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Introducing Wellness & Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and its Benefits in Bangladesh

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Abstract- Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country and situated in Southern Asia. It is the seventh largest country in the world in population. Around 80 million people are considered as work force where 41% are female, and 59% are male (according to World Bank report 2014). Out of 80 million people, 2.2 million people are serving public sector, 4.5 million people are in private jobs, and rest of the people are involved in agriculture, fisheries, entrepreneurship, NGO, and so on. Now question is are these people engaged in service sector getting enough motivation to work? Are they getting enough benefits? Is there any counseling system for employee's hard time or control employees emotion? If the government and the private company's wants to make productive and stress-free employees, then they have to answer all of the question mentioned. To do so, Bangladesh can introduce the "Wellness and Employee Assistance Program."Again, it will be a question- what is EAP? Employee Assistance Program is a confidential, short-term, counseling service arranged or offered by the employer for employees with personal problems that affect their work performance. What is the advantage and disadvantage of EAP? Is there any scope EAP can be implemented in the manufacturing and service sector in Bangladesh? We hope and believe that at the end all kinds of employers, employees and academicians will get all the answers.

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Introducing Wellness & Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and its Benefits in Bangladesh

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Abstract- Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country and situated in Southern Asia. It is the seventh largest country in the world in population. Around 80 million people are considered as work force where 41% are female, and 59% are male (according to World Bank report 2014). Out of 80 million people, 2.2 million people are serving public sector, 4.5 million people are in private jobs, and rest of the people are involved in agriculture, fisheries, entrepreneurship, NGO, and so on. Now question is are these people engaged in service sector getting enough motivation to work? Are they getting enough benefits? Is there any counseling system for employee's hard time or control employees emotion? If the government and the private company's wants to make productive and stress-free employees, then they have to answer all of the question mentioned. To do so, Bangladesh can introduce the "Wellness and Employee Assistance Program."Again, it will be a question- what is EAP? Employee Assistance Program is a confidential, short-term, counseling service arranged or offered by the employer for employees with personal problems that affect their work performance. What is the advantage and disadvantage of EAP? Is there any scope EAP can be implemented in the manufacturing and service sector in Bangladesh? We hope and believe that at the end all kinds of employers, employees and academicians will get all the answers.

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I. Introduction

Companies are hiring physical and mental skills of an employees (Naked truth), but companies are showing that they considered employees as the asset. In return of employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities whatever the companies are paying now in form of wage, salary, remuneration or compensation is not enough for the work an employee does. Based on employee's performance companies' reward them by some form of promotion, bonus or other benefits. Researchers have come to these conclusions that today's workers are disengaged, they lack motivation, they are bored and stressed also burned out. In fact, these surveys seem to paint an increasingly black picture of life at work. An employee assistance programs (EAP) is an employee benefit program which helps the employees to overcome their personal problems or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotions or even their family life. The EAP generally offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services for employees and their families. EAP program also directly or indirectly reduce the company's workplace violence, trauma, and other emergency response situations. EAP program are mainly designed for work-related problem, but it also assists employees with their problems outside of the workplace. Ultimately this program is introduced or designed to reduce risks, cut costs, and enhance employee productivity.

II. Background of Eap in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, unfortunately there is no Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) right now, but most of the companies provide some form of EAP facilities to its employees, although it is a well-organized and popular program all over the world. EAP program started its journey in the mid-sixties and continuing to the mid-seventies in the United States. Basically, EAP focused on alcohol and drug problems that showed in the workplace regarding attendance and productivity. The next decade between 1975 and 1985 built on the success of EAP's and expanded the program focus to include other personal problems. This "EAP" approach addressed relationships, depression, and other psycho/social issues that interfered with the creativity and productivity of the workplace. The increased awareness of addiction and emotional problems from the previous decade, combined with the tightened management of medical benefits, led to a preponderance of inpatient treatment resources. The related increase in behavioral health benefit costs was the program target of this era. These managed mental health programs focused on the 10-20% of total health-care costs spent on behavioral benefits – a portion not worth managing during the prior decade.

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III. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Physical problem of a person can be seen, but we can't see or envisage mental stress of a person. An employee gives his/her maximum valuable time for a company/organization to maximize the company's worth/profit/assets. What about the employee's physical/mental benefits?

