Exploring the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa

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FOR THE READER'S ATTENTION

The reader is reminded of the following:

• The references followed the prescribed format of the Publication Manual (7th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice corresponds with the policy requiring that all scientific documents must employ the APA style as from January 1999, as stipulated by the Program in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).

• The study is submitted by using the structure of a research article. The formatting guidelines as set out by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) was used. Construction of tables was followed in accordance with SAJIP guidelines.

• Each chapter of this mini-dissertation has its own reference list.
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DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I Prudence Deidre Shweni hereby declare that “Exploring the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising employee assistance programmes in South Africa” is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this study are those of the author and relevant literature references as shown in the references.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be submitted for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

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DECEMBER 2020
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I, Ms. Cecilia van der Walt, hereby declare that I took the editing of the mini-dissertation of Ms. PD Shweni titled *Exploring the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising employee assistance programmes in South Africa*.

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SUMMARY

Title: Exploring the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising employee assistance programmes in South Africa

Keywords: Employee Assistance Programmes; experiences of Employee Assistance Programmes; long-distance truck drivers; South Africa

Long-distance truck drivers play a vital role in the economy. The trucking industry makes it possible for businesses to move products nationally and internationally. Long-distance truck driving is not only important, but also an extremely dangerous occupation. The drivers are exposed to various challenges such as accidents on the road, long working hours, time pressures, unusual sleep patterns and safety concerns. They also experience physical health issues such as diabetes, heart diseases, cholesterol and chronic conditions. These challenges have a negative influence on the overall well-being of long-distance truck drivers and their work performance.

The objective of this study was to explore the experiences of long-distance truck divers by means of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) in South Africa. A qualitative research design was utilised based on an interpretivism paradigm. A qualitative descriptive strategy was applied following a combination of convenience and purposive sampling so as to reach the objectives of this study. Long-distance truck drivers in South Africa (N=17) participated in this study, and data-collection was done via face-to-face interviews.

The results of the study indicated that long-distance truck drivers are faced with a large amount of challenges or demands while on the job, which has a negative influence on their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The existing EAPs provide primary health-care services to long-distance truck drivers such as general check-ups, functioning of the heart, HIV-testing, referrals, testing blood pressure and blood sugar, testing cholesterol, testing for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and checking their weight. Some drivers had negative experiences, for instance that the EAPs are closed most of the time, some EAPs have long queues and they occasionally run out of stock. However, the majority of the drivers experienced the EAPs in a positive light because they indicated that when they go to the EAPs their concerns
are addressed, the services are free, they do not have to wait long, the staff are friendly and professional, they receive expert advice, and there is enough parking space for the trucks. The results show that truck drivers experience demands that influence their work performance negatively. These demands include accidents due to lack of sleep, fatigue, inconsiderate fellow road users, long working hours, pressure from the supervisors, safety concerns, spending less time at home and working overtime. The results also reported contributions made by the EAPs such as sharing knowledge about health with the drivers, saving time, providing medication and assistance. According to the findings the participants reported being satisfied with the services provided, but that they would like the following additional services: a gym for exercising, and eye testing. The results indicate that the drivers expressed overall satisfaction with the services provided and further indicated that the participants made no recommendations. However, some did mention that the operating hours should be reconsidered.

Although most of the participants in the study who utilises the EAPs are happy with the services provided; it is still evident that the main focus of the EAPs is providing primary health-care to long-distance truck drivers. The present study grants EAPs the opportunity of improving the current services that are offered and of creating a programme with a holistic approach to truck drivers’ needs.

Recommendations were also made for future research and practice.
OPSOMMING

Titel: Verkenning van die ervaring van langafstand vragmotorbestuurders wat gebruik maak van werknemersbystand-programme in Suid-Afrika

Sleutelwoorde: Werknemersbystand-programme; ervaring van werknemersbystand-programme; langafstand vragmotorbestuurders; Suid-Afrika


Die doel van hierdie studie was om die ervaringe van langafstand vragmotorbestuurders aan die hand van Werknemersbystand-programme (WBP’e) in Suid-Afrika te verken. ‘n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is gebruik wat gebaseer is op ‘n interpretivisme-paradigma. ‘n Kwalitatief beskrywende strategie is toegepas deur ‘n kombinasie van gerieflikheids- en doelgerigte steekproefneming te volg om die doelwitte van hierdie huidige studie te bereik. Langafstand vragmotorbestuurders in Suid-Afrika (N=17) het aan hierdie studie deelgeneem, en data-insameling is aan die hand van van-aangesig-tot-aangesig-onderhoude gedoen.

Die resultate van die studie het aangewys dat langafstand vragmotorbestuurders deur ‘n groot aantal uitdagings of eise in die gesig gestaar word terwyl hulle in die werk staan, wat ‘n negatiewe invloed op hul fisiese, emosionele en psigiese welstand uitoefen. Die bestaande WBP’e voorsien primêre gesondheidsorg-dienste aan langafstand vragmotorbestuurders soos algemene ondersoeke, hartfunksionering, HIV-toetsing, verwysings, toetsing van bloeddruk, kolesterol-toetsing, toetsing van Seksueel Oordraagbare Siektes (SOS) en nagaan van hul gewig. Sommige bestuurders het negatiewe ervaringe gehad soos die WBP’e wat meestal gesluit was, lang wagtoue wat by sommige WBP’e voorkom en dat daar soms ‘n tekort aan
voorrade is. Die meerderheid bestuurders het egter die WBP’e positief ervaar deurdat hulle aangedui het dat wanneer hulle na die WBP’e gaan, hulle probleme onder die loep geneem word, die diens gratis is, hulle nie lank hoef te wag nie, die personeel vriendelik en professioneel is en kundige advies gee, en daar voldoende parkeerruimte vir die vragmotors is. Die resultate toon aan dat eise aan die vragmotorbestuurders gestel word wat ’n negatiewe uitwerking op hul werkverrigting het. Hierdie eise sluit in: ongelukke weens te min slaap, uitputting, onbedagsame mede-padgebruikers, lang werksure, druk van toesighouers, veiligheidsaspekte, minder tyd wat tuis deurgebring word en oortyd-werk. Die resultate het ook die bydraes aangedui wat die WBP’e aan die deelnemers lever soos die deel van kennis rakende gesondheid, tydsbesparing, voorsiening van medikasie en hulp. Volgens die bevindinge het die deelnemers gerapporteer dat hulle tevrede is met die dienste wat gelewer word, maar dat hulle die volgende bykomstige dienste sou waardeer: ’n gymnasium vir oefeninge doen, en oogtoetsing. Die resultate het verder aangedui dat die deelnemers in die geheel tevrede is met die dienste wat gelewer word, en ook dat die deelnemers geen aanbevelings gemaak het nie. Sommige deelnemers het egter genoem dat die werksure heroorweeg behoort te word.

Nieteenstaande die feit dat die meeste deelnemers aan die studie wat van die WBP’e gebruik maak, tevrede voel met die gelewerde dienste, is dit steeds duidelijk dat die hooffokus van die WBP’e gekonsentreer is op die lewering van primêre gesondheidsorg aan langafstand vragmotorbestuurders. Die huidige studie bied WBP’e die geleentheid om op die dienste wat hulle tans lewer, te verbeter en ’n program te ontwikkel wat ’n holistiese benadering tot die vragmotors se behoeftes volg.

Aanbevelings is ook vir toekomstige navorsing en die praktyk gemaak.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation focused on the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa. The following chapter discusses the problem statement, research objectives, research approach and research design. A chapter summary is also included.

1.1 Problem statement

The worldwide economy is dependent on the supply chain networks to function efficiently for it to be successful (Boyce, 2016). This means that for any business to thrive and make a profit, they need efficient and time-saving transportation for their goods. Fourie and Schoeman (2006) point out that the South African trucking industry has a major influence on the economy and social development because it makes it possible to move products nationally. Magazi and Mohammed (2015) similarly found that the freight industry contributes to the development of the economy of South Africa and that approximately 80% of freight in South Africa is transported by road. South Africa’s transport infrastructure has an impact on the growth of the economy, and it contributes 48% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Hence it also determines the efficiency with which the country does business (Logistics & Transport News, 2017). The above-mentioned emphasises the importance of the trucking industry without which the country’s economy, business owners and customers will struggle.

Freight transport on the road had the largest number of truck driver employees (93 279 or 31%) in 2013 (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Newman et al. (2004) conceptualise work-related drivers as those who drive fleet vehicles for work purposes at least once a week and includes truck drivers in transport and logistics companies. According to Statistics South Africa (2017) the volume of goods transported by freight transportation increased by 15.0 % in January 2017 and the income increased by 19.0 % in the same period. Lalla-Edward and Gomez (2015) highlighted that Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) recorded a rough total of over 70 000 truckers in South Africa. The trucking population is enormous, and many truckers dedicate their lives to this job.
Goodwin and Scieszka (2017) state that truck driving has a reputation for being one of the most dangerous occupations. The authors explain that 745 truck drivers died in 2015 and thousands more were injured on the job. Truck drivers can be killed while loading and unloading cargo, handling heavy equipment or falling while climbing in or out of the truck cab. Belman and Monaco (2001) and Gomez et al. (2013) explain that a truck driver’s job is different from any other occupation because they are more mobile, independent, work longer hours and spend more time away from home and their loved ones. This group of employees makes a lot of sacrifices to ensure the delivery of products across the country as well as across the borders. This is a clear indication of hard work and dedication.

Lalla-Edwards et al. (2017) state that truck drivers can be exposed to various job demands which elicit negative outcomes due to their working environments. According to Apostolopoulos et al. (2013) truck drivers work in an environment with extra workload, chronic stress, inconsistent schedules, time pressures and unusual sleep patterns. Boyce (2016) further states that there are other issues that impact truck drivers such as long periods of rigidity in the seat behind the steering wheel. Truck drivers can suffer back and neck injuries due to the position they sit in for several hours on the road (Boyce, 2016). Nazerian et al. (2018) add to this by stating that musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) can be experienced by truck drivers due to this high driving mileage. This disorder is associated with lower back pain, neck and trunk pain due to the awkward position in which truck drivers sit in their seats (Nazerian et al., 2018). Gobel et al. (1998) found that the truck drivers’ work environment, which includes the cabin, exposes the driver to vibrations, noise and climate conditions that can be considered ergonomic stress factors. Ng et al. (2015) state that the environments in which truck drivers work also provide extremely limited opportunities for leading healthy lifestyles. Boyce (2016) explains that truck drivers are exposed to an inactive lifestyle and an unhealthy diet due to easy access to unhealthy food. Truck drivers also face obesity, high blood pressure and sleeping problems (Boyce, 2016). Maldonado et al. (2002) also state that the facilities in which truck drivers sleep are not conducive to sleeping. It therefore makes sense that one of the most common and obvious problem truck drivers face is fatigue (Mitler et al., 1997).

Antonson et al. (2009) describe driving as a cognitive, intellectual, and emotional task that requires continuous and prolonged alertness throughout the trip. However, when the truck driver experiences monotony due to a lack of variety on the road and tedious trip it can cause
hypo vigilance, absent-mindedness, highway hypnosis, fatigue, drowsiness, micro-sleep and even deep sleep (Zainon et al., 2018). Several studies show that truck drivers also experience family stress and strained relationships due to the time they spend away from home (McDonough et al., 2014; Shattell et al., 2012). Mackie and Moore (2009) explain that truck drivers find it difficult to lead a fulfilling and active home life because a conflict exists between their job and home lives. An additional issue that truck drivers have to deal with is a financial stress. Michalopoulus et al. (2016) found that truck drivers’ financial stress is due to lack of support from their employers in terms of inadequate remuneration in spite of the difficult nature of their job and long periods spent away from home. According to Maldonado et al. (2002) South African truck drivers drive long hours to increase their salaries and meet company deadlines. Truck drivers are beneficial to any country’s economy, but do they receive enough support when it involves assistance with their overall work-related well-being? Craig Uren, the COO at Isuzu Truck South Africa, supports the above-mentioned question by encouraging trucking companies to take care of these growing problems. He further states that when their well-being is improved it will contribute to the safety of South African roads (Anon, 2015). The author explains that because of the poor well-being of truck drivers, the chances of collisions to take place are also increasing. Isuzu Trucks South Africa is aware of the impact that poorly managed working environments has on truck drivers and other road users (Anon, 2015). But what is being done to improve the overall work-related well-being of truck drivers?

Boyce (2016) states that the demands that truck drivers experience make it difficult for them to pay attention to their work-related well-being and this critical issue is overlooked in transportation literature. However, there are a few programmes that have been funded and implemented to support long-distance truck drivers. Non-Profit Government Organisations (NGOs) exist that are rendering Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services across South Africa. There are for example EAP facilities available in Cato Ridge and Pongola (KwaZulu-Natal), Bloemfontein (Free State), Bloemhof (North West), Ngodwana (Mpumalanga), Musina (Limpopo), Upington (Northern Cape), and Pomona and City Deep (Gauteng). However, there are no EAP facilities in the Western and Eastern Cape (Lalla-Edward et al., 2017). They largely focus on screening truck drivers for diseases such as HIV, diabetes etc. and then refers them to appropriate healthcare facilities (Lalla-Edward et al., 2018). Furthermore, traditional healthcare facilities such as hospitals and clinics cannot deliver health services to truck drivers because they don’t always have time or permission to stray from the given route, and the opening hours of clinics and hospitals are also ill-timed for truck drivers (Ferguson & Morris,
2007; Gatignon & Wassenhove, 2008). However, truck drivers do make use of traditional healthcare facilities such as hospitals, public and private clinics for the services that EAP facilities are unable to provide (Lalla-Edward et al., 2018).

