not fully understand the purpose of the EAP or have access to the assistance they need. In such cases, the EAP could be misunderstood or misused, potentially leading to the perception that it serves as a disciplinary tool rather than a supportive resource.

#### ***2.8.1.4 Supervisor tolerance***

In a study conducted by Bennet and Lehman (2002), it was discovered that supervisor tolerance regarding substance abuse inhibits EAP utilisation. Supervisors' lenience towards employees contributes to the underutilisation of the EAP, as this results in the employee being given a

‘second chance’ to change their behaviour, resulting in a lack of referrals from supervisors. This may mean the employee will not see a need to access the service because his/her substance misuse has not caused any harm at work. Gong, Boh, Wu, A. and Kuo (2021) argue that managers may also wish to prevent damage to their interpersonal relationships with subordinates so as to facilitate future work interactions with ease. The leniency among supervisors might cause reservations about the use of the EAP.

Moreover, the findings of a study conducted by Harley (1991) show that supervisors are more likely to make an EAP referral when a ‘public’ incident has occurred, raising questions about supervisors' perceptions and motivation to refer to the EAP. These findings also raise questions about the underlying motivations of supervisors and whether the focus is genuinely on the well-being of the employee or if it is influenced by a desire to manage the public perception of the team or organization. It underscores the importance of creating a workplace culture that encourages EAP utilisation for various reasons, including preventive measures and ongoing support, rather than just reacting to visible incidents.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter explored existing literature on the EAP and embarked on the origins, roles, and legal framework for strengthening the programme. Literature extends to the background and informs the various viewpoints on the utilisation of the EAP. Furthermore, the purpose and accessibility of the EAP, legislation and factors influencing underutilisation were discussed. The research aimed to explore the perceptions of the EAP among employees of the University of KwaZulu Natal; hence, the literature reviewed aimed at connecting findings of available research to substantiate the research questions of the study. Hence, EAPs should strive to understand staff needs through a needs assessment (EAPA-SA; 2010). The primary aim of these services is to provide intervention through the application of core technologies for the early identification of work and personal-related problems (Terblanche, 2018). EAP should ensure the provision of these services to enhance work performance and empower employees.

## **CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodology is a systematic and scientific way to solve a research problem (Kothari, 2004). It is imperative that all strategies followed have logical reasoning towards solving or gaining an understanding of the research problem. Jolley (2010) further emphasises that methodology is merely a research plan; it outlines the methods to be used and the design of the research. In this chapter, the researcher delineated the underlying research paradigm, elucidated the research design, discussed population and sampling strategies, delved into the sampling method, explored data collection techniques, and analysed the method data collection. Additionally, it encapsulated the concepts of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical considerations guiding the study were also underscored. Finally, the chapter outlined the significance and value of the study.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016: 51). One may argue that it is a categorised understanding of how the world is viewed. Kuhn (1962) provides a base understanding, stating that a research paradigm is an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables, and problems that are attached to corresponding methodological approaches and tools, namely positivism and anti-positivism. Evidence of research has shown that following a research paradigm validates an investigation. Rahi (2017) further explains that four paradigms in research are positivism, interpretivism, advocacy, and pragmatism. Identifying a specific research paradigm is of paramount importance so that researchers do not investigate and analyse concepts based on their own perceptions. For this study, the researcher utilised the interpretive paradigm because it is the belief that knowledge can only be obtained by deep interpretation of the subject. On the same note, Krauss (2005) avers that the complexity of meaning in the lives of people has much to do with how meaning is attributed to different objects, people and life events. Therefore, the researcher believes that the interpretive paradigm brought insight into understanding the perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the EAP.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The research was carried out following the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is valued for its ability to provide a deep understanding of complex social phenomena. Suryani (2008) argues that qualitative methods can also serve a valuable role in enhancing the quality and depth of survey instruments and questionnaires utilised in quantitative research and can aid in developing a more comprehensive understanding of issues identified in clinical and epidemiological studies. The researcher employed qualitative methodology to delve deeply into the perceptions surrounding the EAP programme at UKZN, aiming for a thorough understanding of its nuances and viewpoints. The rationale for utilising the qualitative method is its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of phenomena, as opposed to quantitative methods, which primarily emphasise numerical values.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Parallel to any investigation, research should have a clear plan and process as to how it will be conducted. This is referred to as research design. Akhtar (2016) defines research design as the plan and structure holding the research project together. Furthermore, a research design should be robust, fit for purpose and withstand any criticism (Jolley, 2010). One may argue that a research design is the “blueprint” of the study, providing clear instructions and guidance for the research as a whole. Akhtar (2016) further explains the types of research design, namely exploratory, explanatory and descriptive designs. For this study, the researcher utilised the exploratory research design.

The exploratory research design is intentionally flexible, enabling the researcher to adapt and explore new concepts while gaining fresh insights into familiar phenomena (Brink: 1998). The flexibility inherent in an exploratory research design offers several benefits to researchers. Firstly, it allows for the exploration of new concepts and ideas that may emerge during the research process. This adaptability enables researchers to respond to unexpected findings and delve deeper into areas that may not have been initially considered. By embracing this openness to discovery, researchers can uncover novel insights and contribute to the expansion of knowledge within their field. To gain an in-depth understanding of any phenomenon; it is necessary to start looking at it in a broader sense and explore its nature (Stebbins, 2001). This involved looking beyond surface-level observations and exploring the underlying nature and

intricacies of the phenomenon. By taking this approach, the researcher can gain a more thorough understanding of the subject matter, uncovering its various dimensions, complexities, and underlying principles. This process of exploration allowed for a deeper analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon, leading to richer insights and a more comprehensive understanding overall. The exploratory research design allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of employees' perceptions of the EAP at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.5 Population and Sampling Strategies**

#### **3.5.1 Study population**

The study population was comprised of employees of the University of KwaZulu–Natal, Howard Campus. The study population comprised a total of 15 participants who were interviewed as part of the research process; however, reaching saturation was regarded as a deciding factor regarding the population size. Saturation is defined as a point of termination of data collection or analysis because no additional information is being discovered (Fusch & Ness, 2015). It is noteworthy that reaching saturation, where no new themes or insights emerge from additional data collection, served as the determining factor for the size of the population. Saturation is a critical concept in qualitative research, indicating that the data collection process has reached a point of theoretical sufficiency. In this study, once saturation was achieved, and no new information or themes emerging from subsequent interviews, the researcher determined that the sample size was adequate to sufficiently explore the research questions and objectives.

By adhering to the principle of saturation, the researcher ensured that the study sample was comprehensive enough to capture the breadth and depth of participants' perspectives and experiences related to the research topic. This approach maximised the richness and relevance of the data collected, contributing to the overall validity and credibility of the study findings.

#### **3.5.2 Sampling method**

A sample is a target population used for research purposes and divided into probability and non-probability sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). For this study, the chosen sampling strategy was non-probability sampling. This approach was selected due to its suitability for accessing

specific populations or phenomena that may not be easily accessible through probability sampling methods.

### **3.5.3 Sampling strategies**

Non-probability sampling is a sampling procedure that will not bid a basis for any opinion of probability that elements in the universe will have a chance to be included in the study sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Among the various sampling strategies available, including quota sampling, accidental sampling, judgemental sampling or purposive sampling, expert sampling, and snowball sampling, purposive sampling was chosen for this research (Rapley, 2014). Non-probability sampling allows for the selection of participants based on criteria such as convenience, availability, or specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

The study made use of purposive sampling, in which the researcher engaged participants to share their insights about the employee assistance programme. Vehovar, Toepoel and Steinmetz (2016) argue that purposive sampling is most commonly used in research where participants who meet the inclusion criteria are recruited into the study. The study employed a purposive sampling approach, whereby the researcher deliberately selected participants who could provide valuable insights into the topic of the employee assistance programme (EAP). Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to target individuals or groups who possess specific knowledge, experiences, or perspectives relevant to the research questions.

In this case, the researcher actively engaged with participants who had direct experience with the EAP, such as employees who had utilised the programme or managers/administrators involved in its implementation. By selecting participants with firsthand knowledge of the EAP, the researcher aimed to gather rich and comprehensive insights into its effectiveness, challenges, and impact on employee well-being and organisational outcomes.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on obtaining in-depth information from individuals who could offer meaningful contributions to the study's objectives. While this sampling approach may limit the generalisability of findings to a broader population, it is well-suited for exploratory research aiming to gain a nuanced understanding of a specific phenomenon, such as the implementation and effectiveness of employee assistance. While non-probability sampling may limit generalisability to the broader population, it offers advantages

such as feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility in accessing hard-to-reach or specialised groups (Taherdoost, 2016)

The inclusion and exclusion criteria utilised for the study were as follows:

#### **3.5.4 Inclusion criteria**

- The study included male and female employees of all ages who have or have never utilised the EAP services at UKZN.
- Participants are employed by UKZN, whether as permanent, contract-based, or internship employees.

#### **3.5.5 Exclusion criteria**

- The EAP department remained excluded.
- The students of UKZN were also excluded from participating in the study.
- UKZN employees' relatives/ significant others, even if they were eligible to use the EAP.
- Employees refused to give informed consent, even when they met the inclusion criteria.

These criteria were established to ensure that the participants selected for the study had relevant experience and knowledge related to the EAP, thereby maximising the richness and depth of the data collected. By clearly defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researcher aimed to target individuals who could provide valuable insights into the research topic while minimising potential sources of bias or irrelevant information.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

The data collection process involves the generation of large amounts of data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Data collection strategies differ for each study, which may include questionnaires, observations, audio, historic data and interviews (Jolley, 2020). This study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data. According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), interviews are discussions, usually one-on-one, between an interviewer and an individual to gather information on a specific set of topics, which can be conducted in person or over the phone. This study, in its nature, aimed to gather and understand information that may be personal to participants; therefore, using interviews assisted in gaining in-depth understanding. The

researcher made use of an audio tape recorder to ensure that information was captured accurately. Tessier (2012) argues that the tape recorder allows participants to speak in their own voices and language as data is being captured on a further technology. This allowed the researcher to capture information while conducting interviews. However, the researcher sought permission from participants to record interview sessions.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data, as the aim of any research is to provide an understanding of a certain phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1990; Jolley, 2020). Furthermore, Lacy and Luff (2001) identified processes that one can use when engaging in data analysis, mainly organising your data, familiarisation, coding and creating themes. Thematic analysis operates under the premise that the recorded messages, such as texts or transcripts, serve as the primary data. During the analysis process, the investigator generates codes through a meticulous examination of these texts. The codes are developed as notable themes naturally emerge from the data, with the analysis being conducted inductively, meaning it is driven by the content of the texts themselves rather than predetermined categories or theories (Neuendorf, 2018).

**Recorded Interviews:** For the interviews where consent was given, recordings were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were then analysed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the participants' responses.

**Diary Notes:** For the interviews where recording was not permitted, the researcher's diary notes were meticulously reviewed and analysed. Although these notes may not capture the full richness of spoken language, they provided valuable insights into participants' perceptions and experiences.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify it as a method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a dataset (i.e., texts). This process is known as thematic analysis (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). The researcher utilised thematic content analysis with the assistance of NVivo Software to arrange and analyse data.

### **3.7.1 Data collection ethical considerations**

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of their data, and their rights regarding confidentiality and withdrawal. Written consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate, including consent for recording where applicable. The confidentiality of all participants was maintained throughout the research process.

## **3.8 Organisation of Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data, collected from semi-structured interviews, was organised following a rigorous coding and thematic analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2006) present a recursive six-phase process for thematic analysis:

Braun & Clarke (2006) present a recursive six-phase process for thematic analysis:

### **3.8.1. Familiarisation with data**

Familiarising oneself with the data (text; maybe transcriptions) and identifying items of potential interest. The researcher engaged in this process by reading and reviewing the transcriptions, allowing for an understanding of the content. The context was understood through listening to the tape recordings of the interviews conducted with the participants.