It is necessary to think about the following questions in prospect of employee and employer-

- For employee efforts are they getting back his/her actual compensation?
- Is he/she motivated with that working environment?
- Is the employee giving his/her best gladly?

Employee Assistant Program plays a volunteer role of an organization for employees. EAP also plays the valuable role by helping employees at their home, work and their community any issues faced by the employees. EAP work if any assault happened by the organization of the hirer. EAP care about employees all physical and mental part so that that employee can make their best effort. With that, the organization will be more benefited and can maximize their profit.

Why Employee Assistance Program is important for a company? EAP assist or deal with all kind of short-term physical and mental stress of employees confidentially. If employees are feeling the risk of their life in their workplace, that should be protected by the organization. Anything by the employer that can reflect rude behave any word of mouth that can de-motivate employees for which employee got hurt and did not focus on his/her performance. It may occur in their personal life. As a result of all these stress organizations may not get their actual productivity/turnover from that employee and thus business will lose profit. To reduce all of this problem organization needs a specific plan, proper training, needs to motivate them so that employee can do their best for the organization. Finally, who will be benefited? Of course, the organization. And that full program will be assisted by the EAP for maximizing organization's future profit.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The overall goal of the study would be to introduce the Employee Wellness and Assistance Program in Bangladesh and find out the result and impact on the bottom line of the organization.

V. Methodology of the Research

a) Sampling Plan and Population

The population of this survey-based research project is defined as existing individual employees, officers and staffs of different level of management and different production based industries including Ready Made Garments (RMG) industries. The survey was conducted in production based industries from inside Dhaka city (the capital of the country) and Gazipur city (nearest to the capital). The population unit has been defined both male and female. For this study, we had to spend total 60 days (June 01, 2017 – July 30, 2017). The sample size for this study has been consisted a total of 100 executives, officers, employees, staffs, and workers were selected from the different departments and the different level. For this study probability sampling approach has been used where each sampling element of the population has an equal chance of being selected. The primary data has been collected from field survey through the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire has been surveyed in face to face interview with the selected sample. For data analysis, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, different tables, and graphs were used to make the data meaningful.

VI. Why are Employees not Able to do their Best?

Human beings are always busy with their economic and social activities. During these activities most of the time people fall into stress. It is very difficult to understand their stress or problems because sometimes they are not interested to share these sorts of problems or stress with the others. They may do it to enjoy more privacy, or they may feel shy to share their problem with others. The result is companies' productivity, and profitability goes down sequentially. Here some of those problems/stress situations we found in our survey are given below to understand what happened on in a company with the employees and employers and also their family and social life.

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Figure 1

- **Employee could not concentrate**: 4% respondents mentioned they could not concentrate on their work because of their family problem, for their tremendous work pressure and sometimes for traffic jam and other reason.

