



## **University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Exploring the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services in  
the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal: The perceptions of traffic officers**

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## **DECLARATION**

I do hereby declare that this research report entitled: “Exploring the utilization of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal: The perceptions of traffic officers”.

Is my own work and that as far possible all sources of information have been fully acknowledged.

.....  
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218077835  
April 2023

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Background**

It has been noted across the globe, especially in industrialised countries where many companies have invested in EAPs. Improving the conditions in a workplace remains on the agenda in most workplaces, including government. Sufficient literature and experts suggest that the relationship between employer and employee can be improved through Employee Assistance Programmes. The working conditions are such that traffic officers are exposed to trauma on the road. While stress is unavoidable, occupational stressors should be limited and support structures like EAP should be effective in equipping employees with coping mechanisms. The main concern in this study is that there is underutilisation of EAP services.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study was mainly at exploring the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. The specific objectives involved the exploration of the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in promoting their occupational wellness; examining the traffic officers' understanding of the EAP role in relation to their working conditions; examining the organisation's strategies enabling the traffic officers in coping with occupational- related challenges and provision of recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.

### **Methodology**

The study used the qualitative research approach. Data was collected from 28 traffic officers in the Department of Transport in Pietermaritzburg region. The sample was obtained using purposive sampling. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a voice recorder, and the data was analysed through thematic analysis.

### **Findings**

The findings of the study were presented in accordance with four main themes and the related subthemes. The themes are summarised as the shared knowledge of EAP, uncondusive working conditions, self-created mechanism and contributions by employees.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that EAP should be marketed to enhance the utilisation and address the myth of the programme. Channels of communication should be available for traffic officers to talk about challenges they face on the road.

**Key-words:** Perception, Employee Assistance Programmes, Job satisfaction, Ecological systems theory, Employee-wellness, Mental health & Counselling.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

The evolving sphere of working environment requires the involvement of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to maintain quality of productivity. This programme is regarded as a workplace strategy that addresses both personal and work-related issues that affect employees in the workplace (Joseph & Walker, 2017). EAPs serve organisations and their employees in a variety of ways, ranging from strategic consultation about issues with organisation wide implications to employees and family members experiencing personal difficulties (EAPA, 2015). Paul (2008) describes EAPs as, proven intervention strategies used by employers to reduce human capital risks and boost productivity, as well as communication methods that effectively engage employees to make good health care life- style decisions. In this regard, employees are helped to solve a variety of personal and work-related challenges that may affect work and therefore their performance. This kind of intervention could be viewed as not only focusing on the business responsibility but has ethical significance as well.

EAPs are therefore primarily concerned with interventions that promote effectiveness and consequently productivity in the workplace. Hence, examining the phenomenon, the Employee Assistance Programmes may be an essential strategy in maximising workplace productivity (EAPA-SA, 2010). Despite their critical role in the workplace, Employee Assistance Programmes do not have common meaning and are not practised unilaterally. In the South African context, for instance, the Standards Committee of Employee Assistance Professional Association of South Africa strives to simplify this conceptual challenge by defining the Employee Assistance Programme as “the company’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, 2010:1).

In trying to address the workplace-related challenges, South Africa as a country has implemented numerous programmes. As a result, the Department of Public Service and Administration in 2001, required all government sectors to establish and implement EAPs for the public service employees and their families. As a result, in 2001, the Department of Transport began implementing the programme in response to the mandate. However, this study was mainly informed by challenges related to the implementation of the Employee Assistance Programme amongst traffic officers in the Department of Transport. It is focused on investigating the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in the



KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. Determining these perceptions is viewed as likely to provide insight on their understanding and challenges so as to identify areas for enrichment of the programmes. Through this study, traffic officers were provided a platform to share their perceptions so as to voice their insight on the implementation of EAP in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

As indicated in the preceding section, two decades ago the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport introduced its EAP (Manganyi, 2016). Despite this notion and the enormous growth of the EAP services in this organisation, the departmental statistical information depicted the relatively low utilisation of the EAP services by traffic officers. The official report by Dr Coetzee also confirmed that, in the process of managing and ensuring the smooth flow of traffic on the roads, traffic officers are often exposed to traumatic experiences (Coetzee, 2017). Dr Coetzee is a service provider that was commissioned by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport to conduct wellness clinics and debriefing sessions for traffic officers, in order to address stress-related challenges within the department. Of concern is the view that the EAP, particularly its preventative focus, is viewed as essential in supporting the incumbents who are undertaking stressful responsibilities.

In this regard, the EAP is presumed to be relevant in the traffic law enforcement context. The limited participation by traffic officers in these programmes is evident despite various awareness programmes, and workshops conducted as a way of creating consciousness about the working environment and the available support measures. These limitations became instrumental in prompting the researcher's interest in conducting a study that elicited the perceptions of traffic officers about the utilisation of the EAP, as they are often the first persons to arrive at the scenes, a situation that makes them vulnerable to different traumatic experiences.

## **1.3 Background of the study**

An EAP-related study conducted among traffic officers in United States of America, found trauma as the prevalent challenge in the workplace (Violanti, 2013). From this study, it emerged that, the kind of trauma experienced by traffic officers while in the line of duty, has had significant impact on traffic officers physical and psychological functioning, and that, the more stress officers experienced, the worse the situation gets. Violanti (2013) found that, only 38% of traffic officers responded affirmatively on the question whether the job affects health, and stress in particular.

A significantly higher percentage of officers died from occupational death than the percentage of the United States general population in the same age group. Another study found that peer support is important to those who have experienced a traumatic event, it is also contended that, line managers and supervisors are important part of any support network as they are a source of support to those affected by trauma, but they also have the ability to influence team attitudes towards dealing with trauma, reducing stigma and encouraging those in need to seek help (Evans, Pistrang & Billings, 2013).

This study is located within the area of Employee Health and Wellness to focus on exploring the participants' perceptions on the implementation of the Employee Assistance Programme services amongst traffic officers in the Department of Transport. In 2001, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport introduced the EAP for all its employees as a workplace intervention strategy relatively new in the public sector in South Africa (Manganyi, 2015). There was a need to investigate the notion of Employee Assistance Programmes in the department, its relevance and what they intended to achieve, considering the stressful nature of the job that traffic officers particularly do.

A study of this nature is viewed as significant in the department particularly among traffic officers, as it determines perceptions about the implementation of the programme, considering that traffic officers are responsible for enforcing law and order on the roads and in the process, their lives are exposed to risks. They attend to obstructions and witness horrific accidents on the road, which contribute to traumatic experiences (General Provisions for the Employee Assistance Programme for the Department of Transport, 2001). The nature of their work tends to exert high level of stress, mainly because they are often first officials to arrive on the scenes in case of the accidents. It is, therefore, crucial for the EAP to intervene by providing counselling including debriefing sessions, to enable traffic officers to respond to road emergency appropriately.

The utilisation of the programme would ensure better working conditions for officers, the solving of challenges they face in the workplace, on the road and at home, and the provision of proper psychological counselling which is debriefing for trauma experience. In South Africa, traffic officers' services are only provided by the public service (Road Traffic Management Corporation Act, 1999). This could be viewed as posing a challenge of limited manpower and contributing to traffic officers in the transport sector being described as over stretched.

## **1.4 Aim and objectives**

### 1.4.1 Aim

The study was aimed at exploring the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.

### 1.4.2 Objectives

1.4.2.1 To explore the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in promoting their occupational wellness.

1.4.2.2 To examine the traffic officers' understanding of the EAP role in relation to their working conditions.

1.4.2.3 To provide recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

Based on the afore-mentioned information, the relevant research question for this study is formulated as follows:

Investigating the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programmes in the Traffic Department:

1.5.1 What are the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in promoting their occupational wellness?

1.5.2 What is the traffic officers' understanding of the EAPs role in relation to their working conditions?

1.5.3 What are the recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport?

## **1.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethics refers to a set of moral principles that concerns human conduct (Albertse, 2007). According to Burns and Grove (2000), ethics in research is about the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect participants' human rights and also has legal and moral aspects. The researcher wrote a letter to the Head of Department to apply for permission to conduct research in the Department (attached as Annexure D), she applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and approval was granted (attached Annexure E). Ethical issues that were observed in this study are identified as follows.

### **1.6.1 Voluntary participation**

This relates to the research ensuring that all participants were willing to participate in the study and research participants were not forced to be part of the study (Babbie, 2007). Those that participated in the study were free from any pressure to do so. They were assured that they were also free to withdraw, their participation at any time should they wish to do so and that they would not be jeopardised for refusing to participate or for withdrawal from the study.

### **1.6.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent is a necessary condition rather than a luxury in social research (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). These authors further indicated that, informed concern should include all the necessary information on the goal of the investigation, duration of participants involvement, procedures to be followed during the study and the possible advantages, disadvantages or dangers to which participants may be exposed. The researcher informed the participants about the study, the purpose and aim, so that they could make informed decisions about their participation in the study. They were also informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and they could terminate their participation at any time if they did not want to continue. The researcher obtained a gate keeper letter to access and conduct a study with traffic officers for Pietermaritzburg region.

### **1.6.3 Confidentiality**

It is the ethical protection for those who are being studied by holding research data in confidence or keeping it secret from the public (Lawrence & Neuman, 2014). As a way of maintaining confidentiality, it was essential for participants to be treated with confidentiality, as a result, no real names and physical addresses were used. The participants were also assured that the information would not be made available to or accessed by anyone but only to the researcher. Both raw data and findings would be kept in a safe place, in a lockable steel cabinet in the office.

### **1.6.4 Beneficence**

Beneficence means “to do good” and positively help a person, it is an action that is done to benefit others. It is an act of minimising the amount of harm that may result should any conflicts occur (EAPA-UK, 2014). Participants’ right not to be harmed was emphasised as they were being prepared to participate in the study. The researcher had the ethical duty to balance potential benefits against potential risk and to minimise potential risk to the greatest extent possible, thus safeguarding and protecting participants. The study is anticipated as not likely to

hurt anyone as it is viewed to help and benefit traffic officers and the Department of Transport in the long- term.

## **1.7 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Pilot & Beck, 2014). In each study, researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016).

### **1.7.1 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). It is regarded as similar to reliability in quantitative research, but with the understanding that stability of conditions depends on the nature of the study. It is also determined by the consistency of the study (Ulin, Robinson, Trolley & McNeil, 2002). To ensure the element of dependability, the research questions asked were clear and logically connected to the research design and objectives. The interviews were conducted in a manner that ensured the development of rapport with the participants and ensuring integrity of research processes. Additionally, questions that were likely to evoke ambiguous understanding were avoided, for instance, the double barrel questions.

### **1.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability involves the ability to generalise or transfer the findings of qualitative research to other settings. The researcher provided extensive and descriptive data on the methodology used as well as on the literature review on the perception of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services. To ensure the transferability of the results, the study adopted a thick description where several interviews were conducted, including the participants' work experiences which contributed to a rich database (Elo, Kanste, Utranien & Kyngas, 2014). However, Schunk and Fouché (2011) describe transferability as the means through which the researcher ensures that the findings of the study can be transferred from one specific situation to another. The researcher in this case, should demonstrate that the study's findings could be relevant in different settings and circumstances.

### **1.7.3 Confirmability**

Polit and Beck (2012), describe confirmability as referring to the objectivity of research during data collection and data analysis. There needs to be congruency between two or more independent persons about the accuracy. Confirmability also indicates a means to demonstrate

quality. It also implies that the findings of the study are solely based on the responses of the participants. The researcher used a recording device to ensure that the confirmability was achieved, whilst the researcher should avoid being biased when presenting the findings of the study.

#### **1.7.4 Credibility**

Credibility determines the extent to which a study result is reliable and relevant with specific regard to the extent of agreement between the interviewees and the interviewer (Creswell, 2014). The researcher ensured credibility by presenting the perspectives of the participants in the data analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, the researcher made sure to preserve persistence observation to get holistic details about the aspect of the phenomenon under the study. Thus, in this study findings are free from the researcher's judgement and biases.

#### **1.8 Value of the study**

This study explored the perceptions of EAP by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport traffic officers, with the view of improving the utilisation of EAP services to the beneficiaries thereof. Firstly, it served as a platform to fully examine the dilemmas and outcomes of the EAPs in the Department. By so doing, intersecting factors would be shared which have the potential to hinder and support the successful utilisation of the EAPs. Secondly, the findings of the study are likely to add value in the work performance of traffic officers and to contribute to enhancing their morale. Thirdly, it aims at enhancing the value of the programme, from the perspective of the primary beneficiaries. This process is essential in enhancing the programme in line with their needs. Fourthly, the study further intended to contribute to strengthening the early detection and appropriate referral systems, and in subsequently improving the management's ability to respond decisively to employees at risk and those who have been facing challenges. As a result, it intended to contribute to its utilisation by human resources or policymakers in making relevant and informed policies that help the Department to get buy-in and commitment from management.

#### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

The study aimed at exploring the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in the Department and included a limited number of participants. While the study managed to provide in-depth insight about this challenge, it could not provide the broadness of this challenge provincially and nationally. It would be beneficial to have a study that would

include more traffic officers to participate in order to attain a broader understanding of the problem at hand.

Secondly, the office assigned for the interviews was a room accessible to officers throughout their shift. On a few occasions an officer did not realise that the room was in use and walked into the room. This caused a temporary interruption in their interview for three of the participants.

Thirdly, the study sample was not representative of all the traffic officers as they were solicited from one region, Pietermaritzburg and from the participants who work day shifts. The majority of traffic officers studied were black and worked day shifts. Interviews were not held with those who worked night shifts. In this regard the study cannot be generalised to those from other regions and those who working night shifts and whose working conditions may be slightly different.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter addressed the introductory aspects of the study. The background of the project presented some dynamics of the South African labour market that presents a problem for officers. The writing has emphasised the nature of problem statement that drives this research where the use of EAPs among traffic officers was found to be less. This raises serious questions that require an investigation. The chapter also presented the aims and objectives of this research and ethical considerations. The following chapter will then draw on aspects of literature to conceptualise and develop a knowledge base by experts and their previous research. This would be a way of presenting the critical concept linking essential factors under the EAP process.

### **1.11 Structure of the study**

#### **Chapter 1: Orientation of the study**

This chapter involves a brief summary of the aspects involved in the study, the significance of the study, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study and the ethical considerations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter provides a review of the literature that the researcher accessed from other scholars in relation to factors influencing the underutilisation of EAPs within the Department among traffic officers.

## **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter covers the methods used in this study namely the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis in relation to research problems and objectives of the study.

## **Chapter 4: Data presentation and data analysis**

This chapter involves the analysis and the interpretation of data collected from the respondents.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter was the final stage of the study which describes the conclusions drawn from the interviews conducted with the respondents. Concluding remarks are made based on the key issues. Limitations of the study are outlined followed by the conclusion of the major finding of the study.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review undertaken in this study. Smith (2016) describes the literature review as an integral part of any research. It demonstrates a more organised way to present knowledge by others. Hence, there are a range of notions that make up any literature review, such as the requirement of synthesising information correctly, the use of critical thinking in the analysis of existing knowledge to spot gaps, and the illustration of an in-depth grasp of one's subject (Smith, 2016). In this study, the literature is presented in line with the objectives and covers three main focus areas, namely the historical development of EAP, conceptual understanding of EAP, and organisational-related coping strategies which will be discussed briefly below on the relationship between EAPs and human resources management.

This was done by examining of its historical perspectives to share its background across the globe. Again, the observations of the EAPs used by traffic officers internationally is later addressed in this literature by means of narratives regarding EAP utilisation in South Africa, to assist in the proper unveiling of the country's efforts for their employees in the traffic officer sector.

#### 2.2 Overview of literature review

##### 2.2.1 Historical development of EAP

The EAPs have had a long history of contributions made because of a decline in job performance of employees in the workplace. This history revealed traceable achievements in the world at large. The EAP was developed in the United States of America (USA) as an Occupational Alcoholism Programme (OAP) for employees that were provided assistance with alcohol-related issues, such as absenteeism, declining performance and the associated impairment of the labour force (Daniels, Teens & Carroll, 2005). Hence, the development of Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act (No. 81 of 1970) was an indication that the USA government formally acknowledged a national interest in addressing alcoholism as an illness through an EAP model.

Nonetheless, as issues at the workplace transformed and new challenges arose, the EAP expanded from an OAP to a programme to address all work-related problems because

alcoholism was obviously not the only problem experienced in the workplace. In some countries, EAPs and occupational social work are seen to be one and the same discipline, due to the overlapping tasks (Masi, 2000).

Occupational social work is known as a more specialised field of practice which addresses human, and social needs of the working community through diverse interventions that aim to foster optimal adaptation between individual and environment. Moreover, many countries like France, Germany, the Republic, Korea, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal and Sweden and Netherlands, the EAP concept is steadily growing and gaining momentum (Manganyi, 2015). For South Africa, the use of EAPs has its broad challenges and the following paragraph engages with EAPs in the country.

### **2.2.1.1 EAPs in South Africa**

Since the origin of the EAP concept in the United States, countries all around the world were modelling and duplicating this programme as was also the case in South Africa (Kenny, 2014). The development of EAPs within the South African context, Schoeman and Petzer (2005) state that during the 1980s, the EAP started in South Africa as a response to the problems that migrant workers encountered by being away from home in artificial settings. Manzini (2005) concurs with this, saying that the EAP was introduced to South Africa in the 1980s by social workers and psychologists who had studied the programme in the USA. South Africa like many other developing countries and internationally, is not unique with regard to problems in the workplace.

Nevertheless, historical injustices remain to have forced the gradual reorganisation and readjustment of the country, to accommodate such diversity. Many factors have facilitated the provision of EAP in the South African context ranging from the HIV/AIDS pandemic, violence, rising healthcare costs, the changes taking place in the health care system, the issues around labour laws, and businesses' obligation to help the government (Harper, 1999). However, Schoeman and Petzer (2005) add that the EAP was developed and established in the public sector due to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the workforce. Since 1980, the EAP has gained recognition in improving performance and productivity in South Africa.

Hence, the delivery of EAPs in South Africa originated in two precise areas, namely human welfare and people management. The Chamber of Mines made efforts to institute the first EAP in South Africa; the company hired a consultant to conduct a feasibility study on EAP for mineworkers internally (Pillay & Terblanche, 2012). During 1986, the concept of EAP was

accepted in the South African labour market, and two mining areas in the country received two programmes housed in their buildings (Pillay & Terblanche, 2012). According to Terblanche (1992), a working group of EAP was created under the auspices of the University of South Africa, which played a significant role in the evolution of EAP in South Africa. This group went on to be incorporated into the membership of the Institute for Personnel Management of Southern Africa (IPM). The entire process ended up with the establishment of a National EAP Committee that eventually elected officers in 1996 representing significant companies, tertiary institutions and social service agencies.

The group operated independently although it was under the central umbrella of the Institute for Personnel Management (IPM). This resulted in the group referred to above splitting totally from the Institute for (IPM), and this brought about the establishment of the South African Chapter of Employee Assistance Professional Association (EAPA) in 1997. The Standards Committee of Employee Assistance Professional Association -SA (EAPA-SA, 1999), states that March 1996 was the exact month and year for the formation of the first board for the committee. The views of Manganyi (2015), stipulate that the major essential purpose of EAPA-SA is to bring about professionalism to this emerging EAP field in the country. Therefore, such engagement was possible through the development of a Standards Document, and an Ethics Document that is to be used by both the EAP practitioners, and other professionals involved in worker relations.

Similarly, the Public Service Commission EAP Evaluation Report (2006) conveyed that, the central purpose for the implementing of the EAP in the SA Public Service is to deal with various employment problems such as stress, conflict management and personal problems. It is important to note that this was long before HIV and AIDS became known, and years before the transformation imperatives generated a broader range of workplace problems to solve.

Notwithstanding, the report further stated that EAPs original introduction was to deal with various problems encountered by public servants which have a direct bearing on productivity in the workplace including, among other things: substance abuse, mental and personal relationship problems, employee conflict in the workplace, personnel development, dealing with disease, and the need for counselling. Due to the South African political history counselling services are mostly run by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), and the emphasis on primary mental health services is high. Some companies still feel strongly about involving primary mental health coordinators in dealing with problems experienced by employees, such as trauma debriefing and depression. One would therefore still find that

employers would use service providers such as the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA), Lifeline, and The South African National Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse (SANCA) for specialised services. SANCA has encouraged the development of counselling services for alcohol dependant employees by emphasising and publicising most importantly the hidden costs of alcohol abuse to organisations and that alcoholism is a treatable condition (Du Plessis in Maiden, 2001).

