

Problem Solving and Decision Making

(BMSW4004_LON) with Lecturer – Alfred Mensah



Task 2

Individual report

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Complexity of the problem at the workplace.....	3
• Definition of the problem	3
• Scope and impact of the problem:	3
• Cause and Effect of the problem, Ishikawa diagram.....	3
• PESTLE analysis.....	5
Proposed range of alternative solutions to the problem.....	7
• Flexible working hours or shifts.....	7
• Working from home/distant work	7
• Use the help and funding for childcare services.....	8
• Holidays and Leaves (statutory holiday, parental leave, or time off for dependants' entitlement).....	8
Choosing the best alternative.- SWOT analysis.....	9
Conclusion.....	10
References.....	11

Introduction

People are coming to very similar challenges repeatedly, even some of the details can change based on the times and utilities and different tools they are using to resolving them, there is still something, a sense that helps us to make the right choices. The book of Proverbs in The Bible, known to be written by King Solomon about 700b.c., calls that phenomenon- "*wisdom*". (KJV Bible, 1909)

Problem solving is a process that consist elements of identifying a certain problem and classify the weighting the criteria by which we will recognise irrelevant decisions and produce and assess alternatives, which may be implemented and follow up. (Williams, 2001)

According to indeed.com, problem-solving is explained as a process of understanding a challenge and the steps taken to find an effective solution to it. They also express the fact that almost all employers are welcoming employees with high problem-solving skills and qualities, enabling them to make better decisions and apply them to improve the management in their companies.

(Indeed, 2021)

In this report I give a reflection on the learned methods and problem-solving tools, which also helped me analyse and resolve the following work problem, chosen for this assignment, namely: **Inconsistent work and life balance, and little to no-vacation time for an employee at Heathrow VIP Bookings Office.**

I will also identify and explain the nature of the problem, its cause and effect on the actual and possible affected sides using the PESTLE analysis. I will also help the decision-making process by exploring Cause and Effect analysis, Fishbone Diagram, and other decision-making tools to inform and advise the stakeholders affected in this case.

Complexity of the problem at the workplace

- Definition of the problem

- ***inconsistent work - life balance***

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines the phrase *work-life balance* as:

“The amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy” (Online Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

- Scope and impact of the problem:

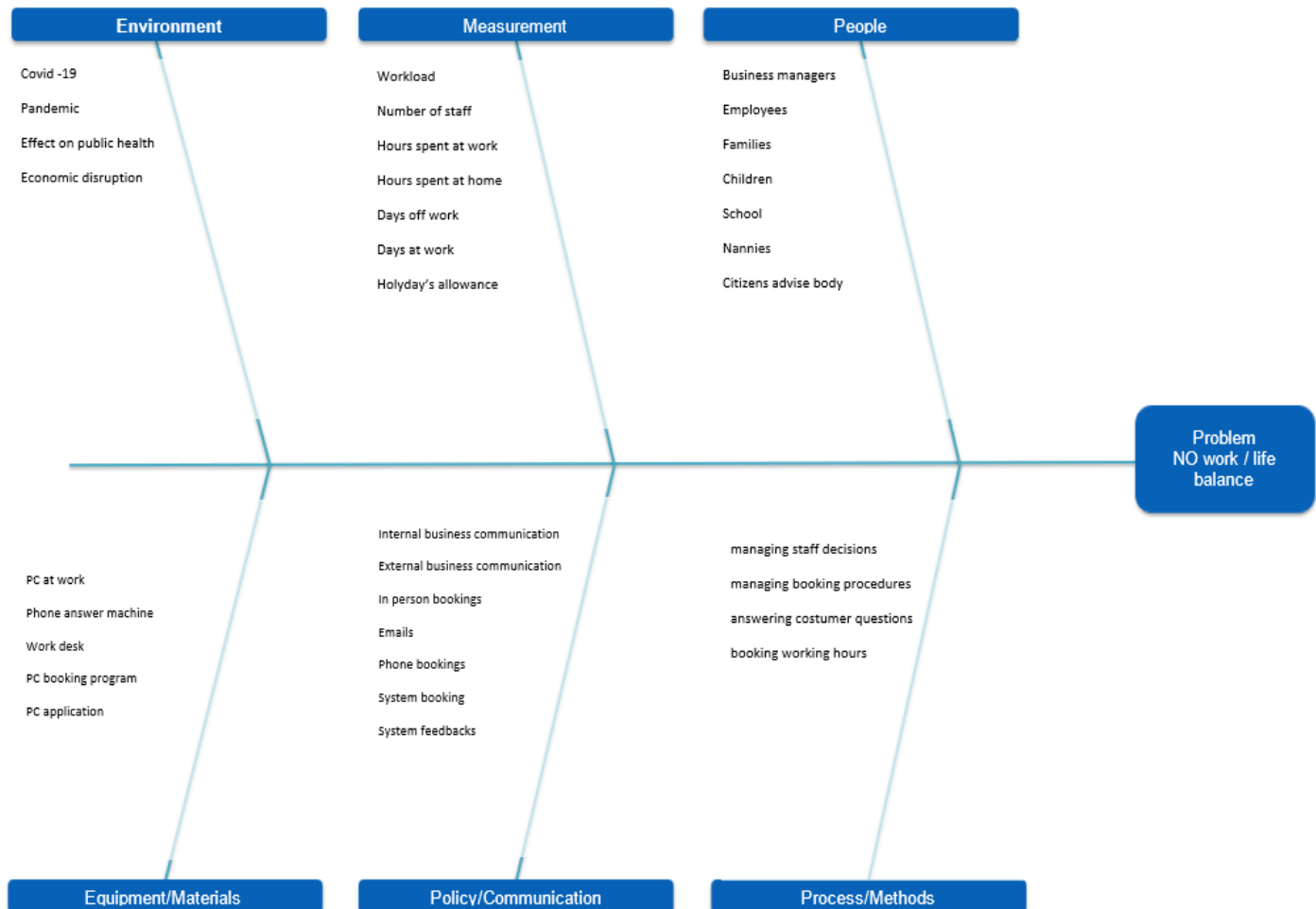
The Initiative complex of the problem is related to Covid -19 Pandemic Phenomenon, that has affected world's many businesses and people's lives and, in this case, a single mother of two children 3 and 5 years old. She works as a Booking Officer at Heathrow VIP Windsor Suite, who is recently experiencing strong concerns about being asked to work extra hours at work, including inconsistent job duties constantly changing during the day for the reason explained by shortness of staff. This fact immanently reflected on the personal and family life as it is being related to lack of time to look after the dependants, their wellbeing and their needs at home and school.

