

Problem Solving and Decision Making
BMSW4004

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1. Introduction

This report describes the healthcare industry, problems that are occurring and selects a current problem which is the communication regarding the mental health of the healthcare workers during the pandemic.

The healthcare workers includes all the staff that works in hospitals and healthcare centres that provide medical care. They face many challenges and have direct contact with the patients and many times their work is overwhelming. That is why their physical health and their mental health is very important. Mental health has been a tabu issue in the past, encountering communication problems at different levels and from different reasons and it seems that there still are barriers to communication on this topic. With the pandemic the communication on mental health became even more complex and led to poor communication, verbal and non-verbal. As the world is still facing the pandemic there is not complete information, but this report analysed the communication problem by using secondary data research and analysed it using various tools of analysis and provided a solution.

2. Overview of problems in healthcare

The healthcare industry is very large and includes a variety of services that focus towards medical care and insurance, research and development, medical equipment drugs manufacturing (Russo, 2016). The healthcare industry was shaken and continues to be affected by the current pandemic. Taking in consideration that many industries were impacted in a way or another, it could be said that this industry was the most exposed. Therefore the issues that the industry is facing today relate to costs as many services were delayed by patients and even by care providers. The pandemic highlighted lacks in organisation and revealed fragmented systems that would need to be more digitalised and overcome barriers. The consumer experience changed as patients were not able to access different services due to pandemic constraints and pressure on the crowded hospitals . Another issue related on data collection systems required in need to provide effective care. This issues led to new priorities in the industry and development of new strategies. According to Forbes (2020) the Covid-19 pandemic brought the industry to a breaking point, stating that issues were related to delay in procedures, poor outcome in the care of the patients, delay of existing problems, economic crisis.

In the United Kingdom health care providers were overwhelmed and that contribute to rise of many types of problems. The total impact of the pandemic consequences can not be fully assessed, as the world is still trying to deal with the virus and information is incomplete. Healthcare providers capabilities played a great role in dealing with the virus and it has to be acknowledge the indispensable role of the healthcare workers. Despite having no great previous experience with such situations and being exposed to great risks, the healthcare workers were the heroes who were the first line of fighting against the virus. Regarding the management of healthcare providers many crisis occurred in the decisional processes, facing staff shortages, supply shortages, equipment and allocated space for providing care.

3. Defining the problem

Problems are described as the “situations, persons, or things that need attention and need to be dealt with or solved” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Dealing or solving the problems involves the process called problem-solving. In the working environment being able to solve problems efficiently can make a huge difference in the business activity.

This report analysis only one problem of this major crisis from the healthcare sector and it will focus on the communication on the mental health of the healthcare workers during the pandemic.

Communication can be realised through verbal or non verbal. Verbal communication are realised using words and it can be spoken or written. Non verbal communication is realised through body language and it reinforces the verbal communication in face to face interaction (Agarwal, 2009).

4. The decision making process

The Decision making process is the sum of the choices after taking a decision, gathering data and weighting the alternative options. There are two approaches to be taken creative problem solving or rational problem solving. The creative problem solving approach is more innovative and imaginative rather than rational problem solving. In contrast the rational decision making process is more ordered, based on convergent thinking and focuses on a specific way of action as a result of complex analysis of the problem. It involves: problem definition, data collection and evaluation, generation of options and implementation.

In some situations decision making process can be very short with instant effect, for example in direct contact from doctors and patients. Or in some situations the decision making process can be very long, with steps that required a long period of time such as gathering data or evaluating the data.

For this report is selected the rational decision making process. The problem to be analysed is the communication on the mental health of the healthcare workers during the pandemic. Depression, stress, anxiety, insomnia are symptoms of mental health problems and it was registered a rise at global level on all demographic segments of the population, healthcare workers were also affected especially as they were facing directly the covid-19 seeing how deadly it can be (Serrano-Ripoll et al, 2020).

