

# The Practice of Employee Assistance Program in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in The Internet Era Based on Harmonious Society

Biyun Zhang<sup>1,2</sup>, Jianjun Huang<sup>3</sup>, Ping Zhang<sup>4</sup>, Changwei Yu<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, Hubei University of Science and Technology, Xianning, China

<sup>2</sup> Graduate School, Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines

<sup>3</sup> Xianning Experimental Foreign Language School, Xianning, China

<sup>4</sup> Xianning Experimental Primary School, Xianning, China

<sup>5</sup> Qinglongshan High School, Xianning, China

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**Abstract:** With the arrival of the internet era, information technology and digital transformation have profoundly changed the operations of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This study explores the practice of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in SMEs, analyzing how EAP, from the perspective of a harmonious society, promotes employee mental health and career development, while enhancing organizational cohesion and competitiveness. The core components and implementation steps of EAP, including psychological health support, career development guidance, and stress management, are discussed. Due to resource limitations, SMEs often adopt flexible EAP models, such as online counseling and workplace training. However, the implementation of EAP faces challenges such as limited resources, privacy protection, and a lack of professional expertise. To optimize EAP, companies need to strengthen management support, use outsourcing services, and establish privacy protection mechanisms. In the future, SMEs can explore more innovative and feasible EAP models, such as AI-based intelligent support, adaptation to remote work environments, creation of culturally adaptable models, and establishment of data-driven effectiveness assessment methods. These approaches will help SMEs address the challenges of the internet era, enhance employee satisfaction, and promote sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Internet Era, Mental Health, Career Development, Harmonious Society.

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## 1. Introduction

In the internet era, the rapid development of information technology and the accelerated pace of digital transformation have significantly altered business operations, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These enterprises possess unique advantages and disadvantages when it comes to market competition, technological innovation, and management optimization. However, with the widespread adoption of the internet, employees' needs and pressures within organizations have gradually evolved, presenting new challenges and management complexities.

While the internet has introduced more efficient work models, it has also increased employees' workloads and time pressures. Due to the convenience of online connectivity, many businesses expect employees to handle work tasks outside regular working hours, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. This has resulted in greater psychological and physical stress for employees. Moreover, SMEs often face limitations in resources and managerial capacity, causing employees to take on multiple roles and responsibilities, which further exacerbates their workload and stress levels.

Meanwhile, the internet era has accelerated information dissemination and technological updates, requiring employees to continuously learn and adapt to new tools and knowledge in their work. This demand is particularly evident in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which must maintain competitiveness by expecting employees to

constantly enhance their skills and adapt to changes. These expectations place higher demands on employees' learning abilities and adaptability, increasing their sources of stress. Moreover, the rapid development of the internet has exacerbated uncertainties surrounding career development. In a competitive environment, SME employees often face less defined career paths compared to those in large corporations, as systematic career planning is frequently lacking. This deficiency diminishes employees' sense of job security, further intensifying anxiety.

Employees in SMEs are experiencing significantly increased demands and pressures regarding workload, skill requirements, and career development in the internet era. Addressing these challenges by exploring and implementing effective Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can not only help alleviate stress but also enhance work efficiency and satisfaction, laying the foundation for a harmonious corporate culture.

This study aims to explore the practical effects of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the lens of harmonious society theory, focusing on their impact on organizational harmony and employee well-being. Specifically, the research seeks to uncover how EAP can assist SMEs in better addressing the multiple pressures and mental health challenges faced by employees in the internet era, enhancing their sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. Additionally, the study examines how EAP fosters workplace harmony, improves employee efficiency and satisfaction, and

how it can be effectively implemented in resource-constrained SMEs to achieve optimal results. By systematically analyzing the impact of EAP, the research provides theoretical foundations and practical guidance for SMEs to design and promote EAP initiatives. These efforts aim to help SMEs cultivate a positive corporate culture, support employees' holistic development, and achieve sustainable business growth. Furthermore, by highlighting the role of EAP in building a harmonious society, this research contributes new perspectives and practical insights to broader social harmony and development initiatives.

