



Role of Employee Assistance Programmes as an Occupational Stress Management Strategy for Enhancing Employee Performance: A Quantitative Study at RECO Manufacturing Industry, Kasese District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) as an occupational stress management strategy for enhancing employee performance at RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese District, Uganda, addressing a gap in research on how structured support mechanisms influence productivity in manufacturing settings. Anchored on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which conceptualises workplace factors as job demands and job resources, the study examined how access to and utilisation of EAPs mitigate stress and enhance performance. The research adopted a quantitative approach, employing both descriptive and correlational research designs to capture the relationships between EAP utilisation and employee performance. The target population comprised 134 permanent employees across key departments from which a sample of 100 respondents was selected using stratified random, proportionate, and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data were collected through self-administered questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, and a pilot study with 10 respondents from Hima Cement Industry was conducted to refine the instrument. Regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between EAP utilisation and employee performance, with a high coefficient ($B=0.831$, $p<0.000$), indicating that effective counselling, substance abuse support, and stress management workshops substantially enhance productivity, morale, and punctuality. The study concluded that EAPs are critical resources for managing occupational stress and recommended strengthening counselling services, improving financial and legal support, and institutionalising EAP policies. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence supporting the JD-R Theory in a manufacturing context and have policy implications for integrating EAPs into organisational practices to enhance employee well-being and organisational performance.

Keywords: Employee Assistance Programmes, Occupational Stress Management Strategy, Employee Performance, RECO Manufacturing Industry.

Citation: Masika Medress, and Tom ongesa Nyamboga [2025]. Role of Employee Assistance Programmes as an Occupational Stress Management Strategy for Enhancing Employee Performance: A Quantitative Study at RECO Manufacturing Industry, Kasese District, Uganda. *Journal of Diversity Studies*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51470/JOD.2025.4.2.143>

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Article History: Received 21 July 2025 | Revised 19 August 2025 | Accepted 17 September 2025 | Available Online October 22, 2025

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1.0 Introduction

Employee performance is a critical determinant of organisational productivity, particularly in manufacturing industries where efficiency, precision, and innovation drive competitiveness and sustainability [1]. High levels of occupational stress in such environments, often caused by workload pressures, safety concerns, and operational demands, can undermine employee well-being and reduce output quality [2]. EAPs have emerged as a strategic intervention for managing workplace stress by offering professional counselling, wellness initiatives, and support systems that foster resilience and job satisfaction [3]. In manufacturing industries, the integration of EAPs as an occupational stress management strategy not only mitigates the negative impacts of stress but also enhances motivation, commitment, and overall performance, thereby strengthening both individual and organisational outcomes [4]. Employee performance, which refers to the efficiency, quality, and consistency with which employees accomplish their

assigned tasks, is strongly influenced by workplace well-being and the availability of support systems [5]. In manufacturing settings, where work is often fast-paced and physically demanding, prolonged stress can lower concentration, reduce productivity, and increase absenteeism, ultimately weakening performance levels [6]. EAPs, which are structured workplace-based interventions offering confidential counselling, stress management resources, and wellness support, provide an effective solution to these challenges [7]. Alleviating occupational stress, strengthening emotional well-being, and promoting healthy coping strategies, EAPs enable employees to remain focused, motivated, and productive [8]. This connection highlights the role of EAPs in maintaining employee health while simultaneously enhancing overall performance outcomes in manufacturing industries.

Employee performance in manufacturing industries within developing countries is characterised by the demand for high levels of efficiency, precision, and adaptability, given that the

sector often serves as a key driver of industrialisation and economic growth [9]. Employees in these industries are expected to meet production targets, maintain quality standards, and adapt to technological advancements, all while working in environments that are frequently labour-intensive [10]. Despite growth potential, performance is often undermined by persistent challenges such as limited access to modern technology, poor working conditions, inadequate occupational health and safety measures, and high levels of work-related stress [11]. In many cases, employees experience fatigue, low morale, and absenteeism, which directly hinder productivity and organisational competitiveness. Stress management mechanisms, such as EAPs, are either absent or underutilised in these settings, leaving workers without structured support systems to cope with occupational pressures [12], [13]. This gap has created a pressing need for studies that explore how EAPs can be effectively adopted as a strategy for reducing workplace stress and enhancing employee performance in manufacturing industries in developing contexts, such as in Kasese District, Uganda.

Employee performance in Ugandan manufacturing industries is largely shaped by the need to achieve production targets, maintain product quality, and ensure operational efficiency, often under resource-constrained conditions [14]. Employees are required to demonstrate technical skills, time management, and adaptability, particularly as the sector gradually adopts modern manufacturing technologies and processes. However, performance is frequently affected by persistent challenges, including inadequate training, limited access to modern machinery, poor workplace infrastructure, and insufficient occupational health and safety measures. High levels of occupational stress resulting from heavy workloads, long working hours, and job insecurity further compromise productivity, morale, and employee engagement. These challenges highlight a critical gap in support mechanisms, making interventions such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) essential for improving stress management, sustaining workforce well-being, and enhancing overall performance in Ugandan manufacturing industries [15], [16].

At RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese District, employee performance continues to be constrained by high levels of occupational stress, despite the company's efforts to implement wellness programmes and flexible work arrangements. Employees experience stress due to demanding job requirements, production pressures, inadequate resources, and socio-economic challenges such as poverty and limited access to healthcare [17], [18]. While RECO has introduced stress relief sessions and wellness initiatives, these interventions remain insufficient in addressing the underlying causes of stress, particularly as they do not provide structured mental health support or professional counselling services. EAPs, which offer confidential counselling, psychological support, and stress management resources, represent a targeted occupational stress management strategy capable of mitigating these challenges [19]. The absence or underutilisation of EAPs contributes to continued burnout, high absenteeism, and low job satisfaction, negatively affecting productivity and overall organisational performance. The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the fragility of existing employee support mechanisms, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive and structured EAPs to enhance employee well-being, resilience, and performance.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) as an occupational stress management strategy in enhancing employee performance at RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese District. Specifically, the study aimed to assess how structured EAP interventions, including counselling, psychological support, and wellness resources, can reduce occupational stress, improve employee well-being, and ultimately boost productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational performance. The study sought to generate actionable recommendations that could guide RECO in strengthening its EAP framework, addressing workplace stress more effectively, and enhancing overall operational efficiency and competitiveness.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To evaluate the implementation and accessibility of Employee Assistance Programmes at RECO Mattress Industry.
- To assess the effectiveness of EAPs in reducing occupational stress among employees.
- To examine the influence of EAPs on employee performance, including productivity, job satisfaction, and absenteeism.
- To identify gaps in the current EAP initiatives and provide recommendations for strengthening EAPs to enhance employee well-being and overall organisational performance.

Null hypothesis

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) have no significant effect on employee performance at RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese District.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli in 2001, provided the conceptual framework for this study by offering a structured approach to understanding the relationship between EAPs and employee performance at RECO Mattress Industry. The theory categorises workplace factors into job demands, such as heavy workloads, tight production schedules, and operational pressures, and job resources, which include support mechanisms like counselling, wellness services, and EAPs [20], [21].

In this framework, EAPs are viewed as critical resources that help employees cope with high job demands, manage occupational stress, and maintain psychological well-being. While applying the JD-R framework, the study was able to examine how access to and utilisation of EAPs could mitigate stress, prevent burnout, and enhance job satisfaction, ultimately improving productivity and overall organisational performance. This framework thus guided the investigation of the strategic role of EAPs in promoting employee performance within the manufacturing context at RECO Mattress Industry.

2.2 Empirical review

The influence of Employee Assistance Programmes on employee performance in manufacturing industries

The influence of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) on employee performance in manufacturing and state-owned industries has become an area of growing interest, as organisations increasingly recognise the need to support employee well-being to sustain productivity [22] explored this relationship by focusing on the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), to analyse how EAP interventions such as counselling services,

substance abuse cessation programmes, and financial literacy initiatives affect employee productivity. The study sought to determine the extent to which these interventions improve workplace performance and to provide evidence on how state corporations can strengthen EAPs to benefit both employees and employers.

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which was appropriate for capturing detailed insights into the existing situation within KPA. The target population consisted of 450 employees, from which 135 subjects were selected through stratified and purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires, with a pilot test conducted to establish the reliability and validity of the instruments. Quantitative data were analysed using regression models and descriptive statistics, while qualitative insights were assessed through content analysis. Results were presented in percentages and frequency tables, allowing clear interpretation of the relationship between EAPs and employee performance.

The findings revealed that employee counselling programmes had the greatest impact on performance, accounting for 65.4% of positive outcomes. Alcohol, drug, and substance abuse cessation programmes followed with 44.3%, while financial literacy services had a lower but notable impact of 38%. Employees who accessed these programmes demonstrated reduced anxiety and stress, improved morale, greater punctuality, and decreased absenteeism. These improvements collectively enhanced overall performance and contributed to organisational efficiency.

The study concluded that EAPs play a significant role in promoting employee well-being and productivity. Counselling services emerged as the most effective, while financial literacy, although less impactful, was recognised as an important support mechanism. The researcher recommended strengthening counselling services, expanding access to financial literacy programmes, and institutionalising policies that promote consistent use of EAPs within state corporations. Furthermore, the integration of EAPs into employment law was suggested as a way of ensuring long-term sustainability. The study also highlighted the need for future research to examine other dimensions of EAPs that may influence employee performance beyond the three considered.

The study by [23] explored the influence of digital transformation on workplace environments, moving beyond the broader focus on business models and societal impacts to highlight a micro-level perspective. The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the success factors of digital workplace transformation, particularly how expected work design characteristics shape employees' attitudes toward these changes. The researchers emphasised that employees' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and connectedness are central in determining their readiness to embrace digital transformation in the workplace.

The methodology involved a case study within the wholesale industry, providing a practical context to examine how digital workplace initiatives are perceived by employees. The study focused on assessing the relationship between employees' expectations of workplace design characteristics and their attitudes toward digital change, linking these attitudes to expected performance and well-being.

Findings revealed that when employees anticipated being autonomous, competent, and connected in the digital workplace, they expected not only improved future work performance but also enhanced well-being.

These positive expectations contributed significantly to their supportive attitude toward digital workplace transformation. The results highlighted that employee well-being and perceived work performance act as mediators in fostering willingness to engage with and sustain digital change initiatives.