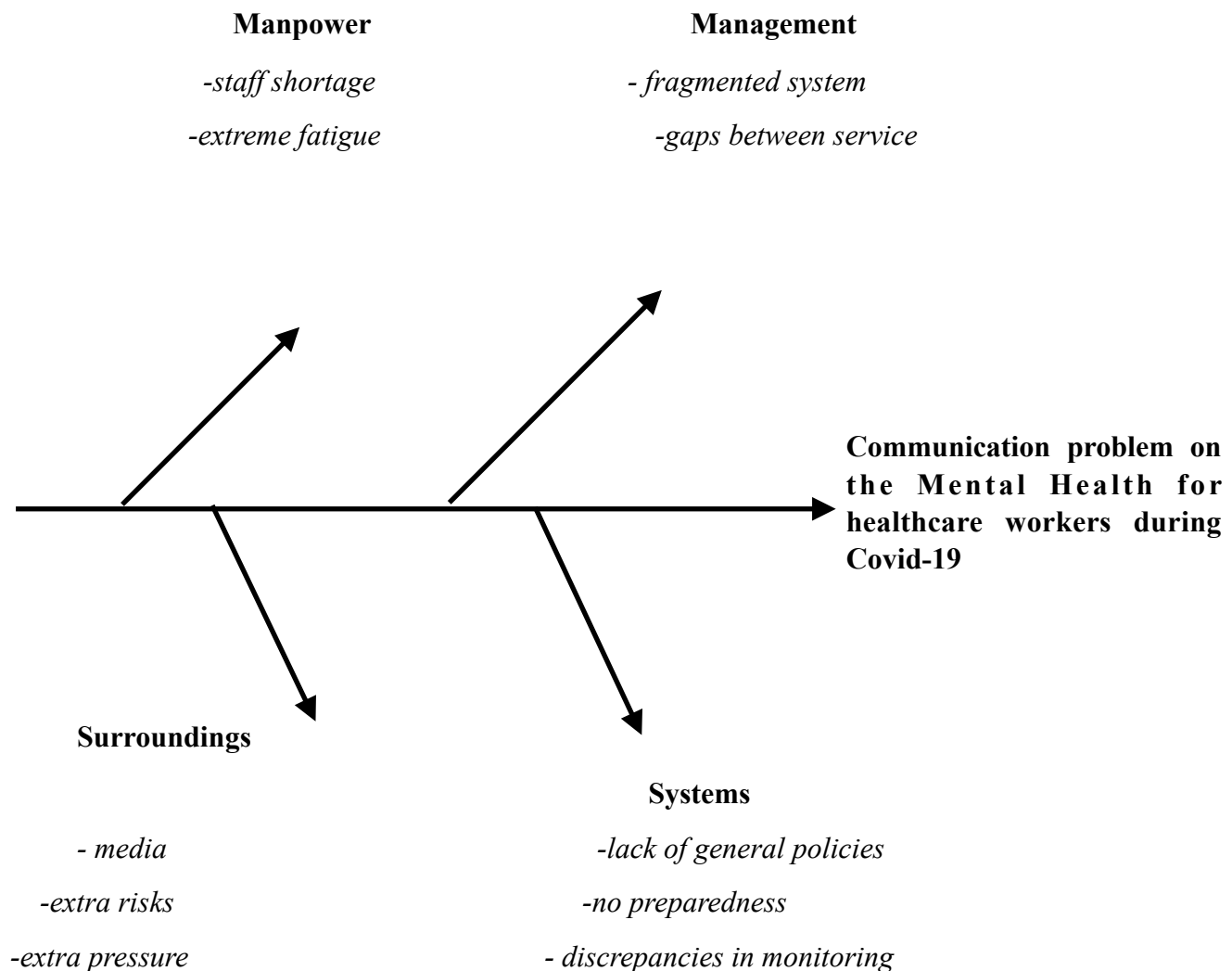
5. The impact of the problem on the stakeholders

Some of the stakeholders of the healthcare providers are doctors, nurses, patients, suppliers, government, media. The communication on the mental health of healthcare workers is very important for them to deliver a quality care. According to BMC Public Health (2021) “COVID-19 has a considerable impact on the psychological wellbeing of front-line hospital staff”. There is not a lot of information on this matter as many informations are restricted, that is why the analysis from this report aims to bring great contributions to the issue. Therefore the lack of communication on mental health problems affects the medical staff, but also the patients.

