HRM2602
Human Resource Maintenance and Retention

WORKBOOK 05

Health and safety

Have a look at the mind map to see where you are in the process of working through the study material.
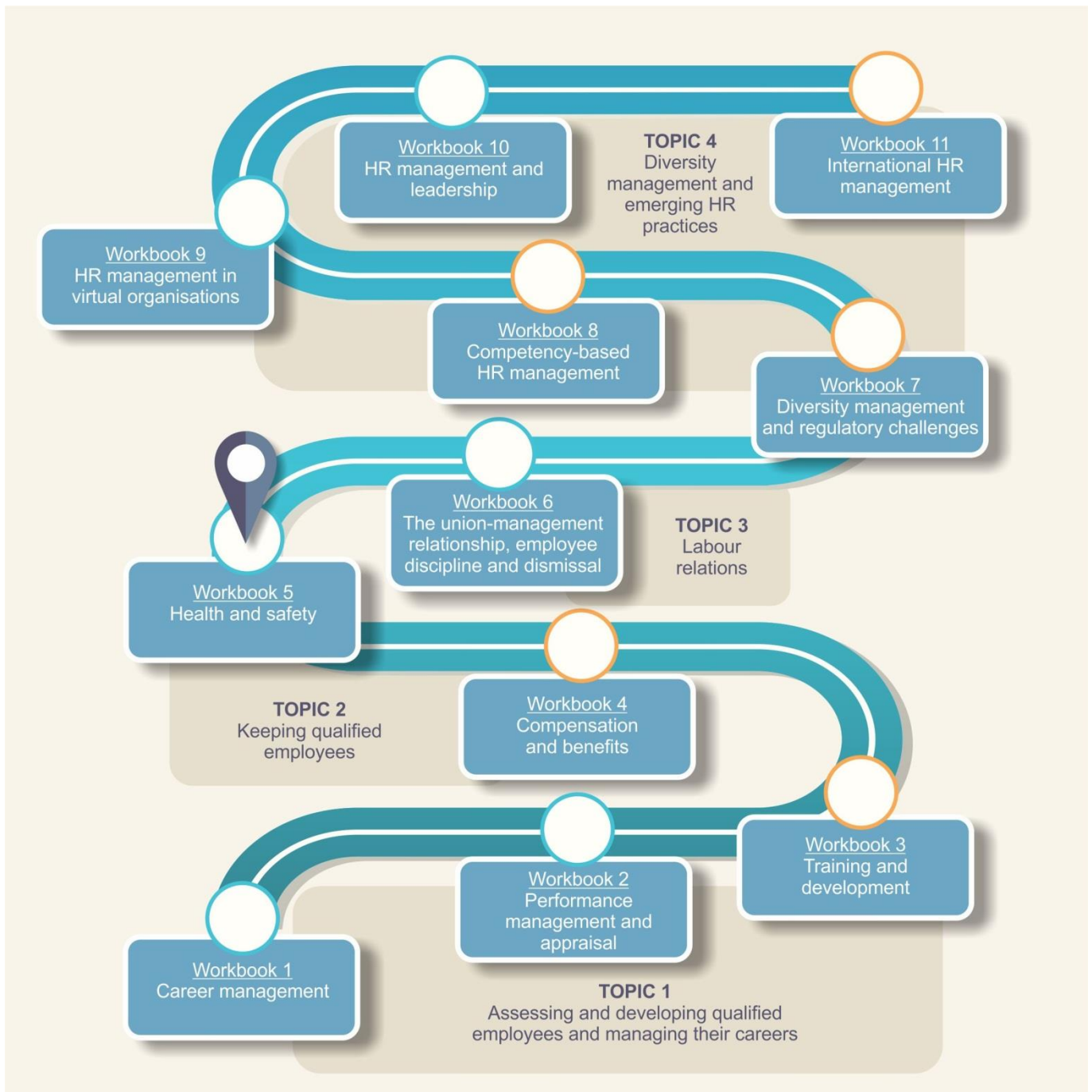
5.1   LEARNING OUTCOMES

Read through the outcomes before you continue. This will give you an overall picture of what we will discuss in this workbook.

After studying this workbook, you should be able to

- differentiate between stress and burnout
- discuss the essentials for an effective employee assistance programme
- list several work-related consequences of alcohol and drug abuse
- discuss the impact of AIDS in the workplace
- state the importance of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and discuss its major provisions

- list several specific initiatives an organisation can use to help reduce violence in the workplace

5.2 KEY CONCEPTS

A number of key concepts are listed at the end of chapter 12 of your prescribed book. Please read through them before you continue. Then you will be familiar with the different concepts that we will refer to in this workbook.

