



Evaluating the Workplace Effects of EAP Counseling in China

Study design and summary of results

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the EAP (employee assistance program) concept has become increasingly accepted in China and the number of new providers on the scene has significantly increased. This is the first evaluation of EAP effectiveness



in China.* This study* examined if and to what degree an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) intervention improved Chinese employees' workplace functioning. The sample included 670 employees from 26 local and multinational companies in China who received EAP counseling. The Chinese translation of the Workplace Outcome Suite-Short Version©**, a five-item outcome assessment instrument was used as a Pre/Post measure. Four of the five items showed significant improvements from the pre- to post-test. The effect sizes on the items varied, indicating that EAP produced different levels of impact on dimensions of workplace functioning. Future research should examine the influences of different EAP models, client organizations and dimensions of workplace functioning.

*An expanded version of this study and our findings will appear in a peer reviewed industry publication in 2015.

**The Workplace Outcome Suite© (WOS) is an instrument specifically designed for quick and reliable assessment of EAP effectiveness. It measures those outcomes that are likely to show change if the intervention works. It is short, psychometrically tested and validated, workplace focused and easy to administer. Two validation studies have tested the reliability of the scales, structural validity of the items, and construct validity of the unit-weighted scale scores. These studies support the use of WOS to evaluate the workplace effects of EAP counseling (Lennox, et al., 2010). The original WOS contains five scales that measure constructs central to understanding EAP effectiveness: Absenteeism, Presenteeism, Work Engagement, Life Satisfaction, and Workplace Distress.

Procedure

Employees seeking EAP services received assessment with the WOS-Short, Chinese twice, i.e., before introducing counseling and about 90 days after completing counseling. Ninety day follow-up was set as a procedure to allow EAP counseling to run its usual course and have potential for sustained impact. The pre-test was conducted as part of the routine telephonic intake, before counseling was set up with a staff or affiliate. Recruitment involved asking clients who called EAP to voluntarily participate in the evaluation, followed by verbal informed consent and guarantees of confidentiality. Less than five percent of clients declined to participate or dropped out after pre-test. During the pre-test, Intake Counselors let clients know that a staff person would follow-up with them in about 90 days to complete the post-test. Complete locator information was gathered (e-mail, cell, work, home phone) to help increase response rates. The post-test was administered over the phone. Follow-up staff made up to three attempts to reach each client and gather data before eliminating him/her from the sample. No more than three follow-up attempts occurred in order to minimize potential complaints about the process. In all cases, the completed pre and post-tests were linked with a common identification number and each client's data were placed and stored on a single line organized in an Excel spreadsheet.



These Excel files were then transferred into a statistical package (SPSS) for statistical analysis.

Results

Chinese Employees' Scores on WOS-Short, Chinese Before and After EAP Counseling

Item	<u>Pre-test</u>		<u>Post-test</u>		<i>N</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Absenteeism 670	2.63	8.97	0.79	4.83	
Presenteeism 670	3.14	1.38	2.02	1.18	
Work Engagement 670	3.06	1.35	3.09	1.34	
Life Satisfaction 670	3.01	1.29	3.72	1.08	
Workplace Distress 670	1.78	1.17	1.49	0.94	

Taken together, the results of this study support the hypothesis that EAP counseling produces positive changes to Chinese employees' workplace adjustment. Significant changes have occurred in the hypothesized direction on four of the five items of the WOS-Short, Chinese. Moreover, these changes persisted ninety days after the employees received brief counseling, indicating that the effects of EAP intervention were lasting and sustainable. The finding that not all items of the WOS-Short, Chinese showed identical changes is unsurprising given the multi-dimensional nature of the workplace outcomes



measured in the instrument. This pattern of results shows that the instrument addresses similar yet distinct constructs and has some levels of discriminant validity.

"The need for accurate, targeted and timely assessment of EAP effectiveness is particularly strong in emerging markets such as China, where the concepts and practices of EAP are beginning to be accepted by employers and employees but have not taken roots as in North America, the United Kingdom, and even Europe. A benefits purchaser must ask one fundamental question: how can I know that these programs improve the health and productivity of my workforce?" Validating their programs using the WOS improves their degree of accountability and maximizes their value to HR, benefit, or medical purchaser." **Matt Mollenhauer, CGP VP of Operations and CGP's lead for its China practice.**

"Because employee assistance programs are relatively novel across China, it's particularly important that management sees concrete gains from their implementation and utilization. The WOS demonstrated the clear benefits of CGP's program, validating both its culturally-aware approach in breaking down barriers and promoting acceptance, and the utility of WOS as an emerging standard for benchmarking the efficacy of employee assistance and health coaching services." **Dr. Li Peizhong, Scientist with CGP's China office**

About the Workplace Outcome Suite©

Used by over 400 EAP and wellness organizations, the WOS stands apart from other outcome measures as it is psychometrically tested, validated, workplace-focused, easy to administer, and free. The WOS brings EAP in line with the data-driven approaches that are changing the way organizations conduct all phases of their business—from product design to customer service, to marketing and talent acquisition. This approach translates improved productivity into quantifiable results, makes the business case for if or when investing in EAP and Health/Wellness Coaching makes sense.



About Chestnut Global Partners

Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) is a behavioral health organization based in Bloomington, IL that offers a full range of culturally aware employee assistance and related workplace services. CGP combines EAP with wellness, disability, high risk maternity, employees safety and compliance management programs, designed to promote employee well-being, improve performance and reduce absenteeism.

Chestnut Global Partners serves companies in over 140 countries, including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Russia. Chestnut Global Partners' Division of Commercial Science develops and deploys scientific assessment technologies, outcome measures, and analytical methodologies so that EAPs, wellness companies, disease management entities and purchasers the world over can determine the effects and/or worth of their programs. For more, visit www.chestnutglobalpartners.org.