For interviews that were recorded, the researcher began the data analysis process by listening to the audio recordings multiple times. This familiarisation step was essential for understanding the context of participants' responses. For interviews where recording was not permitted, the researcher reviewed the diary notes, which were detailed and included both direct quotes and summaries of key points discussed. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of participants' responses. This process involved converting audio recordings into written text, capturing each participant's exact words. After transcription, the researcher reviewed the transcripts for accuracy, making necessary corrections to ensure that they faithfully represented the content of the interviews. To protect participant confidentiality, all identifiable information was removed or anonymised. Participants were assigned numerical codes to ensure their identities remained confidential while quoting their responses in the report, for example, "*Participant 1*" instead of their name and surname. In the presentation of findings, a numbering system was employed when quoting participants. This system allows for the clear acknowledgement of responses while maintaining anonymity.

### 3.8.2. Generating initial codes

To facilitate the analysis, the researcher used a colour-coding system to highlight key themes and codes within the data. Different colours were assigned to various themes or codes to visually distinguish and organise the data. This approach helped in recognising recurring patterns and organising responses into meaningful categories. Generating initial codes that identify important features of the data relevant to answering the research question(s); applying codes to the dataset (segmenting and “tagging”) consistently; collating codes across segments of the dataset. The researcher engaged in this step by taking into consideration the emerging themes identified. This was conducted by highlighting recurring data and coding it with concise descriptions.

An example of this process is shown below:

*Well, I'm not sure if we're talking about the same thing when you say Employee Assistance Programme because I know it as Employee Wellness. And, yeah, it is me helping us to cope with **stress at work**”-Participant 5*

*“Okay, well, I know that it is a service to help employees when they are **stressed at work** or have personal problems. Yes, I know it is a programme that can help employees or help us” -Participant 9*

### 3.8.3. Searching for themes

The researcher began the process by reviewing the colour codes. Through highlighting and coding, the researcher was able to identify emerging themes across the dataset. These themes were developed based on recurring ideas, concerns, and insights shared by participants. The process involved grouping related codes into broader thematic categories, which were then refined to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' experiences and perspectives.

*“Well, I'm not sure if we're talking about the same thing when you say Employee Assistance Programmeme because I know it as Employee Wellness. And, yeah, It is a programme helping us to cope with stress at work”-Participant 5*

*“Okay, well, I know that it is a service to help employees when they are stressed at work or have personal problems. Yes, I know it is a programme that can help employees or help us” -Participant 9*

### ***Theme identified – Variability in knowledge***

Searching for themes, examining the codes and collating data to identify broader patterns of meaning. This process began by reviewing the coded data segments. The researcher then proceeded to identify patterns among the coded data. This assisted with the process of identifying themes that existed within the data. Moreover, the researcher grouped data with similar concepts into one theme. Lastly, the researcher explored the relationship between the coded data and identified themes that contributed to the overall meaning of the data.

#### **3.8.4. Reviewing themes**

This process entailed reviewing themes against the objectives and assumptions of the study. This involved assessing whether the themes addressed the research questions and aligned with the initial goals of the research. Themes were evaluated to ensure they provided meaningful insights related to the study's aims and reflected the participants' views accurately.

*“Well, I'm not sure if we're talking about the same thing when you say Employee Assistance Programme because I know it as Employee Wellness. And, yeah, it is a programme helping us to cope with stress at work”-Participant 5*

*“Okay, well, I know that it is a service to help employees when they are stressed at work or have personal problems. Yes, I know it is a programme that can help employees or help us” -Participant 9*

*Theme identified – Variability and perception of the EAP*

*Objective (s) of the study*

- To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes*
- To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN*

*Assumptions of the study*

- Employees underutilise EAP services offered by UKZN*
- Employees prefer self-referrals instead of EAP referrals in order to keep their lives private in the workplace.*

The researcher identified a relationship between the first objective of the study and the developed themes. This involved mapping how the themes specifically addressed the first research objective and contributed to understanding its nuances. A detailed exploration of this relationship is presented in the analysis section of the report. Here, the findings are discussed

in relation to the initial objectives, illustrating how the identified themes provide insights into the study's goals.

### **3.8.5. Defining and naming themes**

developing a detailed analysis of each theme. The researcher proceeded to name the identified themes with concise and short titles. The theme titles reflect the content and meaning of the data. Secondly, a detailed analysis of the themes was conducted. This involved examining the data within each theme in order to uncover patterns and insights.

### **3.8.6. Producing a report**

Weaving together the analytic narrative and data segments, relating the analysis to extant literature. This process is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this document. The researcher explored the findings of the study in relation to the themes identified. In thematic analysis, the culmination of the process is ideally the identification of a saturated set of themes. "Saturated" in this context means that no new themes are emerging from the data; rather, the themes have been exhaustively explored and adequately represent the range of ideas, concepts, or patterns present within the dataset (Neuendorf, 2018). This saturation indicates that the analysis has comprehensively captured the nuances and depth of the data, providing a robust foundation for drawing conclusions and interpreting findings. The researcher ended the thematic analysis process after identifying saturation. This assisted in ensuring that the data was analysed efficiently. The researcher requested an external transcriber to ensure the accuracy of data collected. The researcher and external transcriber were in agreement on confidentiality through a signed contract.

## **3.9 Trustworthiness**

Pilot and Beck (2014) state that trustworthiness is regarded as the degree of confidence to which a study is conducted and interpreted to ensure the quality of the study. Below are the four pillars showing how trustworthiness was ensured in the study:

### **3.9.1. Credibility**

Stahl, James, Norman, and King (2020) advocate for credibility as a crucial aspect of qualitative research, highlighting its attainment through the establishment of relationships

among reported findings. To uphold credibility in the study, the researcher implemented member checks, a technique recommended for exploring the credibility of results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016). Member checks involve a process whereby individuals who provided information for the study are invited to review the researcher's interpretations and ensure the accuracy of their reported stories (Koelsch, 2013). This iterative process serves to validate the credibility of the interpretation of the collected data. In line with this approach, the researcher engaged in member checks by returning to participants after the completion of the data collection and analysis phases. During these sessions, participants were presented with the researcher's interpretations of their contributions and given the opportunity to provide feedback or corrections as needed.

By incorporating member checks into the research methodology, the researcher sought to enhance the credibility of the study's findings. This process allowed participants to validate the accuracy and authenticity of their representations within the research findings, thereby strengthening the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Overall, the utilisation of member checks as a means of validating the interpretation of collected data contributed to the credibility and rigour of the research process. By involving participants in the validation process, the researcher ensured that the study findings accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences.

### **3.9.2. Transferability**

Qualitative researchers, as emphasized by Stahl and King (2020), often assert that patterns and descriptions identified in one context may hold relevance and applicability in other contexts as well. This notion underscores the importance of providing detailed accounts of the research methodology used in the final research report. By doing so, the researcher enables other scholars to replicate the study's findings in different settings. Anney (2014) further supports this perspective by highlighting the significance of thick description in facilitating the replication of research in varied contexts. Thick description refers to the comprehensive and detailed portrayal of the research methodology, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques employed in the study.

In accordance with these principles, the researcher ensured that the final research report included thorough documentation of the research methodology utilised. This encompassed a detailed description of the study design, data collection methods, participant selection criteria, and data analysis techniques employed. By providing comprehensive details of the research methodology, the researcher aimed to enhance the transparency and replicability of the study's findings. Other researchers can use this information to replicate the study under similar conditions in diverse contexts or settings, thereby contributing to the generalisability and transferability of the research findings.

### **3.9.3. Confirmability**

According to Stahl et al. (2020), trustworthiness in qualitative research is associated with confirmability, which aims to approach as close to objective reality as possible within the context of qualitative enquiry. Anney (2014) expands on this concept by defining confirmability as the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings, emphasising the importance of minimising personal biases during the analysis process. To ensure confirmability and enhance the credibility of the research findings, the researcher implemented several strategies. Firstly, the analysis process avoided reliance on personal perceptions or interpretations that could introduce bias into the findings. By maintaining a neutral stance and adhering strictly to the data collected, the researcher aimed to uphold the confirmability of the study. Additionally, the researcher utilised the interview guidelines as a framework for data collection during the interview process. This ensured consistency and standardisation in the data collection process, reducing the potential for subjective interpretations that could influence the findings.

Furthermore, member checks were employed as a means of validating the credibility of the findings. Participants were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the researcher's interpretation of their responses, allowing for corrections or clarifications to be made as necessary. This iterative process helped enhance the confirmability of the findings by ensuring alignment with participants' perspectives and experiences. Overall, by implementing strategies to minimise bias and enhance neutrality in the research process, the researcher sought to uphold the confirmability of the study's findings. These methodological approaches contributed to the overall trustworthiness and rigour of the qualitative research conducted.

### **3.9.3. Dependability**

Bitsch (2005) highlights dependability as the consistency of data collected over time, emphasizing the importance of ensuring reliability in research findings. To achieve this, the researcher employed a methodological approach outlined by Anney (2014), known as the code-recode strategy. In accordance with this strategy, the researcher coded the same data set twice, allowing for a gestation period of 2 days between each coding session. This deliberate spacing between coding sessions helped mitigate the risk of coder bias or fatigue, thereby enhancing the reliability of the coding process. By reanalysing the data at different intervals, the researcher sought to identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the coding process. Consistency in the themes discovered across multiple coding sessions served as an indicator of the dependability of the findings. Overall, by implementing the code-recode strategy, the researcher aimed to enhance the dependability of the study's findings, ensuring that the themes identified remained constant and trustworthy over time. This methodological rigour contributed to the overall credibility and robustness of the research outcomes.

## **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

### **3.10.1 Permission to conduct study**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of KwaZulu - Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) with ethical clearance number **HSSREC/00005746/2023**. Permission to collect data was also sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Registrar. The researcher provided a proposal detailing the aims, objectives and value of the study to the university.

### **3.10.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Arifin (2018) underscores the importance of informed consent in research participation, emphasizing that participants should be adequately informed about the study, possess a clear understanding of the information presented, and have the freedom to decide whether to participate. To adhere to these ethical principles, the researcher took proactive measures to ensure participants received comprehensive information about the study.

Prior to engaging participants in the research process, the researcher provided a thorough explanation of the research purpose and how their participation could contribute to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) field. This included detailing the objectives of the study, the potential benefits of participation, and any foreseeable risks or discomforts involved. By presenting this information in a clear and accessible manner, participants were equipped to make an informed decision regarding their involvement in the research.

Additionally, participants were provided with a detailed consent form outlining key aspects of the study, including their rights as participants, confidentiality measures, and procedures for data collection and storage. This written consent form served as a formal agreement between the researcher and participants, confirming their voluntary participation in the study. The interview process commenced only after participants thoroughly reviewed the provided information, deliberated on their decision to participate, and provided written consent. This ensured that participation was based on informed choice and that participants were fully aware of the implications of their involvement in the research. By prioritising informed consent, the researcher upheld ethical standards and respected participants' autonomy and right to self-determination. This approach fostered transparency, trust, and mutual respect between the researcher and participants, laying the groundwork for ethical and meaningful research collaboration in the EAP field.

### **3.10.3 Right to withdraw**

Participants have the fundamental right to withdraw from participating in a study at any stage, as emphasized by Connelly (2014). This means that participants retain the autonomy to discontinue their involvement in the research process, even after providing written consent. Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) underscore that participants have the prerogative to withdraw without providing a reason, including any information they have already shared.

To uphold this ethical principle, the researcher ensured that participants were fully informed about their right to withdraw throughout the research process. This included explicit explanations during initial briefing sessions and reiterated reminders during subsequent interactions. Participants were reassured that their decision to withdraw would be respected without any consequences or pressure. Furthermore, to formalise and document this right, information regarding participants' ability to withdraw from the study was prominently

included in the written consent form. By doing so, the researcher aimed to empower participants and provide them with a tangible reminder of their autonomy and agency in the research process.