The study concluded that digital transformation success depends not only on technological advancement or business model innovation but also on the human dimension of workplace design. Ensuring that employees feel empowered, skilled, and connected in digitally transformed environments enhances their acceptance of change and their commitment to supporting transformation processes. This positions employee-centred design as a critical factor in digital transformation strategies.

The study by [24] examined the underutilisation of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) among men in Australia, despite their continued overrepresentation in national suicide statistics and the existence of public health initiatives aimed at improving mental health literacy. The purpose of the study was to explore the barriers and enablers to men's use of EAPs, while also identifying differences in experiences between blue-collar and white-collar employment settings. The focus was on understanding end-user perspectives, which had been largely absent in contemporary literature.

The methodology employed a qualitative research design. Forty-four men participated in the study: 32 from a white-collar organisation and 12 from a blue-collar employer. Data collection was facilitated through focus groups and interviews, conducted by qualified mental health professionals. Five first-round and three second-round focus groups and one interview were held with white-collar workers, while two focus groups and three interviews were conducted with blue-collar workers. Data were analysed thematically using a framework approach to identify recurring patterns and themes.

The findings highlighted six main themes, four of which were barriers to EAP utilisation. These barriers included the perception of no need for EAP because of alternative supports, uncertainty about the services offered, scepticism and distrust of EAP, and cultural influences from both society and the workplace. Sub-themes revealed entrenched concerns such as lack of knowledge, doubts about confidentiality, stigma, and fear of negative career consequences. On the other hand, enablers were linked to the importance of reliable and appealing messaging, as well as proactive engagement and service delivery. Differences between the two employment groups also emerged, with white-collar participants emphasising organisational culture and corporate work structures, while blue-collar participants expressed preferences for practical problem-solving and direct communication.

The study concluded that certain barriers to EAP use, especially stigma and distrust, are more deeply rooted than previously understood and must be addressed as a priority. The authors recommended that EAP providers adopt a more visible and proactive role in workplaces, develop tailored marketing and delivery strategies for different workgroups, and reinforce their independence from client organisations. By doing so, confidence and interest in EAP services could be enhanced. The study also stressed the need for broader societal and workplace initiatives aimed at reducing stigma associated with mental health and help-seeking, which would ultimately improve men's engagement with mental health support services.

The thesis by [25] examined the multilevel factors influencing employee engagement in Malaysia's financial sector.

The purpose of the study was to move beyond traditional single-level analyses of engagement and explore how individual, organisational, and societal factors interact to shape engagement. The focus was placed on three core concepts: empowering leadership behaviour, high-performance work practices (HPWP), and religiosity. By drawing on institutional theory, the research argued that engagement must be understood within the broader interplay of macro- and micro-institutional contexts rather than being confined to a narrow, micro-level HRM perspective.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to address the research objectives. The qualitative phase involved 41 interviews with employees in the financial sector to explore the most salient factors that drive engagement. This was followed by a quantitative survey of 278 employees, which tested the relationships among the identified variables. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods ensured a more robust understanding of the factors influencing engagement across multiple levels.

The findings indicated that empowering leadership behaviour exerted the strongest influence on engagement, particularly when leaders demonstrated concern for their employees. At the organisational level, HPWP were found to be present and to contribute to engagement, but their effectiveness was hampered by implementation challenges and internal organisational issues. At the societal level, religiosity emerged as a unique factor, with Malay Muslim employees reporting stronger engagement when their religious values were acknowledged and integrated into their workplace experience.

The study concluded that both macro- and micro-institutional factors are critical in driving employee engagement. Leaders play a pivotal role by fostering empowerment and support, while organisations must ensure that HPWP are not only introduced but also effectively implemented. Additionally, religiosity should be recognised as an important dimension of engagement in culturally and religiously diverse contexts such as Malaysia. The study recommended that financial institutions strengthen leadership development, refine HPWP implementation, and acknowledge the role of religious values to enhance employee engagement and organisational performance.

The study by [26] investigated the role of conflict management strategies in enhancing employee productivity within manufacturing companies in Tamil Nadu. The purpose of the research was to assess how different approaches to conflict resolution influence workers' performance, acknowledging that conflict is an inevitable part of organisational operations and must be managed effectively to maintain a productive work environment.

The study employed a quantitative research design with data collected from 250 employees who were randomly selected from a stratified sample. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data, ensuring reliability and consistency in responses. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied in the analysis, including Spearman correlation and regression analysis, to test the proposed hypotheses and measure the impact of various conflict management strategies on productivity.

The findings revealed that all five conflict management strategies—collaborating, compromising, accommodating, competing, and avoiding—had a favourable influence on employee productivity. Among them, collaborative and compromising strategies appeared particularly effective in

creating a supportive environment that fostered better performance. The study highlighted that effective conflict resolution not only reduces workplace tensions but also promotes positive interactions and cooperation among employees, which in turn boosts overall organisational efficiency.

The study concluded that conflict management is a critical factor in sustaining employee productivity in manufacturing companies. It is recommended that organisations invest in training and retraining employees on conflict management to strengthen their ability to handle disputes constructively. Encouraging productive and effective interaction among all staff members was also advised, as this would minimise the frequency and intensity of conflicts, leading to a healthier organisational climate.

Research gaps

Based on the empirical review provided, the study addressed several key gaps that were evident in the existing literature.