Legislation related to Duty of Conduct refers to established standards that have to be accomplished by the right medical staff with the right knowledge. The Care Act 2014 legislation refers to all the duties that local authorities must ensure when are assessing patients needs and the system for eligibility for publicly funds for care and support. The healthcare providers, have a duty of care for the doctors and nurses also (Gov., 2014). The Mental Health Act requires voluntary involvement of the patients, that is why healthcare workers should feel encouraged to talk about it and communicate it. The Government made temporary changes to the Act during the pandemic with detailed guidance in case of need (NHS, 2020).

6. Analysis of the problem

The analysis of this problem will start analysing the cause and effect. This type of analysis will highlight what determined the problem, in order to understand its complexity. It will be used a Fishbone Diagram that will help the analysis with the clear display of root cause.



This type of analysis revealed a multitude of causes for mental health problems of the healthcare workers. It can be assessed that *staff shortage* was one of the causes as during the pandemic, many doctors and nurses had to self-isolate because of symptoms or positive testing, or even worse being in need of medical care or death. Other professionals stopped work, or worked from home as

instructed by the Government, but the healthcare workers were not able to do that. Further because of the high volume of patients they worked longer hours and that lead to *extreme fatigue* which is another cause of the problem (The Lancet, 2021). Regarding the management, it was observed that was *fragmentation of the system* trying to adapt to this new pandemic. That led to lack of organisation and lack of support for those who were in need. Numerous occasions emphasised gaps between service, with *media* presenting to the public many patients with other health problems such as cancer being delayed for their treatment. Many other health problems were delayed and mental health was one of those.

The pandemic involved *extra risk* for the healthcare providers, putting themselves in contact everyday with infected patients when treating them and trying to save their life. The *extra pressure* of the pandemic put great weight on the healthcare workers as they were facing everyday the reality of people dying or being critically ill. Some of them with families, had to move out in order to keep them safe. The *lack of general policies* on pandemic and the *lack of preparedness* contributed to the rise of mental health problems for the health care providers because of the uncertainty and unprecedented circumstances. The Healthcare providers and Governments around the world were trying to adapt and find solutions, and it was more of trial and error approach. *Discrepancies in monitoring* such issues could implicate the lack of resources and data and having the main focus on Covid-19. According to Science Direct (2020) “Healthcare workers are more interested in occupational protection, rest, and social support than in professional psychological help”.

Another tool of analysis will be Pestle in order to understand the complex surroundings and all the influential factors from the outside of the healthcare organisations.

PESTLE Analysis

Political Factors:

The Government played and continues to play an important role during pandemic. The healthcare sector was greatly impacted by the measures taken in collaboration with medical experts. The changes made by the Government change the prioritising systems and caused great concerns among many patients. The conflictual political interventions influenced the industry. Government advised and promoted that people should self isolate and telephone or use online assessment if they had symptoms instead of going to GPs or Accidents and Emergencies.

Economic Factors:

Economy registered concerns worldwide and for healthcare organisations it had implications as well. Unemployment lead to people prioritising differently their income and delaying getting the required help for health problems.

Social Factors

It was registered a great shift in society rationale on how to deal with this pandemic. At the beginning many did not believe it was real or at least not that serious as it was presented in media or by the Government. Other people share common fear to go to a hospital even when needed.

Technological Factors:

The healthcare sector made use of technological development and that contribute to improvement and enrichment of the medical act and treatments. That was mirrored in the ability of creating a vaccine that fast and in the assessment of the health complications and conditions. Technological advancement such as online tools made possible the limitation of the physical contact between healthcare workers and patients. Apps, websites, video calls made available a variety of information for patients in the attempt of offering a continuous care.