Overall, by acknowledging and respecting participants' right to withdraw, the researcher upheld ethical standards and prioritised participant welfare. This approach fostered a sense of trust and mutual respect between the researcher and participants, ensuring that the research process remained ethical and participant centred.

#### **3.10.4 Confidentiality**

In the research context, confidentiality encompasses refraining from discussing and making available information provided by participants without their explicit consent (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2008). It is imperative for researchers to ensure that information shared by participants remains confidential and that their identities remain anonymous. As emphasized by Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), safeguarding participants' anonymity extends to avoiding the use of self-identifying statements.

To uphold these principles, the researcher took several measures to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity. Firstly, participants were informed about the concept of confidentiality during the data collection process, empowering them to share information freely with the assurance that their privacy would be respected. This transparent communication not only encouraged open participation but also reassured participants of the researcher's commitment to their confidentiality.

Moreover, the researcher implemented secure methods for storing sensitive data, such as tape recordings and diaries used during data collection. These measures aimed to prevent unauthorised access to participants' information and minimise the risk of breaches in confidentiality. By employing foolproof storage practices, the researcher sought to uphold the trust and confidence that participants placed in the research process. Overall, by adhering to ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher strived to create a safe and trusting environment for participants to engage in the study. This approach not only protected participants' rights but also contributed to the integrity and credibility of the research findings.

### **3.10.5 Anonymity**

Anonymity and confidentiality were recognised as crucial steps in protecting participants from unanticipated harm. It was emphasised that presenting findings in ways that ensured individuals could not be identified helped achieve anonymisation. (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). To ensure anonymity, the researcher used alphabetic codes to describe participants instead of using their real names or identities. The process of anonymisation was emphasised during the data collection process to ensure that participants understood how their information would be protected. This approach helped safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of participants throughout the research process.

### **3.10.6 Reducing the risk of unanticipated harm**

When considering the potential for harm, the approach adopted by the researcher was to systematically address and mitigate risks, adhering to a hierarchical order of action aimed at minimizing any potential negative consequences. Drawing from the guidance of Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), the researcher prioritised strategies to eliminate, isolate, and then minimise risks associated with the study. Participants were extensively briefed on the nature of the research, ensuring they were fully informed about any potential risks they might encounter throughout their involvement.

In line with ethical principles, the researcher took proactive measures to safeguard the well-being of participants. This included providing clear information about the purpose, procedures, and potential risks associated with participation. By fostering open communication and transparency, participants were empowered to make informed decisions regarding their involvement in the study.

Furthermore, the researcher remained vigilant throughout the duration of the study, continuously assessing and addressing any emerging risks or concerns that participants may have encountered. Provisions were made to offer appropriate support and referrals to professionals in the event of any psychosocial needs arising during the study period. This proactive approach aimed to ensure that participants felt supported and protected throughout their engagement in the research process. Overall, by adhering to ethical principles and prioritizing participant well-being, the researcher endeavoured to create a safe and respectful

environment conducive to the ethical conduct of the study. This approach not only upheld the integrity of the research but also demonstrated a commitment to ethical standards and the protection of participant rights.

### **3.10.7 Release and publication of the findings**

The researcher ensured transparency and ethical consideration by informing participants that they would receive information about the study findings through a thesis document while maintaining confidentiality. Each participant was promised a copy of the final dissertation, enabling them to reflect on the outcomes of their involvement. This practice not only respects participants' rights but also fosters a sense of inclusion and acknowledgement of their contribution to the research process.

### **3.11 Value of the study**

Employee assistance programmes serve organisations and their employees in multiple ways, ranging from consultation at the strategic level about issues with organisation-wide implications to individual assistance to employees and family members experiencing personal difficulties (EAPA-SA, 2010). The EAPs allow employees to gain support while balancing their work and personal life. These programmes also allow employees to effectively deal with their challenges, which usually affect their productivity in the workplace. As such, understanding employees' perspectives has assisted with the development of refined and need-based EAPs that would be beneficial to employees. The study further aided in guiding policy development with regards to the utilisation of the EAPs as a whole. Lastly, it was envisaged that the findings of the study would enable EAP practitioners to improve practice guidelines to ensure that services provided are in line with the needs of service users.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

The conclusion of this chapter highlights the key aspects covered, including an overview of the study and the research methodology employed to investigate employees' perceptions of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The research methodology outlined various elements such as the research approach, research design, population and sampling methods, data collection methods, and data analysis methods. This comprehensive methodology serves as the foundation for the study's investigation into the perceptions of EAP among employees.

## **CHAPTER FOUR : FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the empirical findings of the study. The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of employees towards the employee assistance programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In this qualitative study, the researcher used the thematic analysis method to analyse data collected from the participants. The researcher was guided by the six phases of data analysis as documented by Braun and Clarke (2006). These phases 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 empirical data.

### **4.2 Data Presentation**

#### **4.2.1 Data collection**

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 13 employees from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The interviews aimed to explore employees' perceptions of the employee assistance programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher proposed 15 participants; however, data reached saturation point with 13 participants. The study made use of purposive sampling where the researcher engaged participants to share their insights about the employee assistance programme; hence, the interviews were conducted with employees of the University. The interviews were conducted with participants who are employed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College. Participants were recruited through the university notice system. The researcher followed a guided process of data collection. The researcher made use of an audio tape recorder to ensure that information was captured accurately. This allowed the researcher to capture information while conducting interviews. To ensure accuracy and completeness of the data, the researcher sought written consent from all participants to record the interviews. Out of the 13 participants, two (2) individuals declined to provide consent for recording.

**Table 4.1 Brief profile of the participants**

| <i>Name</i>    | <i>Gender</i> | <i>Type of employment</i> | <i>Age</i>    | <i>Tape recording consent</i> | <i>Staffing group</i> |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Participant 1  | Female        | Contract-based            | 31 years      | Yes                           | Professional staff    |
| Participant 2  | Male          | Contract-based            | 32 years      | Yes                           | Professional staff    |
| Participant 3  | Female        | Contract-based            | 30 years      | Yes                           | Professional staff    |
| Participant 4  | Female        | Contract-based            | No disclosure | No                            | Professional staff    |
| Participant 5  | Female        | Contract-based            | 50 years      | Yes                           | Professional staff    |
| Participant 6  | Female        | Permanent                 | 65 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 7  | Female        | Permanent                 | 63 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 8  | Female        | Permanent                 | 61 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 9  | Female        | Contract-based            | 25 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 10 | Female        | Contract-based            | 27 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 11 | Male          | Contract based            | 31 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |
| Participant 12 | Male          | Permanent                 | 56 years      | Yes                           | Support staff         |

| <i>Name</i>    | <i>Gender</i> | <i>Type of employment</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Tape recording consent</i> | <i>Staffing group</i> |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Participant 13 | Male          | Contract based            | 43 years   | No                            | Professional staff    |
|                |               |                           |            |                               |                       |

#### ***4.2.1.1 Interpretation of participants' demographics***

Among the 13 participants in the study, the gender distribution is uneven, with nine (9) females and four (4) males, reflecting a demographic split where 69% are female and 31% are male. When it comes to employment type, the majority are on a contract basis, with nine (9) participants (69%) in temporary roles compared to four (4) participants (31%) who hold permanent positions. The age distribution is equally balanced, with 46% (6 participants) being under 35 years old, classifying them as the youth, and another 46% (6 participants) being over 35 years old, while 8% (1 participant) chose not to disclose their age. In terms of staffing roles, there is a slight majority of support staff, with 7 participants (54%) identified as such, compared to 6 participants (46%) who are classified as professional staff. For the interviews where recording was not permitted, the researcher utilised a diary to capture key insights and observations in real time. This approach involved detailed notetaking during the interviews to ensure that the participants' responses were accurately documented. The diary entries included direct quotes, summaries of responses, and any notable non-verbal cues or contextual information relevant to the participants' feedback.

### 4.3 Qualitative Analysis

**Table 4.2 objectives, sub-themes and main themes of the study**

| <b>Objectives of the study</b>                                             | <b>Main themes</b>                                   | <b>Sub-themes</b>                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes | Theme 1: Variability in Knowledge                    | Subtheme 1: EAP as a mental health service<br><br>Subtheme 2: Lack of information on EAP<br><br>Subtheme 3: EAP as a Reactive vs Proactive service                                            |
| To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN            | Theme 2: Productivity and performance enhancement    | Subtheme 4: Stress as a trigger of engagement to the EAP<br><br>Subtheme 5: Employee well-being vs job performance<br><br>Subtheme 6: The EAP perceived as a management and disciplinary tool |
| To explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs                               | Theme 3: Trust and confidentiality concerns in EAP   | Subtheme 7: Management and disciplinary tool<br><br>Subtheme 8: Distrust in corporate confidentiality<br><br>Subtheme 9: Preference to use external vs. internal support                      |
| To explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs                     | Theme 4: Perceived Benefits and Value of EAPs        | Subtheme 10: EAP utilisation as an employee benefit<br><br>Subtheme 11: EAP financial implications confusion affecting the enthusiasm of EAP utilization                                      |
| To ascertain the accessibility of the EAP service                          | Theme 5: Marketing and visibility of the EAP service | Subtheme 12: Confusion about the EAP office location<br><br>Subtheme 13: Inadequate communication                                                                                             |

### **4.3.1 Identification of Main Themes**

Through the thematic analysis process, the researcher identified several key themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. Each theme represents a significant pattern in the data that addresses the research objectives. The following main themes and subthemes were identified:

#### **Theme 1: Variability in Knowledge**

##### **Objective 1: To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes**

Theme one highlights the variability in knowledge revealed through data analysis. A key finding is the gap in understanding and awareness of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offerings. According to Ajala (2016), employees can fully benefit from the EAP when they have a clear understanding of the programme and its functions. Most participants understand that the EAP is designed to support employees, particularly in managing stress, mental health issues, and work-life balance. The researcher identified a common code that these programmes might include services like counselling, stress management, and wellness services. However, details about what exactly is offered were vague. Some participants have heard about the programme; however, they had limited information about what the programme can offer them. The participants did not have a robust understanding of the EAP.

Many participants expressed interest in utilising the EAP; however, their limited knowledge about the specific services available and how to access them has contributed to underutilisation of the programme. This lack of awareness appears to be a major barrier preventing employees from fully engaging in the EAP. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: the perception of the EAP as solely a mental health service, confusion regarding the services provided by the EAP, the view of the EAP as reactive rather than proactive, limited information about the EAP as a barrier to proactive engagement, and stress acting as a motivator for employees to utilise the EAP. This theme addresses the first objective of the study, which was exploring employees' awareness of the Employee Assistant programme at the University of KwaZulu – Natal.

### **Subtheme 1: The EAP perceived as a mental health service solely**

Baskar, Shinde, and Srinivasan (2021) highlight that mental health is becoming an important part of employee well-being in the workplace. They explain that Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) offer a wide range of services aimed at improving the mental health of employees. These programmes go beyond just addressing specific mental health issues; they support employees in various ways throughout their mental health journeys. However, many participants in the study felt that EAP mainly focuses on mental health problems. This indicates that there might be some misunderstanding about the full range of services that EAPs provide, which can include helping with life challenges, stress management, and overall well-being. Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius, and Tyson (2021) define the EAP as a strategic work-based intervention programme designed to enhance the psycho-social well-being of all individual employees and the well-being of the employer as a corporate client towards improved productivity of the workforce at large, which includes, but are not limited to relationships, health, trauma, substance abuse, gambling and other addictions, financial problems, mental and psychiatric disorders, communication, legal, structural and transformational issues.