The reviewed study by [22] demonstrated the positive impact of EAP interventions such as counselling, substance abuse cessation, and financial literacy on productivity in a Kenyan state corporation. However, the focus was limited to the public sector, leaving a gap in understanding how EAPs influence performance within manufacturing industries in different contexts, particularly in Uganda. The current study fills this gap by examining the effectiveness of EAPs within a manufacturing setting, thereby broadening the applicability of findings beyond state-owned corporations.

The work of [23] shifted attention to digital workplace transformation, highlighting the role of employee autonomy, competence, and connectedness in driving performance and well-being. While insightful, this study concentrated on digitalisation in the wholesale sector and did not address how structured support programmes like EAPs manage stress to enhance employee performance. The Ugandan study fills this gap by focusing specifically on occupational stress management strategies and their measurable outcomes on employee performance.

[24] provided evidence of barriers and enablers to EAP utilisation, particularly among men in Australia, identifying stigma, distrust, and lack of awareness as major challenges. However, this research remained qualitative and context-specific to developed countries. The Ugandan study extends this line of inquiry by adopting a quantitative approach in a developing country context, thereby generating empirical evidence on the direct link between EAPs, stress management, and performance outcomes in manufacturing.

[25] explored multilevel drivers of employee engagement, such as empowering leadership, HPWP, and religiosity, within Malaysia's financial sector. While the study contributed to understanding engagement in a multi-layered institutional framework, it did not focus on occupational stress or EAPs. The Ugandan study addressed this gap by directly examining how EAPs, as formal workplace interventions, reduce stress and improve employee productivity in a manufacturing context.

The study by [26] investigated the role of conflict management strategies in enhancing productivity in Tamil Nadu's manufacturing companies. Although it highlighted interpersonal strategies for managing disputes, it did not explore structured programmes like EAPs that comprehensively address workplace stressors. The Ugandan study filled this gap by evaluating how EAPs function as an

organisational-level intervention for occupational stress management, thereby complementing interpersonal conflict management strategies.

3.0 Research methodology

Research design

The descriptive design was employed to provide a detailed overview of the current state of EAP utilisation, levels of occupational stress, and employee performance at RECO Manufacturing Industry. This design allowed the researcher to summarise and present characteristics of the employees and their work environment, offering a clear picture of the phenomena under study [27].

The correlational design was used to examine the relationships between EAP interventions and employee performance. It enabled the study to determine the strength and direction of associations between variables, such as how participation in counselling, substance abuse cessation, or financial literacy programmes relates to reduced stress and improved productivity [29].

The study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the role of EAPs in managing occupational stress and enhancing employee performance. This approach allowed the researcher to collect numerical data from employees, measure the extent of EAP utilisation, levels of stress, and performance outcomes, and use statistical analysis to determine relationships between variables. By adopting a quantitative approach, the study ensured objectivity, reliability, and the ability to generalise findings within the RECO Manufacturing Industry [29].

Target population

The target population for the study included 134 permanent employees from the Human Resources, ICT, Production, Marketing and Sales, Transport, Finance, Quality Control, and Agriculture departments, as shown in Table 1. These departments represent the core functions of the organisation, each with distinct roles, stressors, and performance expectations.

Including employees from a range of departments allowed the study to obtain a comprehensive perspective on occupational stress and employee performance across different job functions. This diversity enhances the generalisability of the findings, enabling the study to draw informed conclusions about the effectiveness of Employee Assistance Programmes as a stress management strategy across various operational contexts.

Table 1: Target Population

Department	Number of Employees
Human Resources	10
ICT	8
Production	50
Marketing and Sales	20
Transport	15
Finance	12
Quality Control	10
Agriculture	9
Total	134

Source: Human Resource Manual (2024)

The study included only permanent employees from the Human Resources, Production, Sales and Marketing, Transport, Finance, Quality, and Agriculture departments to ensure that participants had consistent exposure to workplace stressors and the organisation's stress management initiatives. These employees were selected because their roles encompass a range of responsibilities and stress experiences, providing a

comprehensive perspective on how occupational stress management affects performance across different job functions. Temporary or contract employees and staff from departments outside the selected ones were excluded, as their limited access to employee programs and differing work demands could introduce variability that does not accurately reflect the experiences of permanent employees, thereby ensuring the relevance and consistency of the data collected.

Sample size determination and techniques

The researcher used the target population of 134 to select a sample of 100 respondents using the Yamane formula (1967) as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = Sample size
N = Population Size
e = Error term (5%)
 $n = 134 / 1 + 134(0.05)^2$
n = 100

Table 2: Sample Size

Department	Sample Size
Human Resources	07
ICT	06
Production	38
Sales & Marketing	15
Transport Agents	11
Finance	09
Quality Control	07
Agriculture	07
Total	100

Source: Researcher Computation (2025)

The study utilized a combination of stratified random sampling, proportionate sampling, and simple random sampling techniques to select participants. Stratified random sampling was employed to divide the target population into distinct departments, ensuring that all functional areas were represented. Proportionate sampling was then applied to determine the number of participants selected from each department based on its size relative to the total population. Finally, simple random sampling was used within each department to randomly select individual employees, giving every eligible employee an equal chance of being included. This multi-stage approach enhanced the representativeness of the sample and reduced selection bias [30].