Even though challenges were experienced at the City Deep Clinic such as service delivery and accessibility to truck drivers, it still reported the highest service volume (Lalla-Edward et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the authors explain that this was their first account of wide-ranging health services use (which included screening for diseases, testing, and counselling for HIV) among truck drivers in South Africa that they know of (Lalla-Edward et al., 2017; 2018). The authors conducted 46 interviews with 24 users and 22 non-users of EAPs. Participants were all male truck drivers between the ages of 36-65 years old. The authors documented that truck drivers that make use of EAP facilities were pleased with the locations, operation hours, infrastructure, and attitudes of the healthcare workers. Also, drivers that did not make use of the facilities explained that they did not know the operating hours and ideal local facilities (Lalla-Edward et al. 2017; 2018). However, based on the numbers, it still indicates that many truck drivers do not make use of the provided EAPs. The conclusion can be drawn that the content of service programmes calls for further investigation.

An additional programme similar to the one mentioned above was launched in South Africa. This programme was introduced as a strategy in 1999 (Trucking Wellness, n.d.). Employees in the road freight industry is the group that has access to this healthcare service. This programme has 22 secure EAP facilities at major trucking routes and across South African borders and mobile centres. They offer the following healthcare services: screening tests for blood pressure, blood sugar, blood cholesterol and body mass index; diagnosis, treatment, care and support of primary health problems or concerns; malaria awareness, information, education, screening and referrals for treatment and care; TB awareness, information, education, screening and referrals for treatment and care; HIV awareness, information, education, counselling and testing; STI screening diagnosing, treatment and education; condom use education and distribution and lastly referrals to appropriate service providers for HIV and AIDS treatment and care (Trucking Wellness, n.d.).

According to Lalla-Edward et al. (2017) existing programmes only focus on HIV prevention and treatment and there is a small number of strategies providing a broader variety of services. Although many efforts have been made to address the numerous challenges truck drivers face,
it is evident that the afore-mentioned programmes mainly only focus on the physical health of truck drivers, while leaving the importance of other issues such as financial and family stress unattended. Berridge and Cooper (1993) conceptualise an EAP as a programmatic intervention at the workplace; it occurs at an individual employee level by utilising behavioural science information and approaches to control evident work-related hindrances that have an effect on the employee’s job performance, with the goal to make sure that employees can perform their tasks adequately and be fully functional in their personal lives. Several other authors have also conceptualised EAPs by specifying that EAPs offer a variety of services such as job-based strategies to have an influence on work health on various levels. This includes identifying troubled employees, enlightening and motivating employees on concerns relating to physical well-being, altering attitudes and solving problems and offering or granting access to counselling and treatment for troubled employees (DeJoy & Wilson, 1995; Hiestermann, 2000; Plaggemars, 2000; Worster, 2000). EAPs, for example, can propose counselling to employees for difficulties such as substance abuse, HIV and Aids, emotional and job-related problems, skills training in numerous areas, management coaching, support regarding physical well-being, counselling and consultative assistance related to legal, financial and non-work issues that may have an impact on work performance (Bergh, 2017). EAPA-SA (1999) also conceptualises an EAP as a worksite-based programme that is designed and developed to assist employees with identifying and resolving problems related to productivity or job performance. Literature further indicates that EAPs are a necessity, which promotes both psychological and work performance (Arnold et al., 2016; Michie & Williams, 2003; Riggio, 2009). Based on the above, it is evident that EAPs form part of the field of Industrial Psychology. The Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 (Government Gazette, 2008, p. 10) outlines a scope of practice for industrial psychologists, which indicates that the following acts fall within their scope: “facilitating individual and group processes for effective organisational functioning; designing, and implementing training programmes for effective organisational functioning; designing, and developing strategies in consumer behaviour; developing interventions to ameliorate poor performance in work settings; designing, and implementing programmes based on understanding ergonomics”. The Act (Government Gazette, 2008, p. 13) further indicates that industrial psychologists “design, manage and evaluate industrial psychology intervention programmes in diverse work settings”.

The above conceptualisation of an EAP shows that the programmes currently being offered to truck drivers are not sufficient, and should focus on other areas of work-related well-being, and
not only physical well-being concerns. Lemke and Apostolopoulos (n.d.) support the above statement by pointing out that in a survey of 46 trucking companies the findings indicate that the efforts made with regard to participation, durability and programme evaluation procedures and programme activities continue to fall short because wellness strategies are insufficient.

Therefore EAPs and utilised that address all aspects of work-related well-being should be implemented. Also, despite the introduction of these truck driver wellness programmes, the lack of literature on its effectiveness is overwhelming. Ng et al. (2015) stated that the small number of intervention studies found in the literature is perturbing because truck drivers are a population at risk and their well-being also impacts the lives of other motorists on the road. The authors also stated that due to the sparse literature focused on wellness promotions for truck drivers a limited amount of evidence exists to prove that the strategies are effective (Ng et al., 2015). To add to the above-mentioned, in 30 sub-Saharan African countries, diverse programmes have been implemented for truck drivers but there are information gaps about the availability of these services and their benefits. This hinders further planning and implementation (Lalla-Edward et al., 2016). Doke (2015) mentions that the previous CEO of Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union Worker Health Programme states that even though the road transport sector has implemented wellness strategies, they still need to do a lot more because more workplace advocacy, education, and awareness of these wellness promotion services would increase the demand thereof. Currently a gap still is found in the literature on the effectiveness of EAPs for truck drivers; therefore it is essential for the effectiveness of these programmes for truck drivers needs to be reviewed to use the results to further enhance the efforts thereof (Ng et al., 2015). Based on the literature provided, it is evident that the current EAPs offered to truck drivers are insufficient, which makes it necessary for it to be a research topic to be addressed.

To summarise, truck drivers form an essential part of our country’s economy and community. They are a population who are in demand of widespread EAPs, which reaches beyond what is currently being offered. Since there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of EAPs, it is not easy to be satisfied by their existence. The alertness towards truck drivers’ work-related well-being needs to improve, and the effectiveness of the current EAPs needs to be explored. Businesses should give the issue more attention by promoting work-related well-being and by offering and implementing EAPs that address overall work-related well-being and not merely physical well-being. Also, EAPs are utilised within companies as part of their business strategy,
not only to promote the functioning of employees, but also to enhance the loyalty and performance of employees within the organisation (Matlhape, 2003). EAPs also hold the potential of making a great impact on individual employees, as well as the business processes of organisations (Matlhape, 2003). The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how EAPs in the trucking industry are experienced. Based on the above-mentioned argument and literature, the following research questions arose:

1.2 Research questions

- How can Employee Assistance Programmes be conceptualised according to the literature?
- What Employee Assistance Programmes are provided to long-distance truck drivers within South Africa?
- How do long-distance truck drivers within South Africa experience these Employee Assistance Programmes?
- How do Employee Assistance Programmes contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers within South Africa?
- What recommendations can long-distance truck drivers in South Africa make to Employee Assistance Programmes in order to address their concerns?
- What recommendations can be made for future research and practice?

1.3 Expected contribution of the study

For the organisation

The study explored the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising EAP’s in South Africa. This will assist the organisation with the opportunity to develop a holistic approach to truck driver health. The findings will provide organisations with more knowledge on the demands long-distance truck drivers experience that has an influence on their wellbeing and work performance. Also, more insight will be provided concerning the needs of truck drivers and the services they desire. Additionally, the study helps industrial psychologists within South African organisations to advise organisations that a holistic approach to wellness is very important.
For the individual

The study will create awareness among truck drivers concerning the services that are being provided by the EAPs. It may also create awareness among truck drivers that they are in need of more than just health-related services. Also, truck drivers might realise that the demands or challenges they experience are serious and they should seek help to address these.

For the literature

There is currently a gap in literature with regards to the experiences of long-distance truck drivers. There is a scarcity in literature regarding the current topic under study. Previous literature mostly focuses on the health issues of truck drivers, which is not the focus of this study. This study adds to and builds on the current literature concerning long-distance truck drivers, specifically with regards to their health issues and work demands. Long-distance truck drivers are very important to the economy of South Africa. Hence, the findings of the study contribute particularly to South African literature.

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.4.1 General objective

To explore the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

- To conceptualise Employee Assistance Programmes according to the literature.
- To explore the Employee Assistance Programmes provided to long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.
- To explore how long-distance truck drivers within South Africa experience Employee Assistance Programmes.
• To explore how Employee Assistance Programmes contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.
• To explore what recommendations long-distance truck drivers in South Africa make to Employee Assistance Programmes in order to address their concerns.
• To make recommendations for future research and practice.

1.5 Research design

1.5.1 Research approach

In this study a qualitative design was utilised. Qualitative research involves looking into characteristics, or qualities of a phenomenon, that cannot be entirely reduced to numerical values (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Qualitative research is less structured because it does not rely on questionnaires which have structured response formats (Quinlan et al., 2015). According to Booth et al. (2008) qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2014) state that a qualitative researcher studies the difficulties of a specific occurrence. Qualitative studies are true-to-life because they attempt to study the everyday life of a variety of communities and people in their natural setting (Booth et al., 2008). However, Leedy and Ormrod (2014) emphasise the fact that qualitative research does not only focus on human beings. Qualitative research assists researchers in understanding the world, society, and its institutions; it can provide an understanding of societal issues, questions, and problems (Tracy, 2013).

Furthermore, this study was constructed on the interpretivism paradigm. Quinlan et al. (2015) describe interpretivism as a social reality which is a subjective construction based on interpretation and interaction. This means that the knowledge obtained is based on how the experiences are interpreted. In addition, the interpretivist regards the reality of individual as being unique because their circumstances, life experiences, and constructs are interpreted in a different manner (Quinlan et al., 2015). This study was based on the interpretivism paradigm because the researcher explored the experiences of EAPs among long-distance truck drivers and how they interpret these experiences. The researcher therefore acquired information from the interpretations of the truck drivers regarding the EAPs. Lastly, interpretive researchers
believe that the reality is people’s personal encounters with the outside world (Booth et al., 2008). Multiple realities therefore exist among individuals, this means that although individuals may experience the same phenomenon, their experiences thereof may differ; thus indicating more than one reality of the same construct. Relating to this study, long-distance truck drivers may be exposed to the same EAPs, but their interpretation and experiences thereof may differ.

1.5.2 Research strategy

The researcher will be applying a qualitative descriptive strategy. Neergaard et al. (2009) explain that the purpose of a qualitative descriptive strategy is to gain an honest and easily understood description of an experience or an occurrence. The main of a qualitative descriptive study is to discover the experiences of the specific occurrence being studied; hence data collections will be in the form of structured, open-ended individual or group interviews (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Bradshaw et al., (2017) state that many interpretations of reality exist and what is reported is an individual interpretation that is supported by the experiences of the participants. Therefore the qualitative descriptive strategy was relevant so as to explore the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising EAPs.

1.6 Research method

The research method comprised the literature review, research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, and strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity, reporting style, and ethical considerations.

1.6.1 Literature review

An exhaustive literature review was done for this study. Numerous databases were utilised to trace valuable information. These databases consist of Google Scholar, Emerald, EBSCOhost and Sabinet online. Additionally, the researcher made use of peer-reviewed academic journals and books. Non-academic sources were also used to expand the search for this study. Journals such as the following were used: *Journal of Transport & Health, International Journal of Workplace Health Management* and *Journal of Business Logistics.*
1.6.2 Research setting

Long-distance truck drivers employed by multiple trucking organisations were chosen to participate in this study. Truck drivers who participated in this study made use of EAPs offered to them. These EAPs offered to employees were not provided by their employing organisation but were provided by various NGOs (Non-Profit Government Organisations). The data for this research were collected in the Northern Cape province since EAP facilities are available in this province and it was also easily accessible for the researcher. Interviews were conducted at a suitable venue that was private and disturbances-free.

1.6.3 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

After the researcher had presented the proposal to the Research Scientific Committee, she obtained permission from the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) to continue with the study. The researcher contacted the two NGO’s that provided roadside EAP’s in order to obtain their permission to conduct interviews with truck drivers making use of the EAPs provided by them. Permission was granted by one of the NGO’s. Following permission granted by the NGO, the researcher identified and approached potential research participants by visiting an EAP where the participants are located and explained the purpose of the study to them. The researcher obtained permission from the participants for them to be interviewed. Written informed consent was provided to participants prior to conducting the interviews. The content of the study and the consent form were clarified in detail to the participants for them to make an informed decision. Various roles were filled by the researcher. The first role fulfilled by here was that of a planner. This involved planning the research process. The planning started with writing the proposal, setting deadlines, drafting interview questions, data collection, data analysis and report writing. The researcher also acted out the role of data collector and data transcriber. The analysis of the data was conducted by both the researcher and co-coder (i.e. professional within the field of industrial psychology). Therefore the roles of data analysers were fulfilled. The researcher also took on the role of a report writer when discussing the results in a simplified and clear manner. Lastly, it was important for the researcher to be objective and to not force her opinions on the participants.
1.6.4 Research participants and sampling methods

The sample size of the population was 17 long-distance truck drivers (N=17). Data were collected until data saturation was reached. Data saturation was achieved when the researcher interviewed the 17th participant and did not identify any new information or themes. A combination between convenience and purposive sampling was utilised in order to reach the objectives of the study. According to Quinlan et al. (2015) convenient sampling takes place when the researcher involves participants who are easy to involve. Convenience sampling is also called accidental sampling because it involves individuals who are available by coincidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Hence truck drivers utilising the NGO’s EAPs and who were willing, able and available were approached to participate in this study. With purposive sampling, the researcher made a judgment call about who to include in the sample. Participants who utilise the EAP’s were included within this study and were therefore the key informants on the topic under investigation (Quinlan et al., 2015). The population consisted of long-distance truck drivers in South Africa. Inclusion criteria were the following: a) they had to be employed as a long-distance truck driver within South Africa; b) they had to be making use of EAPs offered to them; c) they had to be willing and able to participate in this study without the interview interfering with their working schedules; d) they had to give consent to participate in this study and to have interviews audio recorded; and e) they had to be proficient in at least English.