Some of the responses from the participants are as follows:

*“I’m not sure, but I think it helps employees struggling with mental health issues to deal with it in the workplace”* – Participant 2

*“From what I can gather, it seems to be a support system designed to help employees manage personal and professional challenges. I’d imagine it includes services like counselling and psychological support, which can be beneficial. Additionally, I think it might offer wellness services that address both workplace-related issues and personal life challenges. This could mean helping employees with stress management, mental health, and overall well-being, which are crucial for maintaining a good work-life balance”* - Participant 3

*“My understanding is that the programme helps employees with mental issues at work”* - Participant 11

Despite the general awareness, participants had a limited grasp of the specific services offered by the EAP. This lack of detailed knowledge reflects a significant gap in understanding how the EAP can be utilised effectively. For example, while participants knew that counselling might be available, they were often unclear about the types of counselling (e.g., mental health,

financial advice) and how to access these services. In a study by Roche, Kostadinov, Cameron, Pidd, McEntee, and Duraisingam (2018), researchers found that EAP services primarily included counselling for relationship issues, mental health concerns, and trauma support. Interestingly, they also noticed a growing focus on overall well-being rather than just treating mental health conditions. This shift shows that there is a greater awareness that promoting general well-being can help prevent mental health issues and create a healthier workplace. By emphasizing well-being alongside mental health, EAPs can offer more complete support for employees, leading to a stronger and more engaged workforce.

### **Subtheme 2: Lack of information on EAP**

An effective Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can play a crucial role in supporting employee well-being, yet many employees may not fully utilise these services due to a lack of understanding (Masi, 2011). This subtheme shows the participants' lack of awareness of EAP service offerings, as the findings reveal significant confusion regarding the specific resources available. This confusion highlights the importance of clear communication about the programme's services and purpose, as misunderstandings can prevent employees from seeking the support they need. The following discussion explores the insights shared by participants and emphasises the necessity for organisations to enhance their outreach efforts regarding the EAP.

#### ***Some of the responses from the participants are as follows:***

*“I think if I had more awareness of the programme, like understanding what the programme is about, what it offers, and how they can help me, then I could use the programme. But for now, I’m a bit confused about their services and how they can help me” -Participant 10*

*“I have a social work background, so that's what I know I would say. It is an employee, assistant programme, that most companies have assisted their employees in dealing whatever matters that they're dealing with” -Participant 1*

*“This is actually my first time hearing about the EAP programme. From what I can gather, it seems to be a support system designed to help employees manage personal and professional challenges” Participant 3*

Some participants expressed confusion regarding the services provided by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This uncertainty seems to stem from a lack of clear information about the programme's offerings. Similarly, Matthews, Gerald, and Jessup (2021) pointed out that the low number of employees utilising the EAP can largely be attributed to this lack of knowledge about the range of services available. This indicates that there are different interpretations and understandings of what the programme encompasses. This confusion suggests a need for improved communication and outreach regarding the EAP. It is essential for organisations to provide clear and comprehensive information about the services offered, so employees can fully understand how to access and benefit from the programme. By clarifying the EAP's purpose and services, employers can help ensure that employees feel more confident in seeking support and utilising the resources available to them.

In a study conducted by Moore (1989), it was found that employees had a recognition level of the EAP, but they did not understand what services were readily available to them. This was reflected in the findings of this study, where participants indicated their understanding of EAP to have a link between stress management and well-being. However, they were unsure of what service was offered to remedy their issues. This could be a contributing factor to underutilisation, as employees might opt for private services due to a lack of understanding rather than a preference.

### **Subtheme 3: The EAP as a Reactive vs Proactive service**

Understanding the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is important for employees to make the most of their services. As discussed in subtheme one, many participants reported that they had limited knowledge of the programme. However, they further reported seeing it only as a way to cope with stress instead of a tool for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This misunderstanding reflects the evolution of the EAP, from addressing various workplace mental health issues to encouraging wellness services. The following discussion highlights the participants' perceptions of the EAP.

### Here are some of the responses from the participants:

*“Well, I'm not sure if we're talking about the same thing when you say Employee Assistance Programme because I know it as Employee Wellness. And, yeah, it is a programme helping us to cope with stress at work” Participant 5*

*“Mmmmmh, to be honest, I don't know much about the specifics of these programmes. When I think about wellness, I think of overall well-being—being in a good state mentally and physically. It is about recognizing when something isn't right and seeking help because being well is crucial for productivity at work. From what I've seen online, these programmes might offer counselling and support to help employees deal with personal or work-related issues. However, I haven't participated in such programmes myself, so my understanding is quite limited” -Participant 4*

Other participants described their understanding of the programme as limited. It was identified that most were unaware of the programme's specifics and viewed the programme as a coping mechanism when they were in a stressful situation rather than a preventative measure to assist them in dealing with a healthy work-life balance routine. This subtheme reflects a broader perception that the programme is primarily seen as a coping mechanism for immediate stress rather than a preventative tool for maintaining a balanced work-personal life. Frost (1990) states that employee familiarity with EAP services is essential to their appropriate use. Some participants expressed their limited awareness of EAP proactive services, which hinders their participation in activities such as Wellness days. According to EAPA-SA (2010), the objectives of proactive services are to focus on the clinical and non-clinical components of the EAP, to build and strengthen individual and organisational skills and competencies and to enhance optimal wellness, individual resilience, teams and the organisation. This means that the EAP should encourage optimal wellness where employees are able to engage in activities to take care of themselves.

Many participants saw the EAP mainly as a resource to turn to during times of crisis or high stress. This perception aligns with the idea that the EAP is used primarily for immediate problem-solving rather than long-term well-being. In the study conducted by (Mogorosi, 2009), it was identified that 90% of EAP referral cases were substance abuse related (reactive), and 44% of staff members utilised the programme for health education and training. This suggests that while the EAP offers both reactive and proactive services, it is commonly perceived that the programme is reactive. The EAP's role as a preventative tool is not well understood or acknowledged by most employees. This fosters employees into perceiving EAPs as one sided,

as EAPs are designed to support not just immediate needs but also to foster long-term wellness and prevent issues before they escalate. One of the objectives of proactive services in EAP is to enhance optimal wellness, individual resilience, teams and the organisation (EAPA-SA: 2015). The focus was often on seeking help when problems arose rather than using the EAP as a regular part of wellness routines. This limited understanding could stem from insufficient information about the full range of EAP services, including those designed to support ongoing mental health, stress management, and overall well-being. The researcher is of the view that perceiving the EAP as a reactive tool may lead to its underutilisation for preventative purposes. Employees might not engage with the programme until they are in distress.

## **Theme 2: Productivity and performance enhancement**

### **Objective 2: To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN**

There is a clear connection between overall well-being and job performance, showing that the EAP is crucial for a healthy work environment (Baskar., Shinde & Srinivasan, 2021). Most participants verbalised the importance of accessing a counselling service to help them manage their personal lives and work better. The theme of productivity and performance enhancement addresses two subthemes: Stress as a trigger of engagement and Employee wellbeing versus job performance.

### **Subtheme 4: Stress as a trigger of engagement to the EAP**

It is important to understand what triggers employees to use the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to make it more effective. This subtheme elaborates on one of these triggers as identified in the data analysis. Many participants said stress was their main reason for using the EAP, showing that it serves as a helpful resource. The following discussion looks at these insights and highlights the need to recognise employee feelings about the EAP and the different factors that influence their experiences.

### ***Some of the responses from the participants are as follows:***

*"I would definitely consider using it. Reflecting on my experience as a student, where I didn't take full advantage of counselling and support services, I see the value in having such resources available. Although I tend to separate my professional and personal support needs, knowing that such services are provided at work, especially since they're free and included in*

*the salary package, makes them more appealing. It would be interesting to see how they could support my well-being and potentially enhance my work performance” -Participant 3*

*“Absolutely. If I had more information, I’d definitely consider using the programme and would even recommend it to others. I think it could be a great resource for managing stress and dealing with challenges, especially as a student balancing work and study. It would be valuable to have a structured way to access support” -Participant 5*

*“I think it would benefit me significantly. Having access to counselling and support services would allow me to express and address any issues I’m facing. Right now, I’m often overloaded with work and don’t have the time to seek out help elsewhere. If the EAP provided convenient and accessible support, it could help me manage my workload and emotional stress better” -Participant 5*

According to EAPA-SA (2015), EAP professionals conduct assessments to identify issues affecting employees, their family members, or the organisation as a whole. Based on these assessments, they develop a plan of action or treatment, which is considered part of the reactive services offered by EAP. Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius & Tyson (2021) also view stress management as a key component of these reactive services. Interestingly, several participants mentioned that stress was their primary reason for reaching out to the EAP. Taute and Manzini (2009) argue that the EAP is perceived as a helping hand to troubled employees, and thus, most respondents are prepared to consult the programme when the need arises. This insight highlights the importance of understanding employee attitudes toward the programme, which was one of the key objectives of the study. By recognising stress as a compelling factor for seeking help, the study sheds light on how employees perceive the EAP and its relevance to their challenges. This understanding can help organisations improve their EAP offers and better support employees in managing stress and other related issues. Greene (2017) posits that individuals are shaped by complex systems rather than acting in isolation. This perspective is compelling as it recognises the interconnected experiences that define human existence.

### **Subtheme 5: Employee wellbeing vs job performance**

According to Gruttadaro and Beyer (2021), organisations in various industries are increasingly recognising the importance of addressing mental health and well-being as a top priority. This focus is driven by the significant impact mental health has on safety, quality of performance, productivity, employee recruitment and retention, and overall financial success. Some participants noted that they would be more effective in their jobs if they had access to an

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to help manage their emotional and personal stresses. This perspective aligns with the systems theory, which underpins the study's framework, identifying the interconnectedness of participants and their workplaces. Terblanche, Gunya, Maruma, Mbuyisa, Maseko, Mojapelo, Myeni, Pretorius, and Tyson (2021) argue that human beings are holistic and systemic. Because negative energy and stress can overflow from one aspect of a person's life to another, whether from work to home or vice versa, employees often struggle to resolve their work-related or personal issues on their own. As a result, they frequently need some form of external support or intervention. By acknowledging this interconnectedness, organisations can better understand why providing access to EAP services is crucial. Such support not only helps employees manage their stresses but can also lead to improved performance, greater job satisfaction, and a healthier workplace overall. This holistic approach to employee well-being can benefit both individuals and organisations.

***Some of the participants responded as follows:***

*‘I feel like if uuurhmm employees are able to have a platform or a way in which they're given an opportunity to maybe we'll sharing the difficulties in Wellness in general, they'll perform a bit better at work like because whatever we are going through, whether it is it has to do with the working environment itself or personally, it affects our productivity at work. So, if there's a programme of that nature and people have the resources of getting those type of assistance, that definitely work better, and they'll function better at work, yeah.’ -Participant 1*

*“I believe these programmes provide platforms for employees to discuss their challenges and get support. They're meant to improve productivity by addressing personal issues that could affect work performance. For example, during the winter flu season, having access to wellness programmes could be very beneficial. I've never attended one myself, but I think it is about offering support in various areas—emotional, financial, and more—to help employees manage their workload better” -Participant 4*

*“Based on what I know, the advantages of an EAP are quite significant. For one, it helps ensure the wellness of employees, which in turn can lead to increased productivity and a more positive work environment. When employees are well-supported, they tend to perform better and contribute more effectively to the team” -Participant 3*

Some participants identified that the EAP enhances productivity in the workplace. The programme was also described as a support structure for employees to manage workloads effectively. There was a notable acknowledgement of the relationship between general well-being and job performance. This finding underscores the importance of integrating wellness programmes as a core component of employee support strategies. Isham, Mair, and Jackson

(2020) recommend that, although wellbeing may be a determinant of higher levels of productivity, it is important to note the relationship between the two-over time. The positive impact on productivity highlights the need for organisations to ensure that employees are aware of and can easily access these resources. One of the objectives of the study was to explore employee attitudes on the EAP. Participants presented a positive attitude towards utilising the EAP. This highlights the importance of promoting the EAP as a resource that not only helps with immediate issues but also contributes to long-term productivity and job satisfaction.