Moreover, due to South African political history, an EAP often plays a role in encouraging trends, such as moving from an authoritarian culture to a more participative one, from an exclusive to an inclusive style, from secrecy to transparency, from withholding to empowering, and a culture of ownership and belonging. However, the purpose of implementing an EAP by South African organisations is to help employees to address or deal with their problems which include, but not limited to, personal and work-related problems which negatively affect employees' job performance.

Watkins (1997) indicates that, EAPs in any organisation provide guidance and creativity in maintaining and motivating people who make the organisation work, as it develops new programmes and services to deal with organisational and personal problems. In South Africa, there is no EAP Act, to ensure the uniformity of implementing the EAP in all spheres of work. Terblanche (1998) affirms this that there is no specific EAP Act but states that provisions are made for EAP regulations in various other Acts of the country.

#### **2.2.1.2 EAPs as a broad-brush approach**

Traditionally, EAPs were primarily focused on alcoholism programmes (Bophela & Govender, 2015). This was the approach that was difficult to address the needs of the employees and the organisation since it was focusing on one problem which was alcohol. Traditional EAPs were one sided approach it was only focus on employees with alcohol habit. This means that, management focus was on business and productivity, failing to behave at work disciplinary procedures were taken followed by dismissal. It also failed to address stigma, no support from company. As a result of its limitations, traditional EAP tend to suffer from very low utilisation. As the workplace became more aware of the needs of employees, the design of the EAP developed in such a way that it met all the needs of the employees in the workplace. The EAP as a broad-brush approach was adopted by many companies. The involvement of counselling in EAPs plays a huge role at work place as it encourages employees who are faced with challenges. It is a good intervention that is intended to change an employee behaviour voluntarily. Though the advantages of the EAPs can be hard to see at the first glance, after

decades of scientist evaluating programs, the data provides a great outlook on reasons to have worksite programme. The disadvantages of this approach are the absence of support and buy-in by the management. EAPs work well as a broad-brush in the field of law enforcement. It can increase work organisational effectiveness and public safety. Traffic officers' work environment has many occupational challenges or stressors that can be a leading cause of incapacity leave and sickness absence, this can actually lead to officers getting leave without pay and EAPs together with Human Resource personnel can assist officers getting special leave in the case of an emergency. In general, the evolution of the EAP in the organisation has reinforced the human nature of organisational assistance and reduced stigma associated with mental health and addiction.

The basic characteristic of the broad-brush approach is that, it focuses on the job performance of the employee, with the assistance provided to all employees with deteriorating work performance regardless of the cause of the problem. EAPs and management can work together to create an environment that is conducive in the workplace of officers, by allowing wellness awareness workshops to be conducted on issues affecting employees on a daily basis. This approach also accommodates officers' families as they are the most traumatised unit since they live with traumatised officers who are experiencing trauma on a daily basis, it also accepts family referral when requesting psychological intervention for the officer concerned.

In addition, Sandy (2015) emphasises that the current approach of EAP is more holistic in such a way that it includes amongst others, the emotional, physical psychological, familial and organisational impact on an employee's performance.

### **2.2.1.3 Reasons for implementing the EAP**

There are number of reasons for implementing the programme within the workplace. Organisations and departments have introduced this programme for the benefit of the employer, employees and their dependents, to enhance productivity, address absenteeism and presenteeism, promote health and self-responsibility, which aim at increasing working commitment and loyalty in the work place. Among other things, it compels organisations to be proactive in engaging with employees in relation to attending employee problems. Implementation helps the organisations to be proactive rather than being reactive.

Furthermore, EAPs have elements, such as management endorsement which is important for the programme to be known at work. Management has to play a leading role in advocating the programme, to talk about it in their meetings and support all the services rendered by the

programme, refer employees whenever the need arises. Union endorsement is crucial to popularise it since employees believe in their union representatives. The programme must be accessible to all employees for them to own it to boost their morale and decrease stigma to those who perceive employees using the programme as weak and has seen them as failing in life. In addition, there are challenges during the implementation of the programme that can make it to fail, such as lack of support and commitment from management and supervisors, delays in referrals or none at all. It has therefore, important for the managers to be committed to the ultimate objective of the programme namely, to assist employees whose performance is being impaired. It is important that managers, supervisors, unions and family of the employees should be fully informed about the existence of the programme, benefits of the services, what the programme entails, principles of confidentiality and the issue of discrimination or stigmatisation must be well addressed during the marketing process (EAPA-SA, 2010).

Failure to manage confidentiality of cases would hamper utilisation of the programme, hence it is important for the case manager to be familiar with and be professional regarding his or her intervention when helping employees. There are positive benefits in utilising the programme, it helps employees to improve health and creates a sense of belonging at work and builds cohesiveness amongst employees, whereas union involvement in the programme helps to protect its members from punitive measures which can lead to disciplinary action.

Consequently, there is a benefit in management where practitioners conduct management training about the EAP, equipping them with knowledge on how to refer employees to the programme, intervention techniques and symptoms to notice when an employee is not performing well at work. Further to that, the EAP has benefits for both the employee and the employer such as, managing employees who may be experiencing emotional, behavioural and wellness issues, enhancing the work environment, and improving employee job performance.

### **2.2.2 Conceptual understanding of Employee Assistance Programmes**

Departments and organisations are becoming more aware of issues relating to employee health and wellness in the workplace, this has been shown by the show of interest by public organisations to integrate employee assistance programme with employers' responsibilities. However, Naicker and Fouché (2003:25), define EAP as a "professional assessment, referral and/or short-term counselling service offered to employees with alcohol, drug or mental health problems that may be affecting their work performance". Furthermore, it is described "as a method of intervention that focuses on the decline of job performance, not on the nature of the

employee's problem to restore the worker to full productivity" (Fouché, 2003:25). Like most therapeutic treatments, EAPs are believed to help those in psychological distress.

Furthermore, EAPs are an effective mental health resource that employers can utilise to improve mental well-being of employees while reducing risk associated with absenteeism, presenteeism and job satisfaction (Attridge, Sharar, DeLapp & Veder 2018; Joseph, Boerner & Murphy 2017). Similarly, EAPA-SA (2010:1) defined EAP as "the work organisation's resource, based on core technologies or functions to enhance employees and workplace effectiveness through prevention, identification and resolution of personal and productivity issues". The EAPA-SA core technology that pertains to this research study is the essential role and implementation of EAPs towards effectively improving employee wellbeing and productivity.

### **2.2.2.1 The Objectives of the Employee Assistance Programmes**

EAPs are implemented in organisations with a specific purpose and objectives in mind. According to Rajin (2012), there are three sets of objectives that employers intend to achieve, namely to:

- (i) conform to the obligations and common law duty of care;
- (ii) provide and support the wellbeing of employees
- (iii) provide and support the wellbeing of employees, and
- (iv) retain employees and improve production.

Among other things, the primary goal of an EAP is to provide help for troubled employees and their family members (Chiabotta, 1987). This help is in the form of problem identification, needs assessment, referral and follow-up services and education.

Traditionally, employers were not interested in the personal problems experienced by employees in the workplace, they were only interested in production as per the policy requirement of the organisation. As a result, employees felt that their employers were disinterested in their well-being (Ranjin, 2012). According to Dickman, Challenger, Emener & Hatchison (1988), four goals have been identified in an EAP. These goals involve; firstly, identifying the employees whose personal, health or work problems are interfering with their job performance. Secondly, discover the motivation of the troubled employees to seek and accept appropriate help. Thirdly, assisting both managers and employees in achieving productivity. Lastly, addressing the underlying stressors in the workplace.

In essence, an EAP is not a service that employers can use to facilitate the dismissal of a troubled employee but is a structure that an organisation can use to serve the needs of such employees. Its implementation demonstrates to employees that their employer or organisation cares about them and is willing to go the extra mile.

#### **2.2.2.2 Elements of EAPs**

Elements of the EAP contribute towards the understanding of what is needed in such programmes, and what are the crucial ingredients that help to ensure the success of the programme (Pace, 2006). These include the following

- **Management endorsement**

It is crucial for management to endorse the programme and what is sets out to do. Active involvement at the highest level of management of the organisation will determine whether the programme will be successful or not. They are expected to endorse the programme in their meetings, supervisor training and to offer training sessions of the employees of the organisation.

- **Employee and Union endorsement**

It is crucial for these bodies to endorse the programme. Organised labour and employees must participate in these programmes, without union support the programme may be viewed with fear, suspicion and resistance. To ensure support in the organisation proper consultation processes should take place among all parties concerned.

- **Voluntary participation**

The programme services should be free of any form of coercion. Employees must not be compelled to attend the programme even though they may be using the services, they have a right to disengage when they want to. Management should not under any circumstances threaten an employee if he/she does not feel comfortable to voluntarily use the programme.

- **Confidentiality and privacy**

The element of confidentiality refers to the ethical duty of a member to safeguard information entrusted to them by clients with whom they have a professional relationship (EAPA-SA, 2010). This includes the obligation to protect information from unauthorised access. Furthermore, confidentiality with regard to the programme is integral to its success. The programme is designed to assist employees to manage stressors before they become a major



factor in work place performance. Whether or not the particular issue has impacted work performance, people are often concerned that the employer's knowledge of the problem's existence could in some ways jeopardise their job (EAPA-SA, 2010).

Without confidentiality and privacy, the EAP would lose credibility as the employer would be reluctant to utilise the programme. When employees are referred to the programme, there is a level of expectation the employee might have in terms of keeping the secret safe. Maintaining the confidentiality of what is discussed during the session with the employee, is one of the most important principles of the employee assistant practitioner's work. Furthermore, the employee can provide consent in writing on when and how to disclose the confidential information.

- **Professional staff**

This refers to the programme staff's ability, knowledge and delivery of appropriate and effective services, they need to have been trained and possess the knowledge pertaining EAPs and have access to resources with regard to employee concerns. Professional staff should represent the area of practice in the employee assistance profession by showing respect, being professional and being accountable and responsible for any action taken while assisting. An important function of the EAP is referring employees to appropriate resources. Three avenues by which employees enter the programme are discussed below.

### **2.2.2.3 EAP referral measures**

Employee access EAP for many different reasons, however referral is highly dependent upon effective assessment in that one cannot refer an employee without a proper understanding of the problem (EAPA-SA, 2005). These referrals are voluntary or self-referrals, informal referrals and formal referrals.

- **Self-referral**

In this type of referral, an employee may choose to use the EAP independently, some may have job performance problems, but they have sought out the EAP before involving the supervisor. This is a good action for the employee to help himself or herself however, the disadvantages of this referral is that, the employee might not want to be referred for help because his personal reasons that he does not want the supervisor or family member to know about the problem.

- **Informal referral**

This approach can occur when there is no pattern of deteriorating work performance, but a friend, colleague, family member and union representatives are aware that an employee is

experiencing some kind difficulty in his/her personal life. For example, an employee may confide to these peoples that he/she is having personal problems, this gives the opportunity for the employee to be reminded of the EAP. The disadvantages of this referral would be the fact that confidentiality is compromised as people knows about his or her problem. This form of referral is not based on disciplinary action.

- **Formal referral**

This type of referral takes place when there is a pattern of deterioration of work performance and the supervisor should promptly refer an employee at an early stage of the problem, and this should be done before the disciplinary action. Formal referral to the programme allows a supervisor to fulfil his or her responsibilities in addition it affords employees the opportunity to get the assistance needed (Van Wyk, 2015). This approach helps in reducing the negative impact on work performance of the employee. Despite that, the disadvantages of this referral is when the supervisor does not want to refer the employee with a hope that, he or she will change the behaviour. This worsened the situation and deteriorate the condition of the employee.

#### 2.2.2.4 Utilisation of EAP

When the organisation rolls out the EAP, it benefits the organisation as a whole. In this regard, the employer and the employee become the main beneficiaries to gain from the EAP. The support that is offered by the employer to employees can through EAP benefit those who utilise the programme. Sieberhagen, Els, & Piennar (2011), outlined the benefit the organisation derives from the EAPs and Employee Wellness Programmes (EWP s).

**Table 2.3 Benefits through EAP and EWP**

Increased mental wellness	Reduced absenteeism
Increased energy	Increased presenteeism
Life and job satisfaction	Improved industrial relations
Reduced stress	Increased employee performance productivity
Reduced depression	Reduced health care costs
	A reduction in accidents

*Source: Adapted from Sieberhagen et al., (2011)*

However, benefit of using the programme will assist officers by increasing mental wellness and energy to be fit while taking decisions on the road. In the absence of stress and depression, the department will have happy performing employees in the workplace.

It is, therefore, important for the organisation to encourage employees to utilise EAPs for it to achieve its objectives.

#### **2.2.2.5 Value of an EAP**

The value of an EAP is mostly determined by normalising the reactions employees display after a critical incident and improved psychosocial functioning of the individual, which means that the focus is on displaying less symptomatic discomfort. Effectiveness of an EAP in this regard is also measured in terms of restoring and stabilising the organisation's employee officer to be fully functional and productive in the quickest possible time (Attridge & VandePol, 2010). There is, however, evidence from the literature that EAP intervention in terms of critical incidents is effective (Attridge & VandePol, 2010). Critical incident stress response refers to an integrated, comprehensive, multi-component crisis intervention approach for addressing the psychological consequences of critical incidents. For over past 25 years a general model of the Critical Incident Response (CIR) group debriefing has been developed that can be used to accelerate recovery from traumatic workplace events' (VandePol, 2006). The National Institute of Mental Health (2002) states that "Early debriefing and focused psychotherapeutic intervention can reduce stress in bereaved spouses, parents, and children". On the other hand, that is not a debate anymore, is that the use of Comprehensive, Integrative, Multi-component crisis intervention System (CIMS) or other kinds of psychological early interventions cannot successfully prevent the experience of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). CIMS is considered comprehensive because it consists of multiple crisis-intervention components, which functionally span the entire temporal spectrum of a crisis.

Robinson (2004) mentioned that it is a multi-component approach to employee support that incorporates education, individual support, group meetings, organisational consultation, family support, and referral and follow up. EAPs strive to improve employee productivity and organisational performance. According to Holton (2006), the results of the exclusive return on investment study conducted among wellness managers in America, workplace wellness programmes improve employee morale, reduce company health care costs and increase productivity.

An employee assistance workgroup (EAP workgroup) was established in 2007 in Washington to develop recommendations for improving the coordination and integration of EAPs, as well as examining best practices and evidence-based approaches to design and deliver effective EAPs (Rothermel, Slavitt, Marlo & Dan, 2008). EAPA-SA (2010), incorporated this approach by developing certain core technologies and standards as a way of providing a benchmark for

employee assistance practice; encouraging the establishment of quality employee assistance programmes; relating the scope of EAP services; operationalising programme standards and guidelines; and lastly educating the work-place community on EAP services to enhance the quality and the functioning of existing employee assistance programmes.

However, Mercer (2007) stated that EAPs are aligned with the overall health and productivity strategy and can perform a critical role in identifying individual and organisational risk factors that may decrease performance. In relation to this, the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA), introduced the Employee Health & Wellness Strategic Framework (EHWSF) for the Public Service in November 2008, to be used on the EAPs education for employees in the workplace which consists of the Health and Productivity Management Policy (HPM), for non-communicable disease including Chronic Disease of lifestyle occupational injuries and diseases, which are increasingly becoming main contributors to high burden of disease.

For this purpose, the Public Service Act, 103 of 1995, requires the Head of a Government Department to create and maintain a safe working environment for employees. Part 6 Section F provides for a Head of Department to introduce, for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of any health promotion programme among departmental employees. From these mentioned provisions, the Act guarantees workplace wellness and requires heads of departments to put in place wellness and Employee Assistance Programmes for employees to deal with employees' problems in their jobs.

#### **2.2.2.6 Legal issues on EAPs**

EAPs deal with issues involving mental health, employee discipline and confidentiality, employers that provide EAP services must be aware of legal concerns surrounding those services. This involves mandatory referrals, a formal, mandatory referral to an EAP (as opposed to a voluntary referral in which the employee chooses to seek the EAP's help) should almost always occur with the employee's consent. In extreme cases in which a formal referral may be warranted, employers must make certain that the employee has a documented performance problem in addition to appearing to be depressed, suicidal or potentially hostile (Matlhape, 2003). In the case of formal or supervisory referrals, employers typically discuss their perceptions of the work performance problems with the EAP counsellor on the front end (although not necessarily in front of the employee). With a signed release from the employee, the EAP would later be able to provide the employer with limited feedback about the individual's attendance, compliance and prognosis. When issues arise about potential

workplace violence, an employer has the option of not permitting the individual to return to work without a "fitness for duty" certification from a licensed health care practitioner.

Employers should be cautious about using the threat of termination to force an employee to attend mandated counselling. If the employer makes such a threat, the employee might then claim disability discrimination based on a perceived mental disability. The employee might also be able to claim invasion of privacy or the misuse of confidential medical information (Matlhape, 2003). Moreover, the Metrics and Reporting process that allows the measuring of the usefulness and value of an EAP can prove tricky. Many employers do not even try to measure whether EAPs are worth the money. Since this is so, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that "all of the published studies indicate that EAPs are cost-effective." Hence the U.S. Department of Labour reports that for every dollar invested in an EAP, employers generally save between \$5 to \$16. Alternatively, the use rate reporting which is the most calculated measurement of EAP performance measures how much employees are using EAP services. But this measurement has no consistent definition, and little research has been done on EAP benchmarking, so linking the use rate to the employer's business goals is difficult. Employers should look not only at the EAP's use but also at indicators such as the number of employees and dependent cases opened, follow-up services provided, employee education programmes, and management training programmes. Employers should also look at EAP services not related to individual cases, such as consultations with workgroups or debriefings to alleviate stress after critical incidents (Matlhape, 2003).

Customisable reports touch many employers reporting dissatisfaction with their EAP use reports and the need to reformat those reports for internal use. Most often, EAP use reports are merely operational metrics, providing little value to the purchaser and offering little insight into the value or outcomes of the programme. Nevertheless, to remedy these shortcomings, EAP reports should be customised for the end user, provide useful operational metrics and measure the variables that matter to the employer, such as clinical outcomes, the EAP's influence on productivity, and the EAP's impact on disability and health care costs. The bottom line is that EAP providers should be required to validate the efficacy and results of their programmes and services. Additionally, the employer should require its providers to demonstrate the usefulness of the services provided based on both quantitative measures (such as outcome-based survey tools) and qualitative information (such as case studies) (Matlhape, 2003).

### **2.2.2.7 Relationship between EAP and Human Resource Management (HRM)**

The EAP and HRM share a critical role to provide employee assistance within the organisation, hence there is a common desire to aid employers and employees to resolve problems. In this regard, discrepancies can occur when different points of view to a problem are left unresolved. Willis (2018) describes Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) as a “product of organizational efforts to recover from global issues of financial crisis and chronic medical ailment”. HRM has to understand issues faced by the employees in the department and back them up with strategies that would enhance productivity. In light of the above, HR managers within the department are expected to keep in mind that, they are required to adopt a proactive approach rather than a reactive one in creating a conducive and flexible environment to achieve service delivery. However, the relationship between EAP and HRM is important to mitigate challenges of employees and propose strategies that would assist the department at large. As Willis (2018) asserts the elements guiding human resource management are mostly influenced by regulatory compliance as opposed to those applicable to EAPs which promote life improvement.

Furthermore, in order for the EAP to be more strategic, it must be in line with HR policies and be able to report its work on a higher level of the department. HR managers are facing a variety of challenges that came with globalisation and technology. With the challenges that came in with new technology, accidents in the workplace which cost departments a lot of money, employees with emotional problem, legal issues, family problems and financial issues forces HRM and EAP to work hand in hand with the purpose of creating coping strategies for employees in the workplace. The intention of EAPs working together with HRM is to help employees with coping strategies such as employee satisfaction, training on trauma, and prevention workshops like financial wellness training, maintaining healthy lifestyles, alleviating stress levels, decision making for the department to be successful.