## **2. Current Development of EAP**

### **2.1. Development History of EAP**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) refer to a series of support services provided by companies to their employees and their families, aiming to help employees address personal, work, and family-related issues, thereby improving job performance and quality of life. The scope of EAP services typically includes psychological counseling, stress management, financial guidance, legal assistance, career development counseling, and more. By helping employees resolve psychological and personal challenges, EAP promotes overall well-being and enhances workplace efficiency.

Globally, EAP has evolved into a cross-cultural and multi-model system of employee support. Initially developed in Western countries such as the United States and Europe, EAP has gradually expanded to the Asia-Pacific region, gaining significant traction in countries like Japan, Singapore, and China. With the growth of multinational corporations and globalization trends, an increasing number of companies recognize that EAP not only improves employee mental health but also enhances productivity, reduces absenteeism, and lowers employee turnover rates, thereby increasing corporate competitiveness in the market.

In China, the introduction of EAP occurred relatively late. Some multinational companies were the first to implement EAPs in the late 1990s, but it was not until after 2000 that EAPs began to gain wider adoption domestically. As workplaces became more complex and societal demand for mental health services increased, EAPs started drawing attention from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Despite its late start, the development of EAP in China has accelerated in recent years, gradually evolving into service models tailored to local cultures and enterprise needs. Many companies have leveraged internet and digital technologies to provide online psychological support, anonymous counseling, and mental health assessments, breaking the limitations of traditional face-to-face consultations.

In today's internet-driven era, EAP service models are increasingly shifting toward digitalization and intelligent solutions. By utilizing internet and artificial intelligence technologies, companies can offer EAP services at lower costs and with greater efficiency. Online psychological assessments, virtual counseling, and emotion monitoring tools enable employees to better manage stress, emotions, and personal challenges. These innovations cater to the fast-paced and dynamic nature of modern work environments, especially within SMEs, providing convenient and private support options that enhance employee engagement and satisfaction.

In summary, EAP have evolved over decades from basic intervention models into comprehensive systems encompassing psychological, financial, legal, and career

support. They have become a vital tool for companies to demonstrate care for their employees. The historical development of EAP reflects the growing corporate focus on employee well-being and highlights its significant potential to foster organizational harmony and employee happiness. In the internet era, EAP development is increasingly digital and diversified, poised to adapt to the evolving needs of employees and changing management landscapes.

### **2.2. Current Application of EAP in International and Domestic SMEs**

The application of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in SMEs varies significantly between international and domestic contexts. Overall, EAP adoption in international SMEs, particularly in developed countries, is relatively mature. In contrast, domestic SMEs in China are still in the early stages of EAP implementation, primarily constrained by resource and cost limitations. However, there is a growing trend of increased adoption.

In international contexts, especially among SMEs in developed countries like those in Europe and North America, EAP has become a common tool for employee support. Many governments and regions promote EAP implementation by providing policy support and encouraging SMEs to address human resource and cost constraints through outsourcing. These companies often collaborate with third-party mental health and counseling service providers to deliver flexible support options, including telephone counseling, mental health assessments, and crisis intervention.

In recent years, the widespread adoption of online platforms has enabled smaller companies to access EAP services at a lower cost, further expanding the scope of EAP applications. On the whole, EAP usage in international SMEs has reached a relatively mature stage, with a focus on delivering efficient, convenient, and personalized support to help employees manage the multiple challenges of work and life.

In domestic SMEs, the adoption of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) started relatively late. However, in recent years, the increasing demand for employee mental health support and the rising awareness of corporate social responsibility have gradually sparked interest in EAP among SMEs. Despite this growth, domestic SMEs face significant limitations compared to large enterprises in terms of resources, budgets, and implementation experience, resulting in a relatively low penetration rate of EAP.

Due to cost considerations, many SMEs opt for simplified EAP formats, such as offering mental health workshops or short-term counseling services, which fall short of systematic and professional implementation standards. Additionally, EAP adoption in domestic SMEs is hindered by several factors, including insufficient awareness of mental health issues among employees and inadequate emphasis on EAP in corporate culture. Concerns over high implementation costs and low employee participation further reduce the effectiveness of EAP initiatives.

Nonetheless, with increasing awareness of employee welfare and the promotion of mental health by government and industry organizations, more SMEs are exploring tailored EAP solutions to suit their needs. For example, some companies collaborate with online mental health platforms to provide services such as psychological assessments and online counseling, reducing implementation costs and ensuring employee privacy.