### **Theme 3: Trust and confidentiality concerns in EAP**

#### **Objective 3: To explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs**

Trust and confidentiality are critical factors in the effectiveness of support programmes like the Employee Assistance Programme (Milne, Blum & Roman, 1994). Many participants raised concerns about sharing personal information in the service offered by their employer, mainly due to uncertainty about how confidentiality is protected. This fear can discourage service users from accessing counselling services. (Wong-Wylie, 2007).

#### **Subtheme 6: The EAP perceived as a management and disciplinary tool**

Participants expressed their concern about perceiving the EAP as a disciplinary tool for management. Taute and Manzini (2009) argue that there is an association of the EAP with the disciplinary process, which suggests that staff would not trust the programme as it is viewed as a management tool. This perception can create a barrier to trust, leading employees to feel that their confidentiality may not be safeguarded. When staff believe that information shared with EAP counsellors could be accessible to supervisors or used against them in disciplinary situations, they may hesitate to seek help. The following discussion explores how this perception influences employee attitudes toward the EAP and the implications for its utilisation.

#### ***Some of the participants' responses are as follows:***

*“No, but I know that when it comes to maybe colleagues, people are not too fond of using umm anything that comes from the university because of maybe confidentiality and so forth, and people are scared of being stigmatized or labelled or disciplined and so forth” -Participant 1*

*“Disadvantages, I’m not sure if I trust the psychologist or whoever the counsellor is there because what if my stress is, like, my supervisor? So, I’m not sure if I can trust them if they won’t tell my supervisor, you know, or my manager, what’s happening” -Participant 9*

*“Disadvantages, for me personally, would be trusting the staff at the EAP office. I wouldn’t be sure if they were my colleagues or how it works. For me, it is just an issue of confidentiality” -Participant 11*

Some participants expressed concerns about trusting the programme, as they feared that their supervisors had access to the information shared, which could be used against them. This sentiment aligns with one of the study's key assumptions: that employees tend to underutilise their EAP services and prefer seeking help from external providers to maintain their privacy at work. In a study conducted by Taute and Manzini (2009), it was discovered that staff members often struggle to trust the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) because they perceive it as a management tool primarily used in disciplinary actions. Leary (2021) also highlighted similar concerns, noting that individuals may avoid using EAP resources for various reasons. These reasons can include fears of being accused of wrongdoing, experiencing stigma, being labelled, or even facing pressure to retire from their positions. Consequently, the perception of the EAP as a management tool can significantly influence employee attitudes toward using the programme. When employees believe that their confidentiality is at risk or that their participation may lead to negative repercussions, they are less likely to engage with the EAP.

### **Subtheme 7: Distrust in corporate confidentiality**

EAPA-SA (2015) defines confidentiality as a cornerstone of the profession, consistent with all the professional standards, ethics, and legal requirements that regulate the management of information, with the objective to protect the privacy of the individual employee and the interests of all the stakeholders. Confidentiality plays a vital role in counselling and services, including the personal information of the service user. This subtheme unpacks the concerns of confidentiality shared by the participants.

#### ***Some of the participants' responses are as follows:***

*“Disadvantages, for me personally, would be trusting the staff at the EAP office. I wouldn’t be sure if they were my colleagues or how it works. For me, it is just an issue of confidentiality” - Participant 11*

*...Disadvantages, I'm not sure if I trust the psychologist or whoever the counsellor is there because what if my stress is, like, my supervisor? So, I'm not sure if I can trust them if they won't tell my supervisor, you know, or my manager, what's happening" -Participant 9*

A prominent theme identified from the participant feedback is the concern regarding trust and confidentiality in the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Participants expressed concern about confidentiality as the EAP is a service provided by the employer. A significant factor contributing to this resistance is a lack of understanding of how confidentiality is maintained and the specific clauses related to it. Since the EAP is provided by the employer, some participants worry that their personal information might not be kept confidential. There is a fear that discussions with EAP counsellors could be disclosed to management or affect their employment status. Participants noted a general lack of clarity about the confidentiality clauses associated with the EAP. This uncertainty has fueled concerns about the potential misuse of their personal information and reluctance to seek help. Due to the lack of understanding, the researcher identified that it might be a significant factor in underutilisation

Matthews et al. (2021) reported that concerns about the confidentiality of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services, especially regarding the possibility of supervisors or managers discovering that employees are using these services, significantly hinder their use. Some participants expressed apprehension about accessing the programme due to these confidentiality worries. This highlights a broader issue of misunderstanding surrounding the EAP and the potential for breaches of confidentiality. When employees are unsure about how their information will be handled or whether it could be shared with management, it creates barriers to seeking help. This lack of understanding can prevent individuals from taking advantage of valuable resources designed to support their well-being (Masi, 2011).

According to Roman (2003), a good rapport is based on trust, and employees will not share their innermost feelings and thoughts, circumstances, and background if they do not believe or are not guaranteed that the information will be held in confidence. Ensuring that employees trust the confidentiality of the EAP is crucial for its success. The organisation must clearly communicate and demonstrate the confidentiality measures in place to address these concerns. EAPA-SA (2015) states that precautions should be taken to ensure that all communication involving confidential information is protected.

## **Subtheme 8: Preference to use external vs. internal support**

One of the underlying assumptions of the study was that employees prefer self-referrals instead of EAP referrals in order to keep their lives private in the workplace. This assumption was evident in the data analysis. This subtheme aims to converse about this preference.

*Some of the participants' responses are as follows:*

*“I will always opt to use my medical aid and choose someone outside of the institution” - Participant 1*

*“No, I wouldn’t use it. I have medical aid and prefer going on the private route if I have a problem. I still feel like my issues might be exposed. I don’t know if it is a trust issue, but I don’t understand how it works in terms of confidentiality. I think it is a good programme, but we tend to forget about it. I’m not sure if it is a marketing issue, but we forget about it unless they send us emails, and then we see those. They’re just not the first line of contact for me if I have a problem, personally”-Participant 11.*

*“I would say on a scale of 1 to 10, maybe like 5—a 50-50 chance—because I want to use the service because I need it, but I’m not sure if I trust that they won’t talk to my supervisor or manager about my issues, especially if I have an issue with my supervisor -Participant 9*

Participants frequently expressed a preference for utilising external support services, such as those covered by their medical aid, over the internal Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This preference is primarily driven by concerns about confidentiality and a lack of clarity regarding the services offered by EAP. The choice to seek private or external services is influenced by perceptions of better privacy and a more comprehensive understanding of available support options. Participants expressed that they trust an external service provider more than a service provided by the employer because their information is less likely to be disclosed, especially sensitive information discussed during counselling sessions.

These findings support the underlying assumption that external support services are often preferred due to perceived issues with confidentiality and service clarity. The preference for external services highlights the need for the EAP to improve its visibility, communication, and trustworthiness. Providing clear information about EAP’s services and ensuring robust confidentiality practices can help shift preferences toward internal support options.

EAPA-SA (2015) suggests that appropriate referrals can significantly enhance job performance and overall employee well-being. However, some participants expressed worries about

feedback reports being shared with supervisors, particularly when the issues presented involve those supervisors. In a study by Taute and Manzini (2009), employees voiced concerns about the professional management of the EAP, citing the potential for supervisors to access feedback reports as a significant issue. These concerns may lead employees to prefer seeking external support rather than utilising the EAP services available to them. This behaviour aligns with the study's assumption regarding the underutilisation of EAPs. When employees feel that their confidentiality might be compromised or that their supervisors could be informed about their personal issues, they are less likely to engage with the programme.

#### **Theme 4: Perceived Benefits and Value of EAPs**

##### **Objective 4: To explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs**

In exploring employee willingness to utilise the Employee Assistance Programme, one significant theme emerged: confusion surrounding the cost of services. This uncertainty can have a profound impact on employees' willingness to engage with the programme. Some participants expressed confusion regarding whether the EAP services are free or if there are any associated costs. This uncertainty about financial implications can affect employees' willingness to use the programme. Concerns about potential costs may deter employees from accessing the EAP, especially if they are unsure whether they will incur any expenses or if the programme is truly free of charge. Furthermore, it was identified that some participants lacked an understanding of the cost implications related to utilising the EAP service. This confusion might be a contributing factor to their enthusiasm for accessing the programme, resulting in a possibility of underutilisation.

##### **Subtheme 9: EAP financial implications confusion affecting the enthusiasm of EAP utilisation**

A key aspect of understanding Employee Assistance programmes is the clarity surrounding their benefits and costs. In this discussion, we delve into participants' experiences of uncertainty regarding whether the EAP is part of their benefits package and whether accessing it incurs costs. Ajala (2026) states that employee assistance programmes are programmes sponsored by the employer that are intended to support the removal of various workplace

problems. This subtheme unpacks how confusion about financial implications can affect the utilisation of the EAP.

***Some of the responses of the participants are as follows:***

*“Yes, I would. I need someone to talk to and advise me financially as I’m about to retire but I don’t have the money to pay for it” -Participant 6*

*“Yes, if I don’t have to pay, I would use it. I’d like them to make it clear whether we have to pay for the programme or not. Also, if they could help with financial issues, that would be great for me because I am the breadwinner at home and have a lot of financial difficulties. I’m stressed right now; I’m 63 years old, so stressed, and I have chronic diseases. So, yeah, if they could tell us more about the programme, I think it could really help” -Participant 7*

*“Okay, advantages, I think, because I have someone to talk to. Yeah, be able to talk to others, basically. Disadvantages, I’m not sure if I trust the psychologist or whoever the counselor is there because what if my stress is, like, my supervisor? So, I’m not sure if I can trust them if they won’t tell my supervisor, you know, or my manager, what’s happening” Participant 9*

*“Advantages, I think, because it is a good programme for employees to access. Disadvantages, for me personally, would be trusting the staff at the EAP office. I wouldn’t be sure if they were my colleagues or how it works. For me, it is just an issue of confidentiality” Participant 11*

French, Zarkin, and Bray (1995) argue that Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are a relatively new fringe benefit for employees. While employers provide these programmes, it is essential for both employers and EAP practitioners to clearly communicate that the programme is an added benefit to avoid any confusion among employees. In this study, some participants expressed uncertainty about whether the EAP is included in their benefits or if they would incur costs when accessing the programme. This ambiguity can significantly impact employees’ willingness to utilise the service. Many participants indicated that they would be more inclined to use the EAP if the cost implications were clear. This highlights the importance of clear communication regarding the nature of the EAP, as misunderstandings about potential costs could dampen enthusiasm and discourage employees from seeking the support they need. Ensuring that employees understand EAP as a non-cost resource could lead to higher utilisation rates and ultimately contribute to better employee well-being.

## **Theme 5: Marketing and visibility of the EAP service**

### **Objective 5: To ascertain the accessibility of the EAP service**

In examining employee perceptions of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), a significant concern emerged regarding its visibility and marketing within the organisation. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how insufficient marketing efforts and communication channels impact employees' understanding and engagement with the EAP.

### **Subtheme 10: Confusion about the EAP office location**

This theme underscores the challenges posed by insufficient information and communication and confusion about the whereabouts of the EAP location. Participants indicated that the EAP is not sufficiently visible or well-marketed within the organisation. This lack of visibility and effective marketing is seen as a significant factor contributing to limited employee engagement with the programme. It was identified that the EAP lacks visibility and marketing to capture employee engagement. Many participants reported a lack of clarity on how to access the EAP services. There is a general feeling that the EAP is not promoted effectively. Employees may not be aware of the programme's existence or how it can benefit them due to inadequate communication. EAP's marketing efforts are perceived as insufficient. Participants noted that the programme is often only mentioned through limited channels, such as the university's email communiqués, which may not capture the attention of all employees. Furthermore, participants highlighted that the EAP is not prominently featured in physical spaces within the workplace.