Some of the important key concepts in this workbook are:

- Health
- Safety
- Stress
- Job burnout
- Employee assistance programmes (EAPs)
- Distress

Now read this paragraph:

Once the right people have been placed in the right jobs, their performance is monitored, they are trained and developed if needed, their careers are properly managed and they are paid a fair and equitable salary (plus benefits), you would think that all the important issues relating to HR management have been taken care of. This is not the case, however. HR managers are also responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe work environment for their employees. As we have already explained, the two most important factors within the HR manager's control that can help retain employees are, firstly, to pay them competitive salaries and benefits (Workbook 04) and, secondly, to ensure a healthy and safe work environment for them.

Surely it is only fair for employees to expect a working environment that is not harmful to their health or would not cause injury or death!

Activity 5.1

Think about any large shopping centre close to your home and answer the following questions:

a. Does the environment in and around the shopping centre look healthy and safe? (Note things such as dangerous equipment and hazardous elements in and around the shopping centre, floor surface, etc.)
b. Do you think the health or safety of the employees in the various shops will be influenced by these factors? Give reasons for your answer.
c. Who do you think should accept responsibility for the health and safety of these employees? Why?

Feedback

You should realise now that the work environment, working conditions and equipment can have a substantial effect on employees' work behaviour. If working conditions are unsafe and unhealthy, employees not only have to concentrate on doing their jobs, but also on avoiding or minimising these

unfavourable conditions.

5.3 INTRODUCTION

Workplace health and safety focus on the physical, mental and emotional well-being and protection of people. A concerned HR manager will realise that employees who are safe and healthy will be able to contribute much more to achieving the organisation's goals than those who have to struggle with their health and deal with safety issues. Fortunately, HR managers can do a lot to enhance the health and safety of employees. You would probably agree that employees are entitled to working conditions that enhance rather than diminish the efforts they put into their jobs.

The key question therefore is:

How does the HR manager ensure that the organisation builds and sustains a healthy and safe work environment?

Activity

Watch the following video:

Health and safety and working conditions
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCs8aNV2FuI

Share your thoughts and understanding of health and safety – do this online. Refer to the **Discussion Forums** tool on the HRM2602 myUnisa module site and select **Forums 08: Workbook 05 Activities**.

If you ask around, most people would probably say that people doing dangerous work (e.g. someone who works many kilometres underground in a gold mine) will most likely be concerned with health and safety issues. Even a medical doctor doing a twelve-hour shift and suffering from exhaustion due to a lack of sleep can be considered a health and safety issue. Even if these people are compensated for the danger and discomfort they have to endure, the organisation also has to take certain precautions and actions to minimise these unhealthy and unsafe working conditions. Health and safety are a three-way commitment – the organisation, employee and the government. As you will learn later, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 lays down certain rules aimed at preventing accidents at work.

Activity 5.2

Read the case study at the end of chapter 12 in the prescribed book and then answer these questions:

a. Do you think that Linda's current situation will have an impact on her performance at work?
b. What health and safety issues are affecting Smart Trade?
c. What can Smart Trade do to ensure and maintain a healthy and safe work environment?

Feedback

You probably realise by now what serious problems an unhealthy (or unsafe) working environment can cause. Smart Trade has some quite serious problems on its hands. When answering the questions in

activity 5.2, you should have noted the following:

As a result of Linda's promotion she has to travel more often and she has been under severe pressure. Although she is a high achiever and outstanding performer, she is starting to experience burnout, a condition that is impacting on her health and behaviour (depression, unhappiness, lung infections, weight gain, excessive coffee drinking and smoking). Linda feels that she cannot continue with her job and would rather resign. The company is also experiencing safety issues in the form of substance intoxication and workplace harassment. It is obvious that the company has to consider strategies to support Linda and other staff members with similar problems, and also deal with safety issues.

The company should explore systems to support employees who are having problems. If the company is not big enough to employ staff members to run these programmes, it could consider using outside facilities or other companies specialising in these services to assist their staff members where needed. Whatever the company makes available should adhere to certain requirements and meet the needs of the employees. These initiatives should also be communicated clearly to all staff members. Companies have to ensure that they adhere to health and safety rules and regulations, especially in the manufacturing and mining environments.