Overall, the application of EAP in international SMEs has become relatively mature, focusing on enhancing employee well-being and organizational cohesion. However, SMEs face numerous challenges in addressing employee-related issues, including limited resources, insufficient management capabilities, weak corporate culture development, and inadequate support for career development. These challenges are particularly pronounced in the internet era. Effective EAP implementation can help alleviate employee stress, provide career growth support, and foster a caring corporate culture, enabling SMEs to improve employee mental health and job satisfaction even under resource constraints. This lays a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the enterprise. With increasing societal attention to employee mental health, the adoption of EAP in domestic SMEs is expected to expand further. This growth will contribute to the creation of harmonious enterprises and a harmonious society, providing valuable support for both organizational and societal development.

### **3. EAP in SMEs Practice**

#### **3.1. Core Components and Implementation Steps of EAP**

Implementing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in SMEs requires tailoring its core components to the enterprise's specific needs and resource conditions, ensuring an optimal balance between cost and effectiveness. The core components of EAP typically include mental health support, stress management, career development counseling, and financial and legal advice. By delivering these services, EAP can effectively help employees address challenges in both their personal and professional lives, enhancing their productivity and overall satisfaction.

##### **3.1.1. Mental Health Support**

EAP provides personalized mental health services to assist employees in coping with issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, thereby enhancing their psychological resilience. This component often includes psychological counseling, crisis intervention, and emotional management training. For SMEs, outsourcing services like online psychological counseling can be a cost-effective way to address the personalized needs of employees. This approach ensures accessibility, flexibility, and privacy, which are critical for fostering employee engagement with mental health initiatives.

##### **3.1.2. Stress Management**

In the high-pressure environment that employees in SMEs often face, stress management is crucial. EAP's stress management services typically include stress assessments, stress-relief activities (such as meditation courses and yoga sessions), and time management training. These services help employees improve their self-regulation abilities. SMEs can design simplified stress management programs tailored to the specific needs of their employees, helping them find a balance between work and life. This personalized approach can effectively reduce stress and improve employees' overall well-being.

##### **3.1.3. Career Development Support**

Career development support within EAP helps employees maintain professional competitiveness, improve career satisfaction, and enhance their sense of belonging, especially in a rapidly changing work environment. The core components of this support include career planning, skills

enhancement training, and mentoring. SMEs can provide career development opportunities through regular career counseling sessions and online learning resources, helping employees build their skills and reduce anxiety and turnover rates. By investing in career growth, SMEs can foster employee loyalty and satisfaction.

##### **3.1.4. Financial and Legal Counseling**

Employees' financial and legal issues can affect both their job performance and mental state. EAP provides financial planning and legal counseling services to help employees better manage personal and family financial matters, reducing their stress. SMEs can collaborate with external professional institutions to provide basic financial and legal advisory services, enabling employees to focus more on their work. By addressing these concerns, companies can enhance employee well-being and overall job performance.

### **3.2. EAP Implementation Steps**

#### **3.2.1. Needs Assessment**

Before implementing an EAP, companies need to conduct a needs assessment to identify the primary sources of stress and mental health needs among employees. This step can be carried out through surveys, interviews, and performance analysis to ensure that the EAP content aligns with actual employee needs and that resources are allocated effectively.

#### **3.2.2. Goal Setting and Planning**

Based on the results of the needs assessment, clear EAP objectives should be defined, such as improving employee mental health, reducing burnout, and enhancing career satisfaction and organizational loyalty. A detailed EAP implementation plan should then be developed, outlining specific services, target participants, timelines, and required budgets.

#### **3.2.3. Outsourcing Services or Internal Resource Allocation**

SMEs, when implementing EAP, can choose to outsource certain services to specialized mental health service providers or consulting companies to reduce costs and improve service quality. At the same time, businesses can also leverage their internal resources, such as employee training programs or career coaching, to establish a foundational EAP system that suits their specific needs and capabilities.

#### **3.2.4. Employee Training and Promotion**

To ensure the smooth implementation of EAP and active employee participation, companies should provide training for employees to promote awareness of EAP services and their benefits. Employees need to understand how to access EAP services and the support available to them. Promotional efforts can be made through company meetings, emails, bulletin boards, and other channels to increase employee awareness and engagement with the program.