*Here are some of the responses of the participants:*

*"Given my current lack of knowledge about the EAP, I would describe its accessibility as quite limited. If I'm not aware of the programme or how to access it, it clearly indicates a problem with its visibility. For the programme to be truly accessible, it needs to be better publicized. This could involve using various communication methods such as emails, posters, or even updates in the office to make sure that employees know about it and understand how to access the services" -Participant 3*

*"I'm not sure whether they have offices or not. I have never been to their office. I usually see employee wellness posters on email, but I have never seen their address or contact details. Eish, sis im not sure at all" -Participant 2*

*"I don't know where to go, but I think my supervisor can help me if I need any help. If I have stress, I can go to my supervisor, and they'll help me" -Participant 8*

*“I’m not sure how to access them on my own. I don’t know where the office is, but I can ask my supervisor if I need them” -Participant 9*

*“I haven’t engaged with the service extensively, apart from one wellness day, despite working here for seven years. I’m not sure how to find the EAP services. My interest is mainly in regular testing rather than counselling” -Participant 13*

*“I think it's accessible on virtual platforms because I know there's a number I can call if I need to speak to someone” -Participant 4*

In a study conducted by Leary (2021), it was found that not knowing how to access an EAP, coupled with the notion that some employees may not even know that they have an EAP, may contribute to an underutilisation of the services that get offered to them. Similarly, in this study, some participants expressed confusion about the EAP office location and how they would access the service. Some shared that they would ask their supervisors, check their emails or use a search engine like Google when they need EAP services.

#### **Subtheme 11: Inadequate communication about the benefits of utilising the EAP service**

Effective communication about EAP benefits is essential in order to improve utilisation. EAPA-SA (2015) underscores that the EAP marketing strategy should target all levels of the organisation and should be adapted accordingly, with posters on topics of interest displayed for the employee population. The EAP should consider the type of employee when creating marketing strategies. This means accommodating all employees, for example, using clipboards when displaying posters for employees who do not have access to email or electronic mail. The discussion in this subtheme aims to unpack the participants' responses and interpret the data against existing literature.

##### ***Here are some of the responses:***

*“It is somewhat accessible, but there’s room for improvement. We do receive notifications about the programme, but it is easy to overlook them amidst a busy schedule. I think the issue is more about personal attitude and time management. For instance, people from our generation might not prioritize these resources as much as they should. However, having a more accessible and visible programme would certainly help” Participant 1*

*“Honestly, my perception of the EAP in the UKZN is quite limited because I haven’t been exposed to much information about it. It seems like there’s a significant gap in promotion and awareness. If there’s not enough information available to staff members, it is challenging to gauge its effectiveness or understand how it can be utilised. It appears there might be a*

*need for more active promotion and better communication to ensure that employees are aware of the programme and its benefits. Without this, it is hard to form a clear opinion about how well it is working or how effective it is” -Participant 3*

Some participants noted their lack of marketing regarding the benefits of the EAP service. They stated that the information shared through the university's communication portal is lacking. Additionally, others pointed out that the UKZN communication email platform is not effective, as employees are often too busy with their responsibilities to engage with promotional emails. Masi (2011) contends that the objectives of marketing an EAP service include increasing employees' awareness of the EAP and its offerings, enhancing familiarity and comfort with its operations, and promoting acceptance and usage among employees, managers, labour representatives, and organisational leaders. The goals also encompass boosting the utilisation across all levels of the organisation, integrating the EAP more fully within the host organisation, fostering a sense of ownership among managers and employees, and ensuring the EAP remains visible as a crucial contributor to organisational productivity, efficiency, and the overall well-being of staff and management.

The results suggest that EAP's marketing and visibility are inadequate. Participants indicated that they receive emails on the EAP via the university's communication. However, it does not entice them to make use of the programme. EAPA-SA (2015) argues that Marketing strategy should target all levels of the organisation and should be adapted accordingly. Employees who do not have access to email are not privy of the information shared by the organisation.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the empirical findings from the study on employees' perceptions of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, through a qualitative approach guided by Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the underlying research paradigm, research design, population and sampling strategies, sampling method, data collection techniques and the method of data collection. Additionally, it discussed the concepts of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, the ethical considerations and an outline of the value of the study were discussed. In conclusion, a methodological approach was employed in the collection, presentation and analysis of data.

## **CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a comprehensive summary of the findings in relation to the study's objectives. It delves into a detailed discussion of recommendations that arise from the study's findings. Furthermore, the chapter concludes with a synthesis of the overall study, reflecting on its significance and potential impact. This section aims to provide a thorough understanding of how the findings can be applied in practice and what steps may be taken moving forward to enhance the programme's effectiveness.

### **5.2 A summary of findings based on objectives**

#### **Objective 1: To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programme**

The key findings of this objective are based on the experiences of the participants. Many participants shared that they have a limited awareness of the available EAP at UKZN. Furthermore, the participants indicated a lack of understanding of what services are available when accessing EAP. These findings might contribute to the underutilisation of the EAP service, meaning employees might opt for external services due to a lack of understanding of what is available in-house.

#### **Objective 2: To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN**

Most participants expressed that they perceive the EAP as a mental health and counselling service only. These perceptions reflect a lack of awareness of the EAP. The programme is primarily seen as a coping mechanism for immediate stress rather than a preventative tool for maintaining a balanced work-personal life.

#### **Objective 3: To explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs**

Some participants indicated that they prefer to utilise private external services rather than the EAP available to them. This preference supports the initial assumption proposed at the beginning of the study, which suggested that employees are more inclined to choose self-

referrals over EAP referrals to maintain their privacy in the workplace. This desire for confidentiality appears to be a significant factor influencing their choices regarding mental health support. In addition to this, other participants expressed a willingness to engage with the EAP if it were more effectively marketed and promoted. They believe that the services offered by the EAP are vital for employees' well-being, yet they feel that greater awareness and visibility could encourage more people to take advantage of the programme. Overall, these insights highlight a clear connection between perceived privacy, awareness, and the utilisation of the EAP services, suggesting that targeted outreach and communication could enhance participation.

#### **Objective 4: To explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs**

Some participants expressed a reluctance to use the EAP service, citing concerns about trust and confidentiality. A few individuals specifically mentioned their lack of confidence in the staff at the EAP office. Additionally, they raised worries that their supervisors might gain access to their information through feedback reports provided by EAP practitioners. This fear of potential breaches of privacy significantly influences their willingness to engage with the programme, highlighting the need for stronger assurances regarding confidentiality and trustworthiness within the EAP framework.

#### **Objective 5: To ascertain the accessibility of the EAP service**

Most participants indicated that they were unaware of the physical location of the EAP office. Among those who have access to the university's email system, some noted that while they have seen promotional emails about the EAP in their inboxes, they often overlook them. As mentioned in the literature review, employees who face long distances to access EAP services are less likely to report their personal issues due to the inconvenience of travel (Holosko & Feit, 1988). This lack of awareness and the associated barriers may contribute to the underutilisation of the services offered by EAP.

The study uncovered positive attitude towards utilising EAP services. Participants described the importance of the programme and its benefits. However, there is an accessibility issue with regards to the lack of information about a physical office and/or virtual platforms. There were varying responses on the accessibility of the EAP.

- Most participants shared that they were unaware of how to contact the EAP service.

- Others shared that they rely on their supervisors to share information since they do not have access to the university's email communication; they would consult if they needed to utilise the EAP.
- A few participants shared that they would use a search engine such as Google to retrieve contact details for their EAP service should they need to use it.

### **The analysis revealed several key themes**

Variability in Knowledge and Perception: Participants generally recognised the EAP as a supportive resource but lacked a detailed understanding of the specific services offered. This gap in knowledge highlights the need for better communication about the EAP's offerings.

Perception of the EAP as Reactive vs. Proactive: The EAP is often viewed primarily as a reactive tool for immediate stress rather than a proactive measure for maintaining a balanced work-life routine. This perception suggests a need to shift the focus towards preventive support.

Perceived Benefits and Value of EAPs: Despite some concerns, participants acknowledged that the EAP could enhance productivity and support workload management, underscoring its potential value in the workplace.

Trust and Confidentiality Concerns: Concerns about confidentiality and trust in the EAP services were significant barriers to utilisation. Addressing these concerns is crucial for increasing employee engagement with the programme.

Preference for External vs. Internal Support: Many participants preferred external private services over internal EAP support due to confidentiality concerns and a lack of understanding of EAP services.

Marketing and Visibility of the EAP Service: The EAP's visibility and marketing were found to be inadequate, impacting employee engagement. Enhanced promotion and communication strategies are needed to improve accessibility and utilisation.

## **5.3 Recommendations of the study**

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following recommendations are drawn:

### **5.3.1. To improve practice:**

#### **Conduct educational initiatives**

Conduct educational initiatives to assist improve awareness of the range of scope of services offered by the EAP service. Enhancing employees' understanding of the specific services offered and how to access them can bridge the gap between awareness and utilisation. This improvement can ultimately lead to better support for employees and more effective use of the EAP resources. EAPA-SA (2015) emphasises the significance of training and development, as well as support for stakeholders within work organisations, including managers, supervisors, and unions. This training is crucial for effectively managing employees who are facing behavioural, emotional, or wellness challenges. The researcher recommends that the EAP implement clearer and more comprehensive communication strategies. This could involve creating detailed brochures, hosting informational sessions, or providing interactive online resources that clearly outline the services available. This recommendation addresses the following subthemes: EAP as a mental health service, Lack of information on EAP, EAP as a Reactive vs Proactive service, Stress as a trigger of engagement to the EAP.

#### **Clear and transparent information**

The uncertainty about the financial implications of using the EAP affects employees' willingness to engage with the programme. Providing clear and transparent information about costs, highlighting the programme's benefits, and improving communication can help address these concerns. By enhancing understanding and perceived value, employees are more likely to utilise the EAP, leading to better overall well-being and improved workplace outcomes. EAPA-SA (2015) highlights the importance of promoting EAP services, including their availability and guarantees of confidentiality, to managers, supervisors, unions, employees, and their family members in accordance with the Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa. This recommendation addresses the following subthemes: EAP financial implications confusion affecting the enthusiasm of EAP utilisation and EAP utilisation as an employee benefit.

### **Improve marketing and visibility strategies**

Improve marketing of the service using posters and noticeboards. This will encourage employees who do not have access to electronic advertisements.

### **Enhanced transparency and reassurance about the protection of personal information:**

The concern about confidentiality affects employees' utilisation of the programme. Providing training and seminars to ensure confidentiality and its clauses will improve trust and encourage utilisation of EAP. This recommendation addresses the following subthemes: The EAP is perceived as a Management and disciplinary tool, Distrust in corporate confidentiality, and Preference to use external vs. internal support.

### **5.3.2. To enrich wellness interventions in academia:**

#### **Social Work based interventions**

The Social Work profession is well versed in theory and intervention strategies of a variety of issues faced by employees including academics. The Social Work profession can bring a distinct perspective to academia by developing interventions that meet both needs of the organisational system and interpersonal challenges. Social workers are trained to provide holistic interventions in issues such as workplace stress, burnout and so forth. The integration of these skills can result in a comprehensive solution-based intervention specifically for the field of academia. The establishment of sustainable internal support systems can be beneficial to both the organisation and individuals struggling with the work-life balance equation.

### **5.4 For future research:**

- “Exploring employee’s perceptions of the Employee Assistance Programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Westville, Edgewood and Pietermaritzburg campus”. This study specifically focused on Howard campus; therefore, findings do not represent perceptions of other campuses.
- “Exploring perceptions of EAP staff members at the University of KwaZulu-Natal”. Understanding the viewpoints and challenges of the service provider can improve the implementation of the programme.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter is an important step in improving the EAP by offering practical recommendations based on the study's findings. These suggestions focus on the main ideas of the EAP and aim to make the programme more effective and beneficial for employees. By putting these recommendations into action, the organisation can fill existing gaps in awareness and usage, creating a more supportive environment. The findings underscore the importance of improving awareness, transparency, and trust regarding EAP services. Enhancing the visibility and perceived value of the programme, along with addressing confidentiality concerns, will be essential in ensuring that employees fully utilise the EAP and benefit from its offerings. This study provides valuable insights into refining EAPs and enhancing their effectiveness in supporting employee well-being and productivity.

