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Module: BMSW4004 Problem solving and decision making

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Title: Problem-solving and decision-making report

Table of contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 The problem.....	3
2.1 Analysis.....	4
3.0 Possible solutions	4
3.1 Evaluate solutions and PMI	5
3.2 Final solution.....	6
4.0 Monitoring plan (stakeholders) and control	7
4.1 Implementation of the solution	7
5.0 Conclusion	8
6.0 References.....	9
Attachment 1.....	10

1.0 Introduction

A problem is a matter or situation that presents complications in finding solutions (Ziegenfuss, 2002). Knowing how to analyse a problem and being able to find the most suitable solution, helps individuals to overcome difficult situations and turn them into achievements and new opportunities. Using the different techniques learned in this module (Fishbone technique, PMI analysis, Stakeholders' plan, and Gantt chart) guides in analysing different perspectives of a problem and aid to find the reasons behind a solution with a consequent development.

Understanding what could have been done differently and what went wrong when a problem was faced, also thinking about what created that situation, could help in avoiding the repetition of similar circumstances. For example, in a business, this could help in being more productive and for an employee being able to solve problems may improve personal achievements and create a better work environment. Not being able to visualise the problem and find solutions can generate negative effects such as being stuck in the same situation for a long time, feeling angry and frustrated (Tams, 2016) and it might also increase the problem itself.

This assessment aims to address several aspects related to problem-solving and decision-making. For this report, I have analysed the mental health issue in my workplace using the fishbone analysis, the PMI technique, the stakeholders' plan, and the Gantt chart.

2.0 The problem

My first job was as a sales assistant in a family business bakery. After the first year I realised that I was not feeling good anymore, even thinking to go to work was making me feel sick. I was working six/seven days a week for 10/12 hours per day, doing unpaid overtime. This had a huge impact on my mental and physical health, I did not have time to do anything else other than work, eat and sleep. After a couple of years, my productivity and my physical health started to decline. My colleagues and I had to take days off because of the stress level caused by the job distributions and the employers' treatments. For example, they did not communicate with us, and they did not pay attention to our well-being caring only about customers and not employees. Also, most of my colleagues left the job because of the stress this was causing them, and the company had to hire always new people and pay for their training.

