

Course: CERT HE Skills for the Workplace,

Health & Social Care

Module: Problem Solving and Decision Making

BMSW4004_LON

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**“Poor Work-life Balance faced by Healthcare Professionals in the UK: Its
impact and possible solutions”**

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Abstract

Studies and research are currently standing out on how to achieve a balanced life, which is known as the state where people prioritize equally the demands of their career and the demands of their personal life, especially in view of the possibilities offered by modern technologies.

The recent changes in the workplaces in the UK arising from the Brexit and from the Covid pandemic, at a time when health centres were overloaded, demanded very often the employees to have their working hours alternated, and this situation has made it difficult to reach a work-life balance. Thus, even with many resources available nowadays related to how to achieve work-life balance, the companies and employers have as much responsibility as the individual to encourage this healthier balance.

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1. Introduction:



As stated by Martins (2018), the results of Ankur Shah research in Western Europe, concluded that Great Britain is the place that has the worst work-life balance among those countries. According to the author, studies have shown a high-rise proportion of workers that work fifty-plus hours per week or even more. That means Brits are spending more time in a professional occupation instead of breaking the connection with work or doing other relaxing activities.

Experiencing a good work-life balance, according to the Mental Health Foundation (2021), has different meanings for everyone, since each person achieves a healthy balance in both professional and personal areas, allowing them to be satisfied and fulfilled with their choices, such as achieving responsibilities at work and having enough time to spend with family and friends; also time for hobbies and spirituality, decent sleep, and eating properly; moreover, not distressed about work while are at home.

However, it is currently difficult for many professionals to achieve this balance, meeting a *Poor working-life balance* though, especially in the healthcare sector. Based on research, this report aims to find the causes and effects of a poor work-life balance, furthermore, discuss the impact that this problem has on the stakeholders, in order to analyse the decision-making process including the relevant legislation, moreover, applying the successful theories to recommend a solution to this problem faced by the healthcare professionals in the United Kington.

2. Poor Work-life Balance in Healthcare

Having a poor working-life balance means that the balance between personal and professional life is not achieved by the healthcare workers. This problem has negative impact on employee satisfaction at work and consequently decrease creativity, productivity and quality of the service provided; furthermore, impacting on company's goals, costs and expenses in the Healthcare's billing, such as waste with training and overtime work, making wrong decisions, and rework.

Moreover, it is necessary to understand the nature of this problem, which can be caused by organizational factors such as job demand and even company culture and by individual factors such as work orientation, personality and energy, personal control, age and gender, also life and career stage. Therefore, the problem faced by the Healthcare workplace can also be caused by external factors of a company.



2.1 PESTEL Analyses:

It is important to evaluate the external factors through the PESTEL Analyses, that tool also allows collapse the risks and opportunities into Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Environmental and Legal external factors.

Political: Government regulations related the Covid pandemic has challenged and presented new risks to the well-being of healthcare workers; the healthcare system has been put under significant pressure. Health professionals experienced a high level of work-related stress at risk of poor psychological well-being (Cambridge University, 2021), thus significantly affecting the health work-life balance.

Economic: Currently inflation faced by Britain have forced the market to raise prices and subsequently, shorten purchasing power, population are in needs to work more hours to keep the same lifestyle, (Goodman, 2022)

Sociological: 'Stay at home save lives' as the same as social distance slogans have been affecting people's social life until nowadays, forcing people to stop socialize as it was in the past, (Deshpande, 2020).

Technological: Work from home and applications such as email, WhatsApp, social media, moreover the easy access to the internet via mobile phones, have made people available to work all the time, including during their time off work, (Deshpande, 2020).

Environmental: Not having adequate space to work from home. Insecurity to return to work, (Deshpande, 2020).

Legal: As states by Galindo (2019), Dayan and Billy had said in a recent report from Nuffield Trust "*The end of freedom of movement for people in the EU after Brexit could cause a further slowdown in the number of arrivals of workers who occupy positions essential to the system*". This same report shows the proportion of foreign employees between 2000 and 2019 reached 23.5%, points out a growing foreign dependence for the NHS.

2.2. Cause and effect analyses of poor work-life balance:

The Cause and effect analyses helps to identify the causes of the problem and assess its effects, addressing the root of the problem.

Causes:

- Lack of qualified professionals
- Decrease employees
- Working longer hours
- Isolation in working conditions
- New rules to apply to the job and visa
- Rise duties at work
- Rise expenses without a rise in salary

Effects:

- Work stress
- Work insecurity
- Lack of control
- Poor decision-making skills
- Poor employee productivity
- Impact on others in workplace and at home
- Behaviour at work
- Threat of mental health issues

3. Discussion of the impact on all stakeholders

The impact of the work-life balance on healthcare workers is an important subject to discussion, as the type of work delivered by this industry is highly valuable and important to society. For this reason, the inclusion of all the stakeholders related to this industry needs to be involved in the discussion, which is essential to help these workers to achieve a good balance between their work-life, helping them to maintain excellent care and support for patients in a high standard manner, as the society and governments demands.

In this discussion, we will describe all the aspects involved in the decision-making related to work-life balance for healthcare workers, and the present legislation and codes of conduct followed by the United Kingdom state.

The most important stakeholders related to this discussion presented here are the patients; employees and employers; and the government and regulators.

Patients

In the UK all the patients have the right by law to be treated with respect. It is mandatory by law that a citizen needs to be treated respectfully and compassionate, as society demands. In this view, all the health workers need to be encouraged to treat patients in a compassionate way, delivering a high standard way of care and support, and involving patients in the treatment decisions. All this demands time and skills from the healthcare workers, which need to be trained and supported to achieve this excellence. To support the workers, a fair and well-balanced work-life balance needs to be achieved in a way that they can deliver the expected way of treatment without compromising their personal life.