1.6.5 Data collection methods

The data collection method for this study was face-to-face interviews. Interviews are beneficial because it provides in-depth information seeing that the participants share their feelings, thoughts, beliefs and emotions. According to Harrell and Bradley (2009) interviews can gather information concerning past or present behaviours or experiences. The use of interviews creates the opportunity for rich data gathering (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Stroh (2000) explains that the researcher composes a list of questions, referred to as an interview guide. However, before the researcher commenced with the interview, she asked the participants for consent to use an electronic voice recorder. This enabled the researcher to reflect on the participants’ answers and to report their perceptions, ideas, and interpretations correctly, which decreased the possibility of bias. The researcher posed open-ended questions to allow participants to provide their perspectives and thoughts. Participants were motivated to elaborate on their answers and
thoughts and explain them so that the researchers could understand their perspectives. The following interview questions were posed to the participants during the interviews:

- **What are the services provided to long-distance truck drivers by EAPs?**
- **In your opinion, do the EAPs address the concerns experienced by long-distance truck drivers? Please elaborate by providing reasons for your answer.**
- **Apart from physical health concerns, what other concerns do long-distance truck drivers experience that have an influence on your work performance?**
- **Apart from physical health services, what other services are offered to long-distance truck drivers by EAPs?**
- **In your opinion, how do these services contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers?**
- **Apart from physical health services, what other services would you like EAPs to provide to long-distance truck drivers?**
- **What suggestions can you make to EAPs to assist with the concerns of long-distance truck drivers?**

Participants were requested to provide biographical information during the interviews. This granted the researcher the opportunity of describing the participating sample to future readers of the dissertation or future publications. The following information was asked from participants: gender, age, ethnicity, and language.

### 1.6.6 Recording of data

The participants’ permission was asked to audio record the interview to ensure that no data went lost. Before the interviews commenced the researcher ensured that the recording device was in proper working condition. Using the electronic voice recorder ensured the correct interpreting of the data collected during the interviews. The data was placed in safe-keeping in a password protected file after having been transcribed, using Microsoft Excel.
1.6.7 Data analyses

The researcher applied certain methods when collecting data to accurately describe the participants’ experiences. Thematic analyses were used in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. The researcher made use Microsoft Word to organise and transcribe the data. Once the data had been processed in the program, the researcher read through the data multiple times to become familiar with the themes. A process called coding took place, by means of which the researcher grouped smaller pieces of data according to a common domain. Finally, the researcher interpreted the data to make sense of the data and gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Thematic analyses include the following steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data

The data was capture on an Excel sheet. The researcher absorbed the information thoroughly by reading through the transcribed data to become familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. This assisted the researcher in finding meanings and patterns in the data collected. By reading and rereading the transcripts the researcher was able to identify patterns and themes within the data.

Step 2: Generate initial codes

This step involved the production of initial codes from the data. The codes identified a feature of the data that appeared interesting to the analyst. It is referred to as the basic elements of the raw data or information that can be assessed meaningfully. Coding therefore involves grouping one’s data in a meaningful manner. Significant features of the data were thus identified.

Step 3: Discovering themes

This step began when all the data had been coded and collated and the researcher had compiled a long list of the different codes. The step involved sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researcher basically analysed the codes and considered how the different codes could be
combined to form an overarching theme. The researcher used tables to assist in sorting the different codes into themes. The themes identified answered the research questions of the study.

*Step 4: Reviewing themes*

This step involved refining the themes that the researcher extracted from the data. The researcher discovered that some themes were unnecessary due to a lack of supportive data. After having reviewed these themes, the researcher omitted unnecessary themes. At this stage, the researcher finalises the themes that were considered to be important and informative.

*Step 5: Defining and naming themes*

This step began when there was a suitable thematic map of the data. At this stage, the researcher defined and refined the themes by identifying the essence of the themes and determining which aspects of the data each theme captured. For each individual theme, the researcher wrote a detailed analysis. The researcher also identified the story each theme told and whether it fitted into the overall story told by the data. The main themes were described in a way that captured the essence of the study. The researcher also discovered sub-themes within themes. These are viewed as *themes within-a-theme*. This helped the researcher give structure to a large and complex theme.

*Step 6: Writing the analyses*

This step began when the researcher’s themes were finalised and included the final analysis and write-up of the report. The purpose of the write-up was to tell the complicated story of the data to convince the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis. The analysis provided a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story that the data tells. Enough evidence of the themes was included in the write-up, for example enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence and importance of the theme. The write-up did not only provide data, but the extracts were embedded in an analytical narrative that illustrated the story in a convincing manner. In this step, the findings were put in writing and the analysis was finalised.
1.6.8 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

To ensure the quality of the data the following strategies were employed:

*Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study can be applied to other circumstances (Shenton, 2014). Transferability indicates that data can be transferred to other contexts. According to Cope (2014) a qualitative study is transferable if the results mean something to individuals that are not involved in the particular study and when other groups can relate the results to their own experiences. Nieuwenhuis (2016) states that transferability encourages readers of research studies to relate to features of the study and their own experiences. The researcher ensured transferability in the study because the inclusion criteria of the participants, the sample of the data, and the research method were all clearly described.

*Dependability*

Dependability refers to the ability to obtain similar results when the study is repeated in the same context, with the same methods and lastly with the same participants (Shenton, 2014). This can be achieved when the researcher is in the same mind at each stage of the research process. Hence the researcher always did bear in mind the overall purpose of the study. The researcher also reported the study in detail. The researcher therefore explained the research design and its implementation in detail. Aspects explained and described were for example: the planning and operational detail of data collection, execution of data collection and evaluation of the success of the process followed (Shenton, 2014).

*Confirmability*

Confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. This means that the researcher admits his or her own biases. Cope (2014) maintains that this can be demonstrated by describing how conclusions and interpretations were established and demonstrating that the conclusions were drawn based on the data collected. Here the researcher has to prove that he or she did not simply write down his or her own thoughts. Cope (2014) states that, in qualitative research, this can be done by offering quotes from the participants.
The researcher can ensure confirmability by honestly and correctly reporting the views and opinions of the participants. The researcher therefore provided interpretations of the data that clearly indicate the true feelings and opinions of the participants.

**Credibility**

Cope (2014) explains that credibility is enhanced by the researcher when he or she describes his or her experiences as a researcher and verifies the research findings with the participants. Credibility is found in research when the human descriptions of experiences are easily identified (Cope, 2014). It is therefore important for the researcher to understand the answers given by the participants and to interpret it correctly. Shenton (2004) refers to credibility as the internal validity of qualitative research, which means that the study is measuring what it is supposed to be measuring. In this study the researcher achieved credibility by ensuring the participants of the researcher’s independence. Thus the participants were ensured that the data they provided were kept confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any given time.

**1.6.9 Reporting**

The data collected by the researcher were reported in a Microsoft Word in the form of a table. Making use of tables made it easier to understand and interpret the results. The tables consisted of themes, subthemes and direct responses from participants. The direct responses authenticated the themes and sub-themes.

**1.6.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are important in any research project and to protect the rights of the participants. The researcher only continued with the study after permission had been granted by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). The researcher discussed the possible data collection with the management of the organisation. The researcher provided management with a detailed document explaining the purpose of the study. None of the participants felt uncomfortable; therefore no steps were taken to deal with a situation. There also was no need for the researcher to provide the participants with the contact details of a registered health-care professional. The consultation fee with the health-care
professional would have been covered by the researcher. However, the interview questions did not elicit an emotional response seeing that the questions focused on long-distance truck drivers in general.

When the organisation granted permission, the researcher’s responsibility was to ensure that the participants understood the content of the study and to clear up any uncertainties. Each one of the participants partaking in the study was given a consent- and confidentiality form to sign, stating their rights and that information provided by them will remain confidential. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the study. The study was non-discriminatory and unbiased. Bogdan and Biklen (1997) provide ethical guidelines to which the researcher of the study adhered:

- To avoid all research sites where participants may feel coerced to participate in the research.
- To honour the privacy of the participants.
- Participants will be informed on what is expected of them and what they can expect of the researcher during the research process.
- All participants’ identities will be protected and remain confidential.
- Participants will be treated with respect and no harm will be done unto them.
- When writing and reporting the findings it will be done in a truthful manner.

The information of the participants will remain confidential should the research paper be submitted for publication. The researcher did not give individual level feedback to the organisation. The researcher did however provide the organisation with the option of receiving feedback on group level. This group level feedback was suggested by the researcher, in order to improve the current EAP services provided to long-distance truck drivers.

1.7 Chapter division

This mini dissertation will consist of three chapters:
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Research article
Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendation
1.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the problem statement and the research objectives were discussed. Additionally, the research method was explained, followed by a brief overview of the chapters that follow.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE
EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF LONG-DISTANCE TRUCK DRIVERS UTILISING EAPs IN SOUTH AFRICA

Orientation: Long-distance truck drivers play a vital role in the economy. This population contributes largely to South African businesses to be successful and efficient. They transport goods and services nationally and contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The demanding nature of this occupation has a negative influence on the well-being of long-distance truck drivers, the organisation and the transportation of goods and services.

Research purpose: The general goal of this research study was to explore the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa.

Motivation for the study: The well-being of long-distance truck drivers needs to be focused on due to the role they play in the economy, businesses and the community. Although this population plays such a vital role in the economy, they are still neglected. They experience several health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, sleep apnoea etc. Long-distance truck drivers also experience stress due to financial problems and meeting deadlines. They also spend a large amount of time away from home. However, there are services available to assist truck drivers with these health-related challenges. The aim of the researcher was to explore whether these services are packaged in such a manner that it meets the population’s needs.

Research approach, design and method: A qualitative research method was utilised in this research study, along with the qualitative descriptive research strategy. A combination between purposive and convenience sampling was used to reach the aims of this study. The sample consisted of long-distance truck drivers employed within South Africa (N=17). The data collection method for this study took place by means of face-to-face interviewing. Thematic analysis was utilised as the data analysis method.

Main findings: The results of the present study indicated that long-distance truck drivers experience a variety of challenges on the road. The findings showed that when they visit the EAPs, they only receive primary healthcare services. The results also indicated that they are happy with the services and did not recommend many changes. The researcher found that long-distance truck drivers experience many demands with which the EAPs cannot assist them.

Practical/managerial implications: The demands with which long-distance truck drivers are faced have an influence on their job performance. The EAPs should investigate the needs of long-distance truck drivers and not only focus on providing primary healthcare services. The
EAPs should implement a holistic approach when providing services to long-distance truck drivers.

**Contribution/value-add:** The existing literature on the health-related issues experienced by long-distance truck drivers is extensive; especially in the USA. However, research conducted in South Africa is lacking, and there is a gap in research regarding all the challenges that long-distance truck drivers experience. This study might motivate the EAPs to not merely focus on primary healthcare needs of long-distance truck drivers.

**Keywords:** Employee Assistance Programmes; experiences of Employee Assistance Programmes; long-distance truck drivers; South Africa

**INTRODUCTION**

Makamo et al. (2015) states that freight transportation is one of the largest contributors to the economic development both nationally and internationally. Cokayne (2016) confirms the above by indicating that the road freight industry is crucial for South Africa's economy, which is emphasised by the fact that 86 percent of the freight transported annually goes by road (Cokayne, 2016). The total of products transported by freight transportation increased by 3.6% in April 2019 compared to that in April 2018 and the profits increased by 4.1% (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Scott (2011) states that South Africa’s economy depends on mobility on a daily basis and it is the road network that transports the products, which comprise our GDP. The trucking industry has a variety of business activities and plays a vital role in different economic sectors such as agriculture, mining, extracting, manufacturing, construction, delivery and forestry, to household removals, container cartage, bulk fuel transport and rural bread delivery (Anon, 2016). Therefore, the freight industry is largely in control and important for South Africa's economy, and politicians who have the interest of South Africa at heart, must start emphasising this population as an important item on their agendas (Scott, 2011).

Reed and Cronin (2003) maintain that long-distance truck driving is a profession that demands good physical and mental health. However, the long hours, irregular sleep, noise and vibration, heavy lifting are some of the many challenges that have an influence on the well-being of long-distance truck drivers (Reed & Cronin, 2003). Hege et al. (2018) mentioned that apart from physical health concerns, long-distance truck drivers also experience unfavourable working
conditions that may result in fatigue, lack of productivity at work, no work-life balance, which then together cause poor and unhealthy habits, depression and other mental illnesses.