2.1 Analysis

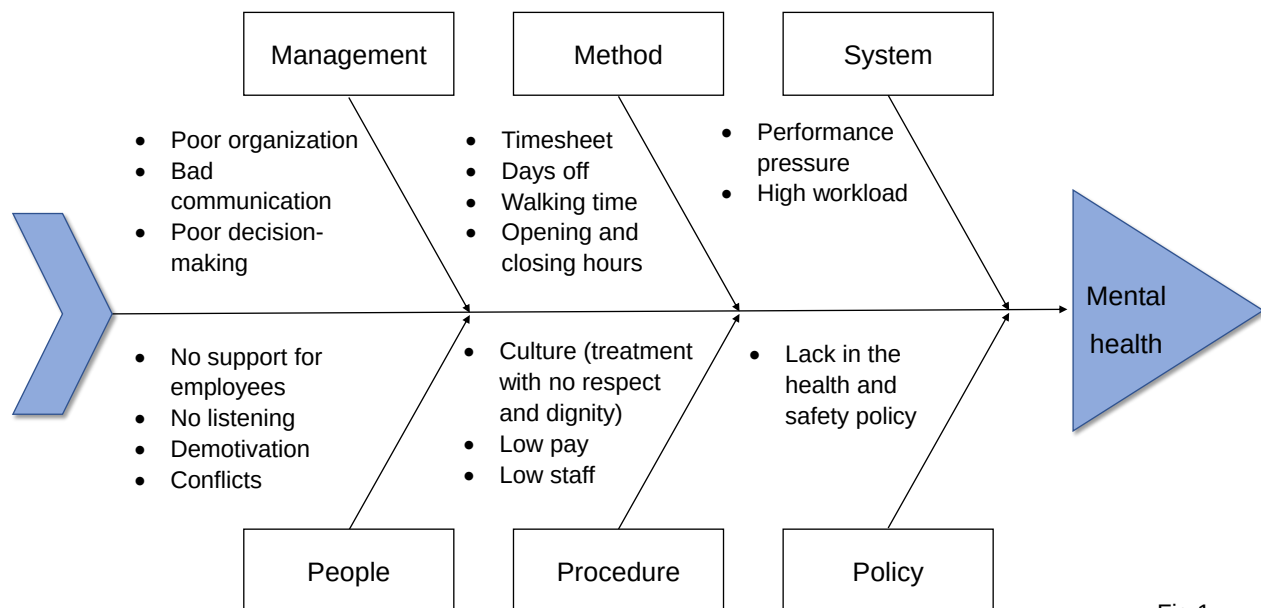


Fig.1

The main problem in my workplace was the employees' mental health which is the status of well-being where an individual can take the advantage of their abilities, perform well in a productive manner, deal with different situations and be able to contribute to their community (World Health Organization, 2018). In the job at the bakery, I was not performing well anymore, and I felt stressed, so I used the fishbone diagram (Ishikawa, 1996) which shows six possible categories of potential causes of this problem (Fig.1). In this company, there was a huge lack of health and safety policy because the organisation did not take care of long working hours causing stress, tiredness, loss of concentration, and consequent injury risk. For example, one day I felt tired (doing overtime) I had an injury caused by the system which involved an elevated workload and a high pressure on the individual who had to manage to complete simultaneously many duties (baking, serving customers, displaying food, cleaning etc). Furthermore, the management had poor decision making and a poor organization of assignments, giving a not clear explanation of daily tasks or weekly goals. Besides, the procedure was inappropriate, employees were underpaid, and managers were treating them unfairly and also sending work-related messages on their days off. In addition, there was no support and no listening from the employers who were taking wrong decisions about the tasks' distribution. For instance, I was promoted to the manager position, but my salary did not increase, and every employee's mistakes were my responsibility as a result of feeling demotivated to do my job.

3.0 Possible solutions

After having analysed the causes of the employees' mental health problem I can visualise possible solutions.

Policy reformulation: The policy needs to be reformulated and must include mental illness prevention and support. To prevent mental illness, trained staff need to control and evaluate possible symptoms of employees that are starting to not come to work or not being able to accomplish assigned tasks on time.

Management, system, and organization plan (method): Managers must organise the workload between the staff members and the hours they can work without feeling overwhelmed and tired as a consequence of injuries or sicknesses. The opening-closing hours could be changed to give employees time to rest and go back to work feeling refreshed.

Procedure (salary increase): The salary should be increasing each year and employees who are promoted and who have more responsibilities should have another contract with higher pay and maybe other benefits.

Also, if the company has the required financial resources, there should be hired a couple of part-time team members to cover the full or half-day off from other colleagues that can rest and avoid long shift hours.

People (employees and employers' support): Employers should support employees and have a meeting at least once a month where they could discuss issues and concerns and try to find a common solution. The company's culture should promote collaboration between employees and listen to employers as well.

3.1 Evaluate solutions and PMI

PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING
Ability to work less hours reducing tiredness +7	Higher cost for the employer - 6	Better company reputation +7
Reduce the stress +8	Price increment - 7	Employees will less likely change job +8
Afford gym and physiotherapy +6	Less possibility to hire new staff -7	Better workplace environment +8
Afford living costs and overcome poverty +10		

Solution 1= +34

PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING
Employees supported and motivated +8	May arise some arguments -3	Self-esteem +6
More collaboration and productivity +9	Time and cost of trained support -2	Less absenteeism +10
Incrementation of competence and abilities +5		Employees promotions +6
Better company's culture +7		Not feeling isolated +7

Solution 2: +53

As shown by the PMI tool developed by Dr Edward de Bono, the solutions I am proposing, generate and weigh different pros, cons, and implications of a decision (Finley, 2012).

Solution 1 salary increase

As a first solution, I decided to analyse the salary increase. With higher salary employees can work fewer hours receiving the same salary as before but dedicating more time spending part of the wage for relaxing activities such as going to the cinema, pub, restaurant or a have a short holiday weekend. This will help in reducing stress (Liu, 2021) and in creating a social lifestyle outside of work. In addition, employees could afford to go to the gym or get some physiotherapy treatments to reduce the risk of injuries and prevent any physical health issues. This solution could also help some individuals or families overcome their poverty status and afford the living cost (Emig and Moore, 2021), feeling happier and satisfied. On the other hand, the company must increase the cost of the products to have higher financial resources and may lose some customers. Also, the company might not be able to hire new staff members because of the tax and salary costs. The interesting point of this solution is that a company with a high salary would improve the organisation's reputation (Cox, 2021) and creates a better workplace environment, having fulfilled employees that will unlikely change their job.