Legal Factors:

This pandemic led to a change in legislation on various aspects. There were two lockdowns and many other measures and regulations aimed to keep low numbers of cases and stop the spreading of the virus. This efforts aimed to act proactively and not having overcrowded hospitals with Covid-19 patients and impossibility of giving the required care.

Environmental Factors:

The environmental considerations for the healthcare industry were in connection with waste, masks were found in rivers and waters being a source of pollution.

The SWOT analysis identifies the internal and external factors by highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the organisation and it enhances positive and negative aspects. It will be made a SWOT analysis for the main healthcare provider in the United Kingdom, the NHS.

SWOT Analysis

<u>Strengths</u> Modern technology Modern laboratories and pharmaceutical sector High levels of expertise	<u>Weaknesses</u> Lack of preparedness Lack of appropriate policies Time delays in practical implementation Lack of communication at different levels
<u>Opportunities</u> Rapid adaptation of the systems Usage of online systems to perform medical act Vaccine development Research and development resources	<u>Threats</u> Waves of covid 19 New pandemic Disruption in medical act Disruption in suppliers chain

The strengths of the healthcare provider are related to existing capabilities prior the pandemic. Existence of modern technology in hospitals and laboratories are positive aspects to be taken in consideration. High levels of expertise refer to the high numbers of doctors and scientists that are working in the organisation. The weaknesses are the lacks of the organisation such as unpreparedness, inexperience and inexistent framework to deal with pandemic. Opportunities in this unprecedented circumstances relate to the work on vaccine development worldwide; availability of resources for research and development. The threats relate to possibility of an another wave of the virus or in the future of new pandemic; disruption in medical act is a threat for the organisation as observed in the past which can lead to many issues. Disruption in suppliers chain could lead to major issues regarding drugs and protective equipment, medical equipment and technology.

7. Alternative solutions to the problem

A solution for the presented problem could be the creation of an app with general information on mental health, with possibility of online sessions with professionals. This app will ensure effective communication between the healthcare workers and the hospital or other healthcare centres management or the specialists. It is a form of written communication, but it makes possible realisation of spoken communications through video calls. Another solution that could solve the problem is the creation of a mandatory subunit within the hospital designated to address the problem. Weekly assessment of staff who register to the service and further referral to more complex assistance. This will involve verbal communication and non verbal in the meetings and written communication in the reports or other specific documents.

8. Evaluation of the solutions

PMI decision making models involves assessing what is good (plus), what is bad (minus) and what is interesting. By using this tool it can be taken decisions based on contrasting aspects of the situation and reflecting on facts.

What is good +	What is bad -	What is interesting
Technology +2 Expertise +2	Policies -2 Time delay-1	Resources +3

Total +4

There were presented two options of acting towards solving the presented problem. From the analysis it can be observed that the healthcare industry has several resources to work with such as modern technology and high levels of expertise (SWOT analysis) and that makes both options viable. In weighting which options would be more effective it has to be taken into consideration the threats of potential new pandemic, disruption of the services. Further that creating a mandatory subunit in each healthcare organisation is not very practical as it involves different aspects such as physical location, finances, staff availability, legislation, policies.

That is why an app that will monitor the mental health of the healthcare workers could work on many levels. It would make the communication very effective, it could provide the information, it could provide the contacts, the online assessment and referral for further specialised help according

to each individual needs. Further that it could send reminders and continuous notifications and that could influence some individuals to act towards their needs, instead of denying or delaying dealing with them. Mental health is vital in any individual's life and it can have serious consequences, that is why prevention psychological support is indicated.

9. Implementation of the solution

The app will be created in collaboration with the Government and medical experts that will work on the content. The Government and private organisation would work together to solve the presented problem, whilst ensuring the required types of resources. It would be designated a team to create the app and the content. The execution plan will also involve creating a network of specialist registered on the app that would be able to provide online counselling and care provision. Further that the plan would be communicated to the stakeholders.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders can be internal such as doctors, nurses, specialists etc or external such as media, suppliers, patients.