- Cause and Effect of the problem

According to Tague (2005), a fish bone diagram also called the cause-and-effect ground or issue diagram, is a visualisation tool for categorising the potential causes of a problem to identify its root causes. Fishbone is an alternative name to the Ishikawa Kaoru method, used to break down root causes that potentially contribute to a particular effect. (Tague, 2005)

Cause	Effect
- covid 19 government rules	- leading to business and staff disruptions
- inconsistent workload, - multiply job duties, - work overload	- employee is experiencing stress at work - physically and mentally exhausted - returning late from work
- not enough day breaks, - extra hours stay to finish the day tasks	- not enough time to refresh at home - no time for dependants and their needs - parenting is potentially affected - physically and mentally exhausted
- high business season	- no holidays - vacations are limited to minimum or none
unhealthy work-life balance	- is affecting productivity levels
too much emphasis on work	- results in feelings of loneliness and frustration for the employees
-not taking a healthy break from work	- unwelcome mental and physical effects on the employee
-having no vacation	- increases the risk of job burnout - decreased efficiency in their work. - become less productive and less valuable

Ishikawa (Fishbone) diagram for: work/life balance problem



- Who is Involved in the problem? (Stakeholders) PESTLE analysis

A general observation using PESTLE analysis, reveals the stakeholders involved in the problem in relation to the effect resulting of the employee's complaint.

Politics,

the **UK government** actions have affected the business budgets, business politics and business plans of many companies in the country. That also affected the personal lives of people, their homes, and jobs travels.

Economics,

The UK **Business Companies**, have been affected by changing, closing, and reforming businesses and their staff to unexpected levels. In this case the Heathrow VIP services have been massively disturbed by cutting **many customer** bookings and cancelled flights. That affected, the **general income** and the budget carrying on payments to staff and expanding the margin of expenses to profit returns.

Social,

General lockdown, isolation, and quarantine have led to social anxiety, limited communication, and emotional disturbance to **personal life of elders and children**. that lead to limited communication at work and disbalance of the workplace atmosphere related to interpersonal factors.

Technological,

unexpected shortness of staff and quick changes, of customer and consumer plans and availability, triggered by the chances of travel closures or health barriers, have given a big challenge to finding alternatives in the approaches and tools used to communicate deliver and confirm bookings and services.

The **use of computer programmes and mobile applications** have increased drastically and many of employees are not ready or being trained to use **new technologies**.

This reflected on the time employees spend at work or taking trainings out of work, to compensate to the specific new tasks at work gaining new skills to compete the demands.