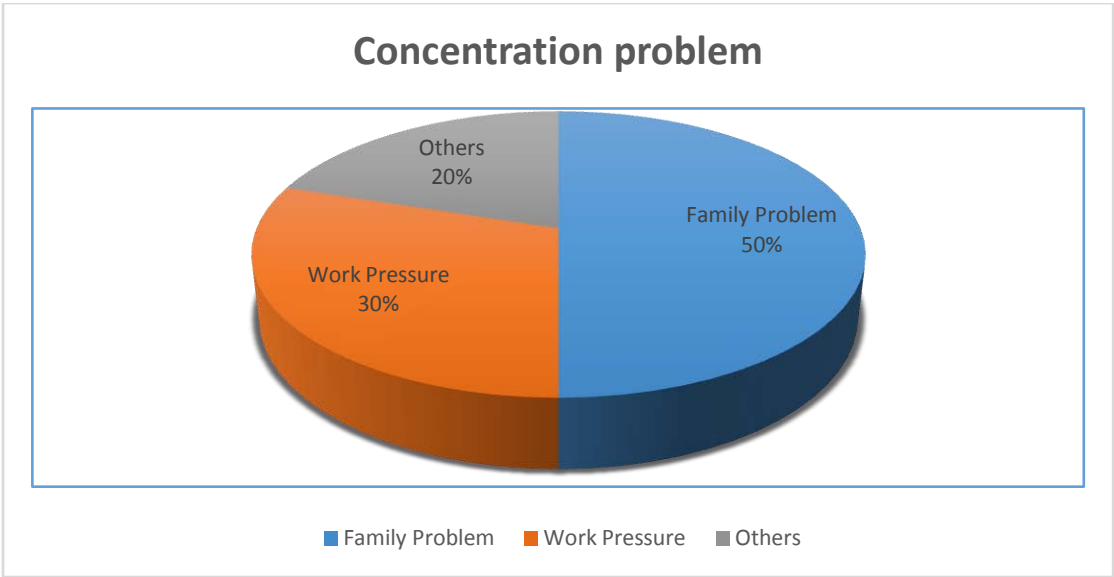

Figure 1.1

- **Lack of confidence**: 13% respondent informed us that they are feeling less confident to do the work given because of their poor quality of training. They mentioned most of the training was done inside the classroom; the training was not with the real or practical instrument. They mentioned another reason for being less skilled, and they did not apply their skill in their work life. But, if the employees were skilled enough to apply their practical training in their job life, that would make them feel more confident.

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Figure 1.2

- **Feeling low**: 8% employee felt low for their performance. They are feeling afraid of the bad or hush behavior of higher authority (boos/manager/supervisor etc.) with them.

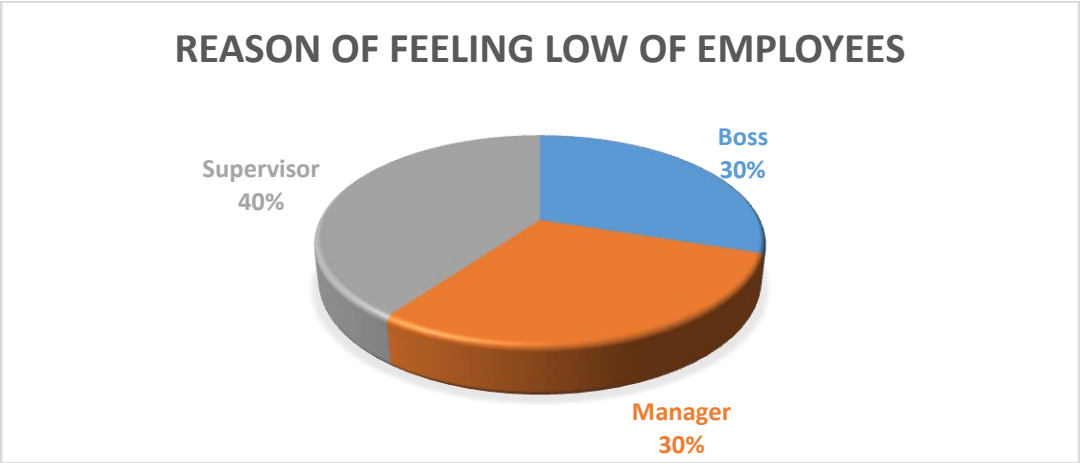

Figure 1.3

- **Labor dispute/Conflict:** 9% respondent said that they face conflict with their opinion with the higher authority. In some cases, employees do not have right to share their opinion always. Workers have a boundary to work in an organization, in some cases employee's opinion is deemed to be needed by the higher authority, but all employees are not welcomed to express their opinion because employee's opinion does not match with the employer's one. For this when it is time to take the decision without considering the employee's opinion conflict arises. Conflict may arise due to salary issue as employees are not satisfied most of the time with the amount they get. Conflict may also arise when authority gives unfair advantages to some of their employee which they do not deserve. All these conflict problems create psychological stress in employee's mind.