Solution 2 People and support

The second solution I propose is to give more support to employees. Support and motivation increase collaboration between colleagues and employers with a consequent implementation of productivity. Employees will also increase competence and abilities by exchanging ideas and opinions with others. This will help in creating a better company culture where employees will feel motivated to go to work and will be willing to accept challenges (Heinz, 2021). The company should invest in training for mental health prevention and should ask for frequent employees' feedback that will help the business itself to improve its workplace quality. Having meetings is a great opportunity for both employees and employers to talk about any issues or concerns that may arise creative unexpected solutions. However, having many different opinions might originate some arguments and create adverse effects. Training staff to understand mental health issues will cost time and money for the company, but it will reduce the employees' stress and the following absenteeism (NORC and NSC, 2021). Staff members will not feel isolated and motivating them with a deserved promotion will grow their self-esteem.

3.2 Final solution

After having evaluated two possible solutions and applied the PMI, I have decided to implement solution 2 which is giving more support to employees. The first thing to do is plan what the company must do to prevent mental health issues in the workplace. A budget must be set for hiring a mental health prevention trainer who can train managers and supervisors. Employers and managers must

be committed to achieving the same goal which is to prevent and understand if there are any mental health symptoms among employees. The main task will be focusing on the training which has to be scheduled for all the employers, managers and supervisors that must be sure to understand when an employee is tired due to the workforce or long hours shifts, when an employee is distracted, anxious or when a staff member starts to be absent from work. There should be a written policy with rules to follow in case of mental health problems (OECD, 2022) emerge with any details of the dealings plan. Furthermore, meetings will be needed to review the training and analyse it to see if it is working or if something needs to be changed. Also, constant feedback from employees must be asked frequently and must be reported to managers who will be able to write and analyse any issues offering proper solutions.

4.0 Monitoring plan (stakeholders) and control

Applying for solution 2 and giving more support to employees, the employer will need to organise and write a plan to prevent mental health problems (Attachment 1) specifying all the possible solutions to any symptoms which may arise in the workplace. According to Ziegenfuss (2002), everyone inside and outside the company contributes to the quality of poor or accurate problem-solving. In fact, following the stakeholders' plan, which defines who can influence or have an interest in reaching the company objectives (Bonnaïous and Rendtorff, 2016), managers and supervisors will have to analyse if the procedure is working properly and report any difficulties that may appear during the monitoring time, trying to apply and evaluate different solutions. Besides, employees must report any issues or concerns and feel free to talk about hours of work, timeline pressure or any conflicts between colleagues, supervisors, and managers. Also, customers will leave feedback on social media when an employee is tired, and his low performance reflects on their service. In addition, health and safety trainers' key interest is to take care of forming employers, supervisors and managers teaching them to monitor, evaluate and take solutions for any health and safety problems. Finally, the finance consultant will directly deal with the employers to offer different financial options to give the best support to the employees without reflecting a bad impact on the business's financial resources. Lastly, employers and staff members can receive more advice from occupational health support.

4.1 Implementation of the solution

Referring to Belton and Stewart (2001), in an organization facing constantly the same issue there is needed to formulate and formalise a proper process which will be used to approach future problems. Intending to develop a structured mental health prevention policy, I decided to use the Gantt chart, (Fig. 2) which shows the steps to be taken throughout the year (Siegel and Sweeney, 2020). In the first month, the company should prepare a plan, organise a budget to invest in health and safety support, and find financial and timing sources to allocate proper training, meetings, reviews, and planning. After the first three months of monitoring, the company should review, readapt the original

plan (if required) and monitor it for a further three months period where managers, supervisors and employers will decide, after a review and a meeting, to formulate a written policy which must be followed at all times.