Research instruments

The study employed self-administered questionnaires to collect primary quantitative data from respondents, using a five-point Likert scale. This approach allowed participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to Employee Assistance Programmes, occupational stress, and employee performance, providing measurable data that could be analysed statistically. The use of a self-administered format ensured that respondents could complete the questionnaires at their convenience, promoting accuracy and honesty in their responses [31].

Piloting

A pilot study was conducted with 10% of the respondents, that is, 10 participants from Hima Cement Industry in Kasese District, to evaluate and refine the research instruments before the main data collection phase. This preliminary step allowed the researcher to assess the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaires and interview guides,

ensuring that the instruments would effectively capture accurate and reliable data during the full study.

The questionnaire was tested for content validity by engaging experts to review the questionnaire items and ensure that they comprehensively covered relevant topics and aligned with the research objectives. Using the content validity index (CVI), the instrument achieved a validity score of 0.857, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. This process enhanced the credibility and reliability of the research tools, ensuring that the data collected would be accurate.

The questionnaire was assessed for reliability to ensure it would yield consistent and stable results over time. Reliability is important in research as it evaluates the extent to which an instrument produces the same outcomes under similar conditions. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency by analysing the correlation between individual items. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 or above is considered acceptable. The questionnaire achieved a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.841, indicating strong internal consistency and enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected. and trustworthy for drawing meaningful conclusions [32],[33].

Data analysis

The data was analysed using both descriptive and regression analysis and tested at a 0.05 significance level. Descriptive analysis summarised the data using measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, providing an overview of the responses.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Employee Assistance Programs

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with the availability of employee assistance programs in this organization	100	1	5	3.76	1.464
The counseling services provided by the organization effectively support stress management	100	1	5	4.14	.493
The workshops and seminars provided by this organization are helpful in teaching stress management techniques	100	1	5	4.09	.842
the substance abuse support resources provided by this organization are effective for those in need	100	1	5	4.11	1.091
The crisis intervention services offered by the organization are useful in managing immediate stressors	100	1	5	3.90	1.185
The legal and financial counseling offered by this organization is effective in reducing personal stress.	100	1	5	3.70	1.150
Overall	100			3.95	1.0375

Source: Primary data, 2025

The findings from table 3 above, reveal a generally positive perception of the organization's Employee Assistance Programs, with an overall mean satisfaction score of 3.95 out of 5. However, a closer examination of individual components shows significant variation in employee opinions. The highest levels of satisfaction are reported with the counseling services for stress management (Mean=4.14, SD=.493) and the helpfulness of workshops and seminars (Mean=4.09, SD=.842). The notably low standard deviation for counseling services, in particular, indicates a strong consensus among respondents that this service is effective. Similarly, substance abuse support (Mean=4.11) and crisis intervention (Mean=3.90) are also viewed favorably, though the higher standard deviations for these items (1.091 and 1.185, respectively) suggest that opinions are more divided, with a wider spread of responses from very positive to very negative.

Conversely, two key areas emerge as clear priorities for improvement. Satisfaction with the mere availability of Employee Assistance Programs received the lowest mean score (3.76) and the highest standard deviation (1.464), indicating that this is not only the lowest-rated aspect but also the one with the greatest disagreement among employees. Furthermore, the effectiveness of legal and financial counseling is also a relative

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between Employee Assistance Programmes and employee performance. The results were presented using suitable tables to facilitate clear interpretation and comparison of the findings.

Ethical considerations

The study observed ethical considerations to ensure the rights, dignity, and confidentiality of all participants were protected. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent, clearly explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by not disclosing personal identifiers, and the collected data was used solely for research purposes. Adhering to these ethical principles promoted trust, integrity, and compliance with standard research guidelines [35].

4.0 Findings

The research attained a complete set of 100 questionnaires from the selected participants, resulting in a response rate of 100%. This full participation ensured that the data collected was comprehensive and representative of the target population, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study findings [35].

Descriptive Statistics on Employee Assistance Programs

The study examined respondents' perceptions regarding the effect of EAPs on employee performance at the RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese. Participants rated their agreement using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to quantify their perspectives as presented in Table 3.

weakness (Mean=3.70), with a high standard deviation (1.150) pointing to inconsistent experiences.

The findings indicate that employees generally perceive the organization's Employee Assistance Programs positively, with an overall mean satisfaction score of 3.95 out of 5. The average mean of 3.95 suggests that, on the whole, employees agree that the programs are effective and supportive, particularly in areas such as stress management counseling (Mean = 4.14) and workshops/seminars (Mean = 4.09). This indicates that these core support services are successfully meeting employee needs and contributing to occupational stress management.

The overall standard deviation of 1.0375 reflects a moderate spread of responses. This implies that while a significant number of employees hold positive perceptions of the programs, there is still a proportion of respondents whose experiences differ, highlighting variability in satisfaction. Components such as the availability of EAPs (SD = 1.464) and legal/financial counseling (SD = 1.150) show higher dispersion, suggesting inconsistent experiences and areas where employee perceptions are more divided.