Therefore, HRM has to refer employees who have productivity problems, and issues such as absenteeism rates, sick leave, and trauma, domestic violence to EAP services to prevent complications that negatively affect work performance. It has become imperative that HRM has to impart organisational culture and ethics a place in line with its policies. EAPs provide confidential support services on a wide range of issues that can impact on the individual employee and his job performance.

EAP's relationship with human resources management is crucial. Blair (1985) emphasises that the relationship between the EAP and the Human Resource Management is critical for the effectiveness of the programme. This relationship involves many complex issues and requires alternative methods of dealing with them such as ethical hazards that may damage the reputation of the department as well as its image. Although both EAP and HRM share a common desire to aid employers and employees to resolve issues left unresolved. EAPs provide confidential support services on a wide range of issues that can impact individual employees and job performance.

#### **2.2.2.8 EAP and management within the public sector**

The Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA, 2008) states that, the Head of Department should allocate adequate human and financial resources to implement health promotion programmes and where appropriate form partnerships with other departments, organisations and individuals who are able to assist with promotional health programmes. The DPSA further recommends that, management support is crucial in ensuring the realisation and utilisation of the programme and communication of the version of the programme at different levels within the Department. It is expected that managers should make use of the EAP by monitoring, supporting, and guiding employees to use the programme. They have the role of identifying those employees with un-acceptable behaviour and those who are under-performing, make the programme accessible to the organisation. Management should ensure that they invite the EA practitioner to their meeting and give a slot on the agenda to market the programme. According to Blair (1985), the EAP's relationship with Human Resource Management emphasises that the relationship between EAPs and the Human Resource Management (HRM) is critical for the effectiveness of the programme. This relationship involves many complex issues and requires alternative methods of dealing with them.

#### **2.2.2.9 Legislative framework**

The employer in any organisation in the country has a social responsibility to assist employees with challenges they are facing in the workplace. The South African legislative framework clearly outlines the protection of employees' rights in the workplace in both public and private sectors (Pezer & Schoeman, 2005).

##### **(i) The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides a framework for human rights, employment, labour relations and good practice. It also provides a framework for legislation in this regard. Chapter two of The Bill of Rights in the Constitution outlines rights, such as human

dignity, equality and freedom. According to Section 23 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to fair labour practice. When interpreting this section in relation to the EAP, it can imply that it is improper to dismiss an individual as a result of deterioration in job performance without proper analysis of the circumstances.

**(ii) Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993)**

Section 24 (a) of the Constitution states, among others, that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his/her health or wellbeing. Section 27 (1) (a) of the Constitution further states that everyone has a right to health care services. Section 18 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, states that health and safety representatives must be appointed in the workplace, among others their duties are to identify potential hazards and major incidents at the workplace and to make recommendations to the employer regarding the minimising or elimination of such hazards. The EAP is a subsection in the Human Resource Directorate, developed in the workplace to ensure that these rights are realised although health and safety aspects are covered by this Act.

**(iii) The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998)**

The Employment Equity Act is aimed at addressing the socio-political and economic imbalances for the past through the promotion of equal opportunities, the elimination of unfair discrimination in the workplace and the implementation of affirmative action to redress past injustices. The recognition of the right of employment for disabled people by the Employment Equity Act extends the functions of the EAP to accommodate people with disabilities and to ensure that support programmes are in place. In the context of an EAP, the introduction of the support programme protects employees against unfair discrimination based on family responsibility, ethical or social origin, HIV status and HIV, drug and alcohol testing.

**(iv) The Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995)**

This Act promotes and regulates the right to fair labour practice outlined in the Constitution. Sections 9 and 10 protect employees whose performance is managed due to poor performance and incapacity. The Act also emphasises that rights of employees need to be protected. In this regard, the employer would need to ensure that all measures are explored in assisting employees to address performance-related matters short of dismissal.



It requires the employer to ascertain the extent of the incapacity and to supply reasonable accommodation such as light duties whereas alternate placement must be explored. The Act promotes the establishment of workplace forums, which serve as an ideal structured platform for engagement between employees and employers. Sieberhagen, Rothmans and Pienaar (2009) present that EAP issues could significantly be addressed through these established workplace forums, and these mechanisms provide for constructive measures to address workplace issues.

#### **2.2.2.10 Role of the EAP within the Department of Transport**

The role of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is intended to assist employees and their families with personal issues (Richmond, Pampel, Wood & Nunes, 2017). The programme offers problem-assessment services that are confidential, relevant and timely, and referral and follow-up facilities to health care providers. In any organisation, the primary aim of these facilities is to help employees find a balance between their employment, family and other personal obligations (Attridge, 2018). However, the General provisions for the Employee Assistance Programme for the Department of Transport (2001), highlighted that the role of EAP within the Department is to assist official with any personal or social problem, such as alcohol and drug dependency or occupational stress, that has an adverse effect on the efficiency and productivity of such official, as well as his or her job satisfaction. It provides the official with support, guidance and access to counselling or treatment that may solve the official's personal or social problem and improve his or her work performance and quality of life, whilst at the same time increasing the Department's effectiveness.

There is service delivery model in EAP that explains the manner in which the programme services will be rendered, the department used one them for service delivery. According to the Standards Committee of EAPA-SA (2015), the following should be considered by an organisation when selecting an appropriate delivery method, namely office space, administrative support, confidentiality as well as legal compliance in terms of storing documentations and accessibility to outside resources. There are two type of integrated service delivery models namely the internal/ in-house model and external/off site model. The Department of Transport was using the in-house model where professional wellness practitioner was implementing the programme, works with supervisors and self-referrals. It should be noted that, to participate in the programme is voluntary and it does not impact officials' job performance. An official may gain access to and participate in the EAP by approaching the Departmental EAP practitioner, by way of self-referral, informal referral and formal referral. The EAP practitioner must deal with the official in an impartial and

professional manner and must be concerned primarily with safeguarding and improving the well-being of the official. The EAP practitioner must, in assisting the official, consider any situation from both the Department's and the official's point of view and should put neither view at risk. Participation in the EAP is voluntary and must be kept confidential.

The EAP help manage HIV/AIDS cases, raising awareness, training of officials, provide knowledge on voluntary counselling and testing, treatment and support services to improve productivity (Pillay & Terblanche, 2012). In terms of self-referral, an official immediate supervisor may only be informed of an official's participation in the EAP if the official agrees in writing that his or her supervisor may be informed of such participation. Participation in the EAP will not, under any circumstances be held against an official or jeopardise the official's promotional opportunities and or job security. Any information disclosed by an official during participation in the EAP, regarding his or her personal or social problem, is confidential and may not be disclosed to anyone without the official's written consent (General provisions for the Employee Assistance Programme for the Department of Transport, 2001).

Where an official has given his or her consent for the disclosure of information, the information may only be disclosed to the person named in the written consent if it will not cause substantial harm to the official or the relationship between the official and the Departmental EAP practitioner and, the information disclosed cannot exceed that which is absolutely necessary to accomplish the purpose for which it is disclosed (General provisions for the Employee Assistance Programme for the Department of Transport, 2001). Records regarding an official participation in the EAP shall not become part of official's personnel records and must be kept in a confidential and secure filing system by the EAP practitioner.

The General Provisions for the Employee Assistance Programme for the Department of Transport, (2001) affirms that, an official's immediate supervisor must ensure that the official is aware of and understands the provisions of the EAP procedures and what is expected of him or her in terms of job performance and working habits. If an official is of the view that he or she has been unfairly treated regarding these procedures, he or she has the right to follow the relevant grievance procedures in order to settle the dispute. In addition, during the counselling session, if recommendations emerged such as refer an employee externally, the practitioner would ensure that the employee receives the services.

### **2.2.2.11 Principles of the EAP in the Department of Transport**

The Department of Transport EAP Policy statement (2001) states that Employee Assistance Programme will endeavour to work in accordance with the EAP Principles towards delivering a service that is, Neutral, Accessible, Timeous, Voluntary, Free from Prejudice, Equal and Dignified, Confidential, Protected against Abuse and Balanced. The EAP should recognise the employees' right to privacy, and employees using the programme should be given assurance of the above principles. It is evident that, the Department of Transport deemed it necessary to develop general provisions of the programme, implementing it, as it is the intervention strategy intended to promote, create awareness of wellness issues. It allows employees to take charge of their life responsibilities and promotes wellbeing in their life. It also seeks to provide and produce a favourable environment for all employees of the Department.

Although the use of EAP is confidential, HR still needs to be involved with EA practitioners as an important stakeholder within the programme. No information obtained from or about the employee as a result of his/her participation in the EAP shall be made available to be used for any purpose. HR has a responsibility to educate managers and supervisors about the value of the programme. All records and discussions regarding an employee personal problem is handled in a confidential manner. As stated above, confidentiality is the main concern in any working organisation when helping employees who have problems. Some do not want their supervisors to know that they have problems. It is, therefore, the duty of HR to remind employees about the programme and that services are completely confidential.

### **2.2.3 Perceptions of traffic officers about EAP services**

This research's objective sought to identify the perceptions of officers about EAP services in facilitating occupational wellness. Bell (2006), indicates that an EAP can have all the cutting-edge programmes, but this does not matter if no one knows about them. However, this simply means that if employees do not know about the existence of the programme, it cannot be utilised adequately and thus its impact on the organisation might not be visible. According to EAPA-SA (2011), there are a number of factors which determine employers' and employees' awareness of EAPs in the workplace. These factors are, stigma, confidentiality issue, fear of not knowing what would happen after they have opened up to the programme, trust and professionalism in handling the issues. Stigma and confidentiality relate to their concern as to what would happen after they have reported the problem and, what would happen to his or her job after opening up to the programme.

Another concern was the trust issue, since they were not familiar with the programme, they would like to know if management has access to their files in the EAP office. Some perceive the programme as a management tool to discipline them. Therefore, it became clear that the programme is not marketed well within or among officers. However, marketing is identified as the one of the core technologies of EAP, which determines awareness of the programme. It emphasises how the programme works, who can be referred to the programme and who are the important stakeholders of the programme for it to be successful.

Officers revealed that, they have developed a tendency to share their challenges among themselves rather than reporting it at work. Some employees perceived it would stigmatise employees who consulted the EAP and perceive them as weak. As a result they preferred to share their problems with their family members and pastors in the church for spiritual wellness. In the challenging high-risk traffic-environment, traffic officers rely on this higher power for the protection of the self, family and different road users who are all at risk of accidents and dangerous incidents (Mushwana, 1998).

Similar to awareness, employees' perceptions about the EAP is determined by a variety of factors in the workplace. Raising awareness of EAP amongst the organisation's staff is one of the biggest challenges. Yacoob and Sipon (2014) determine perceptions of employees towards the use of EAP by means of four factors: self-stigma, social stigma, emotional openness and anticipated risk and utility.

#### **2.2.4 EAP utilisation by international traffic police/law enforcement officers**

Officer Health and Organizational Wellness (2017), commented that, in the United States of America, the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, formed the national Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) group in 2011 to bring attention to the safety and wellness needs of law enforcement officers following a number of high-profile ambushes on police.

Since 2011, the OSW Group has raised awareness, increased knowledge, and encouraged law enforcement agencies to adopt practices that recognize that a law enforcement agency's most valuable resources are the men and women who put their lives on the line every day in the name of protecting and serving their communities. For this reason, it is critical that the COPS Office and BJA- with support from U.S. Department of Justice leadership promote the best

possible information to keep the nation's law enforcement officers safe on the job. According to the Officer Health and Organizational Wellness (2017), law enforcement officers are exposed to risks every day. Some of these risks are reported to be obvious, such as assaults on officers, vehicle accidents and injuries in the line of duty, whereas the effects of stress, cardiovascular disease, depression and suicide may not be visible, but they can have fatal consequences.

Employee Assistance Programmes were introduced to address issues that affect law enforcement officers in the workplace including their family members. Officer Health and Organizational Wellness (2017) further emphasises the role of EAPs must ensure that they understand the nature of work, culture, and stressors of the job to best serve the needs of law enforcement personnel. It is further emphasised that EAPs must deal with injury prevention, which is officer fitness, obesity, post-traumatic stress, suicide, mental health and substance abuse.

In the United Kingdom, police officers are commonly considered to be a high-risk group for the development of mental health disturbances because of the various critical incidents and potential traumatic events they encounter during their career. These so-called operational stressors, such as witnessing the death of children, confrontations with victims of sexual harassment, serious traffic accidents, suicide and experiencing violence, might increase the risk of symptoms of anxiety, hostility and fatigue. A minority may develop mental disorders, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), (Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017). According to section 1 of the Occupational Health and Safety and Law Enforcement, World Health Organization (WHO) emphasized that health and safety of law enforcement should promote physical, mental and social wellbeing considering the fact that Law Enforcement personnel routinely face on the job health and safety threats such as criminal assault, high stress situations and exposure to HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

In the United States, the Occupational Health Safety and Health Act 1970 (OSH ACT) created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (OSHA) to provide occupational health regulations for private sector and federal government employees. Programs such as Physical Fitness programs, Stress Management programs, Economic programs, and Employee Assistance Programs can be introduced to address personal or professional problems adversely affecting the employees' well-being.

### **2.2.5 EAP utilisation by South African traffic police/ law enforcement officers**

The context within which South African traffic officers function stems firstly from their appointment as prescribed by the National Road Traffic Act, No. 93 (1996). Traffic officer is defined by National Road Traffic Act (Act No. 93 of 1996), as an officer appointed in terms of section 3A, and any member of the Service, and any member of municipal service, both as defined in Section 1 of the South African Police Act, 1995 (Act No. 68 of 1995), and for the purposes of Chapters 5, IX and X and section 74 and 78 of this Act includes a peace officer.

“Traffic law enforcement authority” means an institution, department or law enforcement component established in terms of the Road Traffic Act, 1996 (Act 93 of 1996), the Road Traffic Management Corporation Act, 1999, (Act 20 of 1999) or any other applicable legislation, for the purpose of controlling traffic and traffic law enforcement “agency” has a similar meaning. Effective traffic enforcement is the most important requirement for road safety. The country can have the best rules on the road, but if these are not enforced effectively, the country will continue to have an increase in fatal accidents on the roads.

However, in South Africa, the National Department of Transport established the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) division in April 2005 in terms of Section 3 of the Road Traffic Management (RTMC) Act, 1999. The RTMC offices are in Centurion, Tshwane, and these officials were seconded from the provincial Department of Transport to facilitate the partnership between national, provincial and local spheres of government in the management of road traffic matters. The overriding aim of the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) is to overcome the current fragmentation of traffic management functions across hundreds of provincial and local jurisdictions and to bring a new professional coherence and improved morale into the entire system.

Actual law enforcement is done on all the public roads within the boundaries of a particular local municipal or provincial area (National Road Traffic Act 1996). The work environment of the traffic officer also includes the Law Enforcement Section within Traffic Services, where the officer carries out administrative duties. Secondly, traffic officers are appointed as peace officers in terms of section 334(1) (a) of the Criminal Procedure Act, No. 51 (1977), as published on 02 September 2011 (Gazette No. 34583, Regulation 707). These duties include all powers bestowed upon peace officers and all powers awarded to police officials, with the exclusion of specified sections and subject to certain provisions.

It is therefore, important to note that, traffic policing includes a wider variety of activities than merely enforcing traffic legislation. Traffic law enforcement is concerned with creating the safe traffic situation through the application of criminal sanctions to undesirable behaviour.

Whereas traffic policing on the other hand is concerned with the application of a variety of reactive and proactive activities such as, regulating traffic laws, managing and enforcing drunken driving campaigns, attending accidents, supervising evacuations and educating public on traffic related matters (Rajin, 2012). A range of comprehensive health and wellness programmes are in place in RMTC, which encourages employees to choose healthier and more balanced lifestyles. This approach is to ensure the overall wellbeing of employees in terms of health, emotional, financial and occupational health and safety. It is through partnering with Independent Counselling and Advisory Services International (ICAS) as a service provider.

The Department of Transport in the province of KwaZulu-Natal introduced EAPs in 2001 to address a variety of problems such as but not limited to substance abuse, personal and work-related problems, dealing with disease and providing counselling. The Department chose the in-house model services to be provided within the department. In this type of model, the employer maintains a full-service facility and employs EA practitioners on a full-time basis (Rajin, 2012). It is a comprehensive programme which deals with employees' challenges within the department including traffic officers exposed to multiple incidents, trauma, stress, depression and social and family relationship problems.

The EAP component helps all officials through interventions like stress management, debriefing sessions and the promotion of a physical exercise programme. EAP interventions are often offered through an integrated approach by social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, health professionals and occupational therapists. In summary, this study is about exploring the utilisation services of EAP and the perception of officers about the programme.

In South Africa, traffic officers are working with Provincial Traffic Officers or Municipal Traffic Officers to enforce law and order on the road. Municipal Traffic Officers are appointed as peace officers in terms of section 334(1) (a) of the Criminal Procedure Act (1977) as described. The difference is that Provincial Traffic Officers perform their duties within the boundaries of various Provinces, whereas Municipal Traffic Officers perform their duties within the boundaries of numerous municipalities. However, Municipal Traffic Officers are found in different municipalities of the country implementing traffic law enforcement, road

safety and issuing of fines to those who violate traffic laws and by-laws. In view of this, one municipality with active EAPs in its area is Buffalo City Municipality (BCM).

This municipality has a comprehensive employee assistance programme that provides EAP services to all the employees with support from management. The municipality EA practitioner conducts various prevention programmes for employees such as wellness day, teambuilding sessions, debriefing sessions and assists with occupational related challenges on an annual basis. These efforts range from providing Municipal Traffic officers access to information on mental health resources, while emphasis is placed on health and families.

### **2.2.6 The scope of the traffic officer**

Within the context of the traffic officers' functions that originates from the day of appointment in terms of the National Road Traffic Act (1996), an authorised officer may only exercise his or her powers or perform any duty when in possession of his or her certificate of appointment. Some of these duties are described as follows, as provided by the Act;

Duties include to control and regulate traffic on any public road, which may include the closing of any public road, and redirecting the driver to remove the vehicle from such a road and to follow another route with the vehicle. Among other things, they have to inspecting any vehicle for compliance as required by the provisions of this Act, and temporarily forbid a person from driving a vehicle should that person be found incapable.

Secondly, Section 31 states that a traffic officer may also, subject to the provisions of this Act or any other law, exercise any powers or duties conferred upon an inspector of licences under section 3F. This, however, includes using the prescribed written notice to direct an owner, or operator, driver or any person in charge of any vehicle, to present a vehicle which they suspect to be non-roadworthy, for inspection, examination or testing to an appropriately graded testing station.

Thirdly, traffic officers are appointed as peace officers in terms of section 334(1) (a) of the Criminal Procedure Act (1977) as described. These duties include all powers bestowed upon peace officers and all powers awarded to police officials, but with the exclusion of specified sections and/or subject to certain provisions. In addition, a traffic officer's schedule is also governed by whether or not the individual is a Provincial Traffic Officer or Municipal Traffic Officer. The difference is that Provincial Traffic Officers perform their duties within the boundaries of various Provinces, whereas Municipal Traffic Officers perform their duties



within the boundaries of their specific municipality. In general, traffic officers have a serious responsibility to maintain law and order on the roads without fear or favour. Looking at the above points, it is clear and evident that traffic officers are executing their duties in circumstances which may lead to stressful experiences, and their scope of work described above contributes to their traffic work environment, and this will be discussed below.

### **2.2.7 Nature of a traffic officer's work environment**

In general, the environment in which traffic officer's work is not fully understood. It is fraught with difficulties. It includes a law enforcement section within the general traffic section, where the officer carries out administrative duties, helps with punching over time for traffic officers, punching leave accordingly for the section and helped with Injury on Duty (IOD) where necessary. Traffic officers spend most of their working day outside engaged in law enforcement on the roads, it does not matter whether it is hot, sunny, windy, raining or there is thunder officers have to be available on the roads.