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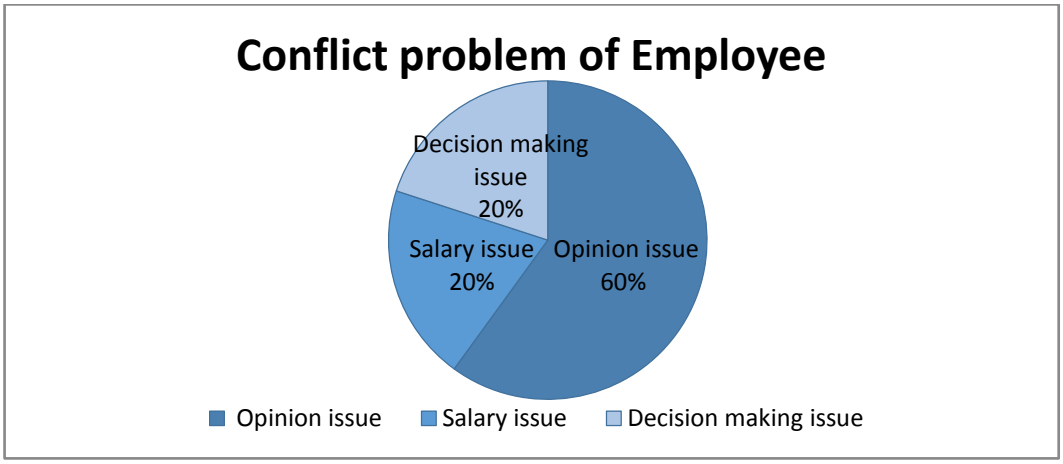

Figure 1.4

- **Employee job stress**: It was found in the survey that 6% employee felt stress in their job life. This is due to the rude behavior of higher level authority with their employee. Overload work pressure is another form of stress on the job. Feeling insecurity about the future of job security and they don't have any plan for retirement or future fund are also mentioned as a reason for job stress.



Figure 1.5

- **Relationship between employee and employer issue**: 6% worker found who have employee and employer relationship problem because they are not in a very cordial or polite relationship. An example was taken from the response; an employee has done some mistake in his/her work, the higher authority criticized him/her in a way that he/she felt down although he/she has been working there for a long time. He/she was feeling down which can be prolonged for a long time in future unless it was taken care of. This situation gets worse when another employee who is being liked by the employer also start criticizing that person. These colleagues always try to tempt themselves by using negative word or by misbehavior for that mistake in a negative situation.

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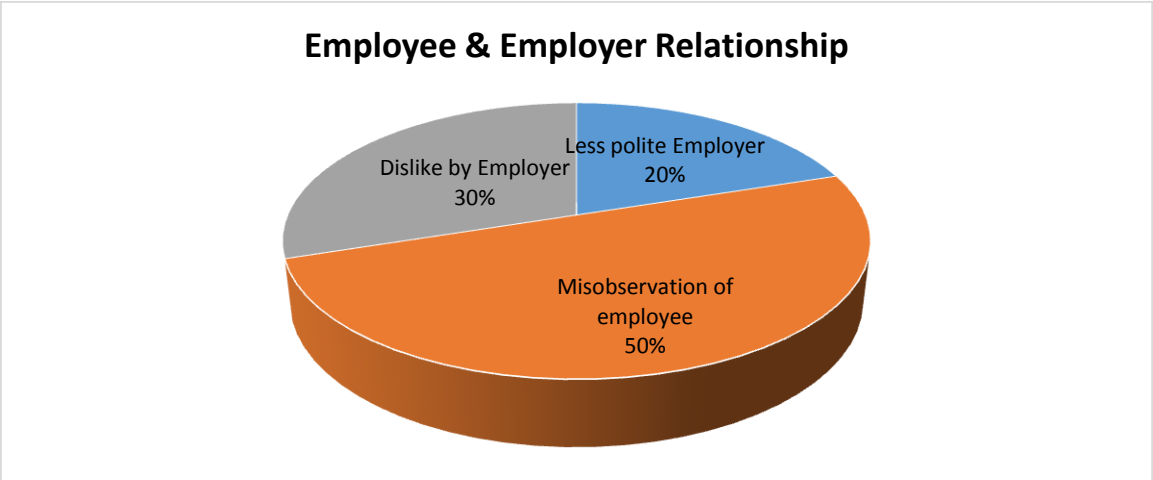

Figure 1.6

- **Eldercare, child care, parenting issue**: 9% female employees said that they could not concentrate on their work because of their child left home alone. Some of them mentioned they do not have child-care or day-care facility in their workplace which makes them feel worried or feels tensed about their child. Some of the employees have a complain of not getting the compensation for their child as the organization do not have the space of child care in their organization.