Sendall et al. (2016) assert that road transport industry workers, such as long-distance truck drivers, experience an increased risk of chronic disease. The authors explain further that the reason for the increased risk of chronic diseases is due to the working environment of long-distance truck drivers, which restricts their ability to participate in physical activity and restricts their access to healthy food choices. Research also indicates that long-distance truck drivers world-wide experience health worse than most because there are high numbers of STIs (sexually transmitted infections), cancer, heart diseases, chronic conditions (such as diabetes, obesity, leg pain and back pain), lung diseases, as well as a range of mental health conditions (such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, personality disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Lalla-Edward et al., 2016). Research further indicates that the work schedule of a long-distance truck driver has an impact on the driver’s quality and length of sleep that may cause diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood sugar and abnormal cholesterol levels (Hege et al., 2019).

The physical vehicle of long-distance truck drivers is their workplace and so they are branded as a group that is hard to reach for health promotion (Sendall et al., 2016). Lalla-Edward et al. (2016) state that the health needs of long-distance truck drivers are unique, and they experience a much difficulty accessing healthcare. Also, limited information exists on the health, health-seeking and risk- behaviour profiles of long-distance truck drivers in South Africa (Lalla-Edward et al., 2018). Reed and Cronin (2003) also affirm that a broad literature review indicated limited information on health-care needs of long-distance truck drivers.

EAPs exist for long-distance truck drivers. Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) explain that the existing EAPs offer primary health-care services to long-distance truck drivers across Sub-Saharan Africa. These services include for example STI testing and treatment, HIV-testing, referrals, testing high blood pressure, blood sugar testing, cholesterol testing and sharing knowledge about health (Trucking Wellness, n.d.). Lalla-Edward et al. (2016) state that it is difficult to plan for the proper care of long-distance truck drivers because little is known about the health concerns of truck drivers and whether the existing programmes are effective.
In conclusion and as can be seen from the above problem statement, long-distance truck drivers play an extremely important role within the global economy (Boyce, 2016). An extensive exploration of long-distance truck driver’s health and wellness exists in medical literature. However, in the business sector, research is still lacking (Boyce, 2016). Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) also state that not much research has been conducted on the health of truck drivers, how they seek help and risk behaviours of long-distance truck drivers in South Africa. Therefore the aim of this study was to explore the experiences of long-distance truck drivers utilising EAPs in South Africa.

**Research purpose and objectives**

The general aim (or purpose) of this study was to explore long-distance truck drivers’ experiences of utilising Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa. This study aims to reach the following specific objectives:

- To conceptualise Employee Assistance Programmes according to the literature.
- To explore the Employee Assistance Programmes provided to long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.
- To explore how long-distance truck drivers within South Africa experience Employee Assistance Programmes.
- To explore how Employee Assistance Programmes contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.
- To explore what recommendations long-distance truck drivers in South Africa make to Employee Assistance Programmes in order to address their concerns.
- To make recommendations for future research and practice.

**Literature review**

**Long-distance truck drivers**

A truck driver or trucker is a person who makes a living as a driver of a truck. These drivers or truckers normally transport materials and goods between manufacturing companies, distribution- and retail centres. To be able to become a truck driver, one needs a valid driver’s
license and a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and the following: time-management, stress-management, problem-solving and communication skills (Indeed, 2020).

Even though the job title might give the impression that truck drivers only drive trucks, it is important to know that driving is not the only task of a long-distance truck driver (Shibuya et al., 2010). Long-distance truck-drivers also check the truck for mechanical issues, does basic repair work, records cargo deliveries, plans routes using GPS, cleans the cabin and follows accident procedures (Betterteam, 2020). Their work involves climbing up and down and operating at heights such as the cabin, the truck’s body and platforms, handling goods/products. The goods that are transported often weigh tons and must be collected, loaded, unloaded and delivered (Shibuya et al., 2009). The cargo that long-distance truck drivers transport includes cars, steel, grain, produce and timber and they work in the following industries: retail, abnormal loads, agriculture, petro-chemical industries etc. (Career Planet, 2015). The conclusion can be drawn that all these tasks can be a demanding force in the work of a truck driver.

**Work demands of long-distance truck drivers and the consequences thereof**

Hege et al. (2019) state that long-distance truck driving is one of the unhealthiest and dangerous professions in the United States. Saltzman and Belzer (2007) state that the risky and dangerous working conditions of long-distance truck drivers can result in injuries sustained on the job, which can have an influence of their productivity and driving performance. The author further states that the above-mentioned conditions have an influence on the life expectancy of long-distance truck drivers. The average life expectancy of US truck drivers is 12-20 years which is lower than that of the rest of the population (Saltzman & Belzer, 2007). According to de Vries et al. (2019) long-distance truck drivers who reside in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer from poor health and a substantially reduced life expectancy.

Adding to the unsafe working conditions, long and unbalanced work hours on the road and busy schedules contribute to fatigue, psychological stress and lack of sleep (Krueger et al., 2007). Long-stance truck drivers are away from home for long periods due to schedules that are beyond their control. These long-distance truck drivers then have to catch up on their sleep when at home and this affords them less time to engage with valuable resources such as family, health, social/leisure activities (Hege et al., 2019).
Employees who work long hours are typically more at risk of unhealthy weight gain, alcohol use, smoking, other health issues, and injuries on the job; poorer neuropsychological performance; decreased vigilance, cognitive function, and overall job performance; amplified fatigue; reduced attentiveness; and slower work, particularly in the first 9 to 12 hours of the shift (Apostolopoulus et al., 2010). High rates of overweight and obesity also put long-distance truck drivers at risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obstructive sleep apnea, diabetes, lower back pain and arthritis (Krueger et al., 2007). The psychologically demanding nature of a long-distance truck driver’s work also has an impact on their mental health due to time pressures, separation from family and friends, driving risks, and violence (Shattell et al., 2010). Examples of the symptoms of mental health that long-distance truck drivers experience includes anxiety and depression which again have a negative influence on work performance (Haslam et al., 2005). The freight industry is a high-risk industry; organisations should therefore consider employing EAPs.

**Employee Assistance Programmes**

Prohofsky (2007) points out that EAPs were established in the mid–1940s for the purpose of addressing substance abuse problems. This purpose has not changed much, but by the mid-1970s employees were faced with other challenges that also needed to be addressed and this included marital problems, family issues, and prescription drug abuse, and this all became part of the growing realm of EAPs. Prohofsky further suggests that EAPs have evolved, encouraging wellness, productivity, and work-life balance services to meet the important needs of a diverse workforce.

Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa (2005, p. 1) conceptualises Employee Assistance Programmes as “a worksite-based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns including but not limited to: health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance”. Authors Sonnenstuhl and Trice (2018, p. 1) also conceptualise EAPs as “job-based programs operating within a work organization for the purpose of identifying troubled employees, motivating them to resolve their troubles, and providing access to counselling or treatment for those who need those services".
EAPs for example, propose counselling to employees for difficulties such as substance abuse, HIV, and Aids, emotional- and job-related problems, skills training in numerous areas, management coaching, support regarding physical well-being, counselling and consultative assistance related to legal, financial and non-work issues that may have an impact on work performance (Bergh, 2011). Bhoodram (2010) explains that the current employee assistance programmes offer crisis management, trauma debriefing, and employee counselling in response to structural downsizing and other forms of workplace transformations. The author further states that the above-mentioned programmes played a huge role in the development of other services such as HIV/Aids, legal counselling, financial management and disability management, and making it available to all employees. Bhoodram (2010) also noticed that these services could expand into the risk management and prevention facets of job performance.

Du Plessis (2001) highlights the notion that EAPs have progressed from Social Welfare-Occupational Social Work, Human Resource Management, Occupational Health and the Mental and Medical Health fields. Du Plessis (2001) further holds that social workers seem to be the preferred profession to be steering EAPS, but they are not the only professionals because nurses, psychologists and human resource employees also have a part in it. The above-mentioned information is a clear indication that EAPs form part of the field of Industrial Psychology. The Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 (Government Gazette, 2008, p. 10) outlines a scope of practice for industrial psychologist which indicates that the following acts fall within their scope: “facilitating individual, and group processes for effective organisational functioning; designing, and implementing training programmes for effective organisational functioning; designing, and developing strategies in consumer behaviour; developing interventions to ameliorate poor performance in work settings; designing and implementing programmes based on understanding ergonomics”.

The rapid development of EAPs is seen in the establishment of associations such as EAPA-SA, standards that are being developed and ethics for those who practise and lastly the development of formal training at tertiary institutions (Govender & Terblanche, 2009). This mentioned author added that a trend is seen at national conferences hosted by EAPA-SA that many organisations name their programmes “Employee Wellness Programmes” to convey the expanded focus from older EAPs’ core focus.
Type of EAPs available for long-distance truck drivers within South Africa

Two NGOs exist that provide assistance to long-distance truck drivers. The first programme has 22 secure EAP facilities at major trucking routes and across South African borders and mobile centres. They offer the following health-care services: screening tests for blood pressure, blood sugar, blood cholesterol and body mass index; diagnosis, treatment, care and support of primary health problems or concerns; malaria awareness, information, education, screening and referrals for treatment and care; TB awareness, information, education, screening and referrals for treatment and care; HIV awareness, information, education, counselling and testing; STI screening diagnosing, treatment and education; condom use education and distribution and lastly referrals to appropriate service providers for HIV and AIDS treatment and care (Trucking Wellness, n.d.).

The second NGO facilities available in Cato Ridge and Pongola (KwaZulu Natal), Bloemfontein (Free State), Bloemhof (North West), Ngodwana (Mpumalanga), Musina (Limpopo), Upington (Northern Cape), and Pomona and City Deep (Gauteng). However, there are no EAP facilities in the Western and Eastern Cape (LallaEdward et al., 2017). They largely focus on screening truck drivers for diseases such as HIV, diabetes etc. and then referring them to appropriate healthcare facilities such as hospitals or clinics (Lalla-Edward et al., 2018).

Research shows that health-care programmes do exist that suit the needs of long-distance truck drivers and it proves to hold much potential. However, many issues still exist such as availability of services and how they affect these drivers. These need to be addressed with more planning and effective implementation (Lalla-Edward et al., 2016). Lalla-Edward et al. (2016) further indicate that the health programmes identified for truck drivers only take care of HIV-related interventions and the other three programmes cover malaria, tuberculosis and general primary healthcare services. These programmes rely on peer educators and health-care workers to offer HIV prevention services. Other services include behaviour change communication, condom marketing and delivery, STI screening and treatment, stigma reduction activities, information, education and communication, HIV testing and counselling and also capacity building for community and local staff, family planning and activities that teach them to make an honest income (Lalla-Edward et al., 2016).
Furthermore, although the above-mentioned NGOs have shown progress with primary healthcare services such as testing and HIV counselling, the focus is on preventing infectious diseases and not much is known about long-term health tendencies within this population (Lalla-Edward et al., 2019).

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Research approach**

A qualitative research design was utilised in this research study to describe the experiences and perceptions of long-distance truck drivers in South Africa. Polit and Beck (2012) posit that the main focus of qualitative research is to focus on the experiences and perceptions of participants. Marczyk et al. (2005) explain that qualitative research consists of studies that do not try to quantify the results through statistical methods or analysis; it involves interviews and observations without any measurements. Singh (2006) goes further by pointing out that the focus of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon being explored and not merely the reader, the researcher, or the participants being studied. Singh (2006) elaborates on this by noting that for researchers to study the problems of individuals and groups, they use a developing qualitative approach to explore, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the individuals, groups and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes.

This study was constructed on the interpretivism paradigm. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) explain that interpretivism understands the world as others experience it. The research would normally take place in a natural setting where the participants live (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Quinlan et al. (2015) reminds the reader that every person’s reality is different and unique due to the way in which they interpret their circumstances and life experiences. The researcher will be exploring long-distance truck drivers’ experiences of EAPs and how they interpret these experiences. All long-distance truck drivers make use of the EAPs but have different experiences and that is why this paradigm is suitable for the study.
Research strategy

A qualitative descriptive strategy was utilised in this study. Bradshaw et al. (2017) define qualitative description strategy as being mainly applicable when the researcher needs information from the people who experience the phenomenon that is being studied and where there insufficient time and resources. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012) qualitative descriptive studies is a complete summary in simple terms of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals. Bradshaw et al. (2017) further explain that the qualitative descriptive strategy is seen as important, and suitable for research questions that focus on learning the who, what and where of events and experiences and on getting interpretations of participants regarding a phenomenon that is not fully understood.

Research method

The research method includes the literature review, research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, and strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity, reporting style, and ethical considerations.

Research setting

Long-distance truck drivers employed by numerous trucking organisations within South Africa were selected to take part in this study. The truck drivers who were selected in this study made use of EAPs offered to them. These EAPs offered to employees are not provided by their employing organisation but are provided by various Non-Profit Government Organisations (NGOs). The researcher collected the data in the Northern Cape where the NGO’s EAP’s are situated and the location was easily accessible for the researcher. Interviews were conducted at a roadside clinic where long-distance truck drivers receive primary healthcare services such as condom use education and distribution, STI screening, screening for blood pressure etc. There were two rooms and the researcher made use of one to ensure privacy and confidentiality as well as no disturbance.
Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researcher presented the proposal to the Research Scientific Committee and received approval to continue with the study. Thereafter the researcher submitted the proposal to the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) for approval to further the study. The proposal was approved by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). Two organisations were contacted by the researcher to request permission to conduct interviews with truck drivers making use of the available EAPs. One of these organisations gave the researcher permission to conduct interviews with the long-distance truck drivers who utilise the EAPs.