Available at: (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/discrimination-in-health-and-care-services/taking-action-about-discrimination-in-health-and-care-services/protecting-your-human-rights-when-using-health-and-care-services/#:~:text=Your%20right%20not%20to%20be,hospital%20or%20a%20care%20home>)

Employees

In order to provide healthcare workers to be assertive, compassionate, and supportive in their work, it became mandatory that the same workers have a well-balanced work-life, in a way they can manage well personal life in deterrent to their job. The employees have the right to have a flexible working schedule in the way that they can deliver the best results on the work, without compromising their personal life.

Employers

Employers have a duty to look after all employees' health and safety. This also includes healthcare workers from over-working or doing long hours shift runs. Helping workers to have a flexible working life balance will affect directly the results of these workers. Employers need to consider healthcare workers' personal life schedules, to be supportive and assist them in the better possible way. (Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>)

Government and regulators

Government and regulators are aware of the implication of long hours working and the importance of work-life balance for healthcare workers. In the UK the Working Time Regulations 1998 law establishes the ideal conditions that workers need to have in their jobs. It lay down a maximum of 48 hours of work a week, but also allow workers to opt-out of the same regulation. This regulation includes not just the right but also the duties that workers need to comply. (Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/working-time/factsheet#gref>)

4. Analysis of the decision-making

In the healthcare working industry, the regulators of this industry develop a Code of Conduct with which workers need to comply. This Code was established to protect the public by promoting best practices in healthcare, but also display a self-care conduct that protects the employers as follow *“the actions people take for themselves, their children and their families to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health; meet social and psychological needs...”*

It shows the importance that government and regulators are willing to promote to help workers to improve their own personal life and the balance between work and life in general.

(Available at: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Standards-legislation/Code-of-Conduct/Code-of-Conduct.pdf>)

To deliver this support, employers need to consider flexible work and various aspects demanded by care workers such as:

- Reducing the time of work
- Flexibility on the start/finish working scheduling

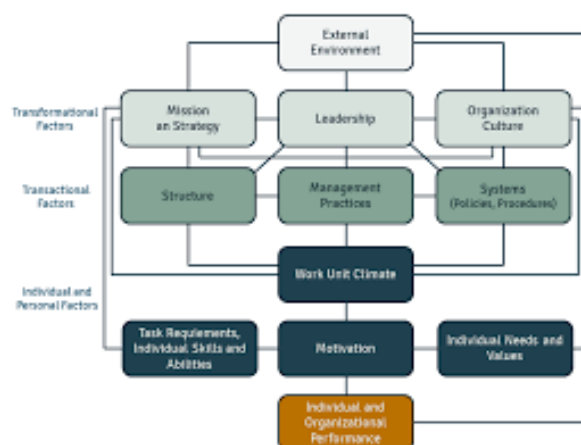
- Compress hours
- Sharing work and responsibilities among all staff
- Working on specific days or times considering religion, parents/children's terms, studies, etc.

5. Recommendation: Flexible Working.

Presenting solutions to this problem faced by the health system and making a good decision is essential to follow some important steps, such as identify the decision, collect pertinent information, recognize the alternatives, heaviness the evidence, select among alternatives, act, review decision and its consequences.

According to NHS Employers (2022), implementing flexible work has been presenting positive facts to incorporate it, to apply the flexible work as the solution for poor work-life balance using the Burke-Litwin Change Model (1992).

5.1 Burke-Litwin Change Model (1992).



External Environment: Helping from new technologies and patient acceptance for online care, prevention advice and self-care.

Individual and Organisational Performance: Discussions about its preferences and needs allows share solutions and supporting each other. Making major contribution to keep employees. *“Organisations should be guarding against any flexible working penalty and ensuring that it is considered in all roles”.*

Leadership: Discussing to the entire team and other line managers to come up with great solutions that can work for everyone.

Mission and Strategy: Retain staff. Analysing new process across organizations to have options for filling gaps.

Organisation Culture: *“Flexible working can be done in a wide variety of different ways, including variable working patterns, condensed hours or annualised hours.”*

Management Practices: Great management can create mutual confidence and responsibility outcomes, by effective communication and feedback on every step, that can be manage remotely.

Structure: All employees can request flexible working. Encouraging the employees to talk about that even during recruitment process.

Systems: Facilitating by modern technology.

Work Unit Climate: Flexible working and support for the team create a relationship of loyalty and commitment to the work.

Motivation: There are many circumstances that lead staff to request flexible working and supporting these arrangements in the possible way is essential for attracting and keeping staff satisfaction.

Task Requirements and Individual Skills: Clearly present the tasks, understand that everyone is different. Recognize the individual skills and give them support during difficulties to complete the tasks.

Individual Needs and Values: *“Flexible working is about a work pattern that suits the individual’s needs and preferences”*. Be available to work every time can be harm to worker and service, also breach employment rights.

5.2 PMI – Decision Making

PMI – Decision Making is a great tool to allows discussions about the positivises, negatives and implications relate to the ideas about applying flexible working to solve the poor work-life balance in the healthcare sector.

Plus	Minus	Interesting
• Remote working • Focus on productivity • Encourage breaks • Increase support • Keep staff • Work satisfaction • Achieve work-life balance	• Poor social relationship • Loss of concentration • Increase responsibility at home • Less hours working = less wage	• Lead by example • Time to volunteer • Review workloads • Good time management

6. Conclusion

Considering all the facts presented and discussed above it is concluded that, they are essential to understand how employee's poor work-life balance have been impacted negatively the healthcare sector. Furthermore, the implementation of flexible working could help to modify the culture of long hours working, which is established in the healthcare workplace, thus allowing the works achieve a better working-life balance, improving their personal-working life, which guides the benefits and reach all stallholders goals.

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