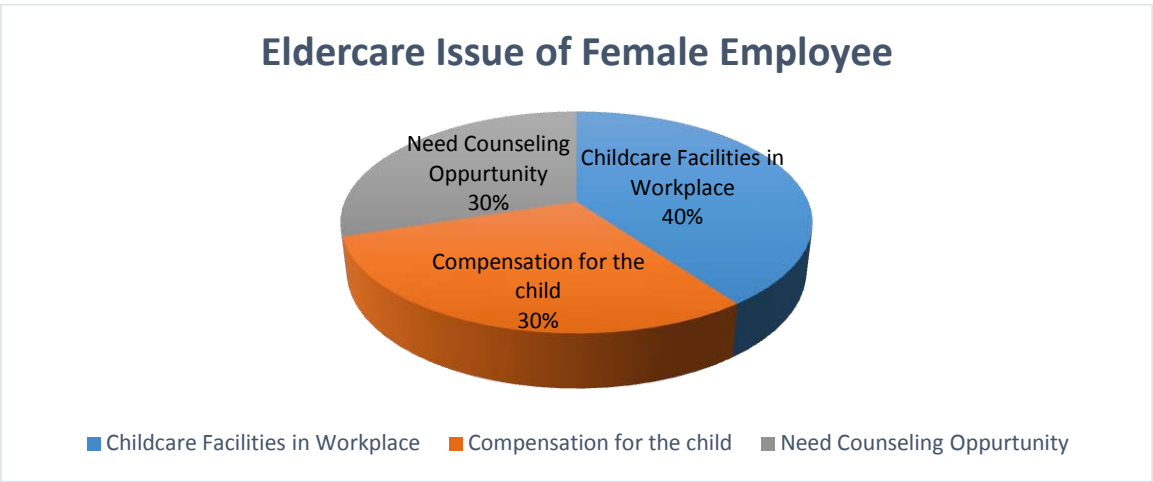

Figure 1.7

- **Harassment**: Out of 100 respondents, total 19% employees of which 11% female and 08% male said that they had experience of being harassed in their organization. Sometimes higher authority harasses them by saying or using slang for their poor performance. In some case authority personnel uses to give the threat of firing them from the job. Some time supervisor or higher position holder sexually harass the female employee by promising more working hour, promotion or financial increment in return of having sex with them. If that employee does not agree to build physical attachment, sometimes they shout on and hurt that worker by using bad comments about his/her personal life or their family life to insult them. All these mentioned reasons caused serious stress in employee's mind.

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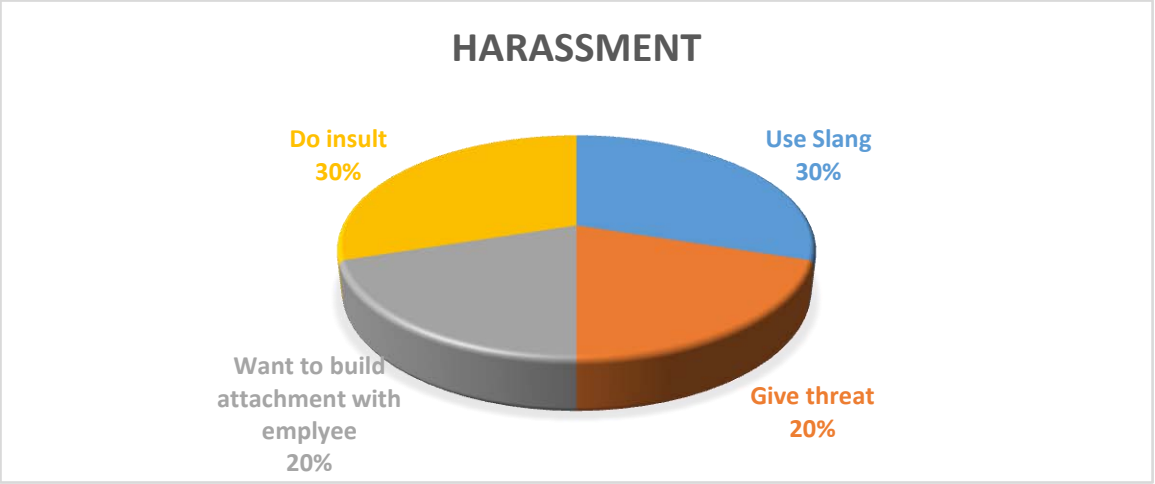