The National Road Traffic Act (1996), defines 'Public road' meaning any road, street or thoroughfare or any other place (whether a thoroughfare or not) which is commonly used by the public or any section thereof or to which the public or any section thereof has the right of access, and includes (a) the verge of any such road, street or thoroughfare; (b) any bridge, ferry or drift traversed by any such road, street or thoroughfare; and (c) any other work or object forming part of or connected with or belonging to such road, street or thoroughfare. Traffic officers have one-on-one contact with the public and are therefore confronted with societal issues and road rage on the road. Besides that, traffic officers used to be the first responders if there is accident on the road to clear any obstructions occurred during the accident, therefore, if there are any human body parts that are scattered on the road, they have to remove them so that family members would arrive at the scene and find everything normal. According to the latest data from Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), the number of traffic officers' deaths on the road increased with 18% between 2000 and 2018. In 2018, 22.4% traffic officers' deaths per 100 000 inhabitants were recorded. One of the pressing issues facing modern society today, both globally and particularly within the South African context is road safety (WHO, 2015). Approximately 23.5% people per 100.001, lost their lives on the country's roads in 2014. In comparison, the 2015 WHO Global Status Report on road safety affirms the global average of road fatalities at 17.42% per 100.000 average for middle-income countries, at 18.4% fatalities per 100.000 population.

Road Traffic Crashes (RTC) has its consequences and make a significant impact on the South African society which continues to hamper socio-economic development and impacts on the well-being of all South Africans (WHO, 2015). This impact is measured in terms of human lives lost, pain, grief and suffering, as well as increasing cost to the economy. It is important and recommended that EAP should serve as a platform to address needs of employees. One can therefore assume that, in order for EAP to have a higher utilisation rates, the services offered must be accommodative to address the diverse needs of all the employees within the department.

### **2.2.8 Occupational stress among traffic officers**

Occupational stress contributes to fatigue, irritability, sleep disruption and symptoms consistent with depression. If untreated, this can lead to negative changes in officers, specifically in their self-schemas and in how they perceive the communities in which they serve (Christopher et al., 2015). Some of the stress identified is inherent potential for danger, unique authority to use coercive force on citizens, a propensity for social isolation and responsibility for the safety of others even at their danger (Webster, 2013).

Traffic officers who suffer from “burn out” can be plagued by a number of symptoms such as memory loss, lack of concentration, difficulty retaining or recalling information, anxiety, physical illness, long and short leave from work, strained personal relationships, difficulty staying awake, panic attacks and this can lead to emotional stress. This can explain that some officers may make administrative errors or display troubling behaviour such as uncontrollable anger towards citizens and suspects, absenteeism, and falling asleep behind the wheel (Christopher, Goerling, Rogers, Hunsinger, & Baron, 2015). Emotional stress is an anxiety related to bodily response from traumatic experiences, is common among police officers and traffic officers (Lucas, Weidner, & Janisse, 2012). Conn and Butterfield (2013) emphasise that, primary trauma is a direct experience one encounters while secondary trauma is caused by the repeated exposure to the suffering of others.

In view of occupational stress, it is not easy for an officer to convey death messages to the family of another officer who has lost his or her life on duty, those who have conducted a next of kin notification know the agony of telling a family their loved one is dead (Conn & Butterfield, 2013). This in turn puts them at risk for becoming cynical, burning out, turning apathetic, divorcing, abusing alcohol and drugs and committing suicide (Moriarty & Fields, 1990). Stress is a major contributor to the dysfunctional behaviour employees exhibit particularly traffic officers who are exposed to high and low stress which has both positive and

negative effects. Apparently, high stress creates low performance in employees where-as low to moderate stress enhances performance.

### **2.2.9 Organisational stress**

Organisational stress appears to be the most frequent and damaging type of stress to both officers and the organisation as it triggers the greatest negative social impact on the community (Slate, Johnson, & Colbert, 2007). It is directly associated with the practices and culture of the department or agency where officers work. Organisational culture can be the way of doing things when faced with challenges, consistency, resilience and involvement in the goals of the organisation. Organisational culture can also be influenced by job stress among officers which may be caused by unreasonable expectations from management, lack of protection for officers who get injured in the line of duty and lack of adequate resources for job performance.

Organisational stress includes internal and external politics, quality of management, public support and image, promotional and career advancement, and enrichment (Slate et al., 2007). Organisational stressors play a crucial role in officer stress levels. A study by Conn and Butterfield (2013) also found that organisational stress was a stronger predictor for psychological stress than cumulative exposure to danger or critical incidents. Organisational stress can also be caused by working with a minimum number of officers and limited resources at their disposal. An unprofessional work environment, poor leadership, long shifts and sleep deprivation are caused by organisations. Amendola, Slipka, Hamilton & Koval (2011) stated that long shifts can also affect sleep duration and quality, along with related measures of alertness and well-being. It is noteworthy to recognise that an officer's stress level is capable of impacting on colleagues and family both directly and indirectly.

### **2.2.3 Organisation-related coping strategies**

#### **2.2.3.1 Coping strategies for traffic officers**

Generally coping is a positive psychological construct which refers to the perceptual, mental or behavioural efforts that people employ to deal with situations deemed potentially difficult and stressful (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Traffic officers' work environment presents stressors the effects of which may manifest as aggression and frustration, adversely affecting relationships with others (Pienaar, 2007). Despite the pressures and difficult working conditions, traffic officers still manage to provide some level of service, loyal to the organisation to provide a high quality of service to the public. They have adopted the strategy of sharing problems with their colleagues, family members and friends by watching television

and spending more time at home. In the absence of professional help, other officers would adopt a style of drinking as a way making them to forget with what they have witnessed on the road.

A study conducted by Ballenger, Best, Metzler, Wasserman, Mohr, Liberman & Marmac (2010) found that officers are significantly more likely than the general population to engage in binge drinking episodes, and more likely to consume alcohol at levels considered “at risk” as defined by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAA). Officers feel better when they drunk, because they can be happy and stop worrying about work problems, whereas some of the officers shared their problems with pastors in the church. Other officers are spending more time with family members watching television and listening to radio and doing exercises. Coping by means of prayer made it possible to be thankful to God in the midst of challenges. It has been established that, traffic officers must also deal with the public’s negative attitudes toward them and disregard for road safety (Pienaar, 2007).

Apart from that, the effect of stress handling programmes on the job performance of traffic official found that their subjective experiences of stress were influenced positively (Van Heerden, 1990). Traffic officers are experiencing the same challenges as police officers in that, they are at risk of being attacked by violent motorists, and being targeted for their firearms (Mushwana, 1998). Another coping mechanism in male officers is the fact that, they grew up knowing that boys are not supposed to cry they have to be strong and stand up for themselves and to protect their families. This is their coping style by not showing tears even if things are not normal.

#### **2.2.3.2 Occupational hazards for traffic officers**

Occupational hazards, injuries and diseases are major concerns among traffic officers and police officers, their exposure can lead to work related injuries and diseases (ILO, 2003). According to ILO, a hazard is a situation that poses a level of potential threat or risk, to life, health, property or environment. The term hazardous refers to a condition, circumstance, or combination of factors that create a substantial risk or danger of causing injury to persons or damage to property (Breeding DC, 2011).

The International Labour Organization revealed that every 15years, 153 employees experience work-related accidents, worldwide. Furthermore, every year 6300 deaths occur due to occupational accidents and 2.3 million deaths occur to occupational diseases. Apart from death, occupational hazards can lead to prolonged absence from work if not prevented (ILO, 2003).

Adding to that, ILO mentioned that there is an increase in exposure to air pollution, toxic chemicals and strenuous work activities have negative implications on the health and wellbeing of employees at large. Traffic officers work on clean roads to gross roads. They stand in the sun blowing their whistles and signalling traffic to move or stop while inhaling dust and exhaust fumes, day in and out even at night hours you will find them on the roads (Prajapati, 2015). Air pollution has an adverse impact on our bodies such as the cardiovascular system and central nervous system (Prajapati, 2015). There are also several different hazards that have an impact on traffic officers that are mentioned below.

**(i) Accident hazards**

In general, exposure to accident hazards such as vehicle crashes, falls and assaults may lead to acute or chronic injuries such as sprains, fractures or even fatalities among traffic officers and police officers (ILO, 2003). Traffic officers have to be on the scene after accidents have occurred and this poses a threat of being hit by a motorist while trying to re-direct the vehicles to another direction.

**(ii) Physical hazards**

When officers are removing obstacles on the road such as a tire, a dead dog or an old car that was just dumped on the road, they are at risk, while trying to remove them. Another hazard is when an officer has to stop a vehicle that has been stolen but it does not stop and comes straight at the officer. He/ she has to be aware that the car will not stop and find a way to rescue him or herself. It is also important for the officers to be provided with protective clothing and equipment to work in harsh weather conditions.

**(iii) Chemical hazards**

ILO indicates that exposure to lead during traffic control, finger-printing work or working on the firing range can be harmful. Furthermore, exposure to excessive carbon-monoxide levels when directing traffic can affect the health of traffic officers. Chemical hazards can lead to cancer. (ILO, 2012). Traffic officers working on busy freeways and roads where there is dust, are exposed to air pollution.

**(iv) Biological hazards**

Biological hazards involve the risk of contracting contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB, infectious hepatitis or rabies (ILO, 2003). The causes often include close contact with infected

people or human bites. There should be guidance on how officers should deal with such hazards.

**(v) Psychological hazards**

Emotional trauma is a common psychological hazard which can affect traffic officers due to witnessing traumatic events, horrific accidents and psychological stressors (ILO, 2003). Other traumatic events include physical injury, assault and hostage situations (ILO, 2003). However, traffic officers and police officers are classified under emergency personnel, hence they are prone to stress, which affects them psychologically, socially and emotionally.

**(vi) Organisational hazards**

Organisational hazards can affect the physical and mental wellbeing of traffic officers. Poor mental health is a serious social and public health burden that requires management (ILO, 2003). If not addressed, mental health in police officers and traffic officers can lead to a serious public health situation. Therefore, it is important for the organisation to develop a policy that creates an enabling environment, to reduce poor health outcomes that can help the organisations deal with its hazards. When the policy on hazards has been well developed and implemented will be a favourable effect on officers' service delivery.

**2.2.3.3 Proposed prevention programmes for traffic officers**

Officers are often the victims of verbal and physical abuse, traumatised by scenes of violence on the road where they have to understand what is taking place with whatever knowledge they have at their disposal and to cope with the situation no matter what. This affects their wellbeing, the way they think, personal life and family relationships which results in the development of a variety of coping strategies. EAPs as an early intervention have the potential to minimise the development of PTSD through prevention programmes and workshops.

Furthermore, Terblanche and Van Wyk (2014) emphasise the importance of the organisation to implement effective Psychological Trauma Management Programmes (PTMP) to enhance employees' work performance and psychosocial functioning. However, the following prevention programmes are regarded as suitable to assist and to deal with trauma.

**(i) Professional Counselling**

This is an intervention aimed at managing workplace trauma in a form of short-term counselling and long-term therapy. The provision of counselling psychological services has steadily expanded in the world and in Africa (McLeod, 2012). Counselling services represent

a major organisational response to psychological and mental health problems reported by employees (McLeod, 2012). When an officer has encountered a traumatic incident, he or she should be offered counselling to reduce stress and anxiety. Workplace counselling offers an officer an opportunity to discuss issues of concern and adopt a constructive means of coping with difficult situations.

Counselling includes stress debriefing which is closely associated with psychological debriefing. Practical support is offered on possible stress reactions and self-help guidelines.

**(ii) Management of conflict**

Conflict can be caused for a number of reasons and it is inevitable especially at work. It is well-known thing the nature of traffic officers' work is stressful, frustrating and causes conflict. Handling these complex situations without getting into serious disputes or violent situations on the road is a difficult challenge for the individual officer (Bertilsson, 2017). Conflict sometimes might be caused by not getting promotion and salary increments. It is noted that, working conditions in this line of work are particularly important to maintain a working climate free from conflict and disputes thus positively in line with performance (Thomas, 2009). It is crucial for management and officers to be provided with conflict management training during college training to equip them with skills on how to avoid physical confrontation and provocation among officers in the workplace. This would provide them with resilience and a conducive working environment. Well- managed workplace conflicts improve individual performance, morale, teamwork as well as organisational commitment and improved service delivery.

**(iii) Stress management**

Stress management is the most important subject in the world of work wherein every individual irrespective of gender, status, rank, religion, culture or class, and so forth is undergoing stress from excessive pressure created by uncontrollable behaviour around us. At work it might be caused by the organisational challenges that are beyond control or caused by the nature of job functions. With regard to officers, stress can be a major contributor to dysfunctional behaviour. Lepine, et al., (2005) highlighted that, the stress in police traffic wardens or traffic police was enhanced by the structured working environment of the organisation.

Nonetheless, the work of traffic officers is very important yet quite stressful, thus the need for emotional stability, self-awareness and stress management skills in their field (Pienaar, 2007). Officers' exposure to stressful occupational encounters has the potential to results in an

unhealthy life style. Stress is very destructive to a healthy life style, as officers are re-traumatized by accidents on the road.

It is, therefore, important to point out additional organisational stressors such as shift work, inadequate supervisory support, limited work resources and wellness days for officers. Stress management workshops on topics such as absenteeism, alcoholism, substance abuse, family problems or domestic violence and post-traumatic stress disorder should be part of on-going training in the workplace. In addition, EAPs should be properly tailored to accommodate the necessary wellness programmes for officers within the organisation.

#### **2.2.3.4 ‘Asher Model’ a Wellness Model**

The Asher Model was developed at the Symposium on Officer Wellness in California. During this time there was great awareness on mental health issues in law enforcement officers and officers were committing suicide, in some instances while on duty. There were many outcomes from the symposium, the most impactful being the need to have a multifaceted approach with innovative, action-focused problem solvers taking a stand to focus on finding solutions to officers’ problems. Gang (2014), came up with ‘Asher Model’ to be used by EAPs which consisted of a seven-fold approach to a culture of wellness in the field of law enforcement.

This model revealed the importance of wellness intervention in the field of law enforcement. There are seven points of approach as it relates to creating a wellness culture in the workplace these are;

- (i) Awareness: in police agencies there is a need to create an environment where “It’s OK to not be OK” (Gang, 2014). There has to be an honest discussion with the employees bringing difficult conversations out of the shadows and into open.
- (ii) Solution-focused approach: Management should spend more time focusing on the solutions, not on the problem. For example, an officer has a problem he or she has to be referred for help with total confidentiality.
- (iii) Peer support: This should be created and there has to be a team to support the victims to mitigate the stress, it will create sense of belonging.
- (iv) Resilience: There has to be a programme on resilience where they will be reminded of being mindful of issues they are experiencing in their scope of work.



- (v) **Healthy habits:** Officers must be encouraged to be physically fit by practising a healthy lifestyle. The involvement of the organisation is crucial to allocate and create a budget for funds to build a fitness facility and have an open day once a year for officers where health service providers will be part of the day to help.
- (vi) **Spirituality:** A spiritual programme for officers is important where they would be given the opportunity to off-load and share what is bothering them. The programme can guide them and show what is right and wrong as well as providing them with spiritual awareness as a defence against societal chaos.
- (vii) **Family:** It is important to include family members of officers in all wellness programmes of the organisation such as financial wellness, debriefing sessions and retirement programmes. This model accommodates all the important aspects needed in a law- enforcement environment.

#### **2.2.3.5 Suggested strategies to increase wellness fitness for traffic officers**

Increasing fitness for officers can create a healthier workforce, increase officer's productivity and decrease risk of developing chronic illnesses. Thus, employees who are physically fit and active are more productive than employees the ones who are inactive. Motivating traffic officers about wellness fitness could be difficult and complicated, the absence of which could lead to injuries and illnesses. Research participants highlighted that, false information and lack of information on wellness for officers in the workplace could lead to ignorance that EAP assistance is available. However, health and physical fitness of officers can affect their motivation. Therefore, below are suggested proactive strategies to increase wellness fitness for officers in the workplace to reduce stress and trauma of event they have witnessed on the road, namely:

##### **(i) Emotional wellness**

This is an important element of a person and connected to mental wellness. This is very fragile and can break very easily and if this happens it is difficult to restore if not done correctly and professionally. Emotional wellness is comprised of the awareness, acceptance and management of emotions (Howard, 2012). Traffic officers alleged that, management have the tendency of not acknowledging effectively their emotions when they have lost a colleague through accident. This however, resulted in using unacceptable mechanisms to cope with stress and which resulted in fear, anger, sadness, stress, losing hope, unhappiness and feeling frustrated.

Emotional wellness also comprises the extent to which an individual feels positive and optimistic about life. Through a path of wellness, individuals learn to express themselves openly, while also managing (their) feelings effectively (Hamil, 1998). However, when all this is not addressed it causes mental breakdown or mental illness which leads to a measure of stigma as there is still stigma around conversations of mental illness at work. It is recommended that EAPs must create support groups for cases of mental illness and their families, offering support by means of emotional intelligence where it will assist them with the ability to correctly identify their own emotions. Emotional wellness would help officers to effectively and efficiently meet the demands they face on the streets.

**(ii) Physical wellness**

This is an important strategy for traffic officers to adopt as the nature of their job requires fitness. Physical activities and exercise are important in the prevention of chronic illness. Similarly, Strout and Howard (2012), emphasise that exercise, nutrition, substance abuse, habits, sleep patterns and medical check-ups are all considered to be part of the physical dimension while also maintaining a balanced lifestyle. It is noted that, physical wellness has a huge role in job function for officers, but the nature of their work sometimes hinders them from doing some kind of exercise because of injuries sustained in accidents. It is emphasised that for them to be able to honour this dimension fully, aerobics classes at work can help them to fight fatigue and stress and the department should provide them with a space on the premises where their offices are located for the classes. The emphasis on this dimension is that, EAPs and management must take a leading role in addressing this issue. However, incentives have a role on this dimension to motivate an officer to engage in healthy and positive living. Physical wellness fitness such as resting, hygiene, diet and exercise are basically considered to be important.

**(iii) Intellectual wellness**

The intellectual dimension involves the function of the mind, while the physical dimension of wellness involves the function of the body (Howard, 2012). There is a need for creative exercises that stimulate mental capacity. It is important that officers have open minds at all times as this is required by their job function and to make quick decisions on the road. The road environment places constant demands on traffic officers as they may be attacked by disgruntled motorists, who are target for their fire arms and thrown off their motor vehicles (Pienaar, 2007). Traffic officers' job is a very mentally exhausting job. Everyday officers are tasked with making decisions and processing information, yet there are many factors that they have to consider when making a decision. Officers suggested that, intellectual wellness can be

addressed at work in the following ways; firstly, through a resource centre where they can have access to a variety of resources to help their profession. Secondly, professional development which could help provide necessary skills, i.e. financial literacy, communication skills, diversity management, conflict resolution and decision-making techniques. Thirdly, through the process of enhancing their intellectual ability, officers will be enabled to progressively work towards challenging their minds with sound thoughts, which would help to confront challenges on the road without being afraid.

**(iv) Spiritual wellness**

It is an important wellness element which is associated with connectedness, belief, ethical values. Spirituality is regarded as an essential defence in stressful situations. Spirituality includes a sense of purpose, ethical values and beliefs, relationships or connectedness and transcendence (Jacobs, 2013). Connectedness with people is part of the need for self-actualisation in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which motivates some people (Theron, 2009). Spiritual wellness is related to a sense of purpose and meaning in one's life and also includes having morals and practising ethics. It has also a huge impact on people's thought and behaviour to maintain the desired characteristics that are led to success in the work environment. Thus, spiritual wellness can serve as a pathway for officers. Based on the above-mentioned points, it is crucial to offer a quiet space for officers where they can sit and relax, pray and meditate after experiencing a crisis. It has furthermore been confirmed by officers that spiritual wellness for them is to be cheered-up or being complemented by their colleagues when they have done exceptionally on the road, it is a way of coping as well.

**(v) Social wellness**

The social dimension of wellness is based upon interpersonal relationships, which includes appreciating differences, acting with diplomacy, and exhibiting altruistic behaviours towards others and the environment (Strout & Howard, 2012). Traffic officers must be diplomatic when relating to colleagues and motorists on the road, but more importantly with the family members at home. They have to build that ability and maintain it for the sake of performing well at work. Officers recommended that social wellness can be achieved through wellness events where management should be part of these events when officers shared challenges they have experienced on the road, group lunches must be held at a specified time and group activities should take place at work. They believed that these actions would create a sense of belonging and can make officers happier and physically healthier as well.