The interpretation of both the mean and standard deviation has important implications. The relatively high mean confirms the effectiveness of key EAP services, reinforcing their role in

enhancing employee well-being and performance. Meanwhile, the moderate to high variability indicated by the standard deviation signals the need for the organization to improve communication about program availability and address inconsistencies in services like legal and financial counseling. Addressing these gaps could increase uniformity in employee experiences, enhance overall satisfaction, and further strengthen the impact of EAPs on occupational stress management and performance.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress management initiatives contribute to enhancing productivity of workers in my organization	100	1	5	3.90	1.142
Reduced workplace stress helps you in achieving production targets	100	2	5	4.15	1.019
Supportive workplace environment helps me in maintaining high work quality	100	2	5	3.99	.663
Stress management initiatives in my workplace foster teamwork within your department	100	2	5	4.05	.742
I am motivated perform well in my current workplace culture	100	2	5	4.04	.716
I am confident in the safety measures currently in place in my workplace	100	2	5	3.91	.767
Overall	100			4.01	.8415

Source: Primary data, 2025

The findings in Table 4, reveal a strong positive link between well-being initiatives and employee performance, with an overall mean score of 4.01. Employees clearly recognize that a reduction in stress, directly enhances their ability to meet key performance indicators, as evidenced by the highest mean score (4.15) for the statement connecting reduced stress to achieving production targets. This performance-oriented mindset is further supported by high ratings for motivation (Mean=4.04) and the role of stress management in fostering teamwork (Mean=4.05). The notably low standard deviations for these last three items (all below 0.77) indicate a powerful and widespread consensus among employees on these points, suggesting that the workplace culture is successfully promoting collaboration and motivation.

However, the data also highlights a crucial area for strategic focus. While the impact on productivity is acknowledged (Mean=3.90), this score is the lowest in the set and is coupled with the highest standard deviation (1.142). This indicates that while many employees feel more productive due to these initiatives, there is significant disagreement, with a sizable portion of the workforce not experiencing this benefit. This suggests that the current stress management programs may be more effective at improving cultural factors like teamwork and motivation than they are at directly translating into measurable gains in individual productivity output. Addressing this perception gap could be key to unlocking further performance gains across the organization.

The overall mean of 4.01 indicates that employees generally perceive a positive link between stress management initiatives and their performance outcomes. This reflects that workplace efforts in reducing stress and creating a supportive environment contribute to productivity, teamwork, motivation, and quality of work.

The overall standard deviation of .8415 is relatively low compared to other areas, suggesting a stronger consensus among employees regarding the performance benefits of stress management initiatives. This points to a more uniform agreement across the workforce on the positive effects of these measures.

The implications highlight that reduced workplace stress (Mean=4.15) and supportive environments (Mean=3.99) are especially valued for sustaining productivity and quality. Teamwork (Mean=4.05) and motivation (Mean=4.04) also reflect favourable outcomes, reinforcing the role of stress management initiatives in fostering collaboration and morale.

Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

The study sought respondents' perceptions regarding employee performance at the RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese. Participants rated their agreement using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to quantify their perspectives as presented in Table 4.

The relatively lower satisfaction with productivity support (Mean=3.90) and workplace safety confidence (Mean=3.91) suggests areas where improvement could enhance consistency. Strengthening safety measures and providing more targeted productivity support could further solidify the positive impact of stress management on employee performance.

The findings from Table 4 indicate that employees generally perceive the organization's Employee Assistance Programs positively, with an overall mean satisfaction score of 3.95 out of 5. The average mean of 3.95 suggests that, on the whole, employees agree that the programs are effective and supportive, particularly in areas such as stress management counseling (Mean = 4.14) and workshops/seminars (Mean = 4.09). This indicates that these core support services are successfully meeting employee needs and contributing to occupational stress management.

The overall standard deviation of 1.0375 reflects a moderate spread of responses. This implies that while a significant number of employees hold positive perceptions of the programs, there is still a proportion of respondents whose experiences differ, highlighting variability in satisfaction. Components such as the availability of EAPs (SD = 1.464) and legal/financial counseling (SD = 1.150) show higher dispersion, suggesting inconsistent experiences and areas where employee perceptions are more divided.

The interpretation of both the mean and standard deviation has important implications. The relatively high mean confirms the effectiveness of key EAP services, reinforcing their role in enhancing employee well-being and performance. Meanwhile, the moderate to high variability indicated by the standard deviation signals the need for the organization to improve communication about program availability and address inconsistencies in services like legal and financial counseling. Addressing these gaps could increase uniformity in employee experiences, enhance overall satisfaction, and further strengthen the impact of EAPs on occupational stress management and performance.

4.4. Linear Regression Analysis

This study sought to establish a relationship between EAPs and employee performance at the RECO Mattress Industry in Kasese district

Table 5: Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.825 ^a	.681	.678	.42020

a. Dependent variable: EP- Employee Performance

b. Predictor: (Constant), AP- Employee Assistance Programs

Source: Primary data, 2025

Table 5 presents the model summary of the regression analysis examining the influence of Employee Assistance Programs on employee performance. The R value of 0.825 indicates a strong positive correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable (employee performance), suggesting that higher engagement with EAPs is associated with better performance outcomes.

The R Square value of 0.681 shows that approximately 68.1% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by the EAPs. This high coefficient of determination demonstrates that EAPs are a significant predictor of performance, highlighting the substantial role these programs play in managing occupational stress and enhancing productivity. The Adjusted R Square of 0.678 accounts for the number of predictors in the model and confirms that the explanatory power remains strong after adjusting for potential bias.