## References

- Adams, K., Hester, P. and Bradley, J. (2013). A historical perspective of systems theory. In *IIE Annual Conference and Expo 2013* (pp. 4102-4109).
- Ajala, E.M., 2016. Benefits of employee assistance programmes in industrial organisations.
- Akhtar, I. (2016). *Research Design. Research in Social Science: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Faculty of Social Sciences. NewDehli.
- Albertyn, C., Bruintjies, C., Finn, M., Jaftha J., Malaudzi, T., Mate, L. and Mudimba, C . (2021) Submission to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development on Amendments to the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 4 of 2000 by The South African Research Chair in Equality, Law and Social Justice School of Law, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
- Anney, V.N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), pp.272-281.
- Arifin, S.R.M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), pp.30-33.

Attridge, M. and Burke, J.J. (2011). *Trends in EAP Services and Strategies: An Industry Survey*. University of Maryland

Ayhan, H.Ö. (2011). Non-probability Sampling Survey Methods. *International Encyclopedia of Statistical Science*, 2(14), pp.979-982.

Back, L. (2012). 18 Tape recorder<sup>1</sup>. *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, p.245. Routledge.

Bailey, G.B. and Troxler, C. (2009). EAP licensure: Is it dead or lying dormant? *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 24(3), pp.357-363.

Baskar, K., Shinde, E.M.B. and Srinivasan, D.A. (2021). Promoting mental well-being through employee assistance programmes. *NHRD Network Journal*, 14(1), pp.64-82.

Bennett, J. (1999). *Employee assistance also helps productivity*. The Argus, Business Section 3: Business Times Appointments.

Bennett, J. B. and Lehman, W.E.K. (2001). Workplace substance abuse prevention and help seeking: Comparing team-oriented and informational training. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 6(3), pp.243–254. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076->

Bennett, J.B. and Lehman, W.E. (2002). Supervisor tolerance-responsiveness to substance abuse and workplace prevention training: Use of a cognitive mapping tool. *Health Education Research*, 17(1), pp.27-42.

Bhoodram, P.A. (2010). *An evaluation of the Employee Assistance Programme in the Department of Correctional Services benchmarked against the standards of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C. and Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: a tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), pp.1802-1811.

Chalain, C.C. (2020). *The role of managers in employee assistance programmes: A case study* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa))

Boone, C.M. (1995). The effectiveness of EAP supervisory training. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 11(1), pp.17-31.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.

Brink, P.J. (1998). Exploratory designs. *Advanced Resign in Nursing Research*, 2, pp.141-160.

Caleni, H. (2017). *Monitoring and evaluation practice standards in South African Social Work and Criminology* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Cekiso, N.A. and Terblanche, L.S. (2015). Pricing models of employee assistance programmes: Experiences of corporate clients serviced by a leading employee assistance programme service provider in South Africa. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 30(1-2), pp.154-178.

Chapman, L.S. (2012). Meta-evaluation of worksite health promotion economic return studies: 2012 update. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 26(4), pp.1-12.

Clark, T. (2011). Gaining and maintaining access: Exploring the mechanisms that support and challenge the relationship between gatekeepers and researchers. *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(4), pp.485-502.

Colan, N.B. and Schneider, R. (1992). The effectiveness of supervisor training: One year follow-up.

Connelly, L.M. (2014). Ethical considerations in research studies. *Medsurg Nursing*, 23(1), pp.54-56.

De Vos, A.S., Delport, C.S.L., Fouche, C. and Strydom, H. (2011). *Research at grass roots: A primer for the social science and human professions*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Dickinson, D. (2003) Managing HIV/AIDS in the South African Workplace: Just another Duty? *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 6(1).

Dictionary, O.E. (1993). Oxford English dictionary. *Simpson, JA & Weiner, ESC. 1989.*

Dipela, M.P. and Sithole, S. (2021). Under-utilisation of internal employee assistance programme (eap) services by the South African Police Service in Lephalale, Limpopo Province. *Social Work*, 57(4), pp.486-498.

Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa (EAPA-SA). (2010). *Standards for employee assistance programmes in South Africa*. APA-SA. South Africa.

Etikan, I. and Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), p.00149.

Fleming, J. and Zegwaard, K.E. (2018). Methodologies, Methods and Ethical Considerations for Conducting Research in Work-Integrated Learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), pp.205-213.

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F. and Davidson, L. (2002). *Understanding and evaluating qualitative research*. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36(6), pp.717-732.

French, M.T., Zarkin, G.A. and Bray, J.W. (1995). A methodology for evaluating the costs and benefits of employee assistance programmes. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 25(2), pp.451-470.

Frost, A.K. (1990). Assessing Employee's Awareness: A First Step to Utilisation. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 6(1), pp.45-55.

Fusch, P.I. and Ness, L.R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, 20(9), p.1408.

Garner, W.R., Hake, H.W. and Eriksen, C.W. (1956). Operationism and the concept of perception. *Psychological Review*, 63(3), p.149.

Gobind, J., Du Plessis, G and Ukpere, W. (2012) Minimum wage and domestic workers' right to basic conditions of employment: Are employers complying? *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(47), pp. 11683-11691

Gong, N., Boh, W.F., Wu, A. and Kuo, T. (2021). Leniency bias in subjective performance evaluation: contextual uncertainty and prior employee performance. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 57(8), pp.2176-2190.

Goulos, A.G. (2019). *Employee Assistance Programme Within the Public Sector* (Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology).

Greene, R. (2017). *General systems theory human behavior theory and social work practice*. Routledge, 215-249.

Gruttadaro, D. and Beyer, C., 2021. Mental Health and Well-being in the Construction Industry. American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health

Hammond, D. (2010). *The science of synthesis: Exploring the social implications of general systems theory*. University Press of Colorado.

Hanson, B.G. (1995). *General systems theory beginning with wholes*. Taylor& Francis.

Harley, D.A. (1991). Impaired job performance and worksite trigger incidents: Factors influencing supervisory EAP referrals. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 6(3), pp.51-70.

Harper, M. and Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(2), pp.510-517.

Holosko, M.J. and Feit, D.M. (1988). Evaluation of Employee Assistance Programmes. New York:

International Employee Assistance Professionals Association. (2009). Definitions Of An Employee Assistance Programme (Eap) And Eap Core Technology Updated 10/11

Jaeger, R.G. and Halliday, T.R. (1998). On confirmatory versus exploratory research. *Herpetologica*, pp. S64-S66.

Jolley, J. (2020). *Introducing research and evidence-based practice for nursing and healthcare professionals*. Routledge.

- Joseph, B., Walker, A. and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of employee assistance programmes: a systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 27(1), pp.1-15.
- Koelsch, L.E. (2013). Reconceptualizing the member check interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 12(1), pp.168-179.
- Kok A. (2008). *The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000: Proposal for Legislative Reform*, *South African Journal on Human Rights*. University of Pretoria
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.
- Kruger, J and Tshoose, C.I. (2013). *The Impact of the Labour Relations Act on Minority Trade Unions: A South African Perspective*, *Head: Solidarity Research Institute*
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lacey, A. and Luff, D. (2001). *Qualitative data analysis (pp. 320-357)*. Sheffield: Trent focus.
- Lamm, A.J. and Lamm, K.W. (2019). Using non-probability sampling methods in agricultural and extension education research. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 26(1), pp.52-59.
- Landreneau, K.J. and Creek, W. (2009). Sampling strategies. Available on: <http://www.natcol.org>.
- Lawrence, J.A., Boxer, P. and Tarakeshwar, N. (2002). Determining demand for EAP services. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 18(1), pp.1-15.
- Leary, M.D. (2021). *Examining Personal and Organizational Factors Leading to Police Officers' Underutilisation of Employee Assistance Programme* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Ledingwane, M. (2000). *A needs assessment for an Employee Assistance Programme at Jubilee Community Hospital*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (master's dissertation.)

Mabunda S.B. (2016). *Implementation of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 by the Department of Water Affairs in South Africa*. University of South Africa.

Maiden, R.P. (1992). *Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa*. New York: The Haworth Press.

Maiden, R.P., Paul, R. and Thompson, C. (2006). *Workplace Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group

Makola ,Z. and Tabane, R. (2022). *South African employees' perceptions of the inclusion of traditional health practitioners' services in workplace employee assistance programmes*. Taylor and Francis Group

Manganyi. P.S. and Mogorosi. L.D (2021). *The Utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme: The Case of a Tertiary Hospital in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Volume 19. Issue 1.*

Mangayi P.S. (2015). *Utilisation of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Services by Employee at Polokwane Tertiary Hospital*. University of Pretoria

Mantzoukas, S. (2004). Issues of representation within qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(7), pp.994-1007.

Manzini, K.P. and Taute, F. (2007). *Factors that hinder the utilisation of the employee assistance programme in the Department of Labour (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria)*.

Masi. A. (2011). *Definition and History of Employee Assistance Programmes*. Dale In *Correct Understanding and Application of EAP Necessary for All Entities that Implement Measures for Mental Health*. Kabushiki Kaisha Roudou Chousakai, Tokyo, Japan. June 2011

Masi D. A. (2002). EAPs in the year 2002. *Mental Health, United States. Manderscheid R, Henderson M, eds. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. (DHHS Publication No. SMA 3938, pp. 209–223).*

Masi, D.A. (2005). *The international employee assistance compendium*. Chestnut Health Systems and Chestnut Global Partners.

Masi, D.A. and Teems, L.A. (1983). The history, the philosophy and the essential components of employee assistance programmes. In *Alcoholism* (pp. 429-437). Springer, Dordrecht.

Masi, D.A. (2011). Redefining the EAP field. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 26(1), pp.1-9.

Matthews, L.R., Gerald, J. and Jessup, G.M. (2021). Exploring men's use of mental health support offered by an Australian Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): perspectives from a focus-group study with males working in blue-and white-collar industries. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 15, pp.1-17.

Milne, S.H., Blum, T.C. and Roman, P.M. (1994). Factors influencing employees' propensity to use an employee assistance programme. *Personnel Psychology*, 47(1), pp.123-145.

Mnisi, M.A. (2007). *The evaluation of the Employee Assistance Programme's internal marketing strategy in the National Prosecuting Authority* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Mogorosi, L. (2009). Employee assistance programmes: Their rationale, basic principles and essential elements. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 45(4).

Moore, T. (1989). Employee assistance programme evaluation: employee perceptions, awareness, and utilisation. *AAOHN Journal*, 37(12), pp.508-512.

Mugari, E.L., Mtapuri, O. and Rangongo, M. (2014). Employee Assistance Programme: The case of a Local Municipality in South Africa

Mullahy, C.M. (2013). *The case manager's handbook*. Jones and Bartlett Learning.

Mundalamo, T. (2015). Factors affecting the utilisation of EAP Services in a waste management company. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (Master's dissertation.)

Naidoo, A.V. and Jano, R. (2003). The role of employee assistance programmes (EAPs) in the South African context. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 15(2), pp.113-27.

Naidoo, N. (2017). *Monitoring and Evaluation Practices of Corporate Clients of an External Employee Assistance (EAP) Service Provider* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Neuendorf, K.A. (2018). Content analysis and thematic analysis. In *Advanced research methods for applied psychology* (pp. 211-223). Routledge.

Nkagisang, J.T. (2019). *Challenges Towards Accessing an Employee Health and Awareness Clinic by Gauteng Health Central Office Employees* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Noe, R.A. (2017). Employee Training and Development (Employee T). McGraw-Hill Education.

Nunes, A.P., Richmond, M.K., Pampel, F.C. and Wood, R.C. (2018). The effect of employee assistance services on reductions in employee absenteeism. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 33(6), pp.699-709.

Nzima, D. and Duma, V. (2014) The Employment Equity Act (EEA) as an Instrument for Employment Equity in the South African Labor Market. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, Vol. 05 No. 09

Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Leech, N.L. (2007). Sampling designs in qualitative research: Making the sampling process more public. *Qualitative Report*, 12(2), pp.238-254.