**(vi) Environmental wellness**

Supporting environmental wellness programmes is important factor in assisting traffic officers to maintain positive behavioural change towards becoming a healthy and happy work force. Supportive environment programmes create an environment that supports behaviour change and healthy lifestyles. These environments are an important factor in assisting individuals to maintain their recent positive behavioural changes towards health habits and wellness (O'Donnell, 2014).

The principle of environmental wellness is to respect others when performing daily duties at work. Building a positive environment is part of the EAP and its management and aims to make officers aware of their surroundings. Environmental wellness is related to a healthy workplace where employees and managers collaborate to continually improve the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and by doing this, sustain the productivity of the organisation (WHO, 2009). It is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions that can cause injury and illness, but an abundance of health promoting environment (WHO, 2010). Traffic officers should get support and resources should also be available to improve work performance. They should be treated with dignity and equity with regard to policy implementation.

**(vii) Communication wellness**

Viewing the primary duties of a traffic officer, opening up the communication in a need to know atmosphere, this created a high need for management to communicate the goals and priorities of the department. Therefore, communication from management point of view is the process by which prepare you informed and guided to achieve the best results. To communicate effectively means not only putting your thoughts and presenting them in an accessible way, but also expressing them in a way that would capture the attention of the receiver (Beattie & Ellis, 2014). Communication wellness on traffic officers is a key on what to do before and after the crisis, for example, when there is accident on the road, media agent would arrive on the scene to interview the motorists and commuters, but when reporting on the news and television they would report another story not what had happened on the road.

Therefore, with this example, traffic officers alleged that managers would listen to the media and they would never be bothered to get their side of the story from them, instead they would want to charge them without communicating with them. Traffic officers emphasized that the department should create a clear trend of communication, where it would accommodate them and not be biased but professional enough to listen to their side of the story as well. In fact,

traffic officers have a negative perception on communication wellness they feel that they are treated very unfair. When there is accident on the road, management, minister or even the Head of Department would make a speech comforting those families who lost their loved ones, visit the families of which is a good thing and a good gesture of showing “Ubuntu”, but when they lost one officer knocked by a car on the road or lost through natural death, minister or Head of Department would never visit officers families. There is need for communication wellness among management and officers to build trust and create transparency in order to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect in the office.

#### **(viii) Occupational wellness**

Occupational wellness is about personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one’s work. It deals with matters of job vacation and career path. It is established by participants that their occupation must reward them with incentives for them to be motivated. Occupational wellness reflects one’s satisfaction and attitude towards work (Hamil, 1998). It is recommended that the department must have an incentive programme that would help to achieve this wellness. Officers emphasised that this could motivate and boost their work morale.

#### **2.2.3.6 Role of trauma counselling in traffic officers**

The researcher is of the opinion that EAPs play a huge role in the management of trauma counselling in the workplace as one of the fundamental scope for EAPs. Van Wyk (2011) comments that the role of the EAP is to provide a specialised service or to establish a working relationship with a specialised partner in the field of trauma management in order to be in a position to provide the best possible service to the clients.

The goal of trauma management counselling should be to respond to traumatic situations in time, in line with the organisational policies and procedures. Further to that, trauma management should be to provide trauma defusing services for the immediately affected employees, to provide debriefing for traumatised employees and to influence policies and procedures relating to trauma management (Van Wyk, 2011). Defusing can be described as a short version of the debriefing process and is usually performed within few hours of a critical incident. The goal of defusing is to reduce the impact of the event and to assess the needs of the group (Roos, Du Toit & Du Toit, 2003).

This process usually takes between 20 to 40 minutes when the practitioner defuses officers on the scene of the accident. This happens immediately after the accident. The aim of defusing is to stabilise the situation directly after a traumatic event that has taken place. In short, defusing is to ensure that the survivor gaining strength and support, gains confidence, calm, and provides

the physical and emotional support needed at that time. Trauma counselling is important as it brings back sanity and reality of life to those officers who are seen as being able to let nothing get under their skin no matter the situation, and when traffic officers start to show signs of stress, they will be told by their peers to suck it up which might cause a huge problem.

### **2.2.3.7 Perceptions of mental health in law enforcement profession**

The officers' work environment has many occupational stressors and forms of exposure that can lead to increased risk for mental health illness. Officers are exposed to traumatic calls for hijackings, crashes and domestic violence and this can result in forms of mental illness such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. In any organisation when an employee appears to be mentally challenged, people do not want to come near him or her. People believe there is something different between mental and physical health, when in fact there is not (Violanti, 2013). A pilot study that was conducted by Violanti, (2013) focused on the question, "How we change mental illness in the law enforcement, that's a big question and the greatest challenge".

All participants in the research affirmed that reducing the stigma associated with mental illness was of critical importance. They suggested that case studies on how officers facing depression sought help and whose lives were saved because of that help could have a positive effect on other officers. Reactions included that the law enforcement profession needs to create a more positive way to view mental health. More significantly, there is nothing wrong with admitting that there are mental health issues in law enforcement, and they need to be addressed from the perspective of treatment, not judgement. Furthermore, the following points were raised by participants in the discussion about mental health and included the mental wellness of law enforcement officers.

This is an important subject even though it has been overlooked for far too long, as it includes emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of officers and their families. It affects how they think, what does society think of them, what the organisation thinks about them, what would happen to their job and what is the relationship between them and management. It is important to note that officers and their families have their own unique perspective of the world around them because of the trauma officers shared with them. The silent killer for a law enforcement officer in any organisation is occupational stress. It is a situation where job-related factors interact with the worker to change his or her psychological and or physical condition such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008).

When law enforcement officers are put into a situation that is out of the norm or control, an officer's body instinctively goes into a "fight or flight" mode. This mode includes the body giving off a specific hormone called "cortisol" (Armbuster, 2011). However, when this happens the senses dim down, and the person feels very threat by the circumstances which can lead to unnecessary shootings. Sometimes when officers deal with too many mental health issues at work with minimal resources at their disposal, in many situations they tend to lose hope and follow their own path. Nonetheless, managers and supervisors in particular, need to better understand the need of officers suffering from mental health problems as officers can find themselves re-victimised and traumatised whilst passing through force personnel and occupational health systems (McDowall, 2014).

A study conducted by Dickinson and Mandy in (2010) determines perceived levels of stigmatisation and support, trust, confidentiality, and equality of services as factors determining the utilisation of different components of EAP in the workplace. It is important that Employee Assistance Programmes counsellors are competent to deal with officers' challenges and that they understand stressors of the job to best serve the needs of law enforcement personnel. A better understanding of traffic officer attitudes by management would mean that, recommendations could be made to improve effective management of the issue to improve the mental health of traffic officers and the public and motorist they work with daily.

Secondly, Organizational culture and the stigma that surrounds officers seeking out mental health services tends to deter officers from seeking help because of a fear of being placed on restricted duty or creating a level of distrust about their ability to "keep it together" on the streets with fellow officers. Brohan, Henderson, Wheat and Thornicroft (2012) argued that, stigma and fear of employment repercussions negatively affect employees' decisions to disclose a mental health problem or concern. Similarly, Coles (2019) suggested that mental health stigma may inhibit minority employees from seeking EAP support. Thirdly, Law enforcement agencies, management, supervisors have to be clear that they are not limited in understanding mental wellness symptoms, and what to do about officers who have mental illness. It is therefore clear that, the workplace is one of the most important settings to promote mental health and behaviour change. There should be interventions in the workplace aimed at protecting all those officers and officials diagnosed with mental illness and policies and procedures to follow should be developed to help at the individual level by means of stress management skills. Referrals for psychological intervention would be needed and provide them with the resources to cope while performing their duties.

In addition, Violanti (2013) went on to address the role of organizational wellness and its impact on officer safety and wellness. He explained that what goes on in the workplace is important and that the organisation and its culture contribute to officer health and wellness. Areas he identified that need to be paid attention to in organisational wellness for law enforcement agencies included mental health, suicide, physical health, nutrition, obesity, stress management, shift work, sleep and post-traumatic stress syndrome. When officers respond to these health issues without being supported, consequences of stress are exacerbated, which can lead to mental illness and suicidal thoughts.

## **2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework selected for this study is Systems Theory, General Systems Theory and Gestalt Theory in the context of EAP. Systems theory gives an understanding of different systems and how they work together (Ansari, 2004). It was therefore imperative for this research study to consider systems theory to gain an understanding of the influence at work and social environment on the employee and vice versa. It examines the interaction between the individual and his/ her systemic environment. The traffic section has different systems within the department, namely the Regional Commanders, Chief Provincial Inspectors, Principal Provincial Inspectors, Senior Provincial Inspectors and Provincial Inspectors, including other human resources personnel. From a systematic perspective, behaviour in the workplace is understood as the product of the dynamic interaction and relationship ties among people who form a system at the workplace (Harvey, 2011). Since workplace is part of the system, management main challenge is to achieve cooperation and synergy among the groups and individuals within the social system, in the interests of achieving organisational goals (Mahoney, 2010). In this regard, EAPs could be seen as a tool available to management for this purpose. Therefore, factors that influence these systems are performance, behaviour, morale and absenteeism in the work place, and they cause low morale and contribute to employee's poor work performance. This means that, management and employees must find common ground.

General Systems Theory is characterised by interaction of its components and the non-linearity of those components (Macy, 2010). It focuses on the arrangements of relations between the parts which connects them into a whole. General Systems Theory is based on the awareness of the essential interrelatedness and inter-dependence of all phenomena. It implies that the whole of the system is more than the sum of its parts. In other words, there is more to an employer and employee together than when they are alone in separate entities (Macy, 2010). There is no traffic section without officers since together they make a whole. The Department of Transport



depends on traffic officers for productivity and service in order to satisfy public road users on the road for the traffic to run smooth. Basically, General Systems Theory is that all systems share certain characteristics that allow them to function as systems, regardless of their type or level of organisation (Macy, 2010). Therefore, General Systems Theory is concerned with the holistic and integrative exploration of phenomenon and events where each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole and each element is affected by at least one other element in the system (Laszlo & Klippner, 1998).

Gestalt theory is the approach to change originated in a clinical rather than an organisational setting and it is the approach to personal growth and development (Karp, 1996). It is the departure from most clinical approaches as it does not view people who have been problems as being sick. It is stated that, the goal of gestalt theory is to help people make better choices for themselves and to take full responsibility for doing so (Karp, 1996). In practice and in counselling it is helping people concentrate on what's happening in their lives now rather than focusing on their past experiences, it is a therapy that puts the focus on here and now. Oelofsn (2007) affirms that the basic principles of gestalt theory is to focus on the immediate and express the true feelings.

In conclusion, The Systems Theory model is the effective and efficient way to analyse the problem within the organisation. With this open system approach, management, traffic officers and all personnel staff must work as a team to develop and achieve goals of the department. The basic tenet of General Systems Theory is that, all systems share certain characteristics that allow them to function as systems, regardless of their type or level of the organisation (Macy, 2010). Therefore, this means that within the department, managers and officers must work together for the betterment of service delivery to achieve the goal of the department. The next chapter will present research methodology and data collection procedures used to complete this study.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The literature has addressed and revealed an in-depth knowledge about the EAPs. The chapter has discussed EAPs, historical perspectives, traced its emergence and changes that have taken place in the United States. In addition, the South African perspective was examined regarding the use of EAPs and local knowledge in this regard. In this chapter EAP utilisation by international traffic officers and by South African traffic officers has been advocated. It further contextualised an understanding of EAPs, the reasons for their implementation and the principles related to EAPs in the Department of Transport. The literature review explored

several factors that may contribute to officers' underutilisation of the programme. The literature identified and confirmed that officers' work carries a great deal of stress, which can lead to personal complications. It also suggested and proposed prevention programmes for officers should be implemented to minimise the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline the qualitative research design and methodology used to conduct research, in other words how the research took place. The interest to explore the perceptions of traffic officers was triggered by work experience in dealing and solving the work-related problems through EAP services. There are two types of analysis that one can utilize for a study, namely; inductive analysis and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis helps the researcher to make meaning from the data and organize to be relevant to the study. Its purpose is to dig into what is really happening, to understand the themes present in the data and to produce findings to answer the research questions (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). Deductive analysis generally means applying theory and to the data. It also helps the researcher to maintain focus on the purpose of the research study. This chapter includes the research approach, sampling approach and data collection strategies. Data was collected through personal interviews at the offices of the respective officers in the Department. These offices were private and convenient for the participants.

#### 3.2 Research site

Before the data was collected, the researcher was granted ethical clearance by UKZN's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee to conduct the study. Gatekeeper permission was also granted by the Head of Department to conduct the study in the Department. The researcher had a meeting with the Director and Principal Provincial Inspectors of the Pietermaritzburg region and briefed them about the study and consent form were distributed. The researcher was then given the dates for the interviews. The study was conducted in the Pietermaritzburg region which is one of the biggest regions in the Department of Transport in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The department consists of five regions. This region was chosen due to its size, as it is the largest region, comprising of a comparatively high number of traffic officers (Integrated Development Plan, 2017/2018). Pietermaritzburg is also significant because it is the capital city and also the second largest city, in the KwaZulu-Natal Province (Msunduzi City Development Strategy, 2015). This city was founded in 1838 and is currently under the Msunduzi Local Municipality and one of the local municipalities that fall under uMgungundlovu District. Pietermaritzburg has an estimated of over 600,000 residents (Msunduzi City Development Strategy, 2015). Its area size is 751 square km occupied by a population of approximately 10,661 people, which translates into 7% of the land area of the uMgungundlovu District, accommodating 61% of its population, ranging from traditional

farmland communities, informal rural settlements to upmarket urban areas (Msunduzi City Development Strategy, 2015).

The Msunduzi Municipality is on the N3 highway at the junction of an industrial corridor (from Durban to Pietermaritzburg) and an agro-industrial corridor (stretching from Pietermaritzburg to Estcourt). On a regional scale, it is at the cross-section of the N3 Corridor and Greytown Road Corridor to the north, a tourist route to Drakensburg, and Kokstad Road to the South. It is also home to unique international events such as the Comrades Marathon, the Duzi Marathon and the Midmar Mile (Integrated Development Plan, 2017/2018).

Traffic officers are administered by the Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI), which falls under the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. The traffic officers' section is crucial because of officers' functions perceived as important and challenging. The most challenging issue with this discipline is the fact that traffic officers are at risk of being exposed to trauma and death on the road, for instance, on the 10 June 2020 eight travelers died in a horror truck crash in the Jozini area where officers were assisting at the scene of the accident. Again, on the 11 September 2021, two provincial inspectors were killed on the road and died in the line of duty (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport Intranet, 2021):

The focus of this project is on the Department of Transport's traffic officers of KwaZulu-Natal. Officers who were participating in the study were working day shift started from 6 AM to 2 PM, and they were interviewed in their offices. Night shift officers could not participate in the study as they would assume their duties outside their office, they use control room as their office, yet they were hardly in the office, their main functions was to be on the road for ensuring the safe and free flow of traffic on the road. Further to that, the researcher was informed by the principal provincial inspector that, this was a busy shift, they were short-staffed. Night shift officers were expected from N3 to channel all trucks to weigh trucks load in weighbridge with the purpose of preventing overloaded trucks to be on the road. The interviews were conducted in the participants' respective offices within the Department of Transport.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

Research methodologies differ depending on the phenomenon to be attended to, and how it should be approached and analysed (Neumann, 2014). Similarly, Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi (2013) describe research methodology as the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. The process of research achieves its objectives using a research methodology. Furthermore, research

methodologies are the instruments or tools that researchers employ whilst they administer any form of inquiry or investigation or study (William, 2011).

In order to collect and analyse data for this study, the researcher applied the qualitative method. This methodology enabled direct interactions with the participants, namely traffic officers. The qualitative method is a crucial feature of any social science research. The method is standard across most social science disciplines such as sociology and anthropology (Delaney, 2015). It allowed the researcher to see and interact directly with the participants, namely the traffic officers.

The role of qualitative method in the humanities is significant with its interest in instant, meaningful and human-related interaction, with its prominent and creative assistance in collecting data, which is what the researcher experienced in the investigation. This captures the problems and the levels of uncertainty that most traffic officers experience. This allows for a smooth building up of collected information (Delaney, 2015). It is a creative and interpretative style of data collection. Nevertheless, the use of the qualitative method was possible using in-depth interviews, which provided richness of data.

### **3.3.1 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular worldview (Maree, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) regard paradigms as representations of ideologies regarding the world, that people hold, and which shape human behaviour. This study was underpinned within an interpretivist paradigm, based on its focus in exploring the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services.

As Hussey (2009) asserts, the interpretive paradigm is utilised in qualitative research, with the aim to explain phenomena as opposed to measuring it. The researcher had to understand how each participant perceives the utilisation of EAP. The researcher's role was therefore to gain insight on the individual members' realities. This focus was on a more personalised form of research, where the researcher entered with an open mind believing that different individuals have a different perspective. Further, the interpretive paradigm develops a relativist ontology in which one phenomenon may entail numerous interpretations rather than a truth that can be determined by the process of measurement (Creswell, 2014).

The officers' experiences were also crucial in providing meaning relating to the role of EAP in the Department. The paradigm fits perfectly in this study as the level of individual interaction

is more productive and intense, and their views become the most fundamental characteristic. In practical terms, interpretive investigators tend to obtain a more critical understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of attempting to generalise, to base that perspective on the whole population (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher strived to understand participants diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the workplace through diverse contexts and events thus trying to avoid bias in studying the traffic officers' interpretations. It is significant to show emerging advantages of the interpretive paradigm. On the one hand, the first gain rests with its identification of views; interpretive researchers cannot only describe objects, and social events but also must understand them in a social context (Creswell, 2014). In addition to this, researchers could conduct this type of research in the natural setting using critical methodologies such as ethnography, case studies or life history to achieve an insider perspective in order to offer a piece of more factual information related to the object of the research. On the other hand, it is also a critical method for an interactive interview that also allows the researcher to investigate and record things that one cannot observe; researchers can review an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives as part of interpretivism (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). The level of distress expressed by the traffic officers could be seen in their eyes, and by body gesture as they answered questions about the Employee Assistance Programme. Valuable data collected has provided greater insights for further action later.

Despite the above key strengths, this paradigm is reported as having its own disadvantages. One of the noted limitations is that, the interpretivism aims to advance the greater understanding and knowledge of a phenomenon within its complexity of the setting rather than to generalise these results to other people and other contexts (Creswell, 2014). This kind of action tends to leave a gap in verifying the validity, as well as the usefulness of the research outcomes using a scientific procedure. Another massive notable criticism of this paradigm is regarding its ontological view that tends to be subjective rather than objective (Mack, 2010). For this reason, the resulting research outcomes could be unquestionably affected by the researcher's interpretation, derived from her belief system, through many ways of thinking which result in many biases. The last limitation of interpretivism is based on its deficiency to address the political, and ideological impact on knowledge and even social reality (Mack, 2010).

### **3.3.2 Research approach**

The study was framed within a qualitative research approach. There are three types of approaches in social research, these are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research approach. The study aimed at exploring the perceptions and experiences of officers, the qualitative approach was seen as applicable to fulfil the objectives of the study. However, it is said that the qualitative research approach puts on emphasis on viewing the world through the eyes of the participants to gather information that is rich and descriptive (Neuman, 2014).

It mainly produces information that is in-depth and non-numeric (Neuman, 2014). The quantitative approach on the other hand, has been defined as an approach that stresses empirical evidence and numerical, mathematical or statistical analyses of information collected through questionnaires and surveys or by manipulating existing statistical information utilizing computational methodologies (Creswell et al., 2003). The mixed-method approach incorporates methodological principles that drive the course of data collection and analysis based on the combination of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative approach which was used in this study is known as the analysis of people as they go about in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach is non-statistical, and it integrates multiple realities hence the information that is produced relates to people's lived experiences, emotions and feelings. Moreover, this approach allows more flexibility in the research process and gives the researcher the opportunity to probe for more information by asking how and why questions (Terre Blanche, Durheim & Painter, 2006).