The standard error of the estimate (0.42020) indicates the average distance between the observed performance values and the values predicted by the regression model. A relatively low standard error suggests that the model predicts employee performance with reasonable accuracy.

The results imply are that Employee Assistance Programs have a measurable and meaningful impact on employee performance. Organisations should therefore prioritise the implementation and improvement of EAPs, particularly in areas such as counseling, stress management workshops, and support services, as these interventions not only reduce occupational stress but also enhance overall productivity and work efficiency. Moreover, the strong explanatory power of the model justifies continued investment in EAPs as a strategic human resource initiative.

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.814	1	35.814	202.837	.000 ^b
	Residual	16.774	98	.177		
	Total	52.588	99			

a. Dependent Variable: EP

b. Predictors: (Constant), AP

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model examining the effect of Employee Assistance Programs on employee performance. The F-value of 202.837 indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant, meaning that EAPs have a meaningful effect on employee performance. The associated p-value (Sig. = 0.000) is less than the 0.05 significance level, confirming that the relationship between EAPs and performance is not due to chance.

The sum of squares shows that the regression explains 35.814 units of variation in employee performance, while the residual (unexplained variation) is 16.774 units. This further reinforces that a substantial portion of performance variation is accounted for by EAPs.

The findings imply that Employee Assistance Programs are a significant predictor of employee performance, demonstrating their effectiveness as an occupational stress management

strategy. Organisations should therefore focus on strengthening and expanding EAP initiatives, as these programs not only support employees in managing stress but also lead to measurable improvements in productivity, morale, and overall workplace efficiency. The statistical significance underscores the importance of incorporating EAPs into organisational human resource and wellness strategies.

Table 7: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.725	.235		3.079	.003
	AP	.831	.058	.825	14.242	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EP

b. Predictors: (Constant), AP

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 7 presents the regression coefficients for the relationship between Employee Assistance Programs and employee performance. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for EAPs is 0.831, indicating that for every one-unit increase in the utilisation or effectiveness of EAPs, employee performance is expected to increase by 0.831 units, holding other factors constant. The constant (0.725) represents the baseline level of employee performance when EAPs are absent.

The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.825) shows that EAPs have a strong positive effect on employee performance relative to other variables, allowing comparison of impact across different measures. The t-value of 14.242 and the associated p-value (Sig. = 0.000) indicate that the effect of EAPs on performance is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The results imply that Employee Assistance Programs have a direct and substantial impact on employee performance. Organisations should therefore prioritise implementing and enhancing EAPs, particularly in areas such as counseling, stress management workshops, and support services, as these interventions significantly improve productivity, reduce occupational stress, and enhance overall workplace effectiveness.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing results indicate that we reject the null hypothesis. The analysis shows a statistically significant positive relationship between Employee Assistance Programs and employee performance, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This implies that EAPs have a meaningful impact on employee performance, supporting the alternative hypothesis that the utilisation of EAPs enhances productivity, reduces occupational stress, and improves overall workplace effectiveness.

Discussion of findings

The empirical review of these studies provides a comprehensive understanding of the influence of Employee Assistance Programmes, workplace interventions, and organisational practices on employee performance and well-being, highlighting both convergent and divergent findings.

The study by [22] aligns closely with the current research focus, demonstrating that EAPs, particularly counselling services, substantially improve employee performance by reducing stress, absenteeism, and anxiety. This finding is consistent with [24], which also emphasised the importance of EAPs in supporting mental health, although Matthews et al. highlighted barriers to utilisation such as stigma, distrust, and lack of

awareness. While Archmedes emphasised the positive outcomes of programme participation, Matthews et al. illuminated contextual challenges that may limit the effectiveness of these programmes, particularly among men and in blue-collar settings. Both studies, however, converge on the implication that effective communication, accessibility, and proactive implementation of EAPs are crucial for enhancing employee engagement and performance.

[23] provide complementary insights from a digital transformation perspective, demonstrating that employees' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and connectedness significantly influence performance and well-being. While this study does not directly evaluate EAPs, it supports the general principle found in [22] and [24] that employee-centred interventions that address work-related needs and personal well-being enhance workplace performance. The convergence here is the critical role of interventions, whether technological or support-oriented, in improving employee outcomes, emphasising that employee engagement and performance are closely linked to the organisational environment.

[24] Further complements the current research by demonstrating that leadership behaviour, high performance work practices and sociocultural factors, including religiosity, significantly affect employee engagement. While this study extends beyond EAPs, it concurs with the findings of [22] in highlighting that organisational support mechanisms and leadership interventions positively influence employee performance. Contradictions arise only in terms of focus; Abu Bakar emphasises engagement and institutional factors rather than stress management per se, indicating that EAP effectiveness may also be mediated by broader organisational practices and contextual influences.

[26] investigated conflict management strategies and found that effective resolution approaches, including collaborating, compromising, accommodating, competing, and avoiding, positively influenced employee productivity. This finding aligns indirectly with [22] and [24] in that both EAPs and conflict management strategies enhance performance by creating a supportive and less stressful work environment. The studies converge on the importance of organisational interventions in reducing workplace stress and promoting productivity. However, Muthumani and Kumar's study contrasts with the other studies by focusing on interpersonal conflict resolution rather than formal support programmes, suggesting that multiple complementary strategies, including EAPs and conflict management, are necessary to fully enhance employee performance.