Health and safety are therefore crucial factors in any business environment, especially when people are involved. Unsafe and/or unhealthy working conditions, together with physical injuries, can lead to psychological distress such as stress or burnout. HR managers therefore have to ensure that they are familiar with all the factors (both inside and outside the organisation) that can impact on these two important elements, as well as their consequences. To enable you to better understand health and safety, we will answer the following questions in this unit:

- What is the difference between stress and burnout?
- What strategies are available to control job stress at organisational and individual levels?
- What types of employee health care programmes exist?
- What action can be taken to prevent accidents in the workplace?
- Is workplace bullying a reality and how can it be resolved?
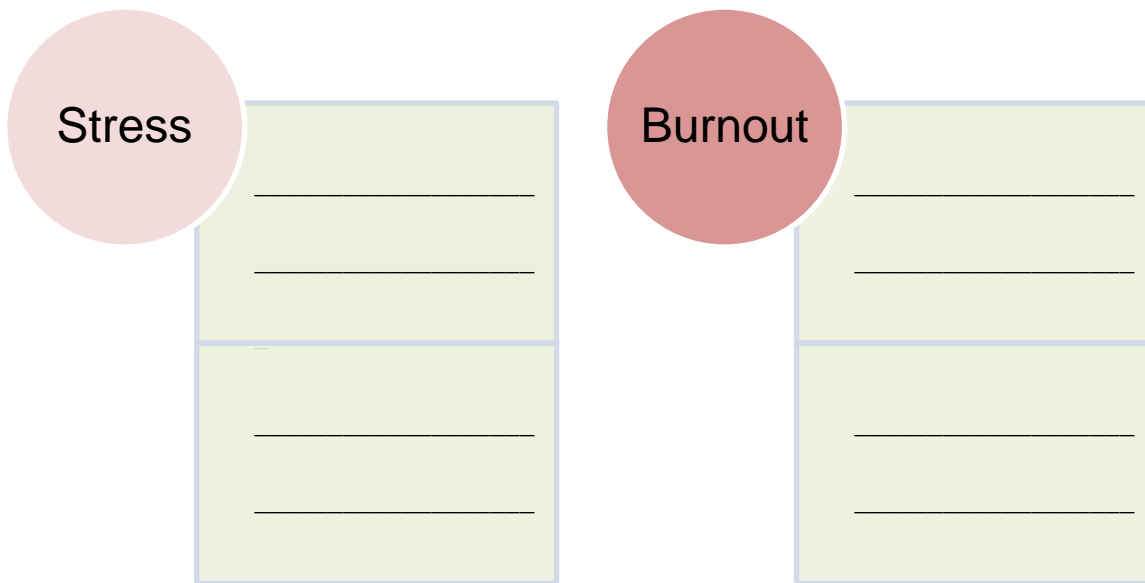
5.4   STRESS AND BURNOUT

Study sections 12.1 and 12.2 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.3: Stress and burnout

a. Use the diagram below to indicate the differences between stress and burnout.

b. What are the causes of stress?
c. Which steps can HR management take to reduce the occurrence of burnout?

Feedback

Stress is any change in the human body caused by physical, mental or emotional factors that require coping behaviour. People differ in the way they respond to stress situations. For example, John could become so anxious during an examination that it affects his performance, whereas Mary would be calm and controlled. Moreover, the effects of stress are not always negative. For example, eustress (positive stress) actually improves productivity and can be helpful in developing creative ideas. Some people also tend to improve their performance when they are placed under mild stress. Although everyone lives under a certain amount of stress, if it is severe enough and persists long enough, it can be harmful (distress).

You could have referred to section 12.1.1 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book to learn more about the causes of stress.

A condition that often develops from organisational and individual failure to deal with stress is called burnout. Burnout is a state of fatigue or frustration. It is a perception that individuals are giving more than they are receiving – whether it is money, satisfaction or praise – and they often feel that they cannot and will not continue to do the job. For a good example of burnout, refer to section 12.2 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book where it talks about Rochelle Ruene. Employees can experience burnout physically, emotionally and behaviourally (see table 12.5 in the prescribed book for symptoms of employee burnout). The HR manager can implement the steps discussed in section 12.1.2 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book to reduce the occurrence of burnout which was experienced by Rochelle.