#### **3.2.5. Service Provision and Feedback Mechanism**

After the formal implementation of EAP, psychological counseling, stress management, career coaching, and other support services should be provided regularly. A feedback mechanism should also be established, allowing employees to offer feedback through anonymous surveys or interviews. The company can use this feedback to adjust and improve EAP services, ensuring they are more closely aligned with the employees' needs.

#### **3.2.6. Evaluation and Improvement**

After a certain period of implementation, the company

should evaluate the effectiveness of EAP, including employee satisfaction, changes in stress levels, and improvements in work efficiency. By analyzing these indicators, companies can assess the effectiveness and shortcomings of the EAP, allowing for further optimization of the content and implementation methods to ensure its long-term sustainability.

In SMEs, the core of implementing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) lies in flexibly and cost-effectively meeting employee needs. By providing precise psychological and career support, EAP helps promote employee mental health and job performance, thus laying the foundation for a harmonious and positive work environment.

### **3.3. Specific EAP Models for SMEs**

The specific models for implementing EAP in SMEs are often designed flexibly based on resource availability, employee needs, and operational environments, aiming to provide effective support within budget constraints. The following are common EAP implementation models in SMEs:

#### **3.3.1. Online Psychological Counseling**

Online psychological counseling is one of the most common models for SMEs to implement EAP, especially for businesses with limited budgets and requiring flexible support. Through the online psychological counseling platform, employees can have one-on-one remote communication with professional psychological counselors, which is convenient for employees to obtain mental health support under the protection of privacy. Counseling usually includes emotional management, stress relief, anxiety, and career confusion. The advantage of online counseling is that 24-hour support is provided, and employees can use the service at a convenient time, increasing engagement and satisfaction.

#### **3.3.2. Workplace Training and Seminars**

SMEs can regularly organize workplace training sessions and mental health seminars to help employees acquire skills for managing stress, regulating emotions, and improving work efficiency. These sessions typically cover topics such as stress management, time management, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution, enabling employees to better adapt and grow in their roles. Training can be delivered in various formats, including offline workshops, live-streamed sessions, or pre-recorded courses, giving employees the flexibility to choose how to participate. Workplace training not only enhances employees' psychological resilience but also fosters team collaboration within the organization, contributing to a more harmonious and productive work environment.

#### **3.3.3. Emotion Monitoring and Psychological Assessment Tools**

Using emotion monitoring and psychological assessment tools, SMEs can assist employees in understanding their emotional states and mental health conditions at any time. These tools, often available as self-service online platforms, allow employees to anonymously complete stress tests, anxiety scales, and other psychological assessments to receive feedback on their mental state. The results from these evaluations provide valuable data for companies, enabling them to gain insights into overall employee mental health trends. This information helps organizations tailor EAP services to address the most pressing needs, ensuring that support is both effective and relevant to their workforce.

#### **3.3.4. Stress relief activities**

Stress relief activities can help employees relieve stress and improve work performance in a relaxed environment. Small

and medium-sized enterprises can regularly organize short-term stress reduction activities, such as outdoor group building, yoga classes, meditation classes, sports and fitness activities, etc., to help employees release pressure and improve mental toughness. These activities can not only regulate the psychological state of employees, but also enhance the relationship between team members and enhance organizational cohesion.

#### **3.3.5. Career development guidance**

SMEs can support the growth and development of their employees through career development guidance, providing a clearer planning path for their career. Career development guidance is usually provided by internal senior employees or external career development consultants, including career path planning, personal skills improvement, career goal setting, etc. This kind of guidance can help employees find motivation and direction in their work, alleviate the uncertainty of career development, and enhance employees' loyalty to the company.

#### **3.3.6. Anonymous Counseling Mailbox or Online Feedback Mechanism**

SMEs can establish anonymous counseling mailboxes or online feedback mechanisms, enabling employees to anonymously submit concerns about mental health, work-related stressors, or suggestions for organizational management. This approach allows management to promptly understand employees' psychological states and potential issues, enabling them to take appropriate measures. The anonymity of this feedback mechanism provides employees with a safe outlet for expressing their concerns, helping to foster trust and create a supportive organizational culture.