Therefore, the empirical review shows strong concurrence regarding the positive role of supportive interventions, whether through EAPs, leadership, or conflict management, on employee performance and well-being. Divergences mainly relate to contextual factors, implementation challenges, and the specific type of intervention evaluated. Collectively, these studies reinforce the premise that holistic strategies addressing both personal and organisational factors are essential for optimising employee performance and managing occupational stress effectively.

Theoretical implications

The findings of this study provide substantial contributions to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory by empirically demonstrating the critical role of Employee Assistance Programmes as job resources in a manufacturing context.

The results indicate that access to and utilisation of EAPs, particularly counselling services, substance abuse support, and workshops, significantly enhance employee performance by reducing stress, improving morale, and increasing punctuality. This supports the JD-R proposition that job resources can buffer the negative effects of high job demands, such as heavy workloads and operational pressures, by enabling employees to manage stress effectively and maintain psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the study highlights that not all EAP components are equally effective, with counselling services having the strongest impact and financial and legal counselling demonstrating relatively lower effectiveness. This nuanced insight extends the JD-R framework by suggesting that the type and quality of resources influence the extent to which job demands can be mitigated. It reinforces the idea that tailored resources, aligned with specific employee needs, are more likely to enhance engagement, satisfaction, and performance outcomes.

Therefore, the study provides practical theoretical implications by confirming that organisational interventions, represented as job resources in the JD-R model, play a strategic role in managing occupational stress and sustaining employee productivity. These findings contribute to the body of knowledge by linking empirical evidence from a manufacturing setting to the JD-R framework, demonstrating how structured support mechanisms like EAPs operationalise the theory in real-world workplace contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study establishes that Employee Assistance Programmes play a vital role in enhancing employee performance by effectively addressing occupational stress in the manufacturing context at RECO Mattress Industry. The findings reveal that counselling services, substance abuse support, and workshops significantly reduce stress, improve morale, and promote punctuality and productivity, with counselling services demonstrating the greatest impact. The study further highlights that while EAPs are generally well-received, areas such as financial and legal counselling require improvement to achieve more consistent employee satisfaction and utilisation. These results underscore the strategic importance of EAPs as organisational resources, aligning with the Job Demands-Resources framework, and demonstrate that well-structured support mechanisms can mitigate job demands, enhance psychological well-being, and sustain overall organisational performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several actions and strategies can be adopted to enhance the effectiveness of Employee Assistance Programmes and improve employee performance at RECO Mattress Industry, with specific roles for relevant stakeholders. Management should prioritise strengthening and expanding counselling services, as these were shown to have the greatest impact on reducing stress and enhancing productivity. This can include hiring qualified counsellors, increasing the frequency of sessions, and providing confidential and easily accessible support. Human Resources (HR) should oversee the design, implementation, and monitoring of these services, ensuring they meet employees' needs and are communicated effectively across all departments.

Workshops and training on stress management should be conducted regularly, targeting all employees.

Production supervisors and department heads can collaborate with HR to identify employees experiencing high job demands and encourage participation in these programmes. This approach ensures that interventions reach those most affected by workplace stress, enhancing engagement and effectiveness. Substance abuse support resources and crisis intervention services should be actively promoted. HR, together with health and safety officers, can develop clear guidelines for utilisation and confidentiality to increase trust and uptake among employees. Legal and financial counselling services, identified as areas needing improvement, should be enhanced by engaging external experts or partnering with professional service providers to ensure quality and accessibility. Top management and HR should establish policies that institutionalise EAPs, making them a formal component of organisational operations. This could include integrating EAP use into performance management frameworks and ensuring that line managers are trained to support and encourage employee participation without stigma. Finally, employee representatives and departmental coordinators should provide feedback on programme effectiveness and help identify additional needs, ensuring that EAP strategies remain relevant and responsive. Collectively, these actions, coordinated among management, HR, department heads, health officers, and employees, will foster a supportive work environment, mitigate occupational stress, and enhance overall performance across the organisation.

Recommendations for future research

Future research could build on the findings of this study by exploring several key areas. First, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term impact of Employee Assistance Programmes on employee performance, well-being, and retention, providing insights into sustained effects over time. Second, future studies could examine additional dimensions of EAPs, such as career counselling, mental health awareness campaigns, and peer support networks, to determine their specific contributions to stress management and productivity. Comparative studies across different manufacturing industries or between public and private sector organisations could identify contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of EAPs, including organisational culture, management practices, and employee demographics. Mixed-method approaches combining quantitative measures of performance with qualitative insights into employee experiences would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how EAPs influence workplace outcomes. Furthermore, research could investigate the role of technology-based interventions, such as digital counselling platforms or mobile wellness applications, in enhancing access to and engagement with EAPs. Lastly, exploring the moderating effects of factors such as leadership styles, organisational support, and employee resilience on the relationship between EAP utilisation and performance could offer deeper theoretical and practical insights for designing more effective occupational stress management strategies.

Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study is its focus on a single manufacturing organisation, RECO Mattress Industry, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other industries or organisations with different operational contexts, workplace cultures, or employee demographics.

A second limitation is the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias, including social desirability or inaccurate recall. This could affect the precision of the measured perceptions of EAP effectiveness and reported employee performance outcomes.

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