5.5 CONTROLLING STRESS

Numerous situations, both inside and outside the organisation, contribute to stress at work. As you have learnt in section 5.4, different people deal with stress in different ways. Because of the effects of stress on human behaviour and consequently on employee behaviour, HR managers need to know how to control stress at organisational and individual levels.

Study section 12.1.2 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.4

Complete this table to indicate the different strategies that can be used at organisational and individual levels to control stress:

Organisational strategies	Individual strategies
• • • • •	• • • • •

Feedback

A number of programmes and techniques which effectively prevent job stress are available (see section 12.1.2 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book). You will probably agree that other organisational programmes (while not specifically designed as stress relievers) could also play a major role in reducing the stress experienced by the organisation's employees. These include equitable compensation, proper performance appraisal, effective career planning and development, organisational development, effective communication, proper motivation, leadership styles, proper job analysis, physical fitness of employees and the availability and effectiveness of employee assistance programmes (EAPs). As we mentioned earlier, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions can also contribute to stress and burnout. Because job stress and burnout are so closely intertwined, it is important for HR managers to be aware of the difference between these two concepts when implementing these strategies.

5.6 EMPLOYER HEALTH CARE PROGRAMMES

You probably agree that when you feel sick, either physically or mentally, your attitude is generally negative, your morale poor and your productivity can be affected. It is therefore obvious that HR managers should do everything possible to ensure that all their employees remain healthy and feel safe in their working environment. This will promote productivity and improve morale which, in turn, will benefit the organisation. But exactly how can HR managers contribute to the improved health and safety of employees?

Study section 12.3 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.5

Read the case study at the end of chapter 12 of the prescribed book and then answer the following questions:

a. Identify and explain the employer health care programmes which can be implemented at the bank.
b. List the stressors in Anne's life and explain how the bank can assist her.

Feedback

You will probably agree that most, if not all, of the health care programmes mentioned in "Employer Healthcare Programmes" are applicable to the bank. They could, for example, assist Anne by means of wellness programmes and substance abuse programmes and also provide all the workers with an HIV/AIDS support programme. It is important for the bank to ensure that these programmes are accessible and that they are presented in a place easily accessible to employees. A number of other aspects are also discussed in your prescribed book that they should consider. You should have identified the stressors in Anne's life and one of these is the situation with childcare and aftercare.

5.7   ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Study section 12.3.3 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.6

Read the case study at the end of chapter 12 and then answer these questions:

a. Discuss the consequences of alcohol abuse.
b. How would you identify an alcoholic in your workplace?
c. What approach would you take when confronting employees involved in drugs and alcohol?

Feedback

You should now agree that alcohol abuse can lead to serious accidents and injuries to other employees. Alcohol and drug abuse can also affect work productivity in a number of ways, including increased absenteeism, lateness, staff turnover and reduced employee performance. The HR manager should educate line management about the consequences of alcohol abuse in the workplace. It is also important to properly identify an alcoholic. The HR manager needs to facilitate a programme to assist the line manager in identifying an alcoholic in the workplace. It is quite evident that confronting a person who has a drug or alcohol problem is very difficult and can have adverse consequences. The HR manager must draw up a guideline on how management should approach employees with a drug and/or alcohol problem.

5.8   AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE

The world of work is coming under constant threat as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in two respects: financial consequences and the basic rights of the infected and affected worker. Earnings are reduced and companies are obliged to incur huge costs through declining productivity, increasing labour replacement and training interventions. A major area of concern is the high labour turnover caused by HIV/AIDS-related deaths.

Study section 12.3.5 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.7

Read the case study at the end of chapter 12 again and then answer these questions:

a. Is Anne's concern about HIV/AIDS in the workplace a valid concern?
b. What would you advise Anne to suggest to her director in terms of dealing with HIV and AIDS in the workplace?

Feedback

With the increasing number of people infected with HIV, this is becoming a real concern for companies. Anne has seen how this has affected her, having been an employer of a person infected with HIV. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is also a major consideration for companies in general. They will have to find ways to support these employees while keeping the goals of the company in mind and trying to maintain acceptable productivity levels.

It is recommended that every workplace work towards developing and implementing a workplace HIV/AIDS programme aimed at preventing new infection, providing care and support for employees who are infected or affected and managing the impact of the epidemic in the organisation. Employers should take all reasonable steps to assist employees with referrals to appropriate health and welfare facilities within the community if these services are not provided at the workplace.