Figure 1.8

- **Inadequate time for family**: Another cause of stress problem is employees are not getting enough time to spend for their personal life. Out of 100 respondents, 06% complained that they do not get work-life balance. They are not getting the proper incentive, or leave for vacation. In Bangladesh, there are some festival or holidays (eg. two Eid, Durga Puja, X-mas day, etc.) but most of the time they do not get the holiday in a way they can enjoy it. Although govt. employees have the chance and scope to utilize the vacation. They can take extra leave for one day before or after the holiday to meet their family in the back home. But the garments worker does not have that facility. Sometimes they have to do over time(working extra time) to meet the scheduled delivery shipment just before those holiday. More over some time they do not get full bonus money before that holiday. So, for private employees do not have time for their child or family members.



Figure1.9

- **Compensation and placement issue**: Out of 100 respondents, 11% feel stress and suffer emotionally or psychologically at the time of promotion or placement. They think that they are not given the right placement/position that they actually deserve. They also believe that they are not getting their actual compensation.

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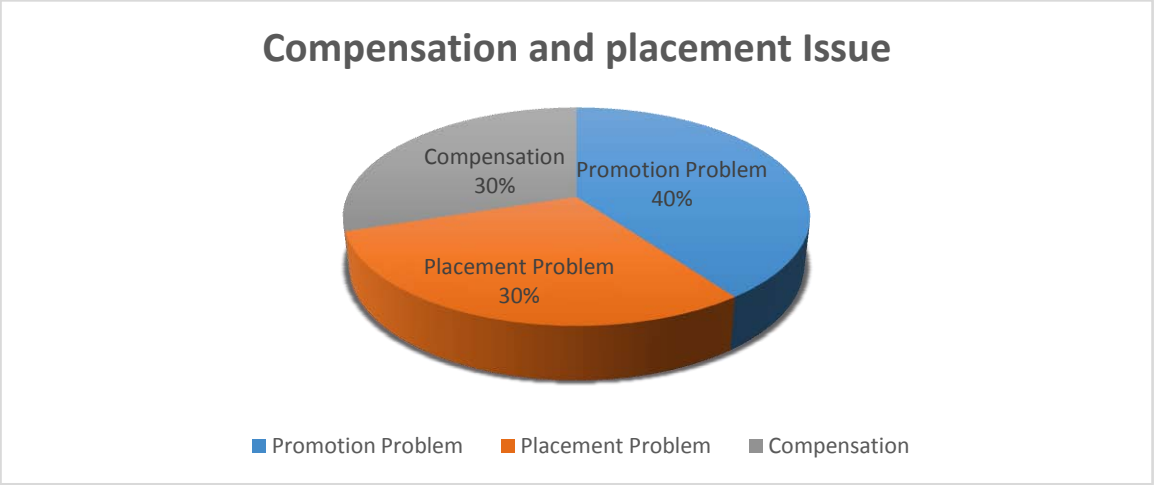

Figure 1.10

- **Workplace Violence**: 9% have experience of workplace violence. If a person does the better job, other employees got jealous of his good work. When one employee does not like another employee then from that disliking thing, bullying or shouting creates which leads to violence in the future.



Figure 1.11

b) Benefits of EAP if can be implemented

- Reduce Abuse: If any abuse happened with the employees, EAP will solve the problem. At first, EAP will seat together with the victim and the employee. Then identify the problem with the investigation and try figure out the issue. If the EAP find out that victim is true, then the accused person will be sack immediately. And for reducing this types of problem EAP can introduce CC TV systems to record the all activities of employees and employer with the CC TV CAMERA footage. If any sort of problem happened, EAP can identify and manage the issue and can take action in a legal way.
- Financial Condition: If any of the employee have any financial claim or compensation claim, if the employee doesn't get that right to sue or to claim, then EAP can take that action. If any unfair happened, any job promotion problem, or any increment problem issue, it will be solved by EAP. If any employee works for a long time in the organization and make their best effort but did not get the increment or job promotion, then this will be verified and be solved by EAP.
- Reduce Harassment: If any harassment happened by the employees, or by the employer then EAP is needed to identify the reason and for possible solution. If any person found responsible for that harassment is need to be sacked immediately or punished in other authorized way.
- Solving HIV/AIDS: If any employees have HIV/AIDS, need to inform the authority about their sickness. HIV/AIDS is not transferred by touching other. But

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EAP in that case inform other people working about what they should do and what they should not EAP. So those HIV/AIDS employees can have a good relationship with other employees. EAP create awareness and handle HIV/AIDS in a good way, so that affected employee can't face humiliation by his/her colleagues.