#### **3.3.7. Crisis Intervention Support**

When employees face significant personal or work-related crises, such as bereavement, severe illness, or disasters, SMEs can offer emergency psychological support and crisis intervention services. SMEs typically outsource these services to professional counseling organizations or crisis intervention teams to ensure timely and expert assistance. Crisis intervention support helps employees navigate challenging times by addressing their emotional burdens, while also maintaining a stable work environment for the organization. This type of support demonstrates the company's care for its employees and reinforces a positive, supportive workplace culture.

#### **3.3.8. Online Learning Platform and Self-Help Resource Library**

SMEs can establish online learning platforms or resource libraries to provide self-service mental health and career development resources. These libraries may include video courses, e-books, mental health quizzes, and guided meditation audio files. Employees can access these resources anytime to enhance their skills and mental well-being. The advantages of self-help resource libraries include ease of distribution, low cost, and flexibility, allowing employees to learn at their own pace and according to their needs, thereby improving personal mental health and work skills.

#### **3.3.9. Group Counseling**

Group counseling is well-suited for smaller SMEs with close working relationships among employees, providing a platform for mutual support to tackle stress collectively. Companies can engage psychological counselors or professional coaches to conduct group counseling sessions in a discussion format. Topics may include team communication

techniques, conflict resolution strategies, and collaboration skills. Group counseling not only helps employees manage psychological stress but also strengthens team cohesion and overall collaborative efficiency.

The specific models for implementing EAP in SMEs are diverse, allowing for flexible selection and combination based on company size, resources, and employee needs. Models such as online psychological counseling, workplace training, emotion monitoring, and stress relief activities can address employee mental health and work-related stress issues while enhancing job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. By adopting these EAP models, SMEs can provide practical and effective support to employees within limited resources, fostering sustainable growth for the organization.

#### **4. EAP Implementation Strategies from the Perspective of a Harmonious Society**

From the perspective of a harmonious society, the implementation strategies for Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) should not only address employees' basic needs but also prioritize their mental health and career growth, fostering their overall development. This approach aims to create a harmonious and positive corporate atmosphere. The following are key strategies for implementing EAP from this perspective:

##### **4.1. People-Oriented Approach: Focusing on Employee Mental Health and Career Growth**

The core of a people-oriented approach is placing employee well-being at the forefront, providing care and support to help employees achieve personal growth. SMEs can implement the following strategies.

**Regular Psychological Health Assessments.** SMEs should offer periodic mental health evaluations to help employees understand their psychological state. For those requiring additional support, companies can provide tailored counseling and mental health services. Regular assessments not only enable early detection of psychological issues but also encourage employees to pay attention to their mental health proactively.

**Career Development Guidance.** EAP should also focus on supporting employees' career growth. SMEs can provide career counseling and skills training to help employees clarify their career paths and build confidence in their professional development. These services enable employees to adapt more effectively to changing work environments and advance in their careers.

**Establishing Employee Support Groups.** Creating employee support groups allows individuals to seek help and advice from colleagues or mentors when dealing with work-related stress or career challenges. Such groups foster mutual support, enhancing employees' sense of belonging and trust. These relationships empower employees to navigate workplace challenges with greater confidence.

##### **4.2. Promoting Work-Life Balance: Combination of Online and Offline Support**

In the Internet era, SMEs can help employees achieve work-life balance and relieve work pressure through flexible

online and offline support models. SMEs can provide flexible online psychological support services so that employees can access psychological support at any time. At the same time, they can regularly organise offline stress reduction activities such as outdoor activities, team building and yoga classes to help employees release stress in a relaxing environment and enhance interaction between colleagues. In addition, benefits such as gym discounts and health checkups can be provided to help employees maintain physical and mental health and enhance their sense of well-being. Where possible, SMEs can provide employees with flexible working arrangements, such as flexible working hours and telecommuting, to help them better balance work and life. Such flexible working arrangements can effectively relieve employees' work pressure and enhance job satisfaction and productivity.

##### **4.3. Building a Harmonious Corporate Culture: Enhancing Organizational Atmosphere and Employee Sense of Belonging**

A harmonious corporate culture has a significant impact on employees' mental health and job satisfaction. By fostering a culture of care, inclusivity, and trust, companies can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and make them feel respected and supported at work. The following strategies can help enhance the harmony of the corporate culture.