Otieno, F.A.O. (2000). November. The roles of monitoring and evaluation in projects. In *2nd International Conference on Construction in Developing Countries: Challenges facing the construction industry in developing countries* (pp. 15-17).

Polit, D.F. and Beck, C.T. (2014). *Essentials of Nursing Research*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia

Rapley, T. (2014). Sampling strategies in qualitative research. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, pp.49-63.

Rehman, A.A. and Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8), pp.51-59

Republic of South Africa. (1995). *Labour Relations Act, 1995*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. (1997). *Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. (1998). *Employment Equity Act, 1998*. Pretoria: Government Printer

Roche, A., Kostadinov, V., Cameron, J., Pidd, K., McEntee, A. and Duraisingam, V. (2018). The development and characteristics of Employee Assistance Programme around the globe. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 33(3-4), pp.168-186.

Roman, L.A. (2003). *The experiences and perceptions of employees with regard to the employee assistance programme at Drakensberg Power Station*. University of Pretoria (South Africa).

Sharar, D.A., (2009). Do employee assistance programme duplicate with services offered through mental health benefit plans? *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 41(1), pp.67-74.

Sidhu, K., Jones, R. and Stevenson, F. (2017). Publishing qualitative research in medical journals. *British Journal of General Practice*, 67(658), pp.229-230.

Sinclair, A. and O'Regan, S. (2007). *Mental Health and Work*. Institute for Employment Studies, Mantel building, University of Sussex, Falmer: Brighton

Stahl, N.A. and King, J.R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1), pp.26-28.

- Stebbins, R.A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences* (Vol. 48). Sage.
- Strydom, H. and Venter, L. (2002). Sampling and sampling methods. In De Vos(ed). *Research at grassroots. For the social sciences and human service professions. (2nd ed)*. Pretoria: J.L van Schaik Publishers.
- Suryani, A. (2008). Comparing case study and ethnography as qualitative research approaches. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 5(1).
- Sutton, J. and Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3), p.226.
- Swedberg, R. (2020). Exploratory research. The production of knowledge: Enhancing progress in social science, pp.17-41.
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. *How to choose a sampling technique for research (April 10, 2016)*.
- Taute, F. and Manzini, K. (2009). Factors that hinder the utilisation of the employee assistance programme in the Department of Labour. *Social work/maatskaplike werk*, 45(4).
- Terblanche, L. (2011). Employee assistance programmes explained: wellness-EAP. *HR Future*, 2011(04), p.27. Sabinet African Journals.
- Terblanche, L., Gunya, T., Maruma, M., Mbuyisa, K., Maseko, T., Mojaelo, K., Myeni, N., Pretorius, M. and Tyson, W. (2021). Employee assistance programmes and occupational social work: interrelated with distinct features. *Social Work*, 57(1), pp.16-38.
- Terblanche, L.S. (2009). Labour welfare in South Africa, *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, January–June, 24(1-2):205-220.
- Terblanche, L.S. (1992). The state of the art of EAPs in South Africa: a critical analysis. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 7(3), pp.17-28.

The Haworth Press International Employee Assistance Professionals Association. (2009). Definitions Of An Employee Assistance Programme (Eap) And Eap Core Technology updated 10/11

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995

Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H. and Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis.

Van Wyk, S. (2016). *The development of a conceptual framework for spirituality in the South African employee assistance programme context* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).

Vehovar, V., Toepoel, V. and Steinmetz, S., (2016). *Non-probability sampling* (Vol. 1, pp. 329-45). The Sage handbook of survey methods.

Weiss, R.M. (2003). Effects of programme characteristics on EAP utilisation. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 18(3), pp.61-70.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S. and Charles, V. (2008). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), pp.417-428.

Wilkinson, L.A. (2011). Systems Theory. In: Goldstein, S., Naglieri, J.A. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*. Springer, Boston, MA. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9\\_941](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9_941)

Wilson, E. and Fox, A. (2013). Data collection. *School-based Research: A guide for education students*, 2, pp.104-125.

Wong-Wylie, G., 2007. Barriers and facilitators of reflective practice in counsellor. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 41(2).

## **ANNEXURES**

## Annexure 1 Gatekeeper's letter

Nonkululeko Mkhize

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Office of the Registrar

University Road, Westville

Private Bag X54001

Durban

4000

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Nonkululeko Mkhize, a Master of Social Science student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I am writing to seek permission to conduct research for my Dissertation on the topic of *Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal towards the Employee Assistance Programme*.

My research aims to explore employee perceptions, awareness, attitudes and accessibility of the Employee Assistance Programme at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I believe that this study will contribute valuable insights to the field of Social Work and aligns with the academic goals of our institution. This study has been ethically reviewed by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee with reference number *HSSREC/00005746/2023*.

I have thoroughly reviewed the university's policies and procedures regarding research, and I am committed to adhering to all ethical guidelines and regulations governing research activities within the university. I have also obtained the necessary approvals from my academic advisor, Dr Livhuwani Ramphabana, who has expressed support for the proposed research.

To facilitate the smooth progress of my research, I kindly request permission to access the following resources within the university:

- a. Permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with 15 employees at the University  
I have provided you with a copy of the Consent Form and Interview Guideline.

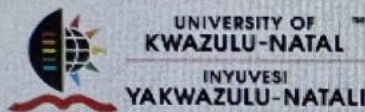
I assure you that I will conduct my research with the utmost integrity and respect for the university's guidelines. Furthermore, I am prepared to comply with any additional requirements or conditions stipulated by the university regarding my research endeavour. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the academic community at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I await your favourable response.

In any event of any queries you may have regarding the study, please do contact:

- a. The research supervisor; Dr Ramphabana at [RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za)
- b. The researcher; Ms Nonkululeko Mkhize at [212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

## Annexure 2 Gatekeepers permission to conduct study letter



7 March 2024

Nonkululeko Mkhize (SN 212509661)  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
College of Humanities  
Howard College Campus UKZN  
Email: [212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

[RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za)

Dear Nonkululeko

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate degree, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"Exploring Perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the Employee Assistance Programme."*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample as follows:

- With a request for responses on the website. The questionnaire and/or request for responses to "interview questions" must be placed on the notice system <http://notices.ukzn.ac.za>. A copy of this letter (Gatekeeper's approval) must be simultaneously sent to ([govenderlog@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:govenderlog@ukzn.ac.za)) or ([ramkissoona@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ramkissoona@ukzn.ac.za)).

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using the 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR MA TUFTS  
Director Governance & Administration

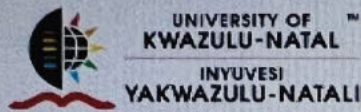
### Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 10 311 260 7971 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za) Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

### Annexure 3 Ethical clearance letter



29 January 2024

**Nonkululeko Happiness Mkhize (212509661)**  
School of Applied Human Sc  
Howard College Campus

Dear NH Mkhize,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00005746/2023

**Project title:** Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the employee assistance programme.

**Degree:** Masters

#### **Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 14 June 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

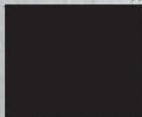
**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 29 January 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

#### **Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: [hssrec@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za) Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Wesville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## Annexure 4 Semi -structured interview guideline

### Appendix A: Interview guideline

#### Biographical details

Male / Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Are you employed permanently/ contract-based/ internship position? \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you understand about the Employee Assistance programme?
2. What support do you think the EAP offers to employees?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing an EAP programme?
4. What are your perceptions about the Employee Assistance programme available at UKZN?
5. How would you express your enthusiasm to use the in-house EAP at UKZN?
6. How would you describe the accessibility of the EAP service at UKZN?
7. How would you like the in-house EAP at UKZN to improve?

## Annexure 5 Information sheet

### **Information sheet and Consent to Participate in Research**

**Name of researcher:** Nonkululeko Happiness Mkhize

**Name of Supervisor:** Dr L. Ramphabana

**Title of research:** Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the Employee Assistance Programme.

#### **Greetings**

You are invited to voluntarily participate in a study that involves research on your perspective of the employee assistance programme of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of the study is to explore perceptions of the employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the employee assistance programmes.

The objectives are as follows:

- To explore employees' awareness of the UKZN Employee Assistance Programmes
- To explore employees' perceptions of the EAPs available at UKZN
- To explore employees' attitudes towards EAPs
- To explore employees' willingness to use in-house EAPs
- To ascertain the accessibility of the EAP services

The duration of your participation, if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be no more than 30 minutes per research interview. The interview session will be conducted by one researcher who will make use of an interview guideline to facilitate the session. If you are agree, the researcher will make use of an audio tape recorder to ensure that information is captured accurately for data collection purposes.

Please understand that your participation in the study is voluntary and by no means are you obligated to participate in the study. As a prospective participant, you are permitted to withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any stage of the study. There will be no penalty of infringement on your rights presented for those who refuse to participate in the study. You will be required to sign a consent form which is attached below this information letter to show that you understood what is expected from you and the procedures involved.

The research findings will directly and indirectly benefit both the researcher and employees of UKZN as findings will enable EAP practitioners to improve practice guidelines in ensuring that services provided are in line with the needs of service users. Confidentiality will be upheld in the following ways:

- a. No information pertaining to your identity will be published in the study
- b. At no point will participants be expected to use their name in the documents or recordings, all recordings and documents that do not have participants names will be destroyed/ deleted after a five year period of the study being published.
- c. All the information stored will be only accessible to the researcher in a passcode protected device.
- d. No information will be shared with individuals not part of the research.

This study has been ethically reviewed by the UKZN Research Ethics.

In any event of any problems or queries you may have regarding the study, please do contact:

- a. University of KwaZulu Natal Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at  
Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000
- b. The research supervisor, Dr Ramphabana at RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za
- c. The researcher, Ms Nokululeko Mkhize at 212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za

## Annexure 6 Consent to participate in the study form

### CONSENT FORM

I (Name in full) \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed about the study entitled: Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the Employee Assistance Programme.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/ concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher via email: 212509661@stu.ukzn.ac.za

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact:

- a. University of KwaZulu Natal Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at  
Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000
- b. The research supervisor, Dr Ramphabana: RamphabanaL@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby give consent to:

Audio-record my interview

YES/NO

I can confirm that the participant above is participating in the study out of their own will and has not been coerced into participating in the study. The participants are encouraged and allowed to ask questions regarding the study and I have provided honest and accurate information to them, to the best of my ability.

Print Name(s) of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annexure 7 Language editing certificate

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Independent Editor</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  | <b>kufazano@gmail.com</b><br><b>+27631434276</b>       |
|                                                                                                                                                    |  | <b>SATI</b><br>SOUTH AFRICAN<br>TRANSLATORS' INSTITUTE |
| <b>CERTIFICATE OF EDITING</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |                                                        |
| <p>This confirms that I edited substantively the document below, including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes to correct errors and clarify meaning.</p>                         |  |                                                        |
| <p><b>TITLE:</b> Exploring perceptions of employees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the Employee Assistance Programme</p>                                                                                                 |  |                                                        |
| <p><b>AUTHOR :</b> Nonkululeko Happiness Mkhize<br/>Student number: 212509661</p>                                                                                                                                                    |  |                                                        |
| <p><b>Note:</b> The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The authors, at their sole discretion, have the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments made by the editor before submission.</p> |  |                                                        |
| <p><b>DATE:</b> 28 November 2024</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |                                                        |
| <b>EDITOR'S COMMENT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |                                                        |
| <p>The author was advised to effect suggested corrections regarding subject-verb agreement, punctuation and overall academic writing style, to name a few.</p>                                                                       |  |                                                        |
| <div style="text-align: center;"><br/><u>Signature</u></div>                                                                                      |  |                                                        |
| <p>Dr Kufakunesu Zano, PhD in English. A member of the South African Translators' Institute, Ref 1000686,<br/>South Africa 2024</p>                                                                                                  |  |                                                        |