As soon as permission was granted by the organisation the researcher visited the EAP’s where the participants were located and clarified the purpose of the study. Permission was given by the participants for the researcher to interview them. The researcher provided them with consent forms to sign before the interviewing process started. For the participants to make an informed decision, the researcher explained the content of the consent forms and the study. The researcher clearly explained to the participants that participation was entirely voluntary.

The researcher performed numerous roles during this research study. As the planner, the researcher planned the entire research process, which started with the writing of the proposal, setting deadlines, drafting interview questions, data collection, data analysis and report writing. The researcher also fulfilled the roles of data collector and data transcriber. The data was analysed by the researcher and co-coder (i.e. a professional within the field of Industrial Psychology); hence the roles of data analysers were achieved. The researcher was also a report writer when discussing the results in a basic and understandable manner. Lastly, it was crucial for the researcher to remained objective throughout the entire research study.

Research participants and sampling methods

The researcher used a sample size of 17 long-distance truck drivers (N=17). Data were collected until data saturation was achieved. Researchers usually define data saturation as the point when “no new information or themes are observed in the data” (Guest et al., 2006). Saunders et al., (2017) further state that data saturation suggests that, based on the data collected and analysed, additional data collection is not necessary. Data saturation was reached when the researcher
interviewed the 17th participant and found that no new information or themes could be identified.

The researcher made use of convenience and purposive sampling so as to reach the objectives of this study. Alvi (2016) explains that convenience sampling is also dubbed accidental or opportunity sampling, the researchers makes use of participants who are easy or convenient to approach. Long-distance truck drivers that make use of EAPs and were keen and available were approached to participate in this current study. Furthermore, the researcher also made use of purposive sampling. Mujere (2016) points out that purposive sampling, also known as judgemental, selective or subjective sampling, is a technique that relies on the judgment of the researcher when selecting the participants that are to be studied. Participants making use of EAP’s were included in this study. The aim of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that will answer the research questions (Mujere, 2016). The inclusion criteria for this study were that participants: a) should be employed as a long-distance truck driver within South Africa; b) should be making use of EAPs offered to them; c) should be willing and able to participate in this study without the interview interfering with their working schedules; d) should give consent to participate in this study and to permit interviews to be audio recorded; and e) should be proficient in at least English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shona</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siswati</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tshivenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the participants, 59% were found to be aged between 33 and 40 years; 24% between 41 and 50 years; and 18% between 51 and 62 year. All participants were male (100%); the majority of the participants were African (76%); only 18% were coloured and 6% Indian. Furthermore, the home languages of 18% of the participants were Afrikaans, Setswana and English. There were 12% Shona participants. The languages isiXhosa, Sepedi, Sesotho, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga represented 6% of the participants.
Data collection method

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews as a data collection method. This method enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth information as the participants shared their feelings, thoughts, beliefs and emotions. According to Gill et al. (2008) the goal of research interviews is to explore the opinions, experiences and beliefs of participants on a matter. Interviews provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena that quantitative methods such as questionnaires will not be able to provide (Gill et al., 2008). These authors further state that interviews are therefore more appropriate when not much is known about the phenomenon.

McGrath et al. (2019) agrees with the previous author and states that interviews afford researchers the opportunity of thoroughly exploring matters that are experienced by participants in a unique way; this gives the researcher insights into how a phenomenon is experienced and perceived. Prior to commencement of the interviewing process, the researcher obtained the consent of participants to use an electronic voice recorder. The researcher was then able to listen to the participants’ answers at a later stage in order to report the correct insights, thoughts and understandings of the participants. The possibility of bias was therefore reduced.

Open-ended questions were posed to ensure that participants provide their own views and opinions regarding their experiences of EAPs. The researcher requested participants to elaborate when answering so as to ensure that the researcher understood their experiences. The following interview questions were included in the interview schedule:

- What are the services provided to long-distance truck drivers by EAPs?
- In your opinion, do the EAPs address the concerns experienced by long-distance truck drivers? Please elaborate by providing reasons for your answer.
- Apart from physical health concerns, what other concerns do long-distance truck drivers experience that have an influence on your work performance?
- Apart from physical health services, what other services are offered to long-distance truck drivers by EAPs?
- In your opinion, how do these services contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers?
• Apart from physical health services, what other services would you like EAPs to provide to long-distance truck drivers?

• What suggestions can you make to EAPs to assist with the concerns of long-distance truck drivers?

Biographical information (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity and language) was also obtained from the participants during the interviews. This enabled the researcher to explain the participating sample to future readers of the dissertation or upcoming publications.

Recording of data

The researcher asked each participant’s permission to audio record the interview to guarantee that no data goes lost. Before the interviews started, the researcher confirmed that the recording device was working properly. By making use of the electronic recording device guarantees the correct interpretation of the data collected during the interviews. After the interviews were conducted, the data were safely stored in a password protected file on a password protected laptop as well as after it had been transcribed, using Microsoft Excel. The physical documents have been stored in a locked cupboard and office on campus. Only the researcher and supervisor had access to the data, and it will be stored for 5 years as indicated in the record management policy of the university. After 5 years the data will be destroyed.

Data analysis

For this current study, thematic analyses were utilised in order to analyse the collected data. Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for categorising, analysing and reporting themes with the data. Microsoft Excel was used to organise and transcribe the data. The researcher transcribed the data into the excel sheet. These transcriptions included the participant number, the interview question, and the responses of all participants. The researcher read through the data several times to become familiar with the themes. The researcher grouped smaller parts of the data according to a common category. This process is known as coding. The researcher then created a separate excel document with a sheet for each category. The researcher then alphabetised the themes in each category. Lastly the researcher identified quotes and formatted the tables accordingly. The final stage was to interpret the data and better
understand it to acquire an extensive understanding of the phenomenon. A more detailed explanation of the steps of thematic analyses follows (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

*Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data*

The researcher captured the data on an Excel sheet. The researcher read through the data to become familiar with the information.

*Step 2: Generate initial codes*

In this step initial codes were produced from the data. The researcher organised the data in a meaningful manner. Coding breaks data into smaller pieces for the researcher to understand it better. The researcher used coding to identify interesting features. Important features of the data were found. The categories that the researcher found within the data were: *Services provided by Employee Assistance Programmes; Experience of Employee Assistance Programmes; Demands long-distance truck drivers experience; Contributions of Employee Assistance Programmes; Additional services desired by long-distance truck drivers; and Recommendations.*

*Step 3: Discovering themes*

The researcher sorted the codes and identified meaningful patterns and started creating themes. The themes were created by grouping ideas and experiences of the participants. Tables assisted with sorting the different codes into themes. The identified themes answered the research questions.

*Step 4: Reviewing themes*

The themes that the researcher extracted from the data were filtered in this step. Some of the themes that were discovered were discarded due to lack of verifiable data. A review of the themes followed and thereafter, redundant themes were omitted. The data describing the themes fitted together in a meaningful way and the researcher was able to clearly see differences between the themes.
Step 5: Defining and naming themes

In this step the researcher constructed a thematic map. The researcher refined and defined the themes and sub-themes as extracted from the data. The sub-themes are themes-within-a-theme and give a description of the theme. Continuous analysis is required for each theme. This assisted the researcher in establishing whether the theme fitted into the overall story of the data. The main themes were named, which captured the essence of the study. This step assisted the researcher in providing structure to a multifaceted theme.

Step 6: Writing the analyses

The researcher's analysis was transformed into an interpretable report. The purpose of this report was to explain the data in a simplified manner so that the reader can be convinced of the merit and validity of the analysis. The analysis was supported by empirical evidence and was logical, non-repetitive and interesting. There were enough data extracts to prove the occurrence and importance of the theme. An analytical narrative portrays the story in an indisputable manner.

Strategies employed to ensure quality data

To ensure the quality of the data, the following strategies were employed:

Transferability

Guba (1981) stated that transferability is the degree to which the results of a research study can be applied in other contexts. Moon et al. (2016) further describe transferability as the degree to which the findings in a researcher's study is applicable to theory, practice and future research. Transferability was ensured by describing the study in detail and the researcher provided a thick and clear description of the methodology.

Dependability

Elo et al. (2014) define dependability as the stability of findings over time and in different conditions. Bitsch (2005) further states that dependability determines whether the research
results will be consistent if the study is imitated with the same or similar participants in similar contexts. The researcher made certain that all research methods utilised in the study were described very well and in detail in order for another researcher to repeat the study.

**Conformability**

Conformability addresses challenges such as researcher bias and prejudices (Bitsch, 2005). Conformability ensures that the research study is free of values, motives or political persuasions (Bitsch, 2005). Anney (2014) explains that conformability deals with making sure that the research findings are derived from data and not from the researcher's imagination. Conformability also refers to the extent to which other researchers can confirm the findings of the research project. Therefore the researcher listened to the responses of the participants and transcribed the data word for word without adding any opinions or ideas of her own.

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings (Tracy, 2010). This means that the finding of the researcher study related to reality and can demonstrate the truth. Credibility was achieved by a practice called thick descriptions which occur when the researcher thoroughly describes everything in so much detail that the readers can draw their own conclusions (Tracy, 2010). Shenton (2004) also describes credibility as the internal validity of the qualitative research; meaning that the study is measuring what it is meant to measure. A study's findings are credible when it is easy to identify real human experiences (Cope, 2014). The researcher therefore ensured that she clearly understood the responses given by the participants and that she interpreted their experiences correctly.

**Reporting**

The researcher reported all the data collected in Microsoft Word in the form of a table. The table format made it easier to comprehend and interpret the results. The following was contained in the table: themes, sub-themes and direct responses from participants. The direct responses substantiated the themes and sub-themes. According to Langley and Abdallah (2011) much importance is attached to reporting qualitative data in tables. Levitt (2019) states that using diagrams, tables or models is suitable for reporting on findings or results.
Ethical considerations

As a researcher it was important to adhere to all ethical considerations in a research project. It was important because the purpose is to protect the rights of participants. The research project commenced as soon as permission was granted by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). The researcher sent a data collection request to the management of two organisations. The purpose of the study was stipulated in a document to the organisations. No questions or concerns were raised by the management of the organisations. One of the organisations gave the researcher approval to collect data. None of the participants were uncomfortable during the interviews because the questions focused on the experiences of long-distance truck drivers in general. If the participants would have experienced any discomfort, the researcher would have referred them to a healthcare professional. The researcher would have been held responsible for the consultation fee with the health-care professional.

When the researcher received permission from the management of the organisation, it was the researcher's responsibility to make sure that the participants completely understood the purpose of the study and that she addressed any uncertainties. A consent form was signed by all participants of the study, indicating their rights and that all information provided by them will be handled with confidentiality. The researcher informed the participants that they may withdraw at any stage of the study. The study was unbiased and did not discriminate against anyone.

Marczyk et al. (2005) also indicated the following basic ethical principles:

- Respect for persons (participants)
- Beneficence – Do not harm participants but rather increase benefits and minimise potential harms
- Confidentiality – participants’ information has to be kept secured and private and only accessed by researcher.
- Voluntariness – researcher must remind participants that participation is voluntary
The researcher will keep all information such as the names of participants and that of the organisation confidential, should the paper be submitted for publication. Individual feedback will not be provided, but the researcher gave the option to the organisation to receive group-level feedback to improve the existing EAP services provided to long-distance truck drivers.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study were organised and structured in accordance with categories, themes and sub-themes. Findings were reported in table format, and direct quotations extracted from the transcribed interviews were included within the table to substantiate the findings. The researcher extracted 6 categories from the data, namely: services provided by EAPs, experience of EAPs, demands long-distance truck drivers experience, contributions of EAPs; additional services desired by long-distance truck drivers; and recommendations.

Category 1: Services provided by EAPs

During the interviews, the long-distance truck drivers were asked what services are provided to them by the EAPs. The services provided to participants were reported as mostly being related to health concerns.
### Table 2

**Services provided by EAPs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Check functioning of the heart** | “They check even the BP and listen to your heartbeat.” (Participant 9)  
  “Firstly, what they do is check my BP and then if I complain for something they check with that thing (points to his heart) and cholesterol and those things.” (Participant 17) |
| **General check-ups**         | “When I get sick, they help me with what I need.” (Participant 17)  
  “Flu and when we have pains, they give us medication for the pains.” (Participant 11)  
  “… I can say they help us when we get sick or got a problem on the road.” (Participant 14) |
| **HIV Testing**               | “Yes, the HIV tests all the tests that are normally done in a medical centre is done here and you get your results in a few minutes and it is your choice they do not force you.” (Participant 3)  
  “Uh sugar and HIV testing even when you have a pain you will come and get assist.” (Participant 6)  
  “…some men come for HIV testing...” (Participant 7) |
| **Provision of medication**   | “… the facilities are very advantages for us drivers if you have a headache and you need a painkiller then you can get it here you are always welcome.” (Participant 3)  
  “I went there for tablets or tonsils like me every year I got tonsils and they put in me injections and they call it penicillin it is very painful.” (Participant 9)  
  “Flu and when we have pains, they give us medication for the pains.” (Participant 11) |
| **Referrals**                 | “…if you are HIV positive for example, they will give you the necessary contact details for a counsellor so that you can go for counselling.” (Participant 7)  
  “…maybe the lady or guy in charge will talk to you and if they can’t help then they will refer you to a doctor...” (Participant 3)  
  “… if you have those diseases that needs attention if it is more than that they will refer you to the nearest hospital.” (Participant 10) |
During the interviews, the participants indicated that the following services are provided to them by the EAPs:

**Check functioning of the heart**: One participant mentioned that when he visits the roadside clinic, they listen to his heartbeat. Another driver added that when he is not feeling well, they check his heart with a stethoscope (participant did not know the name of the device and pointed to his heart).

