

Problem Solving and Decision Making
BMSW4004_LON

Task 2

Viorel Grigorita
Lecturer: Molly Jack

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Defining the complex problem and impact

Mental health issues are one of the biggest problems in the workplace within all industries today. It is something that has affected everyone at some point in their lives. At least 1 in 6 people report experiencing a mental health problem in a week in England [1].

The scope of mental health on a much larger scale than it first seems to the eye, within the workplace employees get pressured to work accordingly to the company standards that usually result to employees quitting their job because they have a lack of support structure in the workplace or feel that they are not a good fit for the company anymore.

The impact of mental health within the workplace is so large that 1 in 6.8 people experience mental health problems and that with better mental health support in the workplace, it could save UK businesses up to £8 billion a year [2]. As a result, this is a complex problem worth investigating solutions for and looking into how it can be better approached in today's workplace.

Analysis of Mental Health in the workplace

Within the workplace a key statistic is that 12.7% of all sickness absence days within the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions [3 – mental health. org]. This definitely shows that there is an opportunity here to improve upon how there can be better support provided to employees as well as encouraging an open conversation, without judgement to allow them to feel safe and comfortable where they work.

To add to this in a survey carried out by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), they found that in the UK there were 820,000 employees suffering from work related stress, depression or anxiety and around 17.9 million working days were lost due to the same issue. [4]

Employees who live alone were more likely to report loneliness both “often or always” and over the past seven days than the average adult; this was also the case for those in “bad” or “very bad” health, in rented accommodation, or who were either single, or divorced, separated or a former or separated civil partners. This further adds to the need to have a structure and community of support within a workplace to reduce the effects of isolation and loneliness that can lead to other mental health issues.

Finally, in the last year the effects of Coronavirus and lockdowns consequently leading to employees having to be forced to adapt their working environments from working in the office with colleagues to remotely working at home has significantly increased mental health effects. From recent research from RSPH, it found that working from home left people feeling less connected to colleagues (67% of people), had less exercise (46% of people) and for those who had multiple housemates were more likely to think that working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing (41% of people). [5]

What solutions can be done to approach Mental Health?

Mental health comes in a variety of forms and there is not one single point where everyone feels the same things as each other, everyone has a different experience and so the approach to providing a solution cannot be one size fits all.

To reduce the impacts and consequences mental health issues have on employees within the workplace, all companies need to increase more focus on their workers and how they are doing day to day. Something like a daily briefing before people start working to see if anyone is feeling

bit let down from issues in their personal life could really help to make a difference and encourage a better safer environment for everyone.

One way some companies like “Monzo” manage mental health is by training people to become mental health first aiders as they believe physical health and mental health are connected to better work life balance too. [6] On their website they have led the way within the industry on encouraging a better culture by providing a way for any employee to publicly share any issues they are having in their lives and by providing dedicated days to take off for anything related to mental health. Within offices they have also integrated first aid boxes which contain resources to encourage activities to improve mental health day to day and allow an employee to take ownership of their wellbeing. [7] Finally, things that aren't standard today have been introduced internally to further add ease and reduce stress to all types of employees such as the introduction of leave for pregnancy loss for either partner. [8]

There are also other ways that companies to provide resources to help empower their employees to take care of their mental health. Providing access to services such as an Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) helpline or private health insurance with dedicated extensive mental health cover on it with providers such as with Vitality or AXA will definitely help add an extensive network to their employees. Another thing that companies could provide would be subscriptions to apps that can be used from anywhere to help manage mental health such as Headspace or cognitive behavioural therapy apps (CBT).

Finally, companies could look to encourage awareness and talk of mental health and how it has affected various people within the workplace by hosting events for example by inviting industry specialists that can come in the company every month to talk about issues going on in people's lives with sensitive topics such as bereavements, pregnancy loss, relationships or suicidal thoughts. A professional talk where mental health workers can make the employees working at the industry feel listened to and safe to share their worries.

