Chapter 4
Determining the Needs for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):
A Comparative Study on Public and Private Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the needs for assistance programs of employees who work in private and public sector and to validate the Turkish version of the needs for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) scale. It was conducted on 198 employees, who work in Ankara, Turkey. As data collecting tool, the needs for EAPs scale and personal information form were used. The results showed that the Turkish version of the scale was valid and reliable. The needs of individuals for the assistance programs on personal and working issues did not indicate significant variation by the sectors. It was found that gender and having children variables had effect on the variation of the needs for assistance programs of the employees. Although this study has filled a significant gap in the literature in Turkey in terms of EAPs needs and the fact that the services in the scope of programs should be structured in accord with the problems of employees, more research is needed on the topic.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational problems that have been increasing in recent years have become more debatable in terms of providing job safety, increasing efficiency among workers in the working places, and improving work life quality. Flexible working hours, which destroy the protective regulations especially in service sector, result in the fact that wages remain unchanged or even decrease and that employees get punished instead of protected against the employers (Akkaya, 2014). In addition, work life may lead to rivalry, pressure, stress and personal greed, and may cause loss of motivation and the job satisfaction in the work place (Ministry of Labour and Social Security [MLSS], 2014). Furthermore, problems such as replacements of colleagues and work place as well as perceived economic tension in the working places may affect psychological health of the employees negatively. So many factors such as job loss, increased work load, prolonged working hours, decreased wages may have a demolishing effect on workers (Kapar, 2012). Moreover, being exposed to different types of violence and discrimination in working places affects mental health of the workers negatively. It has been also reported that deterioration in mental health results in substance abuse (Grund & Schmitt, 2013; Kapar, 2012; Maclean, Webber & French, 2015; Xu, Gail & Jensen, 2012).

In addition to these, while employers take the physical health part of the workers seriously, they tend to disregard psychological problems since they are considered as personal problems (Csiernik, 2005). It has been also reported that even if observed less when compared to physical accidents in working places, these problems are in considerable size when analyzed with respect to their effects (Altuntas, 2010). The leading one of these problems is burnout syndrome (Aksu & Baysal, 2005; Wieskopf, 1980). Burnout is closely related with working conditions. That is because workers may feel worn out and tired emotionally when appropriate working conditions are not provided. This situation causes emergence of emotions such as psychological stress and weakness. Common stress sources can be listed as some problems namely uncontrollable demands related to excessive workload, monotonous and repetitive tasks, machine noise in the work place, negative attitudes in the work place, role conflicts and ambiguities in work place (Csiernik, 2005). Attempts aiming at eliminating these stress sources have been attached importance in many countries, where maximum care is given to leading a humane life and especially to the fact that employers should obey ethical rules (Celik, 2007). The primary one of these attempts in the world is employee assistance programs (EAPs). These programs have been applied in many parts of the world such as the USA, Canada, Britain, Belgium, France, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, South-East Asian islands, Russia, South Korea, China, Japan and South Africa (Burgess, Lennox, Sharar & Shtoulman, 2015; Cekiso & Terblanche, 2015; Choi, Lee & Park, 2015; Csiernik, 1999; Compton & McManus, 2015; Dias et al., 2015; Haring, Hudson, Erickson, Taualii & Freeman, 2015; Lapham, Mcmillan & Gregory 2003; Li, Sharar, Lennox & Zhuang, 2015; Murphy, 1995; Muto, Fujimori & Suzuki, 2004; Vansteenwegen, Sommer, Antonissen, Laneiro & Nunes, 2015).

EAPs is defined as a body of comprehensive services which not only contribute to the solutions of the problems faced in the work places but also of the personal life related problems. These services have many functional characteristics such as increasing job efficiency and satisfaction, increasing organizational loyalty, decreasing absenteeism, decreasing the disability to focus on the tasks, decreasing the mistakes and the rates of occupational accidents regarding workers (Csiernik, 2005).

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