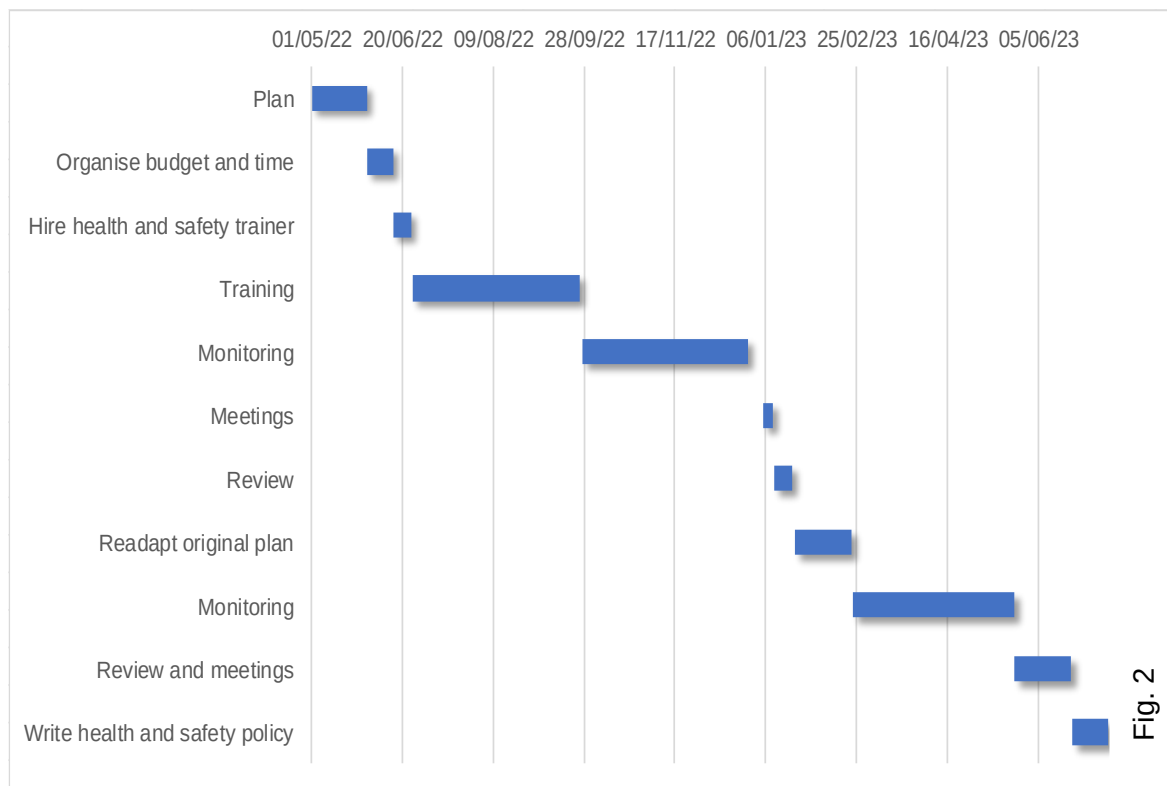


Fig. 2

5.0 Conclusion

People must be aware of the causes of problems to find possible solutions to avoid mistakes and disagreements. The fishbone analysis helps in visualising the main causes with the sub-causes of a problem and with them, it will be possible to formulate different solutions. With the PMI, it is possible to verify which is the best solution to apply and evaluate the pro and cons of making a decision. Also, the stakeholders' plan will show who is involved and what are their main interests in solving a problem. Furthermore, the Gantt chart will aid in organising a proper plan to implement the solution and avoid any further problems. Following the techniques studied within this module, there is a clear explanation of how a problem should be solved and how it may be possible to avoid the repetition of the same issue. Finally, having problem-solving and decision-making skills helps to achieve the desired goal and to create better workplace environments.

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Attachment 1

STAKEHOLDER	POWER/INTEREST	KEY INTEREST & ISSUES	COMMUNICATION VEHICLE	FREQUENCY
EMPLOYER	high	Organise a plan to prevent mental health problems	Official communication	Monthly
MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS	high	Analyse situations and find proper solutions	Official communication and written reports	Weekly
EMPLOYEES	high	Report any issues or concerns	Confidential communication	When needed
CUSTOMERS	low	Feedback	Social media	When needed
HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINERS	low	Train and review	Official communication	Every 6 months
FINANCE CONSULTANT	low	Budget consultation	Confidential communication	When needed
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SUPPORT	low	Advice	Confidential email or official consultation	When needed