Legal, the UK government advisory in the pandemic have affected the frequency of circumstances directing obligations to contract clauses, pointing to the rights of the employees to resolve multiply cases of demand for clearance caused by inexperienced and not prepared management to resolve legal rights situations at work.

Environment,

the global pandemic of covid-19, has affected nations in countries, businesses related to health and hygiene, people and employees, workplace atmosphere, families, personalities, social life.

Covid-19 pandemic environment situation

- strict government guidance and regulations,
- Employers are experiencing a great shortness of staff/unexpected illness / self-isolating/ That reflects on the actual availability of contracted employees and number of staff
- Potential growth on the daily cases to resolve at work as many companies 'multiple demands to resolving their HR problems results in [more phone calls, more emails, more legal actions to be taken by the companies resolving their situations]
- This situation is causing the non-regulated and not consistent demand for workforce, at different times of the working weekdays. The waves of workload will depend on the time when cases to resolve rise or slowdown.
- Unwillingly the amount of stress at work and family life is raised to higher levels and the need of time to relax and refresh becomes an urge.
- looking after sick dependant comes unexpectedly as a personal need for care.

Proposed range of alternative solutions to the problem.

- Flexible working hours or shifts

- if asked, the employer might be able to consider and give a part time shift or work, alternative days or hours depending on various business practicing contract basis.
- ask for a substitute, to cover the times when you cannot afford yourself to stay after the arranged by contract hours.

- Working from home/distant work

- in line to the government instructions, employees can be given the opportunity to work from home where possible. On that base the employee can consider taking some hours or shifts of distant working from home.

- use the new setups and online resources to complete some or partly of the daily tasks.
 - the business management of the company can help with setting up distant work environment / laptop and certain software/internet/a chair and a desk/
-
- Use the help and funding for childcare services

Information on childcare services can be found on the government page 'gov.uk' and also steps to childcare help can be suggested by the citizen advice bureau and many Non-profit organisations helping the employee and employers.

- Holidays and Leaves
(statutory holiday, parental leave, or time off for dependants' entitlement)

- Statutory holiday entitlement is 28 days holiday

The employer can include bank and public holiday as part of the statutory entitlement, decide to roundup the holiday entitlement, but cannot circle it down, they have to offer holiday pay throughout the statutory leave, also can offer additional paid holiday, named 'contractual leave entitlement' (gov.uk, 2021)

- **Taking Parental Leave:** unpaid parental leave is a form of statutory leave (like maternity or paternity leave) and must be taken in one-week blocks. If a child is disabled and on Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment, parental leave can be taken in chunks of one day. It is important to plan, when booking parental leave (Working Families, 2017)

- Taking Time Off for Dependants:

Time off for Dependants offers employees the right to take enough unpaid time off work to take needed action to deal with circumstances concerning their children. (Working Families, 2017)

More information can be found on: <https://www.acas.org.uk/absence-from-work/time-off-to-help-someone-else>

SWOT analysis - choosing the best alternative.

work/life balance alternatives	Flexible hours working	working from home	Holidays / Leaves
Strengths	does not required work on holidays, balance work and childcare	more time at home overseeing dependants	more time with dependants, - leisure, and travels, - strong refreshing factor
Weaknesses	will result in a permanent change to working conditions	more distractions, more noise, need for working setups	needs time arranging it, waiting for conformations, notice period, parental leave is unpaid
Opportunities	reduction in hours flexible working pattern flexible working request	getting financial help to set up the internet and PC desktop, less workplace stress	bank and public holidays as part of the statutory entitlement 28days take unpaid parental leave to look after their child's wellbeing
Threats	employer could refuse if it would have an impact on their business if temporary, should be clearly mentioned in the request	energy bills, phone bills, distraction leads to not properly completing the tasks	Leave can be refused, though their employer would have to allow them to take the leave at another time No time for notice period

Conclusion

To find the reasons for this problem in details and to observe the situation I've made the research based on "cause and effect" tool and using the PESTEL analysis and the fishbone research methods, I have explored and, have suggested the steps to the possible solution for that case.

Flexible Working Hours

can be suggested as the most appropriate approach to the problem persisted. However, the change of contract can bring some financial stress. That financial stress can be balanced and overtaken by the help of government scheme for benefits help.

Steps to accomplish that:

- speak to the manager
- decide which days and hours you would like to work covering the contract hours
- decide if temporary or permanent change
- making an official letter to the employer
- expect possible change of contract
- expect possible refusal

"Leaders and managers who can learn implement and then teach their organisation to become proficient at solving complex problem efficiently and expeditiously are leaders who will always be in great demand and of great value. "(Jeffrey Deckman, 2020)

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