However, the role of the qualitative approach is on gathering a vast amount of data about EAPs awareness. This would also be a process of identifying the contributors enhancing the under-utilisation of EAPs. The voicing of the traffic officers' perceptions gave an inside perspective which is one of the abilities of using a qualitative research approach. The naturalistic manner that a social scientist seeks for was possible, participants were interviewed while at work during office hours. The view of this qualitative approach is more on the naturalistic basis and the constantly elaborative capacity, which still brings a social scientific approach to research (Engel & Schutt, 2013). This qualitative approach tends to examine the social life experienced by the participants, also the interpretation of those meanings (Engel & Schutt, 2013). The exploration of social events such as the work-based issue by traffic officers takes another turn.

Notwithstanding, the qualitative approach permits each participant to bring in their values and expressions (Fouché & Delpont 2002). This achievement happened through the number of interviews, as participants perceptions contributed differently to this research. The strength of

qualitative research is on its ability to provide elaborate textual descriptions of how individuals experience a given research issue. It enables the provision of thorough information about the human cultural aspects such as their behaviours, belief systems, emotions, and the relationships between individuals and their environment.

### **3.3.3 Research design**

According to Breakfast, Bradshaw and Haines (2015), the research design signifies the entire plan of the research, including how the research questions would be answered. The main aim of the research design is to develop a plan of action and implement the plan to obtain the correct answers that are more effective. Rakepa (2012) explains that, a research design describes the conditions under which data will be collected, how respondents will be selected and what instructions will be used. However, research design is basically a blueprint used to conduct the research study (Kumar & Kamalanabham, 2014). Research design provides answers to the 'who', 'what', 'when' and 'how' of a research project. Hence, this allowed for more flexibility in the research process and allowed the researcher to probe for more information by asking how, and why questions to measure the utilisation of the Employee Assistance Programme. Furthermore, the study was based on the exploratory research design.

In addition, in a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument through which the data was collected; this is because of the interpersonal interaction that is vital for note taking and writing of interview responses. The interpersonal interaction acted as the researcher's opportunity not only to interact with these traffic officers, but also to see their work conditions. They contribute to their psychological challenges which hinder their full potential when doing their job as essential workers in the monitoring of our roads.

Using the qualitative research approach attempts to assist the EAP practitioners and other relevant stakeholders of the Department, and to get an overview of the EAP services implemented by the Department of Transport. It is due to the detailed nature with no numerical values used, with minimal complexity (Rakepa, 2012). Another aspect of the effectiveness of the qualitative method is the identification of intangible factors, namely, the existing social norms, the socio-economic status, gender representation, and religion, which can influence the research outcomes.

However, using both qualitative and quantitative styles is possible in the humanities, yet it has its disadvantages and advantages (Rakepa, 2012). This takes place using words, themes and theories throughout the research. The findings in qualitative data can often be stretched to



people with characteristics like those in the study environment, gaining first-hand data that is rich. Moreover, the qualitative method can offer an understanding of complex situations, in a specific social context or phenomenon typically, which takes place in an identified area of study in geographical areas or populations (Rakepa, 2012).

### **3.3.4 Sampling**

Sampling can be defined as a representation of the components from where the data and information will be gathered (Dura & Nita, 2011). O’Sullivan, Russel & Berner (2010) state that, drawing a sample is an economical and effective way to study the population. Hence, as mentioned above the sampled group in this study referred to traffic officers from the Department of Transport in Pietermaritzburg region. In qualitative research, sampling is used to gain in- depth knowledge. Punch and Oancea (2014) emphasize the need to use the most feasible sampling plan, therefore, purposive sampling was less expensive and time-consuming. Furthermore, the researcher used purposive sampling for the study which was seen as more advantageous as it allowed the researcher to select participants who are relevant to the aim and objectives of the study.

In addition, purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when “elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). However, this was the method used in this study, and is one of the most cost-effective and time-effective sampling methods. At a time of conducting this study, a total number of traffic officers in Pietermaritzburg region was 64. The researcher targeted between 15 and 30 traffic officers to participate in the study to be determined by saturation and availability. 27 participants were available for the study as others were on leave, sick leave, and working on standby shift. Their availability was primarily due to the working conditions of officers, as those on night shift were not available to participate in the study. Participants were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. Therefore, the 27 traffic officers who participated all belonged to Pietermaritzburg region, Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.3.5 Semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument**

Babbie (2007) identified three major categories of interviews, namely the standardised interview, the semi-standardised interview and the unstandardised interview. Standardised interviews are formally structured and are similar in nature to a questionnaire survey whereby there are no deviations, or the language used. Semi-standardised (or semi structured) interviews offer a more flexible approach to the interview process, whereas unstandardised or unstructured interviews do not engage a specific framework for questioning. Semi-structured interviews

were used as data collection instruments. The data was collected using an interview schedule. An interview schedule was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the study as the researcher was interacting with participants as it was a one-on-one face to face interview. In this context, the researcher controls the flow of discussions which were administered physically to officers. The interview schedule contained many probing questions to explore the utilization of the programme by the officers.

These kinds of interviews offer more flexible approach to the interview process. While they may use an interview schedule for predetermined topics, they allow for unanticipated responses and issues to emerge using open-ended questioning (Tod, 2006). On the other hand, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to pursue a series of less structured questioning and also permits spontaneous issues raised by the interviewee to be explored. The wording of questions is flexible and facilitates different levels of language to be used and clarifications to be made by the interviewer (Berg, 2009). Interviews were conducted in English as a medium of communication. Informed concerns forms were distributed to the participants after their consent to participate was obtained. Furthermore, the researcher used a digital audio recorder and also took notes as a backup for audio recordings. Hence, participants were requested for permission to record interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this research study as this approach allowed the researcher to get a complete understanding of the participant's perceptions and experience of occupational challenges. The duration of interviews ranged from 20 to 40 minutes per session. Semi-structured interviews provided a more flexible approach and process. The interviews in this research were done in the offices of the traffic officers which is their natural setting.

The formulation of interview schedule allowed the researcher to create interview questions in advance, and this contributed positively to the study as guidance and direction during the interviews. The researcher also formed part as the key tools in data collection. In addition, Babbie (2013) states that a questionnaire generates information that is useful for analysis. The researcher prepared for the interviews by being equipped with the skills to ask interview questions and various ways to probe. The process of interviewing is a method of qualitative research where the researcher collects data directly from the participants. The interviews allowed for the establishment of a list of possible responses and resolutions which, in turn, enables for the construction of a more highly structured interview. They permit for the

discovery of new aspects of the problem through exploring the detailed explanations supplied by respondents (Claire, 2013).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the key foundations of the methodological approach by introducing the site of the study and the reasons why it was selected. This covered a discussion on the interpretivist paradigm, the qualitative approach followed by the qualitative data collection, sampling and analysis methods. The following chapter is comprising of data presentation, analysis and discussion.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data collected from the participants. Data was solicited from the traffic officers employed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. This qualitative study sheds light on the experiences of traffic officers in relation to the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programmes. The data was categorised according to the headings in line with the objectives for this study. As a result, the themes that emerged from the study were aligned with the objectives.

#### 4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

The main aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of the Employee Assistance Programme services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher conducted the interviews using an interview guide which comprised of 11 semi-structured questions. Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Prior to conclusion of the interview, the participants were given an opportunity to provide additional comments. This form of engagement afforded the opportunity to hear the participants' view with regard to their interviews and the questions asked.

##### 4.2.1 Demographic profiles of traffic officers

In this section, biographical data is presented. The data below represents the demographic details of 27 traffic officers in the Department of Transport in Pietermaritzburg, who served as participants in this study. However, the following table shows rank, age, and years of service, marital status and race.

Rank		Age	Years of service	Marital status	Race
Principal Provincial Inspector (PPI)	3	37-55	11 - 34	Married - 21 Divorce - 1	African - 19 Asian - 7
Senior Provincial Inspector (SPI)	5	47-52	13 - 29	Single - 5	White - 1
Provincial Inspector (PI)	19	29-47	5 - 13		

**Table 4.1: Biographical profile of participants**

<b>Participant number</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Do you have full knowledge of EAPs? Yes/No</b>	<b>Utilisation of EAPs? YES/NO</b>	<b>Occasions of EAPs utilisation?</b>	<b>Did you find it helpful? Yes/No</b>
1.	Male	No	No	Once	No
2.	Female	Yes	Yes	Once	No
3.	Male	No	Yes	Once	No
4.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
5.	Female	No	Yes	Once	No
6.	Female	Yes	No	Once	No
7.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
8.	Female	No	Yes	Once	Yes
9.	Female	Yes	Yes	Once	No
10.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
11.	Male	Yes	No	Once	No
12.	Female	No	Yes	Once	No
13.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
14.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
15.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
16.	Female	Yes	Yes	Once	No
17.	Female	Yes	Yes	Once	No
18.	Female	Yes	Yes	Twice	No
19.	Female	Yes	Yes	Once	Yes
20.	Female	No	No	Once	No
21.	Female	No	Yes	Once	No
22.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
23.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
24.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
25.	Female	Yes	No	Once	No
26.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No
27.	Male	Yes	Yes	Once	No

Table 4.1 above provides an overview of traffic officers who participated in the study. For confidentiality purposes, the participants were identified using numbers from 1 to 27. The variables identified were gender, knowledge of EAPs, utilisation of EAPs, occasion of EAPs utilisation and its usefulness. Male participants comprised of 52% of the targeted population, while female participants comprised of 48%. Secondly, the majority of the participants reported

to have knowledge of EAP services. Thirdly, the majority reported to have knowledge of the use of EAP services. Fourthly, all except one reported to have used the EAP services, at least once. Lastly, the majority found the EAP services not helpful.

#### 4.2.2 Themes and sub-themes emerging from the study

Table 4.2 below provides objectives, themes and sub-themes that emerged in the study.

**Table 4.2 Objectives, themes and sub-themes**

Objective	Theme	Subthemes
To explore the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in promoting their occupational wellness	Theme 1: The shared knowledge of EAP	Subtheme 1.1: Understanding the EAP role Subtheme 1.2: Lack of knowledge about the availability of counselling Subtheme 1.3: Lack of EAP marketing Subtheme 1.4: Limited referrals from supervisors Subtheme 1.5: Reasons for not accessing EAP services
To examine the traffic officers' understanding of the EAP's role concerning the conditions under which they work.	Theme 2: Tough working conditions	Subtheme 2.1: Direct trauma impact Subtheme 2.2: Lack of management support Subtheme 2.3: Lack of communication Subtheme 2.4 EAP visibility
To examine the strategies that traffic officers use to cope with occupationally related trauma	Theme 3: Self-created mechanism	Subtheme 3.1: Spirituality Subtheme 3.2: Self reliance Subtheme 3.3: Lack of leadership in EAP's role
To provide recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the Department of Transport.	Theme 4: Contributions by employees	

**Objective 1: To explore the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in promoting occupational wellness.**

##### 4.2.2.1 Theme 1: The shared knowledge of EAP

This theme emerged from the question about the participants' understanding of the EAP. It came about as participants responded to the question about their understanding of the EAP role within the Department. In most organisations, the EAPs are implemented with a specific purpose and objectives in mind. Rajin (2012) identifies three sets of objectives that employers

intend to achieve, namely, to conform to the obligations and common law duty of care, provide and support the wellbeing of employees, and to retain employees and to improve productivity. In relation to the main theme, sub-themes were further identified, including the understanding of the EAP role, the availability of counselling services, marketing, referrals from supervisors and the importance of EAP services.

**(i) Subtheme 1.1: Understanding the EAP's role**

EAPs provide work-based interventions such as individual counselling intended to improve employees' emotional and psychological well-being as well as psychological health and support their immediate family members (EAPPA, 2021). It is important for the role of EAPs to be known to all the employees in any organisation where EAPs are in existence. The focus of this research is to explore the perceptions and experiences of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in facilitating occupational wellness. Officers' responses showed that they understood the role of EAP services as they mentioned below:

*“The role of the EAP is to help employees to be ready emotionally and psychologically to face whatever challenges they come across on the road as there are things that affect us emotionally, but I have not used it I heard about it from colleagues I have never used EAP as I started in 2007, not marketed well don't know where to start, it has to be marketed monthly and quarterly”. (Participant 1)*

The view expressed by the participant was similarly expressed by participant 3 and 6.

*“It is meant to assist traumatic employees, those with challenges, Uhh I think communication and is not marketed well, questioned asked to managers not answered well...maybe we heard about it outside not inside the office”. (Participant 3)*

*“Yes assisting with trauma, the psychological impact it has in the job and home. But don't know who to approach the contact and the location of the office maybe it is not important to use it, they will always talk about the job”. (Participant 6)*

Participants above revealed that, they understood the role of the programme and they know that it is meant to help them with their personal issues. This is very concerning that almost half of the participants understood the role of EAP. General provision for the EAP (2001) of the department highlighted that, EAP role is to assist an official with any personal or social problem, such as alcohol and drug dependency or occupational stress that has an adverse effect

on the efficiency and productivity of such official, as well as his or her job satisfaction. Hence it is important for the EA practitioner to intensify the role of EAP and its functions to officers. The EAP should provide with support, guidance and access to treatment to improve their work performance. However, this has been evidently shown by the departmental report by the inhouse doctor that, alcohol among officers in particular increases the risk of unemployment, increases the risk of arriving late at work, such behaviour resulting in disciplinary procedures (Dr Coetzee, Departmental Report April 2019). In this regard, it is important to note that EAPs play a huge role in the management of trauma counselling as this is one of the fundamental role of EAPs. This however, calls for management, supervisors and EAP practitioners to intensify the level of awareness campaigns, methods of distributing information about the role of EAP to all officers.

However, the Department of Transport deemed it necessary to develop general provisions of the programme, to focus on health promotion, create awareness on wellness issues and allowing employees to take charge of their life, to be responsible, to reduce work-related stress at the workplace as well.

**(ii) Subtheme 1.2: Lack of knowledge about the availability of counselling services**

In the literature, counselling falls under the umbrella term ‘talking therapies’ and allows people to discuss their problems and any difficult feelings they encounter in a safe, confidential environment (Blair, 2003). This is an intervention aimed at managing workplace trauma in a form of short-term counselling and long-term therapy. According to Kamire and Eagle (2010), counselling should start few days or weeks after the traumatic incident for the employees who experienced acute stress and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Below is the comment of a participant:

*“Yes I know that we have EAP programme with counselling sessions but as I said it is not exposed to us, it is rare to hear that any member has been referred to the programme, and further states that, it is very frustrating to know that there is this type of service in the department and yet our management does not recognise it. The work we do is challenging and things we see on the road are horrible, we should have visited your office almost once a month to destress”. (Participant 15)*

**(iii) Sub-theme 1.3: Lack of EAP marketing**

Marketing the programme services is crucial to the utilisation and survival of the organisation. Taute & Manzini (2009) confirm that marketing of EAP services encourages the utilisation of



EAP by supervisors, managers, labour, peers, employees and family members. For the programme to be successful, it must be well marketed in the organisation. It is said that organisations that have a better understanding of their EAP components are one step ahead in meeting employees' needs (Groforth, 2019). Furthermore, employers must take note that often employees do not use the programme because they are unaware of its existence in the organization. They do not know about the service and/or how to access it (Burger, 2019). The aim of marketing is to create, communicate, deliver and exchange services that are valuable to the employees (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). Dickman (2009) highlighted that for EAPs to be effective needs constant marketing at all levels of the organisation. Participants expressed the following views with regard to EAP marketing:

*"I have not used it, I heard about it from colleagues, I have never used EAP as I started in 2007, not marketed well don't know where to start, it has to be marketed monthly and quarterly". (Participant 1)*

*"EAP is not marketed, EAP sessions should be marketed to members and to management at large". (Participant 8)*

*"EAPs should be allowed to come to our office at least four times a year, visibility of EAPs is important". (Participant 11)*

*"I do not remember this programme, I think I am hearing it for the first time, no communication in our office". (Participant 18).*

*"I am not aware of the programme which means the department is not marketed well to us". (Participant 21)*

*"I am not sure of it because I am always on the road, I have not heard anything about it". (Participant 22)*

*"Marketing is crucial on a monthly basis if the practitioner will assist traffic officers". (Participant 24)*

#### **(iv) Subtheme 1.4: Limited referrals from supervisors**

Referrals are the basic principle of the EAP, managers and supervisors have a pivotal role to play when it comes to referrals. Employees access EAP for many different reasons, however referral is highly dependent upon effective assessment in that one cannot refer an employee without a proper understanding of the problem (EAPA SA, 2005). The EAPA further states that management support is crucial in ensuring the realisation and utilisation of the programme and communication of the version of the programme at different levels within the Department. It is expected that managers should make use of the EAP by monitoring, supporting and guiding employees to use the programme. The view expressed by the participants as outlined below, re-affirm this view of limited or no referral by supervisors to the programme:

*“I was not referred to EAP, but I heard about it through my colleagues when was referred to the doctor sessions were not fruitful” (Participant 1)*

*“No I was not referred, I did not know the EAP at that time yet it was the time I needed it the most after the death of my friend”. (Participant 7)*

*“I was not referred though I wish but it never happens because I did not know where to go, but I did not want to be seen weak, not spoken about it till today” (Participant 10)*

*“I was not referred but I have heard it after the death of a colleague”. (Participant 11)*

*“No”, (Participant 16)*

*“No”. (Participant 18)*

*“No and I do not care” (Participant 2)*

Participants opinions above indicated that, officers often been associated toughness and they are expected to handle all sorts of situations, remain tough and not let anything to bother them. Bullock & Garland (2018), stated that officers who do seek assistance from EAPs, may get perceived as weak, not tough enough, or not able to handle themselves. This can also create a barrier among themselves to seek professional help as they would be labelled as weak. The description of officers with such label as weak become personally damaging to the officer. However, it is also clear that, managers and supervisors are not utilising the programme or referring officers to the programme. The fundamental outcome of EAP programmes in the workplace is to improve productivity and organisational performance. Therefore, the manager or supervisor should refer the employee to the EAP in writing due to lowered job performance or attendance and/or any problem that may cause an employee to be unproductive at work (EAPA, 2010). Referrals are the cornerstone of EAP utilisation for it to be effective. The researcher is of the opinion that supervisors should intervene at an early stage of the problem and refer the employee to the EAP for help.

**(v) Subtheme 1.5: Reasons for not accessing EAP services**

EAP services are designed to ensure that management builds on the productivity of each individual employee in an organization (EAPA-SA, 2017). Therefore, it is up to the employer to ensure that EAP services are well marketed within the organization and create a culture according to which EAP services are understood and accepted (Sipek, 2016). The participants were presented with the questions on the minimal use of EAP services, below are comments from participants with regard to the question:

*“No time to come to the EAP during working hours”. (Participant 4).” Don’t know the services and not exposed to them”. (Participant 5)*

*“Don’t know who to approach, the contact and the location of the office”. (Participant 6)*

*”Unaware of the EAP services they get to know when they referred”. (Participant 9)*

*“Personal I think you will look weak, culture says I have to be strong, colleagues will see me weak”. (Participant 10)*

*“Most of the time we are on the road, no communication about it”. (Participant 22)*

*“Managers do not use and officer don’t know it”. (Participant 23) “Not well informed about EAP”. (Participant 25)*

## **Objective 2: To examine the traffic officers’ understanding of the EAP role concerning the conditions under which they work**

### **4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Tough working conditions**

No other professional group is in closer contact with complex problems of society than traffic officers who are responsible for enforcing law on the road. Law enforcement is done on all the public roads within the boundaries of a particular local municipality or provincial area (National Road Traffic Act 1996). They have to clean up horrific accident scenes and stabilise life threatening situations, prevent road rage, public transport problems and in relation to the latter working conditions which are associated with taxi violence whereby they must implement law enforcement on the roadworthiness of the taxi with the aim of protecting public accidents. Furthermore, as they step onto the scene, they experience the role of rescuer as well that of a traffic officer and this results in exposure to huge traumatic experience.

### **4.3.1 Subtheme 2.1: Direct trauma impact**

EAPs play a pivotal role in the managing of trauma in the workplace. EAPA-SA (2010) states that trauma management should form part of an EAP’s scope of clinical services and that signifies that trauma management forms part of an effective EAP service offering to clients. The organisation should ensure that employees who have been exposed to traumatic events should be referred for assistance so that the impact on their psycho-social functioning and work performance are correctly assessed and managed. The participants’ responses below point out that they have to find ways to deal with problems affecting them in the workplace.