- Cost reduction or cost control: By being more concern about employees assistance increase productivity of the worker which leads to producing a quality product. When employees give their best effort with productivity, then efficiency increased. Thus, an organization can make more profit by controlling the cost of rework. It is very important for the organization to add this EAP program.
- EAP can create/ensure good relationship between an employee and employer. For this employer can allow their worker to share employee's idea, and employer needs to analyze those idea. This practice will motivate employee and make them think about organization's good, love and respect their organization. With idea-sharing, better relationship can be introduced between an employee and the employer.
- EAP can provide the physical fitness chart and training, can increase awareness and benefit of good health and give counseling for reducing mental stress and issues of both employees and employer.
- EAP can improve employee's mentality, how to deal with colleagues, with higher authority, and with lower staff. If any problem arises in the organization then, the EAP can help to find out how to deal with that problem and how to adopt good working environment for the employees and employer.
- The EAP can arrange everything about expertise, training and development issue of organization. If the employees, employer and the organization need any kind of change or need to adopt any new thing then, the EAP can be practiced.

VII. Recommendations

In this survey research, our target was to find out the reason of employee's stress problem and possible way to handle the employee's stress problem, wellness and harassment issue in the workplace, especially in RMG sector. Most of the employees leave their job for suffering stress for various reasons. The employer has to understand the employee's psychological and sociological factors. But it was seen that without understanding the employee's condition, top management pressurized employees to work more and more. Shockingly we found workers do not share their problem and they stop talking to each other. Sometimes lower level employees raise their voice, but mid-level employees always think about their privacy or reputation and prefer not to raise their voice. They prefer leaving the job in silent. So day by day their employee performances get down for their stress.

- To resolve the issue employees are needed to be trained up in a way that they can raise their voice for help or support or for counseling without hesitation. By this, they can get their required benefits/ facilities and can give their best work in their working life. All level of the worker must be included in that training and that is how they can feel confidence to do their best in their working life. When employees are doing their best in their work then, an employer will get 100 percent from those employees, so the employer will also be benefited. This would be a win-win situation for both employer and employees.
- Employees are mostly facing - Health, family, drug, alcohol, mental problem, stress and other problem. If organization provide Employee Assistance training trough EAP, with an expert consultant or other immediate action then employees can do their best and can work effectively. It's also needed for employee's mental health, and maintaining good working environment in the organization.
- Effectively implement the EAP can reduce health and mental stress issue by providing counseling and awareness service. When any employee feels mental stress and EAP can help them. When an employee feels sick EAP can suggest/help the employees to manage that leave for physical rest.
- By introducing EAP organization can provide counseling and create awareness with arranging some cultural program, with the training, poster.
- EAP can motivate employees for increasing productivity. The organization can arrange some training with the instrument, not likely in the class room training. Need to reduce all kind of stress and other issues of employees, so that an employee can do his/her best in the workplace for higher productivity.
- Awareness program can be organized by EAP with a different kind of training, counseling and arrange some program.
- The EAP will work if anything wrong happened with the worker, any misbehavior of the employer or other superior, any kind of fault happened by employer, any assault or harassment faced by employees. The EAP will also work if employees need leave or they are in any mental stress, to create more awareness among the worker.

EAP create work-friendly environment for the employee and employer. According to the labor law, the employers can use hiring, supervising but firing is restricted, and there should be a legal issue for firing any employees. EAP ensure all of these and maintain a good working environment for the employee.

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In conclusion, Employers need to implement EAP by providing counseling for employees who have physical and mental stress or psychological problem. Human resources are the most important part of an organization. If the organization does not take care of its employees, employees cannot do their best for their organization, and the organization will not be 100 percent benefited from their employees. Especially workers needed to be taken care of abuse or harass, stress, etc. Only in that way EAP will be an essential part of the organization's future growth.

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