5.9   SAFETY MANAGEMENT

The employer provides the working environment in which employees execute their tasks. It is thus the responsibility of the employer to ensure the safety of the employee. The employer will usually employ HR managers to ensure that the required safety programmes are implemented effectively.

Study section 12.4 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.8

Read the case study at the end of chapter 12 again and then answer these questions:

Assume that Anne works at a company which manufactures paint and paint products. The manufacturing plant is situated in Gauteng and the company supplies its products in bulk directly to large retail stores.

a. Identify the safety elements this company needs to take into account.
b. List the steps (in order of priority) that you think this company should take when implementing a safety programme.

Feedback

Because of the importance of safety in the workplace, you should now agree that HR managers need to remove any measures that are ineffective and introduce ones that will ensure a safe working environment in the future. The safety measures introduced will, of course, differ substantially from one organisation to the next (e.g. a gold mine compared to a supermarket).

5.10   OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES/DISEASES

HR managers need to be aware of the most common occupational injuries and illnesses that affect employees when performing their duties at work.

Study section 12.5 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.9

Complete this table to indicate the different occupational injuries and illnesses.

Injuries or illnesses	Description	Occupations/conditions
Cumulative trauma disorder		
Sick building syndrome		
Occupational disease		

Feedback

Your completed table should include the following information:

Injuries or illnesses	Description	Occupations/conditions

Cumulative trauma disorder	A repetitive motion injury caused by repetitive movements of the same muscles several times each day, leading to injuries of the back or wrist.	Meat packaging, typist or computer data capturer.
Sick building syndrome	A situation in which occupants experience acute health problems and discomfort that appear to be linked with time spent in a building. With no specific link to illness, employees complain of headaches, dizziness and fatigue.	Buildings with inadequate ventilation, contaminated carpets or machinery.
Occupational disease	These illnesses are caused by working in factories and exposure to toxic substances or working in asbestos or coal mining. Examples of such diseases are lung and liver diseases and leukaemia.	Miners, firefighters, construction and transportation workers and low-level supervisory personnel.

Adapted from Wärnich et al (2015)

5.11   OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (OHSA) is the legislation aimed at preventing accidents at work. NOSA is also an organisation that plays an important role in promoting health and safety in the workplace.

Study section 12.6 and read section 12.7 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.10

Mr Jones has just started a business and has 45 employees.

a.   What are the duties of Mr Jones as an employer in terms of the OHSA?
b.   What would the functions of the health and safety representative be?
c.   What are the duties of the employees?

Feedback

The ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of employees rests with the employer. In general, it is the duty of the employer to create and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment which is safe and without risks. Furthermore, the employer must ensure that the activities of the enterprise do not threaten the health and safety of people not employed by the organisation. You should have referred to section 12.6.1 for the duties of the employer, the employee and the health and safety representative.

5.12 WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence can be any act of physical violence, threats of physical violence, intimidation or other threatening, disruptive behaviour that occurs at the worksite. Bullying in the workplace has become a problem in recent years. It is a form of work harassment aimed at hurting, intimidating, offending, humiliating or isolating a person in the workplace. These acts can be inflicted by an abusive employee, a manager, supervisor, co-worker, customer and even a family member.

Study sections 12.8 and 12.9 in chapter 12 of the prescribed book.

Activity 5.11

What can an organisation do to help reduce violence in its workplace?

Feedback

There is no sure way to predict human behaviour. While there may be warning signs, there is no specific profile of a potentially dangerous individual. The best prevention comes from identifying any problems early and dealing with them. EAPs can assist employees in identifying and dealing with issues of violence in the workplace.

5.13 SUMMARY

Although the question of employee health and safety probably did not seem that important at first, it certainly plays an important role in retaining employees in the organisation. People who feel that the organisation cares enough about their health and safety, who feel that the working environment is in fact safe and healthy, will be more committed, motivated and productive. Despite the legal requirements for health and safety issues stipulated by the OHSA, the organisation itself has an obligation towards its employees to promote a healthy and safe workplace.

Organisations that succeed in reducing the rates and severity of their occupational accidents, diseases and stress-related illnesses and improving the quality of their employees' working life will certainly operate more effectively. This improvement can result in

- greater productivity because fewer workdays are lost
- increased efficiency and quality from a more committed workforce
- a reduction in medical and insurance costs
- a reduction in staff turnover (and therefore better retention of employees)

5.14 SELF-ASSESSMENT

The self-assessment questions consist of multiple-choice and written questions. To access the multiple-choice questions, visit the self-assessment workbook 05 tab on Additional Resources and

begin your assessment.