*“I report to the supervisor”. (Participant 2)*

*“Deal with it himself”. (Participant 3)”*

*I still do my work but I am easily irritable, despondent, leave things to sort itself”.  
(Participant 4)*

In support of the above participant, *Participant 5* said:

*“In most cases you leave things to sort themselves”. “Deal with things personally or myself” (Participant 18)*

Other participants reported trauma experiences to their supervisors, this has mentioned as follows:

*“I told the supervisor and told them to take a day off” (Participant 11)*

*“Report to the supervisors then it will depend to him whether they do something about it” (Participant 19).*

Further to that, participants shared trauma with a friend and colleagues instead of management, they said:

*“You tell a friend, trusted one” (Participant 20)*

*“Talking to your friend whom you trust”. (Participant 18)*

*“Discuss it with the colleagues”. (Participant 13)*

*“One would have a positive confrontation with the colleague”. (Participant 15).*

#### **4.3.2 Subtheme 2.2: Lack of management support**

Support from management plays an important role in making the EAP a success. Managers and supervisors at all levels have been described as a linchpin as they are the ones who first notice if employees are experiencing problems that impact have negative impact on their work performance. EAP credibility starts with an endorsement from management through the formulation and distribution of a corporate policy statement (Scanlon, 1991). For the programme to be effective it should be supported by the management of the organisation. The ineffectiveness of EAPs emanates from a lack of support and knowledge by management. When there is no support or endorsement from management, the programme would be ineffective. This was revealed by the participants’ responses where they expressed the following views in respect of how they learnt about the departmental EAP.

*“I was involved in the car accident” (Participant 5)*

*“I was in Ladysmith region, when seventeen people burned alive in the car accident that is where I learnt about it” (Participant 6)*

*“Heard it from the office after the death of a colleague” (Participant 11)*

*“In 2009 when there was a horrible accident on the road.” (Participant 22)*

Adding to this, some participants learned about EAP casually while they were in Traffic Training College for the Department. Apparently, these were just general talks, and were not shared as were not part of the curriculum. Two participants shared the following:

*“I learnt about in TTC told by my supervisor (Chief Provincial Inspector) who was a station commander at that time, during break time” (Participant 23)*

*“I learnt about it in College” (Participant 2) “I heard it through my colleagues in College” (Participant 13)*

Furthermore, it became evident that there was a huge gap between the EAP services and management role in assisting to utilise the programme for the benefit of enhancing the traffic law enforcement work conditions. Participants’ responses showed that managers of the Department did not support and refer officers to EAP when traumatic events or incidents occurred. The respondents responded as follows:

*“ I feel that management does not really know what we face, or they do not care, it is hard, the trauma we face but we come to work every day, what-ever you have within yourself stress related issues, it is worse when we have to work in the road where there was a horrible accident...you do not feel to go to that place on the next day you prefer to work on another place but it does not work like that way you will find yourself going back to that place... you know you have to deal with yourself for you to be able to get up and go to work...it is not easy” (Participant 6)*

*“Sometimes at one point I have to work alone, I was told that they short staff, of which I do not know why the department is not recruiting new officers because we are really short staff, we deal with danger and trauma all the time, it is hard even you EAPs can’t approach the management and our supervisors, very hard when you are working alone at night because sometimes you become the victim of motorist and public on the road, at times as I sit inside the car alone it is scary to be alone on the road at night, you are not brave enough to work as normal and you don’t know whether you will survive the night or not, you are alone the car is marked everybody see the police car, flashbacks will come back all the time when you are sleeping”. (Participant 8)*

*“It is very dangerous and traumatic what we see is very scary...very scary things” when I receive a call about an accident that is where the stress starts exactly it reminds me of other accidents that I don’t want to remember at all, there was a time where I did not buy meat and pies because it reminds me corpse I saw on the road, one will always thinking about what happened on the road yet the department is not helping*

*us with trauma. The trauma create misunderstanding among ourselves as officers”.*  
(Participant 10)

*“Whenever I don’t feel okay regarding trauma, I don’t report it to the supervisor because as I am a man, they will say I am weak and I ended up having bad communication at home and I do not talk well to my family and this affects children”.*  
(Participant 15)

#### **4.3.3 Subtheme 2.3: Lack of communication**

The researcher is of the opinion that essential to a successful EAP is communicating to employees what services are available and what steps employees need to take to access these services, this may increase the utilisation of EAP. The participant stated the following:

*“There is no communication in our section, just look at what had happened to me, I got injured while I was performing my duties, was admitted in hospital for weeks when I was discharged and came back to work, I was told that I am owing the department money because I was exhausted my sick leave then I got leave without pay, my supervisor did not say anything about EAP and even HR office did not advise me, so what I am saying is that communication here in the office is not in existence so nje...it is like that”* (Participant 7)

#### **4.3.4 Subtheme 2.4: EAP visibility**

The visibility of the EAP can have a positive impact upon employee awareness which in turn is related to the utilisation of an EAP (Frost, 2006). An EAP could be used as the most strategic and effective tool in promoting productivity and address absenteeism, hence it is the tool available to an employer to support employees. Visibility of EAP can be done to enhance the programme participants also highlighted that EAP is not available or visible in their offices, they express their view on this as they stated the following:

*“Visibility of EAPs quarterly can enhance the utilisation of the programme. Distribution of booklet with contact numbers of EAP office can help and confidentiality should be guaranteed”.* (Participant 1)

*“Contact numbers of EAP office to contact them direct to address flashbacks”.*  
(Participant 4)

*“EAP visibility should be made compulsory for practitioners to visit our office on a monthly basis”* (Participant 6)

*“An EAP should be more publicity at work and visible, traffic officers must not see EAP as an embarrassment, pamphlet should be distributed encouraging officers. EAP representatives should always be available to override protocol”* (Participant 14)

Visibility of EAP is an indication that the programme should be clearly seen or noticeable by officers within the department. It can also have a positive impact upon officers’ awareness

which in turn, can increase the utilisation of the programme. Failure for EAPs to be visible, has a negative impact towards the department at large, as it does not serve the purpose of its existence, not addressing personal issues, absenteeism, reducing stress and performance of officers. The invisibility of EAP will certainly and negatively affect officers' awareness of the programme and its subsequent utilisation. It is evident that, it is important for officers to be visited by EAP officials, as they are the first responders to a crash scene and in most situations to clear the road, they have to be strong and perform their duties as if normal. While performing their duties on the road, they experience offensive language, non-cooperation from the public, lack of manpower and a lack of cooperation on the part of a higher authority.

The impact of this is that, traffic officers lose passion for their work. The narratives of many traffic officers in the sample of 27, have expressed what they face. The problem is based on what has really been done, which that could depend on level of management inclusivity. The universal perception of EAPs could contribute to the under-utilisation of the programme by officers within the Department. The contextual challenges that affect traffic officers look as if they are unimportant or neglected. The qualitative data of traffic officers also shows the lack of directives which could be central in dealing with all these micro matters these employees experience.

The nature of this job is inherently stressful, including both office and field problems that accumulate. The most experienced participants who have been in the Department of Transport for years concluded that they have become immune. This could be a problem since psychological issues manifest differently. This different manifestation shapes how each person deals with their situation and mechanism for coping. Some participants further reported feeling demoralised because they received so little recognition or none at all.

### **Objective 3: To examine strategies that officers use to cope with occupationally related trauma**

#### **4.4 Theme 3: Self-created mechanisms**

Traffic officers are faced with many stressful situations, and each of them possibly coped with these stressors differently. Generally, coping is a positive psychological construct which refers to the perceptual, mental or behavioural effort that people employ to deal with situations deemed potentially difficult and stressful (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). In literature it is stated that despite pressures and difficult working conditions, traffic officers still manage to provide some level of service and loyalty to the organisation to provide a high quality of service to the

public. However, they have pointed out that, they have adopted the strategy of sharing problems with colleagues, family members, church members and friends by watching television and spending more time at home. Furthermore, participants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding factors that hinder the utilisation of EAP, they have developed coping mechanisms to deal with occupational stress.

#### **4.4.1 Subtheme 3.1: Spirituality**

With regard to traumatic experiences of traffic officers, there are many factors that could shape inconsistent work performance. Spirituality-based coping has been found to be prevalent among traffic officers and police officers. This may help individuals to draw meaning and transform their sense of significance by integrating the stressor into existence by defining of self, thus providing a greater sense of control and aiding in psychological adjustment (Violanti, 2013). However, the high exposure to levels of danger on the road does not cease and traffic officers are required to be constantly attentive. In order to maintain focus some of the participants expressed their views on the importance of spiritual support as outlined below:

*“I use my personal structures at home, they are very supporting and helping as parents”. (Participant 10)*

*“I use my priest and other elders of the church to help”. (Participant 7)*

#### **4.4.2 Subtheme 3.2: Self reliance**

In the absence of referrals by the supervisors, officers developed these types of coping mechanisms as a way of maintaining themselves. They expressed their views on this below:

*“I have decided to deal with trauma myself or sometimes I will talk to my colleagues”. (Participant 3)*

*“I still do my work not saying anything nor reporting but I am easily irritable and despondent sometimes”. (Participant 4)*

*“In most cases they leave things to sort themselves”. (Participant 5) “I do not do anything, I have got little stimulation”. (Participant 6)*

*“You leave it at home and do your work”. (Participant 16)*

*“I will deal with it personally and I think roadshows and wellness days for us can help”. (Participant 18)*



#### **4.4.3 Subtheme 3.3: Lack of leadership in EAP role**

In these circumstances, management support and leadership roles should be clear and essential to support officers against organisational factors that hinder the utilisation of the EAP. Leadership is also critical in any organisations' direction and orientation. It is in charge of outlining the organisations' vision and mission for others to follow (Meraku, 2017). Moreover, they must ensure officers that they provide support and create opportunities for officers to avail themselves for EAP workshop.

*“No knowledge of it, should find marketing strategy, not to be referred to Dr Coetzee, this is management referral that is not working, managers must not punish and refer, stereotype issue of punishment hinder us to use EAP”. (Participant 1)*

*“Protocol is a problem, hinders us to utilise the EAP and channels of command”. (Participant 4)”*

*Lack of information on EAP, it is not cascaded down to us, colleagues preaching”. (Participant 7)*

*“Channels sometimes can cause miscommunication, protocol”. (Participant 15)*

*“Lack of trust between supervisors and juniors, not comfortable in sharing personal information, do not feel comfortable to share at all”. (Participant 17)*

*“Not sure but I think is lack of direction”. (Participant 18)*

#### **Objective 4: To provide recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the Department of Transport**

#### **4.5 Theme 4: Contributions by employees**

This is the theme where officers dedicate themselves to create a good image of the Department. Work pressures when seeing commuters and motorists on the scene of an accident is causing a huge trauma and stress. On a daily basis their occupation is dangerous as they have to do road patrolling and control traffic. Furthermore, they have to clean up horrific accident scenes and stabilise life threatening situations, prevent road rage and to be fit to deal with taxi violence whereby they implement law enforcement when the taxis are not roadworthy with the aim of protecting the public. However, questions 9, 10, and 11 was designed and relevant to establish whether EAPs offered assistance to traffic officers and if there was any contribution provided by EAPs after they experienced the effects of multiple incidents, trauma, stress and depression.

The researcher sought to establish from the participants since the EAP was implemented, what might be done to be able to access it. The researcher also sought to establish their day-to-day

job on the road and what EAPs could do to assist them with challenges they face on the road. Almost all officers expressed their dissatisfaction about the unavailability of the EAP when needed. In addition, officers expressed their views that HR should be involved in assisting them with understanding the Policy and Procedures on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement (PILIR), Determination of Absence in the Public Sector, Financial Literacy skills and Garnishee Orders.

Participants mentioned that EAP should assist with counselling, training or marketing of EAPs, distribution of EAP information and be visible daily, monthly or quarterly in their section. Participants shared the following views:

#### **4.5.1 Subtheme 4: EAP workshop and HR training**

Training for Human Resource Managers and personnel is crucial for the programme to be more strategic. This should include how to access EAP services through the formal and informal referral process, recognizing signs that services are needed, how to identify and make referrals for employees, to ensure they have good understanding of EAP purposes and the availability of EAP resources.

*“Workshop or training on EAP to give us knowledge, monthly, quarterly training is important, EAP visibility”.* (Participant 2)

*“Visibility of EAPs is important, EAP services should be tabled down and all EAP prevention programmes should be known by us”.* (Participant 19)

*“Visibility of EAPs on a monthly basis or quarterly will make the programme to be successful”.* (Participant 24)

*“A lot needs to be clear, should be communicated properly so that everyone would fully understand the purpose of the EAP, training of management or supervisors is important on EAP services it should be made compulsory for EAP to visit our offices”.* (Participant 6)

*“As I have stated to you mam that, I was charged by the department to pay back money, so this thing called PILIR one should have been getting education on it, HR should help us on this and special leave also to know can help”.* (Participant 7)

*“EAP need to be exposed but we need to know about Garnishee Orders, this thing how it works with HR, department should help us on how to handle money because this also causes stress on top of what we are experiencing at work”.* (Participants 8)

*It is the knowledge we need and training including supervisors, promoting EAP can help us, EAP should attend our meeting quarterly, it will be appreciated that supervisors should be forced to call EAPs after an accident and awareness on other*

*issues of the department is important like....Garnishee Orders and Financial Literacy” (Participant 20)*

*“Ehh I think a better communication about EAP would be to do it so that people know more about it, we need to know how I get help from EAP, road show are important.....in other words re-introducing EAP to all law enforcement officers is needed, “If it can be advertised to be used more, may be monthly or quarterly it would help officers it can be market once a month, visibility of EA practitioner in our offices, booklet to be distributed with EAP information workshop on how to use the programme is important, I will be happy if EAP train us on Injury on Duty (IOD) and PILIR” (Participant 27)*

However, below is the participants’ response on their daily traumatic experience on the road, they said:

*“We are working with accidents every time, to tell you it is not nice sometimes it is hard to eat meat and wors because of the experience we have for peoples’ injuries, many of us we don’t like to talk about that, flashbacks when we sleep many.....and many...for different accident you remember date, time, day and even type of a weather when that happens, at night nje mama it is a challenge because it’s not clear and it is risky, I believe that EAP is meant to help us”. (Participant 5)*

*“Sissy we are seeing accidents on a daily basis that is trauma on its own and it is worse when you have to see a dead body, worse burned one, you become more stress when you have to see a baby died on the road, I turned to personalise all this sometimes you blame yourself as a failure for not being able to help these people, Not having enough officers create stress and tension among ourselves, it hard when we have to work at night but marketing this thing of yours will help and I think it was meant to help us cope with our problems”. (Participant 8)*

*“Job is very traumatising, to see horrible accident daily is not nice EAP is not marketed and it has meant to help us cope trauma and help give emotional support”. (Participant 1)*

*“It is difficult to work on the road, EAP is not marketed within the department, and always there for officers even if there are no accidents visibility of EAPs is crucial to be available on a monthly meeting of the office. Help with transfers because it is an issue to us and secondment. What are criteria of getting transfers, EAP should do home visits and it should be marketed in Traffic Training College”. (Participant 19)*

Therefore, some participants shared the same sentiment about the importance of implementing EAPs in the department and said it should be included in the Traffic Training College curriculum for officers. The participants mentioned the following:

*“EAP should be implemented in Traffic Training College for traffic officers”. (Participant 19)*

*“EAP implementation is important especially in Traffic Training College. I think EAP information should be included in their teachings or syllabus”. (Participant 24)*

Participants did express the perceptions regarding the recommendations of the EAPs. There are diverse and important views revealing many similarities by the traffic officers at the Department of Transport in Pietermaritzburg, regarding the improvement of EAPs. The contributions by traffic officers' participants would contribute to the structural and functional level of EAPs. This could improve EAPs in many areas. The participants provided valuable contribution toward uplifting the visibility and knowledge about EAPs. This was useful in improving employees' working environment. Focusing on the bigger issues was a priority for decision makers whilst micro aspects remain which largely drive employees to experience social problems which then affect their work performance.

#### **4.6 Discussion**

The following discussion is based on the findings presented above. These were part of interview sessions with traffic officers within the Department of Transport Pietermaritzburg, whose ages ranged between 29 years to 55 years. The total number of interviews was 27, with predominantly male participants. The total sum of female participants was 13, and the overall number of male participants was 14. When asked about the utilisation of EAPs, only 21 out of 27 employees reported to have utilised the Employee Assistance Programme, and most of them used it, at least once. Only two found the EAP services helpful, the rest reported in the negative. From the last two responses related to demographical data, it became evident and came as no surprise that there is underutilisation of EAP services.

The study reveals very little is known about the services rendered by the EAP in the Department, while some of the participants understand the programme and its relevance. Participants mentioned that the EAP is meant to help them to be ready emotionally and psychologically to face whatever challenges they may experience on the roads, even though they have never used the EAP. More than one participant in this study is aware of the EAP role which is to help employees with counselling for them to be ready emotionally and psychologically and that it is meant to help employees with trauma. More than half of participants in this study revealed that, there is no marketing, no knowledge, lack of supervisory referrals for the programme. These findings are in line with the guidelines of EAPA (2010) which indicated that, employees must be fully informed about the existence of the programme, its services and what it entails must be well addressed during the marketing process.

Participants' findings revealed that they have never been in any training or workshop conducted by the EAP practitioners, though Pace (2006) indicated that management is expected to endorse

the programme in their meetings, provide supervisory training and training sessions for employees of the organisation. However, other officers have referred themselves or were referred by their colleagues for counselling for psychological intervention using their medical aid, instead of being referred to the EAP whereas there is budget allocated within the department for these psychological services. Consequently, Van Wyk (2015) emphasises that formal referral takes place where there is a deterioration of work performance and this should happen at an early stage of the problem.

Research findings support the purpose of EAPs as they are implemented in organisations with a specific purpose and objectives in mind, therefore, if not implemented correctly it defeats the purpose. Therefore, this finding is in line with the General Provision for an EAP for the Department of Transport (2001), which stipulates its objectives as being a commitment to provide an environment that is conducive and promoting the emotional and social wellbeing of all employees.

In the findings, the participants feel that management is not doing enough to protect them from traumatic experiences on the road. The nature of these responses shows the different perspective of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in the Department. The findings revealed that inexperience from the management perspective creates limitations of knowledge with situational challenges mounting for traffic officers. The boundary exists within and between the structures in the Traffic section which affects the sharing of crucial Employee Assistance Programme information. Lastly the participants understood that their job needs EAP intervention because of the work they do daily.

When responding on the tough working conditions, participant findings revealed that they wish to meet with management to discuss with them things that they face on the road, as they have to clean-up horrific accident scenes and stabilise life threatening situations, prevent road rage, public transport problems, and in relation to the latter working conditions associated with taxi violence, whereby they have to implement law enforcement whether a vehicle is roadworthy with the aim of protecting the public. Increased stress levels result in decreased individual performance and productivity (Leka Griffiths & Cox 2003). Many participants shared that debriefing counselling is crucial for participants because of the challenges they face when performing their daily duties. Participants revealed that they experience direct trauma on the road that makes them easily irritable and that some of the trauma is related to work on the scene of accidents. Findings revealed that they have to take a day off to deal with the trauma. Seven participants mentioned that there is no support in the workplace from the management when

needed. It is stated that; debriefing sessions will help them to cope with disastrous crashes on the roads. Coping mechanisms whenever used have shown to reduce the effects of stress (Malek et al., 2010; Schonfeld, 1990).

Participants' findings affirmed that, what they experience on the roads requires special attention and they believe that the EAP should play an enormous role in helping them. Lack of communication and non-visibility of practitioners causes problems which lead to continuing trauma in their lives. Almost all participants encouraged the marketing of the programme and regarded EAP workshops, management support and visibility as important. Secondly, participants' findings showed a number of commonalities which indicated the deeper challenges they faced as traffic officers and conditions which caused stress and trauma.

This was confirmed by Mushwana (1998), traffic officers are at risk of being attacked by violent motorists and being targeted for their firearms. Sometimes they must work alone which is difficult attending to different motorists and their negative behaviour on the road. Thirdly, nepotism and skeleton staff create a huge problem. Generally, nepotism at the workplace with regards to discipline, it breaks the rules on how the officer should behave while performing the duties. However, as per the General Systems Theory emphasized that, all systems share certain characteristics that allow them to function as systems, regardless of their type or level of organisation (Macy, 2010). Participants' findings have reported the feeling of being demoralised as they receive little recognition or none at all.