**General check-ups**: Some of the participants mentioned that when they experience pain they are assisted by the personnel of the roadside clinic. Also, if they do not feel well and they visit the clinic they receive medical assistance. Participants also indicated that the clinics are open during the day and until 23:00 should they wish to make use of the services provided.

**HIV Testing**: A large number of participants mentioned that they go for HIV-testing at the EAPs. One participant mentioned that you are never forced to do an HIV-test; it is your own decision. Another participant mentioned that when you are tested positive for HIV, they will provide you with the contact details of a counsellor.

**Provision of medication**: Participants reported that they receive medication when they visit the clinic. They receive pain medication for headaches, chronic medication, medication for colds
and flu, blood pressure medication, medication for tonsillitis and STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases).

**Referrals:** Participants also mentioned that they receive referrals to doctors or healthcare facilities such as hospitals. They refer them when their cholesterol levels are high. Also, when testing positive for HIV they refer you to a counsellor for counselling. They also refer you to the nearest hospital for diseases that need more attention and if they are unable to assist you at the clinic, they also refer you to a doctor.

**Medical checks:** The participants reported that they come for blood pressure testing. The participants also tested their blood sugar levels. One participant mentioned that it is important to be aware of your blood sugar levels in order to stay healthy. A few of the participants reported that they also receive cholesterol testing at the roadside EAPs. Some participants mentioned that they tested positively for STDs and received treatment.

**Weighing truck drivers:** Two of the participants indicated that their weight is also checked when they visit the roadside clinic.

**Category 2: Experience of Employee Assistance Programmes**

The participants were asked during the interviews to share their experiences of the EAPs being utilised by them. The participants reported both positive and negative experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative experience</td>
<td>Closed most of the time</td>
<td>“Some of the clinics are closed most of the time.” (Participant 2) “...you maybe get the office on the weekend or you get it to Cape town on Saturdays the facilities the offices everything is closed and Monday you are on duty, so you don’t get a chance.” (Participant 2) “Oh, most of the time we are getting here they are closed most of the times.” (Participant 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long queues</td>
<td>“I went there to a container like this one and there was a queue there I think there is almost an hour and 30 minutes ...” (Participant 9) “...so, I was waiting for more than an hour of which I am a truck driver I have to go so at the end I decide to drive and go but I am supposed to get medication from that clinic.” (Participant 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Run out of medication</td>
<td>“... especially winter with the flu then you will see a lot of men then the people run out of stock and they will tell you must go to Beaufort West, Hanover or Bloemfontein.” (Participant 7) “They gave me some excuses I don’t know maybe there was no medication I don’t know.” (Participant 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive experience</td>
<td>Concerns addressed</td>
<td>“I personally think when you come here you get all the help that you need like I am absolutely happy. They assist me very well.” (Participant 2) “.... So far, I have no complaints and I have not heard anyone else complaining.” (Participant 2) “100% for me. It has helped me a lot...” (Participant 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive experience</td>
<td>Free service</td>
<td>“It is basically a free service you see. So uhm the service they deliver is basically a medical service that helps us, and it help financially as well because it is not an expense on us.” (Participant 7) “...here they provide those services for free which is an advantage to us.” (Participant 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Friendly service

“The nurses are helpful we do not have problems with them their attitudes are good, and I never experience problems.” (Participant 15)

“I think the generosity of one-on-one consultations you can see the information they give its not rude and they are professional.” (Participant 1)

Parking available for trucks at the EAPs, whereas parking space is limited in town

“The services that are provided is a good service for truck drivers who can’t make it to a doctor or who can’t find parking in town.” (Participant 4)

“...so if I am here I park here I get what I want and I go my heart is very happy you see because the problem is a truck is not easy to go to a town you see it is always far from the town.” (Participant 8)

No long queues

“... there is no queue like some hospitals you stay there long but here you stay here 15 minutes you done.” (Participant 9)

“... you must push to get to your loading point and offloading point so you get a gap when you are at the garage so while they are busy you can quickly go to the clinic.” (Participant 5)

“Like I said earlier it helps us a lot because if you go to a clinic there will be a lot of people right and you can explain that you are on the road, but they won’t want to understand... here we are assisted fast. So, if you are on the road you can quickly pop in get medication and go.” (Participant 4)

No time to visit hospitals or doctors

“I think they are doing good eh with our job we don’t have time to go to hospitals so this place they are helping us a lot...” (Participant 1)

“Like they assist us because we cannot go into clinics during the working ...” (Participant 13)

“Yes, they help us. Like now they checked my blood pressure is too high and then for example we do not have the time to go to the healthcare facilities like a clinic, so this is an easy one for us.” (Participant 4)

Received expert medical advice

“Ja Ja. So, they are helping us a lot especially some they give you update, what you have to do, what to eat. Diet ...trying to maintain your body and do some exercise ja such advices.” (Participant 1)
Participants experienced the services provided by EAPs as both positive and negative. Following is a discussion of the experiences of long-distance truck drivers:

**Negative experience:** Some participants pointed out that the EAPs are closed most of the time. One driver drove to the clinic for medication, but it was closed so he left and hoped that the next clinic on the road would be open. Another driver reported that the EAPs open at 16:00 and close at 22:00, therefore it is problematic if you experience some kind of issue during the early morning hours. Another participant mentioned that EAPs in certain towns are closed on Saturdays, and therefore he does not have time to visit the EAPs seeing that he is due back on duty on Monday morning. Two participants reported that they had to wait for more than an hour to receive assistance at the EAPs. Sometimes they are unable to wait for such a long time, and they end up leaving without being assisted. Other drivers mentioned that during winter a large number of truck drivers go to the EAPs for flu medication. However, the EAPs run out of stock and they are referred to other clinics in nearby towns, which is not ideal.

**Positive experience:** A large number of participants reported that when they visit the EAPs their concerns are addressed. They also mentioned that the services being provided are free of charge; hence it makes financial sense to visit these roadside clinics. Also, many drivers receive small salaries, and it is expensive to visit doctors, therefore it is a great help for them to be able to receive assistance free of charge. Some participants mentioned that they always receive friendly service from the staff of the roadside clinics. They also mentioned that they appreciate the one-on-one sessions, professionalism and good attitudes of the staff that assist them. Some participants indicated that limited parking space is available in town so they cannot go to town to see a doctor, but the EAPs have enough parking space and it is very convenient. Some participants reported that, unlike at hospitals, they do not have to wait in a long queue to receive assistance. One said he waits for a maximum of 15 minutes then he receives the desired help
and then leaves. Another participant mentioned that it depends on which clinic you visit, because some are full and others have two to three drivers so you can quickly pop in while you are at the petrol station. Some participants reported that the services they receive at the EAPs are extremely helpful and the help is sufficient and that they do not have time or the opportunity to visit other healthcare facilities such as hospitals or clinics. A participant mentioned that with the kind of work they do it is so much easier to visit the EAPs and they can buy food and rest after having received assistance. Participants also mentioned that they receive medical advice on healthy eating and how to take care of their bodies. They are informed at the EAPs that they should exercise, relax, and drink plenty of water etc. One participant also mentioned that they occasionally receive information regarding strikes and roadblocks.

**Category 3: Demands long-distance truck drivers experience**

With regard to the above-mentioned category, the long-distance truck drivers were asked apart from physical health concerns, what other concerns do long-distance truck drivers experience that has an influence on their work performance? Kindly take note that this category was not part of the objectives of the study. However, the participants did provide interesting demands that they experience on the road.
### Demands long-distance truck drivers experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accidents due to lack of sleep</td>
<td>“Especially accidents on the road. it's fatigue ...you never have time to sleep and they are being pushed and they push themselves too. You try to balance the two, you take even energy drink or read a book, but we are being pushed what are you gonna do.” (Participant 1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I got a planned target, so I tried to push till I feel I am tired, so I got sleep while the vehicle or the truck is moving so I make uh accident.” (Participant 9)</td>
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<td>“Because when I am tired on the road, I might cause an accident because sometimes when you sleep driving such things.” (Participant 11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>“Not enough time to rest so most people they are suffering because of fatigue.” (Participant 8)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I was driving from Joburg to Cape Town so obvious I will be getting tired ...” (Participant 14)</td>
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<td>“I think uh most drivers struggle they don't get enough time to rest and it effects obviously the work performance.” (Participant 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inconsiderate fellow road users</td>
<td>“The problem that people don't understand is that this is a truck and that is a small car we are not driving the same. because the truck will never stop within 5 minutes or 4 minutes and someone will come here and drive reckless in front of you and you have to stop, and the truck doesn't stop here and sometimes there’s accidents on the road.” (Participant 6)</td>
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<td>“Like on the road it is getting inexperienced drivers and impatient drivers they affect us how we drive on the road because you end up being involved in an unnecessary accident.” (Participant 13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long working hours</td>
<td>“...the hours that you work is not limited hours it is unspecified hours, so you sit for a long time so, you sit for a long time and what happens is that it makes you develop lower back pain” (Participant 3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“…when you get here from Cape Town you are tired it's a lot of hours and you are tired, and you want to sleep here you don’t want to be a security...” (Participant 3)</td>
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</table>
“They sit on the road say from Cape Town they stop maybe twice, and it is a long distance...” (Participant 8)

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<tr>
<th>Pressure from supervisor</th>
<th>“Uhh the bosses they push you they want to make more money more loads. They look for another extra load before you even offload the load, so they try for you to be there before the time you supposed to offload.” (Participant 8)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Now we are loaded your boss will be phoning you make sharp customer is waiting, road...these bosses will push you and you will push to get paid.” (Participant 1)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety concerns</th>
<th>“There is a lot of issues, currently it is safety, safety is one of our biggest issue. You aren’t safe anywhere to sleep or to buy food it is just unsafe very unsafe...” (Participant 7)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>“.... a driver stopped to adjust his load and out of the bushed came people and they assaulted him...” (Participant 3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“... I parked there in town just going to buy KFC when I came back the windows are damaged, and everything was gone inside the truck...”(Participant 10)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Spending less time at home</th>
<th>“...so, the family is disadvantaged because I do not get to them...” (Participant 3)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>“... I win with money in my pocket, but I lose on the other side time at my home because I don’t get there ...” (Participant 7)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“It is always a win-lose situation because you have to sacrifice but as I have said you make the call are you gonna drive then you won’t get to your home.” (Participant 3)</td>
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<td>“... another thing about a truck driver is that you don’t get enough time for like family you see so but is part of what we do.” (Participant 14)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working overtime</th>
<th>“I must make sure that I work my 9 hours for the day so if I stop, they will not complain but I will not get extra money because I work overtime...”  (Participant 3)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My overtime begins at 17:00 so I must work as late as I can to get the extra money to make the long road worth it....” (Participant 7)</td>
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</table>
“The other thing can be money because they put in a lot of extra work and not being compensated, and the other thing could be obviously overtime is money.” (Participant 2)

The following demands are experienced by long-distance truck drivers on a daily basis:

**Accidents due to lack of sleep:** Some participants mentioned that accidents are caused because they are tired and are not sleeping enough. They do not sleep at night because they are waiting in the queue to load in order to deliver. They never get time to sleep because a huge amount of pressure is placed on them by their supervisors. Some are being paid per load, so they push themselves in order to reach their targets. One participant specifically mentioned that his supervisor phoned and asked why he is driving 195km/h, but he was so tired he did not even notice. Participants also indicated that their fellow road users are inconsiderate and drive recklessly in front of them and expect them to stop within minutes. The result of the reckless driving is always fatal accidents.

**Fatigue due to lack of sleep:** Participants reported that they experience fatigue because they do not have enough time to rest. One reported that when he sleeps, it feels as if he is wasting time because he also receives payments per load. Some drivers reported that they do not get enough sleep and it influences their work performance. Another participant reported that even at truck stops they sometimes cannot sleep because people knock at your window and sometimes you must pay money in order to sleep.

**Inconsiderate fellow road users:** Participants reported that fellow road users do not understand that a truck is unable to stop in four of five minutes; therefore if someone drives recklessly in front of a truck and the truck cannot stop in time, accidents can happen. They also mentioned that there are many inexperienced and impatient drivers on the road and it can lead to fatal accidents.

**Long working hours:** Participants reported that they must sit for extended periods of time, and it affects the blood circulation in their legs and causes lower back pain. Another mentioned that you might have a need to use the toilet, but you can’t stop next to the road because it is unsafe;
therefore you have to hold in, which puts pressure on your bladder and may sometimes cause bladder infections.

*Pressure from supervisor:* Participants reported that they receive a much pressure from their supervisors to deliver more loads and make more money. One reported that some supervisors will look for an extra load before you are even finished unloading. So, when you are done you immediately have another load to deliver and no time to rest. Supervisors add pressure on drivers indicating to them that customers are waiting and that they must hurry up in order to get the load to the customer. Another mentioned that some drivers are forced to drive even when they are tired.

*Safety concerns:* Some participants expressed their safety concerns. They mentioned that one cannot just stop alongside the road, because it is not safe. They mentioned that it is safer to stop at a truck stop. Participants mentioned that they are victims of crime quite often. A participant indicated that a driver pulled off next to the road to adjust his load. Then men came out of the bushes and assaulted him. Another participant said that at some garages your tires are stolen while you sleep. One participant made a quick stop to get food at a KFC but when he returned, his window was broken, and they had stolen all his belongings.