**Enhancing Communication and Feedback Mechanisms.** SMEs can establish open and transparent communication channels, encouraging employees to share their opinions and feedback. Methods such as anonymous feedback boxes and regular employee satisfaction surveys allow companies to understand employee needs and concerns, enabling timely action. Effective communication enhances employee trust in the organization, fostering a harmonious internal atmosphere.

**Support and care from leadership.** Business leaders and department heads should take the initiative to care about employees' mental health and career development. Regular communication with employees to understand their psychological states and work needs is vital. When employees feel supported by leadership, they are more likely to feel valued and respected, which in turn strengthens their sense of belonging and builds strong, positive employee relationships.

**Promoting mental health awareness and training.** Companies can organize activities such as Mental Health Awareness Week and workshops to increase employees' understanding of mental health and encourage acceptance of EAP services. Conducting mental health-related training and seminars equips employees with fundamental skills in emotional management and stress regulation. These initiatives not only help employees cope more effectively with workplace stress but also contribute to fostering an inclusive and empathetic corporate culture.

**Encouraging team collaboration and trust.** Creating a collaborative and inclusive team atmosphere encourages mutual support and understanding among team members, building strong trust-based relationships. Activities like group discussions and team projects can cultivate a sense of teamwork, enabling employees to receive support from colleagues. This enhances their work experience and fosters a more positive and cooperative work environment.

## **5. Challenges and Countermeasures in EAP Implementation**

Implementing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) in SMEs can significantly enhance employee well-being and contribute to business development. However, SMEs face numerous challenges in this process. Addressing these challenges effectively requires innovative and flexible strategies to maximize resource efficiency and employee support.

### **5.1. Limited Resources and Implementation Costs of SMEs**

SMEs usually have limited resources in terms of finance and manpower, making it difficult for them to set up a comprehensive EAP programme like large enterprises. In addition, outsourcing and professional services for EAP are often costly, resulting in SMEs having insufficient budgets for mental health support, making it impossible for them to implement a systematic EAP programme. To address this challenge, enterprises can choose flexible, low-cost outsourcing services and relatively low-cost online EAP platforms to provide basic mental health support to employees. Meanwhile, many government agencies and non-profit organisations provide free employee mental health support and resource libraries, and SMEs can work with these organisations to provide free services such as mental health seminars and trainings to their employees. This approach can effectively make up for the lack of enterprise resources and enhance the sustainability of EAP. Finally, SMEs can also implement EAP in phases, starting with the most basic EAP services, such as stress management training and emotion management courses, and then gradually expanding the scope of EAP. By implementing EAP in phases, the budget can be reasonably allocated so that enterprises can gradually establish a complete EAP system with limited resources.

### **5.2. Employee Privacy and Trust Issues**

EAP involves the mental health of employees, and many employees are concerned that participation in EAP may lead to privacy breaches, which may affect the security of their position in the organisation. Especially in SMEs, where employees and management are close to each other, this concern may be even more obvious. Enterprises should maintain strict confidentiality of employees' personal information when implementing EAP, for example, by using mechanisms such as anonymous counselling and anonymous feedback boxes, so that employees can receive psychological support without having to reveal their identity. Ensure that all employee participation records, psychological assessment results and other information are kept completely confidential to build trust. At the same time, organisations can sign a privacy protection agreement with the EAP provider, specifying confidentiality clauses to ensure that the third party will not disclose any information about employees. At the same time, informing employees of the content of the agreement gives them more confidence in privacy protection, thus eliminating their concerns and enhancing their willingness to participate.

### **5.3. Lack of EAP Professionals**

The implementation of EAP requires professional mental health service personnel and training instructors, but SMEs usually lack such talents, especially in small cities and remote

areas, where it is difficult to find mental health experts with EAP service qualifications. SMEs can cooperate with professional mental health consulting organisations and outsource services such as psychological counselling and crisis intervention to qualified third-party organisations. The experienced service teams of professional organisations can ensure the quality of EAP services and make up for the lack of in-house professionals. At the same time, companies can train internal EAP managers, selecting employees from the existing management or human resources department for basic mental health knowledge and EAP service training, so as to equip them with basic psychological support capabilities. These internal managers can act as internal mental health support staff, providing initial help and guiding employees to seek external support when they identify stress problems. For small businesses that are unable to hire professionals, they can provide their employees with online mental health learning platforms and resource libraries, which include courses on stress management and emotion regulation to help employees learn and manage themselves. These courses can be accessed from well-known online learning platforms, which saves costs for the enterprise and enables employees to utilise the resources flexibly.