Evaluating the various solutions for the most appropriate option

As seen above, there are various solutions available to be able to approach mental health issues and to help integrate a safer and more inclusive environment for employees in the workplace. Swot analysis on the problem of mental health starts from how severe companies precede the topic of mental health with strengths of higher employee satisfaction. Weaknesses that can arise are employees leaving the workplace /leaving reviews and complaints under company name that there isn't employee priority. In the workplace threats like legally being involved for abusing employees by ignoring signs of frustration and other mental affects. Opportunities arise from prioritizing employees' emotions by communicating and offering help in the workplace will attract other companies for collaborations and promotions.

We use SWOT analysis to pay attention to internal business interests like reducing people taking sick days and staff turnovers by understanding employees that suffer from mental health and possibilities of finding solutions which will have a positive impact knowing the workplace is a safe place to come to.

The plan for implementing the solution

To implement our approach to mental health issues in the workplace, we could run some learning sessions with employees and managers to find what types of approaches they would like to have towards mental health and what solutions and ideas they could propose themselves. Bringing in external providers and specialists who can provide some insight into how they approached mental

health in their workplaces and what impact it had benefitted like financially and boosting employee involvement and interest in the company.

The technique for identifying all the possible causes of mental health has associated with a particular solution / and its effects if the problem root isn't identified fully and correctly it will never be solved and companies will be losing out on employees that can bring out a lot to the company.

Pestle is a problem solving and decision-making method we can use to identify the big picture of the environment where employees that struggle from mental health and how things can get worse if the company doesn't act up on it, as well as how far the company can improve and upgrade by listening and communicating with their employees.

Pestle stands for:

P – Political, E – Economic, S – Social, T – Technological, L – Legal, E - Environmental

For political it can increase pressure on government to provide more mental health support to population as mental health increases.

Economically companies need to hire specialists to support people and having to give out holidays resulting in more costs to hire temporary staff.

On the social factor it causes people to miss out days at work because they don't feel socially accepted in their workplace.

One of mental health considered getaway would be the technological factor as people find it easy to distract their lives and issues in the workplace by accessing social media as it doesn't involve speaking with a real person which can feel safer than sharing and being judged. However, that also can result in being bullied online which some cases - is the reason of mentally being scarred.

People tend to find that they aren't legally being understood when they react differently from other employees that don't suffer mental health making them feel judged and unaccepted.

Mentally the environment really affects how you act and can most times be making things worse for people that are struggling. This can especially be seen in office environments where people struggle in silence rather than reaching out for help because they feel like they would be judged for doing so.

Communicating it to key stakeholders

To effectively start improving mental health in the workplace we can talk of how creatively make the topic of mental health stand out in the workplace. We can make it seem as a useful and realist topic to focus on as its affects can really impact businesses and income.

Thinking creatively, we can increase awareness of mental health by looking in many different possibilities of how we can solve it and be aware of it every day. Companies can create a theme of paradoxical characteristic by letting people that have and don't have mental health into groups so they can all work together.

This will show professionalism of the company by making sure the people who don't have mental health by planning training to discipline their behaviours and actions when talking and interacting with people that suffer with mental health.

Monitoring and review techniques to ensure the successful implementation of the solution

Having a positive encouragement and an open environment around mental health within the workplace will support employees that suffer from mental health by showing them that the company is putting in effort in getting to understand the struggles that people have with mental health. Making use of anonymous survey services internally such as Peakon will help management and employees see how much progress a company is making about mental health. By keeping the survey anonymous it would truly help an employee to be able to feel empowered in speaking their opinion without needing to worry about any potential follow up consequences. [9]

Managers and executives can review the topic of mental health and add it on high alerts, things like posters around the workplace can alert and remind colleagues that not everyone is doing well even if they may seem. Keeping the awareness of mental health awareness regularly will help each employee to feel supported throughout their time at the company.

They can also implement mental health awareness and the importance of it by adding it as an annual training in companies to remind others of how to act and let people that suffer of mental health that they are listened and understood.

Conclusion

Overall mental health awareness is a key issue that faces all industries today. By taking a preventive approach to reduce the impacts it has on a workforce and raising the awareness of it within the workplace, will bring a positive impact to the business and their employees. Mental Health should be a priority nowadays, especially with rates of mental health being at its highest point. We've explored the impacts and the various ways to approach it now it is down to the employers and employees to take action.

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