*Spending less time at home:* A participant mentioned that he has experienced problems at home even though he is not even there, seeing as he is on the road. Another mentioned that he sees his family once a week due to being on the road a lot. Some said that they do not get to see their families but that it is part of the job. It also affects their marriages because they get home tired and cannot perform their marital duties.

*Working overtime:* Some participants reported that they work overtime to make more money. One however mentioned that even though he made more money, his family life suffers because he spends less time at home. It is like they must make a sacrifice and it is a win-lose situation. Other participants reported that the payment methods are different in every company, for example some pay the basic salary plus kilometres driven and others pay the basic salary plus overtime. Thus the participants mentioned that they would push themselves and put in a lot of extra work to receive the overtime payments.
**Category 4: Contributions of EAPs to work performance**

The participants (long-distance truck drivers) were asked during the interviews how the services provided by the EAPs contribute to their work performance. Most of the participants indicated that the EAP services they utilise do contribute in some way or another.

**Table 5**

*Contributions of EAPs to work performance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gain knowledge about health</strong></td>
<td>“I was testing my sugar and BP so I know where I stand. Information is very important. Knowledge is very important.” (Participant 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They tell me I must look after myself and say what is wrong on the road.” (Participant 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think a lot because with the information that you get your sugar level is like this and if it is fine obviously, you're going to be happy and continue work.” (Participant 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provision of medical assistance</strong></td>
<td>“It does it does…. if someone tell you in future you can do this it will help you according to your health status it also helps you to improve the accidents on the road no longer being a danger to anyone else.” (Participant 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think they contribute a lot because uh healthy worker is a productive worker.” (Participant 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saves time</strong></td>
<td>“I manage to reach my target because when I come to the Caltex to the container in 20 minutes, I am done I can continue my journey.” (Participant 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I could say they contribute because instead of me taking a whole day off I can just come here and maybe have 30 minutes just to consult you understand that they have saved the whole day they save the time.” (Participant 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I can pass by and get medication without going to hospital and taking time because that will affect my work also. Now it is easy for me because I am just passing by standing like for 30 minutes getting help then I proceed.” (Participant 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants mentioned that the EAPs they utilise hold several benefits and that these benefits have an influence on their work performance and the manner in which way they perform their job:

*Gain knowledge about health:* The participants reported that they receive information on their health status when they visit the EAPs. The information makes them happy; therefore they can continue with their work. Information such as blood sugar levels and how to look after oneself and get enough rest in order to work better is provided to the drivers. A participant mentioned that a nurse even advised him to use two wash cloths in the showers that they share because he developed sores.

*Provision of medical assistance:* Some participants reported that the EAPs assist them medically. This causes them to feel better, hence they can perform safer and better on the road. Participants mentioned that the EAPs help a lot because if they are healthy, they are able to be more productive. The medical assistance provided by EAPs gives them the reassurance that they can still perform their duties.

*Saves time:* Participants reported that the EAPs are more accessible than healthcare facilities. For this reason they spend less time at the EAPs and are therefore able to perform better and reach their targets. They mentioned that one spends approximately 30 minutes at the EAP; consequently saves an entire day because they did not have to take leave for that day.

**Category 5: Additional services desired by long-distance truck drivers**

Long-distance truck drivers were asked whether they desire other services that are currently being offered to them by the EAPs. Most of the participants mentioned that they are happy and satisfied with the current services. Some of the participants desired some other services as well.
### Table 6

*Additional services desired by long-distance truck drivers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Gym for exercising**        | “Maybe if you got time drivers can have a small gym there to exercise. Most of the time you can't even pay a month for the gym. The main services are the gym.” (Participant 10)  
“…” (Participant 8)  
“…” (Participant 10) |
| **Provision of eye testing**  | “Eye test …” (Participant 5)  
“Yes, the eye tests. There is a lot of time that the guys sugar levels are high, and it affects their eyes.” (Participant 3) |
| **Satisfied with services**   | “I am right with this one. From my side I am right I can't speak for others.” (Participant 4)  
“I think everything so far is fine. Because I didn't come here, and they say they don't have it. They take my details and check my blood pressure and what you have they sort it.” (Participant 9)  
“So far, I am not complaining like so far so good” (Participant 13)  
“It is very good what the clinics do.” (Participant 16) |

Most participants indicated that they are satisfied with the current services of EAPs. There were, however, a few suggestions on other desired services:

**Satisfied with services**: Most of the participants expressed their satisfaction with the services provided to them by the EAPs. A participant mentioned that he cannot speak for others but when he arrives at the roadside clinic, he receives the service he desires. Participants are truly satisfied and believe that what the EAPs are doing is exceptionally good for and beneficial to them.

**Gym for exercising**: Some participants mentioned that drivers cannot pay for gym fees, so a small gym at the EAPs will be beneficial to them. Participants mentioned that exercising is
important because you sit in the cabin the whole day, which negatively affects your blood circulation.

*Provision of eye testing:* Some drivers expressed their need for eye testing at the EAPs because they are unable to visit optometrists with their current medical aid plan. They also mentioned that high blood sugar levels have a negative impact on their eyesight; thus these tests will assist in this regard.

**Category 6: Recommendations to EAPs to address concerns**

With regard to the final category, participants (long-distance truck drivers) were asked whether they have any suggestions to make to the EAPs to assist with the concerns of long-distance truck drivers. Most of the participants indicated that they do not have any suggestions. However, the only suggestion was with regard to the opening and closing hours of the roadside clinics.

**Table 7**

*Recommendations to EAPs to address concerns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No recommendations</td>
<td>“To continue to assist us.” (Participant 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“So far so good. What I’ve been coming to this clinic looking for they have helped me so far.” (Participant 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“From my experience I never see anything bad and they help us I am not a regular, so I come here for example when I have flu” (Participant 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconsider the opening hours of the clinic</td>
<td>“If they can be open 24 hours that would be nice” (Participant 11)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I am not saying they should be open all day but if they can be open from 6 to 6 and have two shifts where they rotate it will help a lot.” (Participant 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“In general, I think if they can extend more hours, I think it could bring more drivers here and I think it would be better for them.” (Participant 1)</td>
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</table>
As mentioned above, overall truck drivers are satisfied with the services provided by EAPs and they do not have any recommendations for making the EAPs even more efficient. However, some of the participants did recommend that the opening and closing hours of the EAPs should be reconsidered.

*No recommendations:* Most of the participants mentioned that they have no recommendations to make; the EAPs should continue to assist them. They receive the assistance that they need when they visit the EAPs; therefore they are satisfied.

*Reconsider the opening hours of the clinic:* Some participants expressed the need for the opening hours of the roadside clinics to be reconsidered. A participant mentioned that if they can be open 24/7 it would be of great help to them (the truck drivers). This need stems from the fact that they occasionally arrive at the EAP after 22:00 and they still have experienced some kind of problem or pain and can’t be assisted. They believe that if the hours are extended, more drivers will visit the EAP. A suggestion was made to rotate the staff of the clinic by arranging shifts for the staff.

**DISCUSSION**

**Outline of the findings**

*The first objective of this study was to conceptualise Employee Assistance Programmes according to the literature.* The first employee assistance programmes were established in the 1930s in the United States manufacturing industry, as support from employees to assist alcoholic employees to function better in the workplace (Attridge, 2019). According to Attridge (2019) employee assistance programmes are provided by employees to help them solve health and behavioural issues that are rather serious. Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa defines EAPs as “the work organisation’s resource based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace wellness (effectiveness) through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues.” (Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa, 2015, p.1). According to Barrette (2011) Employee Assistance Programmes is a confidential service that provides support to employees who have work or personal issues. Joseph et al. (2018) also states that EAPs assist employees with
professional help in order to deal with their problems. These problems are either personal or work-related and that is why EAPs provide interventions, screenings, assessments and referrals (Ajala, 2016).

The second objective of the research study was to explore the Employee Assistance Programmes provided to long-distance truck drivers within South Africa. The findings indicate that participants receive primary health-care services such as checking their HIV status and testing for STDs. Apostolopoulos and Sonmez (2007) state that long-distance truck drivers in Sub-Saharan Africa are a vulnerable group to HIV and other transferrable diseases such as flu, STIs and TB (Tuberculosis) and that they are affected by feelings of loneliness, long periods away from home, boredom and stress, which makes them get involved in high-risk behaviours.

Other services being provided to truck drivers of the current study also include heart functioning checks, medical checks and lastly weighing of truck drivers. According to Mahlatji et al. (2015) the most common health problems with which long-distance truck drivers are faced, are being overweight and that they experience high blood pressure. Research also shows that long-distance truck drivers with diabetes (i.e. blood sugar problems) are more involved in accidents than drivers whose health is better, and another epidemiological study reported that heart diseases and musculoskeletal disorder are some of the risk with which long-distance truck drivers are faced (Ronchese & Bovenzi, 2012; Rosenbloom, 2011).

Participants of the study also reported that they go for general check-ups at the EAPs and that they receive medication for colds and flu, headaches and chronic diseases. Lalla-Edward et al. (2019) assert that the current EAPs make use of trained healthcare professionals to provide primary healthcare services to long-distance truck drivers such as diagnosing and treating health conditions, for instance diabetes and HIV prevention and screening for transferrable diseases.

Some participants further indicated that the healthcare professionals at the EAPs refer them to healthcare facilities should the need arise and when they need other medical attention such as counselling. Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) note that these EAPs focus mainly on screening long-distance truck drivers and referring them to healthcare facilities that will take care of their health-related needs. To summarise, it is evident that truck drivers do receive services from the EAPs that assist with the current health problems they are experiencing.
The third objective of the research study was to explore how long-distance truck drivers within South Africa experience Employee Assistance Programmes. The findings indicated that long-distance truck drivers experience EAPs both positively and negatively. Negative experiences included: EAPs are closed most of the time, the operating hours clash with the participants driving schedules, sometimes flu medication is out of stock, and drivers wait for hours to be assisted at some EAPs. Apostolopoulos et al. (2013) notes that long-distance truck drivers also struggle with access to healthcare facilities such as hospitals, doctors and clinics due to limited parking space at healthcare facilities, limits on payment methods, health insurance limitations or coverage, irregular schedules which do not give time to seek healthcare assistance.

During the study, the participants also experienced some positives when visiting the EAPs. They reported that when they visit the EAP they receive the services they need. They highlighted the friendliness of the staff that assist them and their professional behaviour towards them. A large number of the participants mentioned that they enjoy the services at the EAP because it is free, and they do not have time to visit doctors. They also mentioned that when they arrive at the EAPs there is enough parking space. The participants also reported that they find the EAPs very convenient because they do not have to wait for long periods to be assisted. Research shows that utilising EAPs in the workplace can have a positive effect on the stress that employees experience, absenteeism, team spirit, satisfaction, productivity, as well as the organisations revenue (Benavides & David, 2010; Masi & Jacobson, 2003; Richmond et al., 2017). A research study conducted by Joseph and Walker (2016) indicated that EAPs form an extremely important support system for employees and it can assist with avoiding risks in the organisation. Therefore, as mentioned in the reported results of the current study it is evident that participants do receive value from the EAPs they visit, and this can have positive effects on the organisations as well.

The fourth objective of the research study was to explore how Employee Assistance Programmes contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers within South Africa. The themes that emerged from the findings of this research study include gain knowledge about health; provision of medical assistance; and saves times. The truck drivers mentioned that the professionals advise them to eat well and rest in order to perform better. They also receive medication when they are feeling ill, and this allows them to recover in order to perform better, be productive and be safe on the road. Research results from six studies show how employee assistance programs can improve work performance. Attridge (2009)
summarised the results of six studies conducted on the effectiveness of EAPs in general. All studies indicated that work performance improved when utilizing the services of EAPs. Joseph et al. (2018) suggest that EAPs can provide employees with professional support to deal with personal and work-related issues. They will consequently develop coping strategies and employees will not have to constantly take time off, which will thus not have a negative influence on work performance.

The fifth objective of the research study was to explore what recommendations long-distance truck drivers in South Africa make to Employee Assistance Programmes in order to address their concerns. Many of the participants indicated that have no recommendations to make for the EAPs since they are satisfied with the services being provided. However, other participants only recommended that the opening and closing hours of the roadside clinics be reconsidered seeing that they are unable to visit the clinics during normal operating hours. Several researchers found that long-distance truck drivers work irregular and long hours, which does not allow them to access healthcare facilities when they need to (Apostolopoulos et al., 2013; deVries et al., 2013; Greenfield et al., 2016; Lalla-Edward & Gomez, 2015; Lalla-Edward et al., 2016; Olson et al., 2016; Robb & Mansfield, 2007). According to Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) access to EAPs are stalled due to operating hours that can be improved or changed to ensure that more long-distance truck drivers make use of the EAPs. Hence literature is in support of the idea that the operating hours of the EAPs should be revised in order for more drivers to access the EAPs.

The demands experienced by long-distance truck drivers

This category did not form part of the objectives of the study, but the participants did provide the demands that they experience on the road. The themes identified in this study included accidents due to lack of sleep, fatigue, inconsiderate fellow road users, long working hours, pressure from their supervisors, safety concerns, spending less time at home and working overtime. This is supported by Apostolopoulos et al. (2011) who indicate that the work environment of long-distance truck drivers is characterised by excess workload, low job control, chronic stress, erratic schedules, disrupted sleep patterns and extreme time pressures. As mentioned previously, participants reported that they are involved in accidents due to lack of sleep. Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) state that drivers become sleepy and lose concentration, and this is one of the main reasons why accidents are seen to be a serious occupational risk.
Furthermore, participants indicated that they experience their fellow road users as being be inconsiderate. According to Anderson and Riley (2008) truck drivers in the United States of America are faced with risks when they deliver goods, are at truck stops, and also on the road when fellow road users experience road rage.