### **5.4. Improvement of Employee Participation and Trust**

Employees of small and medium-sized enterprises may have doubts about the actual effect of EAP, or think that participating in EAP may be regarded as having psychological problems, and thus are unwilling to actively participate. Low participation and lack of trust will weaken the implementation effect of EAP. Enterprises can introduce the actual benefits of EAP to employees through lectures, publicity activities and case sharing, such as reducing stress, improving psychological resilience and helping career development. Employees who have benefited from EAP can be asked to share their experiences to enhance the trust of other employees. At the same time, senior managers of enterprises can publicly express their support for EAP and convey a corporate culture that cares about the well-being of employees, thereby reducing the psychological burden of employees and enhancing their confidence in participation. Enterprises can also provide a variety of ways to participate, such as anonymous online tests, personalized consultation options, group psychological counseling, etc., to give employees different choices. Diversified methods can increase employee participation and make them more willing to accept EAP services.

## **6. Conclusion and Outlook**

The implementation of EAP in SMEs not only helps to improve employees' mental health, relieve work pressure and enhance job satisfaction, but also promotes employees' professional growth and self-identity, thus building a more harmonious corporate culture. EAP helps employees to get timely support when facing workplace challenges and personal pressure, and strengthens their sense of trust and belonging to the enterprise. At the same time, EAP, as a systematic support system, effectively reduces the departure rate and mobility of employees, and plays a positive role in maintaining a stable staff structure and improving overall performance. In conclusion, EAP is of great value to SMEs in realising the harmonious development of enterprises with

limited resources.

In the future, SMEs can explore more innovative and feasible EAP models. Based on the intelligence of AI technology, future research could focus on the use of AI technology to establish an intelligent EAP model that monitors employees' mental health in real time through data analytics and machine learning algorithms to provide personalised mental health support. AI-driven emotional monitoring and online interactive counselling can enable more efficient support while reducing labour costs, making it suitable for SMEs with limited resources. AI-driven emotional monitoring and online interactive counselling can achieve more efficient support while reducing labour costs, suitable for SMEs with limited resources.

Secondly, developing EAP models adapted to remote work environments. With the widespread adoption of remote work and flexible working arrangements, research can explore EAP models tailored for remote employees, such as virtual psychological counseling and remote team-building activities. These services can help employees cope with feelings of isolation and the psychological pressures associated with remote work. This type of EAP model is particularly relevant for further development in the post-pandemic era, offering businesses flexible and diverse psychological support methods.

Thirdly, building culturally adaptive EAP models. Employees from different cultural backgrounds have varying needs for mental health support. Future EAP models should focus on cultural adaptability, designing psychological support services that align with local cultures and employees' values. This approach is especially beneficial in international SMEs, as it helps strengthen employees' sense of belonging and fosters cross-cultural communication and harmony. By addressing cultural differences, these models can enhance employee engagement and promote a more inclusive workplace.

Finally, establish a data-driven EAP effectiveness evaluation method, and use big data technology to track the use and effectiveness of EAP in real time. Through data analysis, enterprises can understand the changes in employees' psychological needs in a timely manner and optimise the content of EAP services. The data-driven EAP effectiveness evaluation method can also help SMEs allocate resources more accurately and maximise the input-output ratio of EAP.

In conclusion, the future direction of EAP development not only needs to focus on technological innovation, but also needs to consider the adaptability of corporate culture, the support of remote office environment, and how to provide more cost-effective employee support services with limited resources. Through continuous research and exploration, SMEs will be able to design an EAP model that better meets their own needs, giving full play to the positive role of EAP in employee mental health, job satisfaction and the harmonious development of the enterprise, and building a healthy and harmonious working environment for both employees and the enterprise.

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