One alarming finding of the study is that, traffic officers have to create for themselves mechanisms to cope with occupational related trauma at work. Coping is a positive psychological construct which refers to the perceptual, mental or behavioural efforts that officers employ to deal with situations deemed potentially difficult and stressful (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). In the absence of counselling, findings revealed the danger officers encounter on the road demanding which demand their attention influence them to become more spiritual. Further, this was confirmed by two participants, Participant 10 & 7 respectively, confirmed that he used a personal structure at home he received support from his parents and that he also used the priest and other elders of the church to help him. Participants' responses reveal that it is important for them to get professional counselling. Kamire and Eagle (2010) indicate that counselling should start a few days or weeks after the traumatic incident for officers who experienced acute stress and post-traumatic stress symptoms. With regard to this theme, study findings indicated that, in the absence of EAP information, protocol is a problem which hinder

officers to use EAP. The channels are at times incorrect, and there is lack of trust between managers and juniors in such a way that, it is not easy for them to share personal information.

“In addition, lack of direction from managers’ causes havoc at work, as the manager is expected to lead the team by referring officers to the programme when it is needed to do so. In the absence of this direction from managers, officers who are faced with many challenges in life, feel isolated, need trauma counselling or just need support” (Butterfield et al., 2009). Lastly, findings made it clear that there is a visible gap as the majority of participants concluded that they always deal with their trauma on their own which is not healthy for them. It is therefore clear that, officers have created mechanisms for themselves to cope with the trauma of a stressful job. At some stage this self-created mechanism could result in negative outcomes such as drinking alcohol and trying to forget what they saw on the road as a way of coping.

As outlined in the literature chapter, it is important to emphasise the importance of policies and the principles mentioned that need to be put in place by the Department of Transport. The Department should have clear communication when it comes to implementing EAP in their offices. Participants added that it would be a good idea if the EAP function were included in the job function of supervisors, and then supervisors would refer officers to the programme.

Furthermore, adding the EAP function to managers’ job description is particularly important to maintain a conducive working environment that is free from conflict and disputes which could lead to full utilisation of the programme. In addition, by marketing the programme and training management EAP referrals would be recommended. The Department should organise wellness days for traffic officers and their families where psychological and social intervention would be available. In other words, as per the General Systems Theory, there is more to an employer and employee together than when they are alone in separate entities. Which means that, management and employees must find a common ground to together. EA practitioners should be invited to officers’ meetings to help them with confidential issues. Prevention programmes such as financial literacy, Garnishee Orders, communication skills, conflict resolution workshops and decision-making are of great importance and should be provided in Road Traffic Inspectorate section.

The study also revealed the need for revisiting the way the Department implements the programme. It was clear that traffic officers have serious challenges after they have witnessed

traumatic accidents on the road while performing their duties. The Department did not take care of this category of employees by doing a follow-up in the form of debriefing workshops as a way to provide coping mechanisms.

The response from traffic officers throughout the study supported the idea of management being held accountable for making sure that the correct marketing of the EAP takes place within their respective offices when they have meetings. The study also reveals that traffic officers are treated differently compared with other officials of the Department when it comes to the usage of the programme. It was clear that programme credibility and management support are probably the two most important aspects as the success of the programme depends to a large degree on how it is perceived by management.

It was clear from the interviews that Department perceptions of the programme are shaped by management support and buy-in of EAPs. The central role of the Employee Assistance Programme is to assist in the early identification and resolution of productivity problems which may adversely affect employees' job performance. The significance of working conditions for traffic officers become a priority of the EAP; however, this has become a subjective matter which is far from having consensus within the traffic officers' section. The interviews were beneficial for the generation of responses regarding the feasibility and role of EAPs. Therefore, the discovery of information about its role within the Department of Transport in Pietermaritzburg presented new outcomes. These were the concerns they have about the availability of such knowledge to traffic officers.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

It can be concluded that based on participants' interviews, it is clear that all participants need EAP intervention and they are experiencing trauma on a daily basis in their job function. The 27 participants contributed towards the building of knowledge regarding the utility of EAPs. Their response facilitated the answering of essential questions about EAPs feasibility. The qualitative description shared in the narratives also eliminated speculation about the lack of use of the Employee Assistance Programme.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a summary of the entire study, conclusions and recommendations. The aim is to accelerate argument on different perspectives around the ideas of companies and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs). The scope of summary draws on features contained in this research. The segment draws from the first chapter until the last chapter. The generated recommendations impact on the overall research outcomes and aims and objectives. The purpose will be to sum up the dissertation with crucial knowledge relevant to advocate for potential future solutions to meeting the demands of EAPs.

#### 5.2 Summary of the study

This study focused on exploring the perceptions of traffic officers on the utilisation of the Employee Assistance Programme in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal. The Employee Assistance Programme is known as assisting employees' work-related situations. They mediate work-related issues that could affect productivity. The concept of EAPs is relatively new in South Africa as it is reported to have been recently accepted in South African labour market (Pillay & Terblanche, 2012). The objectives were to understand the perceptions of traffic officers about the relevance and their use of EAP services in facilitating occupational wellness. In addition, to examine the traffic officers' understanding of the EAP role concerning the conditions under which they work. The research wanted to examine the strategies and traffic officers' use of the EAP to cope with occupationally related trauma and to provide recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the Department of Transport. The offering of literature review was to generate significant information regarding the EAPs. The Historical Perspective of EAPs Internationally, EAPs in South Africa, EAP utilisation by international Traffic Police/Law Enforcement Officers and EAP utilisation by South African Traffic Police/ Law enforcement were among the reviewed topics. The researcher used methodologies of qualitative research which vary and produced significant data. A qualitative method is a crucial feature of any social science research. The method is standard across most social science disciplines such as sociology and anthropology (Babbie, 2013). It allowed the researcher to see and interact directly with the participants. The method included the interpretivist paradigm, in-depth interviews, participant observation and the purposive sampling contributed to the accumulation of data for presentation and analysis. Furthermore,

the presentation of data was then tabulated with an intent to analyse and discuss the findings from all 27 participants. The following theories were used and applicable to the research study.

The Systems Theory was used to get an understanding the different systems and how traffic officers and management work together. This was done with the purpose to gain an understanding of the influence at work and social environment of the officers and vice versa. Secondly, the General Systems Theory was used to provide awareness of the essential interrelatedness and inter-dependence of all officers in traffic section. It also emphasised that there is no traffic section without officers since they work together. This means that, the Department of Transport depends on traffic officers for productivity and service delivery in order to satisfy public road users. Thirdly, Gestalt Theory was used to show counselling helping people as a therapy that puts the focus on here and now.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the aim of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of traffic officers on the utilisation of EAP services in the Department of Transport. The conclusions of this study are presented in line with the research objectives as listed below:

#### **5.3.1 To explore the perceptions of traffic officers on the relevance and the value of EAP services in facilitating occupational wellness.**

From the interviews, it became apparent that the participants had limited understanding of EAP services within the Department. None of the traffic officers were aware that the department had an EAP programme for employees. Most of the participants knew that an EAP is meant to help them to be ready emotional and psychological to face challenges they come across on the road.

The majority of participants had a positive perception of EAP services as necessary and beneficial to employees and also as a tool to increase performance and productivity. Furthermore, based on the findings, ignorance from the management perspective creates limitations of knowledge with challenges mounting for traffic officers. As a result, few officers viewed EAP as a disciplinary tool for managers since managers had not referred officers to the programme. However, it was suggested that the crucial aspects of a supervisor's referral procedures should be included in their training. Furthermore, it was clear that, the majority of participants have never had an opportunity to attend EAP workshops. Traffic officers were also not clear about EAP services. Participants believed that there is still some stigma attached to the utilisation of the EAP services in the Department. They further associated EAP services

with the services of the in-house clinics of the Department. There was a lack of clarity on who to contact when officers experienced trauma problems on the road.

### **5.3.2 To examine traffic officers' understanding of the EAP role in relation to their working conditions.**

There was a high prevalence of trauma among participants interviewed who indicated that, working conditions are tough for them and they wish to have a meeting with the management and discuss with them things they face on the road. It was clear that working conditions associated with accidents on the road are traumatic. However, trauma they experience on the road make them irritable because of the trauma they have to carry with them and deal with on a daily basis. Many participants feel that debriefing counselling sessions are crucial. As a result, most participants raised concerns that management do not give them support when trauma events or incidents occurred.

Most of the participants revealed that there is no communication at work, some participants were injured on the road, admitted in hospital and discharged and went back to work without referral for psychological intervention. Most participants expressed that EAP visibility and marketing the EAP monthly or quarterly could enhance the utilisation and address myths related to the programme. Participants further suggested that, there should be more publicity of EAP at work and visibility, so that traffic officers should not see EAP as an embarrassment. Pamphlets should be distributed encouraging officers' participation in the programme. Another participant recommended that, EAP representatives should always be available to override protocol.

### **5.3.3 To provide recommendations for the implementation of the EAP in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.**

The participants expressed a need for EAP training of supervisors and employees on EAP services. Findings indicated that EAP training should be compulsory. However, one particular finding confirmed by participants recommended that the Human Resource section should assist in understanding the Policy and Procedures on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement, special leave, Garnishee Orders, Injury on Duty and financial life skills. One of the prominent findings revealed that EAP marketing should take place in Traffic Training College and it should be included in the syllabus.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Recommendations of the study**

On the basis of the findings of the present study, the following points are recommended for the immediate attention of higher authorities for the EAP to be successful in RTI section.

Marketing the programme is recommended to all road traffic inspectorate officers of the Department including management at large. This is an important factor in the field of EAP, as it helps to get help from management and from traffic officers for the programme to achieve its purposes and to be implemented. This is a necessity for EAP to work.

In view of the above, it is recommended that, marketing should be conducted to help officers who are not open enough to share their challenges with family members. Marketing will help encouraging officers to seek counselling and to talk about traumatic events.

Channels of effective communication are recommended to all officers where they will be able to sit down with management to talk about challenges they face on the road. It is further recommended that Traffic Training College for traffic officers in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport should include EAP information in the curriculum of the college to benefit all traffic officers of the Department. This can happen since EAPs are well known programmes from the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), as it is the centre of government which plays a major role in establishing standards and norms of government department. Pamphlets, posters, notices and formal discussions are recommended to be used to promote EAP, this would assist college educators and union representatives who are not familiar with the programme.

Another recommendation is, that a platform be provided for debriefing sessions where traffic officers share their work-related problems with higher authorities frankly and openly on any topic that concerns them, such as roadshows and that this should take place quarterly or twice a year. A debriefing session should take place immediately after a traumatic event as a strategy to prevent Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or officers be referred for psychological intervention, including their families and dependents.

A wellness day for traffic officers is recommended to take place yearly either before the festive season or after it. It will help to boost their morale and create an environment that is conducive for them. Rewards, promotions and recognition for all categories of officers is recommended to be part of the day to increase officer's self-worth and level of motivation.

It is recommended that the department recruit new traffic officers at all levels to deal with the issue of being understaffed.

Recommendations for the involvement of HR section to conduct training for officers on HR issues such as Injury on Duty, Policy and Procedures on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement (PILIR), Determination of Absence in the Public Sector (type of leave), Financial Literacy skills and Garnishee Orders. Ongoing training sessions for managers are recommended on communication skills among officers and management to avoid unnecessary conflict in the office. Management support on EAP is recommended to endorse referrals.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations raised by participants**

Requested the practitioner to be available during their quarterly meeting.

Department should make it sure that officers are referred after the accident

Increase awareness on Injury on Duty (IOD), Policy and Procedures on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement (PILIR) Determination of Absence in the Public Sector, Financial Literacy Skills and Garnishee Orders.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for practice**

The findings of the study indicated that, traffic officers recommended EAP in the Department even though they do not find support from management due to the unavailability of referrals, but their suggestion was that EAPs should be available in all offices of the Department to conduct prevention programmes to assist in reducing stress and to enhance group cohesiveness. Traffic officers recommended that, for the programme to be successful, more EA practitioners should be employed, and all offices should have their own practitioners instead of two practitioners for five regions of the Department.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations for future research study**

The researcher recommends future studies to look into the following:

- A research study to assess and evaluate the progress with regard to the implementation of the EAP in the Department.
- One tertiary institution should be involved with the compiling of relevant training manuals for the Traffic Training College of the Department.
- Identify curriculum needs and the relevancy of the information based on the job function of traffic officers.

#### **5.4 Concluding remarks**

This study explored the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in the Department and the perception of traffic officers. In view of the above-mentioned key findings, conclusions and recommendations, the study identified a lack of understanding of the EAP role and its services and management role towards EAP availability in officers' section. The study also revealed that, training programmes for newly appointed officers in Traffic Training College has excluded EAP information which creates contradiction in the existence of the programme. The absence of EAP in the training college leads to the belief that EAP is not for officers. Based on the study, it is clear that, for officers to truly take part in the programme, commanders must take part in advocating the availability of the EAP. This means having open conversations about the importance of the programme and officers' perceptions will change towards the programme as well as the mental strength. From this study, we can conclude that, traffic officers have a high need for counselling sessions to address horrific trauma they experience on the road. Counselling will also crash stigma and build trust. Lastly, EAPs to be successful, the key important stakeholders including all commanders and other staff members of the section, has to champion and fully support the programme. Therefore, it has been highlighted that the utilisation of EAP services and perceptions of traffic officers need special reference in the department. As such it can be concluded that the goal of the study was achieved.

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**ANNEXURE A**

**Appendix  
Declaration by participant**

I ..... (full names of the participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from this project at any time, should I desire to.

I consent/ I do not consent to this interview being recorded (if applicable).

Signature of the participant

Date

.....

.....

## ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed about the study entitled: Exploring the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal: The perceptions of traffic officers.

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 usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [thobe.zondi@kzntransport.gov.za](mailto:thobe.zondi@kzntransport.gov.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 researchers then I may contact: 082 804 0028

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

**Research Office, Westville Campus**

**Govan Mbeki Building**

**Private Bag X 54001**

**Durban**

**4000**

**KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA**

**Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609**

**Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Witness  
(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Translator  
(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**ANNEXURE C**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Participant

**SECTION: A**

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Do you have full knowledge of EAPs? (Yes/No)

1.3 Utilisation of EAPs? (Yes/No)

1.4 Occasions of EAPs utilisation? (None/ Once/ Twice/ More than twice)

1.5 Did you find it helpful? (Yes/No)

**SECTION: B UTILISATION OF EAP SERVICES**

2.1 Would you explain your understanding of the EAP role within the Department?

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2.2 There is an observation of minimal use of EAP services among traffic officers. In your view, what may be the reason thereof?

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2.3 In your view, what would you regard as the essential role of the EAP on traffic officers?

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2.4 Have you ever been referred to the EAP for help? If yes, please explain how you experienced this programme in the Department?

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2.5 When experiencing problems that affect work performance, how do traffic officers often deal with that?

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2.6 How have you learnt about EAP services in the Department?

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2.7 What would you regard as the organisational factors that hinder the utilizing the EAP by traffic officers?

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2.8 What do you think can be done to enhance the utilisation of the EAP by traffic officers?

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2.9 Since the Department has implemented the EAP, what do you think can be done to make EAP accessible to traffic officers?

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2.10 How would you describe your day-to-day job on the road? In your opinion, would you say the EAP is marketed well in your offices?

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2.11 Considering the nature of your job, what do you think should be the EAP role?

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***THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE***

## ANNEXURE D: GATEKEEPER LETTER



**transport**

Department:  
Transport  
Province of KwaZulu-Natal

Inkosi Mhlabunzima Maphumulo House  
Street Address: 172 Burger Street,  
Pietermaritzburg, 3200  
Postal Address: Private Bag X9043,  
Pietermaritzburg, 3200  
Tel: (27)(33) 355 8821  
Fax: (27)(086) 546 8963  
Email: [Thobe.Zondi@kznttransport.gov.za](mailto:Thobe.Zondi@kznttransport.gov.za)  
29 April 2019

### **HUMAN RESOURCE MANGEMENT: EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

#### **THE HEAD OF TRANSPORT TRANSPORT**

**Attention: Mr B.S. Gumbi**

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT**

##### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to get approval to conduct the research study within the Department for the current academic year.

##### **BACKGROUND**

I am currently registered with the University of KwaZulu Natal- Howard Campus for master's degree in social work. I am expected to conduct a research study as it is required for the degree. I have therefore decided to have my study based on "Exploring the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu Natal: The perceptions of traffic officers.

The target population is Traffic Officers who are allocated within Pietermaritzburg offices. The project is to be conducted under the supervision of Mr MS Sithole currently employed in the University within the faculty of Applied Huan Sciences. He can be freely contacted through Office Administrator.

##### **MOTIVATION**

The research objectives of the study amongst others seeks to understand the perceptions of traffic officers about the relevance and their use of EAP services in facilitating occupational wellness, and to examine the strategies traffic officers use to cope with occupational related trauma.

I herein request permission granted to conduct interviews within the Department on Road Traffic Inspectorate Offices to Traffic Officers in Pietermaritzburg. The officers will be assured of voluntary and independence of the study.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

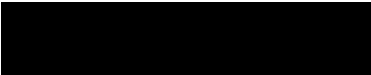
It is therefore requested that approval be granted to allow the research interviews to be conducted amongst the traffic officers of the Department in Pietermaritzburg to Road Traffic Inspectorate Offices. The confirmation letter of registration from the UKZN is attached.


Submitted for your consideration and approval please.

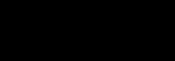
  
**MS MT ZONDI**  
**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR : EHWP/EAP SECTION**

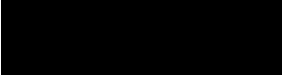
*'prosperity through mobility'*

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT

<b>SUPPORTED/ NOT SUPPORTED</b>
 ACT-DIRECTOR : HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES DATE : 30/04/2019

<b>SUPPORTED / NOT SUPPORTED</b>
 MS S NGUBO DDG: CORPORATE SERVICES DATE : 30/04/2019

<b>SUPPORTED / NOT SUPPORTED</b>
 MS F SITHOLE DDG: TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DATE: 14/05/2019

<b>REQUEST IN PARAGRAPH 3 ABOVE IS APPROVED / NOT APPROVED</b>
 MR BS GUMBI HOD: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT DATE: 17/05/2019

*prosperity through mobility*



## ANNEXURE E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 November 2019

**Mrs Thobekile Mercy Zondi (218077835)**  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear Mrs Zondi,

**Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000851/2019**

**Project title:** Exploring the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal: The perceptions of traffic officers

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

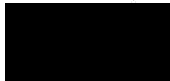
This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 14 October 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

**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 for one year from 27 November 2019.

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.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob  
University Dean of Research

/ms

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

## ANNEXURE F: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

**JOAN HETTEMA EDITING SERVICES**

**250 Troye St., Muckleneuk, Pretoria, 0002**

**Date: 5 October 2022**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

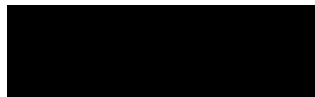
This is to certify that I have duly edited a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Social Sciences (Social Work) in the School of Social Sciences, College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal titled: **Explaining the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services in the Department of Transport KwaZulu-Natal - the perceptions of traffic officers** by Thobekile Zondi.

I have a BA majoring in Latin and English (including Zulu, Afrikaans and Anthropology among others) from the University of Pretoria, Honours in English Language and Literature from the University of South Africa (Unisa) and *Troisième Degré* in French from *l'Alliance Française*. (I also did some part-time studies in Mandarin and Russian).

Throughout my 37-year fulltime career and the more than twenty years since, I have been involved with the process of writing English, editing English or lecturing in the fields of Media Studies, English for Journalism and Business English at various tertiary institutions - for 11 years - (Tshwane University of Technology, Boston College, Damelin College, Rosebank College and College Campus) as well as editing documents and theses for students at universities throughout the country. I also served as judge for the annual competition of the Publications Forum of South Africa for nine years.

Yours sincerely,



J A Hetteema

Joan Ann Hetteema (néé Thies) 072-126-5174

joanhetteema9@gmail.com

# Ms

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