A large number of participants raised the view that they spend a lot of time away from home due to the nature of their occupation. There are many truck drivers that work with agents, which means that they avail themselves at any time for job opportunities to make money, and this has an effect on how many times drivers can go home and spend time with their families and rest (Lalla-Edward et al., 2018). Truck drivers spend long periods of time away from home in stressful environments and their occupation requires them to meet tight schedules and be alert for many hours. However, a research study conducted by Goss (2015) indicates that some drivers do enjoy being away from their families and they enjoy travelling because it is also the nature of their job.

The participants of the current research study also indicated that they experience many safety concerns. Research indicates that long-distance truck drivers are at risk on the road because they occasionally travel to areas with which they are not familiar, remote areas and they travel at night; therefore they have to be extra careful (Gary & Lindsay, 2019; Shattell et al., 2010). Lastly the participants also reported that they work overtime in order to make more money. However, this comes at a price because the more overtime they put in, the less time they get to spend at home. Research indicates that the long periods truck drivers spend away from home increases their loneliness, and drivers are quite emotional when talking about sacrificing time spent at home to make money for their families (Gomez et al., 2013; Lalla-Edward et al., 2018).

Practical implications

By having participated in the study, long-distance truck drivers could share their experiences and challenges in a neutral setting. This study revealed that long-distance truck drivers experience a lot more than only health-related issues. This study can afford the EAPs the opportunity of seeing how they can adjust the current services provided and have a more holistic approach to the needs of a long-distance truck driver. Furthermore, privately owned companies can also assist with the challenges their drivers experience by investing in current EAPs to improve and expand the services that are provided.
Limitations and recommendations

Limitations were evident in this research study. First and foremost, the sample size of the study was 17 participants \((N=17)\); hence the results cannot be generalised to long-distance truck driver populations. The second limitation is that the interviews were not conducted in the first language of the participants because the researcher could only speak Afrikaans or English and it might have caused a barrier for the participants to fully express themselves. The third limitation was that unfortunately no female long-distance truck driver was part of the study, so the researcher does not have the perspective, experiences and challenges of a female long-distance truck driver. Another limitation was that the participants were mostly African and coloured. There were no white participants, which also limited or excluded the perspective, experiences and challenges of white long-distance truck driver. The data was collected in one province which is also a limitation. The researcher and participants were interrupted by the noise of the trucks at the truck stop.

Recommendations can be made for future research and practice

Interviews for future research can be conducted in three provinces to determine whether the findings of this research and those to be conducted produce the same results. Also, for future research, it is recommended that a larger sample group be used. Another recommendation is to employ field works in three provinces to interview the participants in their first language to ensure the collection of rich data. Trucking companies should be more involved in assisting the EAPs with funding to add additional services for truck drivers, for example gym facilities with basic equipment at truck stops. The EAPs and trucking companies should collaborate to design a more effective and comprehensive programme. The programme can include services such as legal advice, financial planning, marriage counselling, substance abuse counselling, family services and stress management. After or during every consultation at the EAPs, drivers should be asked what other challenges they experience and how the EAPs can assist them in it. Trucking companies should motivate drivers to work together and create a “buddy” system where drivers encourage one another to make use of the EAPs and check up on one another.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings indicated that long-distance truck drivers experience many challenges or demands on the road that influence their physical and psychological well-being and their ability to perform at their best. Although some participants were satisfied with the services provided, many also indicated that not all their needs are addressed by the EAPs. Long-distance truck drivers also made recommendations on how to better the services provided by EAPs. These findings will enhance the EAPs’ expertise on how to improve the quality of services for long-distance truck drivers.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
This chapter provides conclusions regarding the findings from the research article (Chapter 2). The conclusions are aligned with the general and specific objectives of this research study. In addition, this chapter also discusses the limitations of this study and makes recommendations for the organisation / practice and for future research opportunities.

3.1 Conclusions

The first objective of this study was to conceptualise Employee Assistance Programmes according to the literature

Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa defines EAPs as “the work organisation’s resource based on core technologies or functions to enhance employee and workplace wellness (effectiveness) through prevention, identification, and resolution of personal and productivity issues.” (Standards for Employee Assistance Programmes in South Africa, 2015, p.1). EAPs thus is a source that provides employees with assistance with work-related and personal problems that influence how they perform at work. The aim of the present study was to explore how long-distance truck drivers in South Africa experience Employee Assistance Programmes.

The second objective of this study was to explore the Employee Assistance Programmes provided to long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.

The researcher explored the services that are currently provided by EAPs to long-distance truck drivers. The researcher found that the EAPs provide services such as: checking the functioning of the heart, general check-ups, HIV-testing, providing medication, referrals, medical checks and also weighing the drivers. The results of this study reported that the services provided mainly focus on primary healthcare for long-distance truck drivers. From literature it is confirmed and evident that existing EAPs that have been implemented are focused on awareness and identifying communicable diseases such as (STI, HIV (including prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT), tuberculosis, and malaria) and chronic diseases (high blood pressure and diabetes), and primary healthcare (de Vries et al., 2020; Lalla-Edward et al.)
(2016). A conclusion can be drawn that both this current study and previous research show that all the services provided to long-distance truck drivers are mainly focused on their physical health.

The third objective of this study was to explore how long-distance truck drivers within South Africa experience Employee Assistance Programmes.

The researcher also explored how long-distance truck drivers experience the EAPs. The experiences of the drivers were positive because truck drivers receive free assistance, advise on how to stay healthy; advise on the importance of resting; the staff are friendly and professional; there is enough parking space, and the services are convenient. Traditional healthcare facilities are situated in town and parking space is limited there for truck drivers. However, Richmond et al. (2017) state that even though a great deal of research is documented on the positive impact of employee assistance programmes and its effects on work performance, these findings are not supported by reliable empirical evidence.

The negative aspect that some drivers experienced were the operating hours of the EAPs because it did not fit into their schedules. The EAPs are open between 16:00 and 22:00, which makes it difficult for participants who pass by truck-stops in the morning to receive assistance. A few of the participants indicated that they have to wait for hours to be assisted at some of the EAPs. Occasionally they arrive and find an EAP open but then the medication they need is out of stock, especially during winter it is flu medication that is difficult to find.

According to various researchers, traditional healthcare facilities cannot always provide the services that long-distance truck drivers need because they are not easily accessible, the parking space is limited, drivers need to use an alternative route to locate them, they assist other patients and close too early (Delany-Moretlwe et al., 2014; Ferguson & Morris, 2007; Gatignon & Van Wassenhove, 2008; ILO, 2005; IOM, 2003; Ramjee & Gouws, 2002). To add to the previously mentioned, Solomon et al. (2004) state that circumstantial evidence from the trucking industry proposes that erratic working hours and geographical location as well as health insurance makes it difficult for long-distance truck drivers to access healthcare for regular and constant treatment of chronic illness, serious problems and prevention methods.

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The fourth objective of this study was to explore how Employee Assistance Programmes contribute to the work performance of long-distance truck drivers within South Africa.

The participants of this study were also asked how the EAPs contributed to their work performance. The following themes emerged: gain knowledge about health, provision of medical assistance and saves time. The participants indicated that the EAPs also provide them with knowledge such as what to eat and what not to eat as well as the importance of resting. When the participants arrive at the EAPs their concerns are addressed, they receive medication, it saves them a large amount of time and this allows them to reach their deadlines and perform well. According to Joseph et al. (2018) studies indicate that making use of an EAP can improve the performance of the employee and the organisation. A study by Kreider (2019) further indicated that implementing an EAP in the workplace can reduce time lost at work by 33% and lower work-related accidents by 65%.

The fifth objective of this study was to explore what recommendations long-distance truck drivers in South Africa make to Employee Assistance Programmes in order to address their concerns.

The main recommendation made by the participants in this study was for EAPs to reconsider their operating hours. Some participants suggested that the EAPs should be open 24 hours; professionals can work in shifts. A large number the participants had no recommendations to make because they were satisfied with the services that they received; they just want the staff of the EAPs to continue assisting them.

Although most of the participants are happy with the services they receive, the primary focus of the EAPs is centred on primary healthcare services, but long-distance truck drivers experience other challenges as well such as legal issues, marital problems etc. Long-distance truck drivers experience more than just physical health issues. Apostolopoulos et al. (2011) are in agreement that an all-inclusive method to ensure that long-distance truck drivers live healthy would assist with many other negative aspects such as irregular hours of service, total work hours and compulsory breaks, inadequate access to healthy food at truck stops, smoking, unfitness and no fitness centres at truck stops.
The demands experienced by long-distance truck drivers

During data collection the participants shared their lived experiences with the researcher regarding the demands with which they are faced. Although this was not an objective of the study, the participants provided interesting information. The themes that emerged were accidents due to lack of sleep, fatigue, inconsiderate fellow road users, long working hours, pressure from supervisors, safety concerns, spending less time at home, and working overtime. The environment in which a truck driver works has a variety of negative influences on increased fatigue such as being away from home for days or weeks, long working hours, abnormal driving schedules and pressure to deliver (BLS 2020; Sieber et al., 2014). Participants also mentioned that fatigue has a negative influence on their performance at work. The National Transportation Safety Board in the USA found that fatigue is cited most frequently as the probable cause of truck drivers’ fatal accidents (Chen et al., 2021).

Some participants mentioned that due to the long working hours they spend a lot of time away from home which has a negative effect on their family and marriage. The participants reported that leaving their trucks unattended is risky due to theft and that truck stops are the safest place at which to sleep. de Vries et al. (2020) assert that truck drivers’ trips normally last for several weeks, which means they are separated from their families and wives for a long period and that, on the road, they experience boredom, high-jacking risks, loneliness and waiting for hours on end at the borders.

The drivers also receive a large amount of pressure from their supervisors to deliver. There is no time to rest because time is money. Research states that truck drivers wait for extended periods to load their truck and occasionally they even have to load or unload it themselves (Belzer & Sedo, 2018; BLS, 2020; Sieber et al., 2014). A large number of drivers also work overtime to make more money. Belzer (2000) states that long-distance truck drivers drive for extremely long hours to earn more money. Whilst being so tired, the participants also experience fellow road users who are very inconsiderate because they drive recklessly in front of the driver and this always ends in fatal accidents.
3.2 Limitations

The first limitation was time because the participants were in a hurry to reach their delivery destination or wanted to sleep. Some of the participants were also very tired which means they did not really focus and could not provide in depth data. The second limitation concerns the number of truck drivers who visited the EAPs. The staff at the EAPs mentioned that most drivers visit during the night because the EAPs are open from 16:00 to 22:00; therefore not many drivers visited the EAP when the researcher collected data. Another limitation was that most of the participants were extremely tired; therefore they could not focus and remember the experiences they had. Most of the participants were African and no female participants were found, which left out an opportunity to obtain other perspectives and experiences. The language barrier was also a limitation because the interviews were conducted in English and it was not the participants’ home language. The participants found it hard to understand some of the questions and terms. However, the researcher clarified it for them, and they understood. The researcher also translated two or three interviews in Afrikaans in an attempt to accommodate the participants. Lastly, the lack of research on the health and demands experienced by long-distance truck drivers in South Africa was also a limitation in this study.

3.3 Recommendations

Recommendations are provided for the organisation/practice and future research opportunities. These recommendations are also the sixth objective of this study.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation

During this study it was evident that long-distance truck drivers experience a large number of challenges. Most of these challenges have a negative effect on the performance of the drivers. The services currently provided are sufficient. However, it can be improved to address the needs of the drivers. The specific needs of long-distance truck drivers should be investigated extensively in order for a tailored programme to be developed. The results of the current study can be utilised by organisations to address the issues that currently are not addressed by the EAPs. According to Lalla-Edward et al. (2018) and Lalla-Edward and Gomez (2015) there are round about 70 000 truck drivers in South Africa; therefore healthcare interventions should be prioritised to ensure a healthy population. The EAPs can provide truck drivers with the contact
details of professionals to assist with other challenges that might not lie within the scope of their professionals, such as referrals for legal advice, financial advice, marital and personal counselling, or to even invite such professionals to the EAPs on certain days. The EAPs should constantly monitor and evaluate how effective the services are that they provide. The researcher also recommends that private truck companies become more involved and invest more in the overall well-being of long-distance truck drivers by collaborating with EAPs. Another recommendation is that the EAP’s can introduce a 24-hour stand by telephone number that drivers can call when they need assistance.

3.3.2 Recommendations for future research

The researcher can make use of a larger sample size to obtain more inputs and other experiences from long-distance truck drivers. The second recommendation is to prioritise and make more of an effort to find female truck drivers and from other races to explore other experiences. A suggestion is that fieldworkers be employed who speak the language of the participant and this will make the participants more comfortable and they will be able to share more experiences.

Another recommendation is that the researcher collect data during the operating hours of the EAPs in order to reach more participants. The researcher should rather stop the recording of the interview when another trucker stops or drives away from the truck stop, this will ensure that the data is recorded clearly and no information is missed. Long-distance truck drivers play an extremely important role in the economy. However, literature in South Africa regarding the experiences or demands of long-distance truck drivers is lacking. For future research a comparative study should be conducted to explore the experiences and challenges of long-distance truck drivers who do not make use of the EAPs.
REFERENCES