Question 1

Explain to the board of directors of a company the difference between employee assistance programmes, employee wellness programmes and health and safety programmes in the workplace. Is it necessary to have all these programmes in place and should the company offer these itself? Substantiate your answer.

Question 2

You have just been appointed as a health and safety representative in your workplace, but no one can tell you what your responsibilities are. Draw up a document that you can use as a guideline to assist you with your tasks, indicating your responsibilities and also discussing whether it will be necessary to appoint a health and safety committee. What would the responsibilities of this committee be?

Question 3

Your friend owns and manages a nightclub that employs two full-time barmen, five full-time waitresses and three full-time bouncers. He has been experiencing problems with several of his employees and has asked you for information and help. One bouncer has been involved in several violent episodes over the past six months, most of them unprovoked attacks on customers. Your friend has been reluctant to discipline the bouncer because he knows that the man has been experiencing marital problems and also lost his father to cancer in the past year. One of the waitresses has been behaving erratically and is frequently late or absent without phoning to explain her absences. She is also rude to customers. Some of the other staff has hinted that she is abusing painkillers, but your friend has no proof. One of the barmen has been ill quite a lot lately; he has lost weight and your friend suspects he has AIDS. What advice would you give your friend? Explain the steps he should follow in each of these instances to help his employees deal with their problems.

Feedback

Question 1

You will find the answer to this question in "Employer health care programmes" and "Safety management" in the prescribed book and in sections 5.6 and 5.9 in this unit.

Students often confuse these three concepts; make sure you understand the difference. Begin by explaining the purpose of each and then discuss the importance of each programme. You must then decide whether it is necessary to have an EAP, an employee wellness programme and a health and safety programme in one workplace – can one be substituted for the other? Also indicate whether organisations need to offer these programmes themselves or whether this can be outsourced and when you would recommend that they outsource them. Remember to give reasons for any recommendations you make.

Question 2

Find the answer to this question in "Occupational safety and health administration" in the prescribed book.

You are not required to discuss the purpose of the OHSA or the duties of employers and employees. Only discuss the duties of health and safety representatives and health and safety committees. Under which circumstances must an organisation appoint a health and safety committee?

Question 3

You will find the answer to this question in "Employer health care programmes" in the prescribed book and in section 5.6 in this unit.

Assess each problem carefully, write down the salient points and then decide what kind of assistance the owner of the nightclub can offer his employees. Explain the purpose of the assistance and the steps he should take to help his employees.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Reflect on your learning while working through this unit. Complete the following self-assessment checklist to determine your understanding of this unit and whether you have mastered the learning outcomes:

Learning outcomes	Yes	No
Can I differentiate between stress and burnout?		
Can I discuss the essentials for an effective employee assistance programme?		
Am I able to name several work-related consequences of alcohol and drug abuse?		
Can I discuss the impact of AIDS in the workplace?		
Can I state the importance of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and discuss its major provisions?		
Can I list several specific initiatives an organisation can use to help reduce violence in the workplace?		

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE REFLECTION ACTIVITY

- If you answered yes to all of the questions in the checklist, you are now ready to move on to the next workbook.
- If you answered no to any of the questions in the checklist, work through the specific sections again.

It is very important that you achieve all the learning outcomes of this module, as they guide your learning process in this module.

CARRY ON

Now that you have successfully completed Workbook 05 and all the activities, you can go on to Workbook 06.

This also means that you have completed the workbooks of topic 2.

SUMMARY OF TOPIC 2

Compensation consists of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards employees receive for their efforts. It affects employee productivity and employees' tendency to stay with the organisation. In modern organisations,

the coexistence of a variety of benefit programmes, incentive schemes and salary scales creates a challenge for the HR department: how to reward employee performance fairly and objectively, while still remaining competitive.

Organisations have to create and maintain a work environment that is safe and healthy to work in. This comprises aspects such as implementing safety measures, eliminating hazards, assisting employees who suffer from stress and burnout, and helping employees who are experiencing severe personal problems which are affecting their ability to do their work properly. A fair volume of legislation governs aspects of workplace health and safety. Issues such as the AIDS pandemic also impact on organisations and thus the HR management function.

Now you can go on to Workbook 06, which is the only unit in topic 3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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