Stakeholder Map analysis

Interest of stakeholders	<u>Keep completely informed</u>	<u>Manage most thoroughly</u>
	Healthcare providers	Media , Suppliers
	Government	
	<u>Regular minimal contact</u>	<u>Anticipate and meet needs</u>
	Trade Union	Healthcare workers

Influence of stakeholders

The healthcare providers should be completely informed as they have high interest and high influence. Media and suppliers would require most thorough management whilst the least influential would be trade unions. In the anticipate and meet needs section would be the healthcare workers, as the application is intended for them and for their benefit.

Implementation of this solution requires implementing a change. Change can be managed using the ADKAR Model which represents the following steps: Awareness of the need for change, Desire to participate and support the change, Knowledge on how to change, Ability to implement required skills and behaviours, Reinforcement to sustain the change.

In the first step the management should introduce the change to the members of the organisation and explain the importance of mental health and the benefit of acting proactively, of deciding to deal with any concerns, and receive treatment when required. In the second step the organisation should show support to the application by promoting it internally. The third step would involve further action towards the emphasising the benefits of being registered and monitored through such an app. In the fourth step should be presented tutorials on how to use the app the most effective and show how easy to use is and faster than conventional methods of care for mental health. The last step would involve the success of the app, the users being satisfied with the effectiveness of the method.

Another model to implement change is the Burke-Litwin change model (1992). This application of this model shows the areas impacted by the change and the hierarchy of the drivers of change (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Burke-Litwin change model



The presented figure above is a simplified version of the theory as it involves many other factors, (structure, work unit climate, tasks, abilities, values, motivation) but it places the most important ones at the top and continues lower with less important ones. Applying this change model for the

selected situation involves following the variables. The external environment includes legislation, economy, competition, markets. During pandemic Government played a major role and had great influence. The strategy and goals are important as the change has to be understood in correlation to the strategy and to be communicated effectively to the healthcare workers. Healthcare providers mission and strategy connect to delivering quality care for their patients, but it also involves looking after their staff. The leadership will influence how the change will be accepted and if the team will commit to the change. In the case presented, the leadership would stress the importance of effective communication on the mental health and existence of a tool such as the app. The organisational culture would contribute to the implementation of the change. The hospitals and all healthcare providers are working with facts and proven theories and this culture would benefit the implementation of this change. Elements of individual and organisational performance represent the lower level on the diagram being less important. Therefore according to the model a change in one of the factors generates a certain degree of change in all others.

10. Monitoring and reviewing

Managers are responsible for the wellbeing of their staff in all circumstances. The app comes to help the problem of healthcare workers mental health during the crisis of Covid-19. The hospital managers are responsible with monitoring and evaluation of the change. This monitoring is very clear and transparent as the app gathers data of registered individuals and professionals input in care provision towards the presented problem. Users would be able to give feedback and that would benefit the method. It would assess the success of the method and every six months it will be made an evaluation and based on the feedback provided it could be improved. Results could also be compared between different areas in the UK and learn from it.

Monitoring the implemented change will be realised by the hospital managers and it will be observed if the change is successful or if requires amendments, but it will also ensure high levels of communication with the Government who is an important stakeholder in this process due to the nature and scale of the implications of the pandemic.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion the pandemic affected the entire world on many levels. The healthcare workers were the frontline for fighting against the virus. The communication of the mental health problems was difficult, with many healthcare workers deciding not even to communicate on the subject or due to staff shortage there were not dealt with. That is why there were greatly affected and led to serious consequences, physically and psychological.

In the decision making process it there were identified positive factors that determined a rational approach, deciding for the creation of a complex app that would ensure communication between healthcare managers and specialists, providing information, specialised care and monitoring aiming to prevent and treat mental health problems of doctors and nurses.

The selected solution is considered to be viable as it is based on the analysis of the industry and organisations, considering their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities as well as potential threats such as a new pandemic. It would raise the level of preparedness and it will contribute to the communication of mental health problems.

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