

Managing People

by A A

Name: Nicoleta Claudia

Surname: Jeculescu

Student ID: 2011088

LCBB5004

Assessment 1

Submission date: 02-Apr-2022 12:34AM (UTC-0700)

Submission ID: 1799526335

File name: NIC_Managing_People-_Assessment_1_MAR_2403_-_Image.docx (346.44K)

Word count: 2523

Character count: 14330

MODULE: MANAGING PEOPLE

MODULE CODE: LCBB5004

ASSESSMENT TITLE: ASSESSMENT 1

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Flexible working and diversity and inclusion	4
Opposing flexible working and inequality at work.....	7
Conclusion	10
Reference list	11

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing uncertainty, it has become crucial for businesses to continue operations through the implementation of different working practices including flexible and remote working. While flexible working practices can be effective for technology companies, in the case of retail organizations including stores and headquarters flexible working might not lead to assumed productivity as retail stores employ a significant number of workers for assisting customers, and store management. To understand the effectiveness of flexible working for the retail organization, it is crucial to evaluate the impact of flexible working. This report highlights the benefits of flexible working concerning diversity and inclusion along with discussing the issues associated with flexible working in terms of inequality at work with a specific role of human resources in both cases.

Flexible working and diversity and inclusion

Benefits of flexible working in diversity and inclusion

Flexible working arrangements mean work environment and schedules that do not have the constraints of traditional jobs and these arrangements tend to consider the individual's personal needs and enable effective work-life balance. De Menezes and Kelliher (2011) noted that the government reports have highlighted significant benefits of flexible working, especially for the parents of young and disabled children. Regarding diversity and inclusion, a flexible working approach enables an organization to employ many women, and mothers who are considering joining the workforce. Apart from promoting gender diversity in the workplace, flexible working can enable the inclusion of differently-abled people, and people with physical disabilities effectively in the workforce.

The fair work practices promoted by the UK government indicate the importance of implementing flexible working practices, especially at the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, stay-at-home orders were released with permission of operations for only the essential businesses, and in the context of the lock-downs and the increasing uncertainty regarding working practices and disruptions due to the ongoing pandemic, flexible working practices can enable the retail organization to function effectively.

Oseland *et al.* (2012) noted that the key benefits of flexible working are reduced absenteeism and increased productivity, reduced travel time and cost for the employees, improved work-life balance the employees, effective business continuity, and improved efficiency. Oseland *et al.* (2012) noted that recent reports suggest that the majority of the millennials tend to prefer the work-from-home opportunity and flexitime and for many jobs, in the future, flexible working will become a norm.

In terms of diversity and inclusion, Chung and Van der Lippe (2020) noted that flexible working increases women's satisfaction with the work-life balance and it can also help in maintaining the working hours of the working mothers, especially after child-birth while they can remain in the human-capital-intensive jobs. Furthermore, men are likely to use flexible work for enhancing their performance and focus on developing their career paths. Clydeco.com (2022) noted that in terms of retail employers, flexibility from staff is highly needed due to reduced FTE or headcount of the staff, and regional managers in the retail business tend to agree on flexible working arrangements informally without any formal procedure. The UK

Commission for Employment and Skills suggests that having employees of different ages in the workplace enhances diversity, mutual learning, and innovation. Flexible working arrangements tend to be critical for the inclusion and diversity of certain segments of the workforce including women, older workers, single parents, and people suffering from mental health issues or physical disabilities. Currently for retail organizations, achieving inclusion and diversity targets involve increased participation of groups in the workforce and enabling benefit for society as well. According to Kaur and Arora (2020) gender, friendly and inclusive workplaces can be developed by introducing flexible working hours and fostering a respectful and inclusive work culture. Flexible working can not only help in the inclusion of more women and married workers with families, but it also enables in introduction work from home opportunities leading to the hiring of people from different geographical regions. Having flexible working schedules, and remote working facilities enable recruitment of staff from different population segments, demographics, ages, and cultures as barriers created by these differences can be overcome with the help of flexible and remote working facilities.

According to Garg and Agrawal (2020), flexible working arrangements help in reducing parenting stress and promote the welfare of parents which directly leads to improved employee engagement and well-being of the employees. [Assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk) (2022) revealed that flexible working along with being beneficial for the employees, brings advantages for the employers as well as the removal of restrictions through flexible working can help in fostering a more diverse workforce.

A diverse workforce leads to improved organizational performance and it improves the motivational levels of the employees as well. [Assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk) (2022) further revealed that COVID-19 has exposed significant inequality as the number of people working at home varies largely in different parts of the country and people who are unable to work from home can be largely benefited from the flexible working arrangements.

One of the important examples of successful diversity and inclusion in the workplace is Tesco plc. Tesco is one of the largest retail companies in the UK and one of the crucial policies of the company is to promote diversity and inclusion in the flexible working arrangement. Tesco uses flexible working arrangements for ensuring a healthy work-life balance for the employees along with attracting a diverse workforce who can balance their individual needs and organizational needs through flexible working (Tesco, 2022).

Role of Human Resources in promoting diversity and inclusion through flexible working

Promoting inclusion and diversity in the workplace and aligning inclusion and diversity policies with the organizational strategies prove to be crucial for human resource management. Shi *et al.* (2018) noted that many organizations have created the role of a chief diversity officer for fostering workforce diversity and from a resource-dependence perspective, diversification levels can promote innovation and institutional ownership. However, Human Resources of a company in terms of various HRM functions including job design, job restructuring, workforce planning, recruitment, and selection can promote inclusion and diversity.

The use of flexible working is closely associated with the function of job designing, and job structure. Considering the issues of structural racism, loss of family, increasing gig work, age, gender, and immigration status being barriers to employment, HR can focus on developing workforce policies that can help in combating the issues.

Human Resources can focus on planning flexibility in work location and schedule for opening new job opportunities to a large pool of individuals. According to Azar *et al.* (2018), there is a significant gap between access to a flexible working arrangement by the employees and the use of flexible working arrangements by employers. HR can help in reducing the gap by linking the flexible work arrangements strategically to the organizational outcomes. One of the main drivers of implementing flexible work arrangements is its ability to address the issue of skill shortages.

As COVID-19 has significantly affected the labor market leading to redundancy and lay-offs, formulating effective flexi-time schedules, and flexible working from different locations can be used by HR to combat the current skills gap and skill shortages of the workforce. Achieving the diversity goals proves to be a crucial responsibility of the human resources and designing flexible job roles, rotational shifts, and flexible working time can enable the HR manager to increase the participation of women, mothers, aged workers, and people from different cultural backgrounds with different interests. The HR department focuses on creating flexible job roles and schedules that can lead to improved gender equality by increased participation of women in the workforce.

Opposing flexible working and inequality at work

Flexible working is leading to inequality

Given the integral association between remote working and the plight related to the Covid-19 pandemic, flexible working arrangements appear to be the future. However, the system embeds several possibilities for inequalities to emerge. Especially in a retail setting, the transition to flexible working will not be that smooth for everyone. For instance, as noted in Messenger (2018), flexibility in terms of working hour arrangements facilitates a major shift from fixed working hours in a week, which has diverse effects on the workers. For a skilled person who is also accustomed to the working processes in a particular setting, hence, the transition to remote working will be easier. However, for the trainees, it will be difficult to adapt to the working practices in the same setting since, for the first phase of training, it is important to be physically present in a workplace.

Apart from the shared issues related to inequality in all workplaces, the retail sector exhibits specific sets of problems related to flexible working that can aggravate the existing dimensions of inequality in work. For instance, a study on a large retail firm shows that, instead of empowering employees, the flexible working patterns are empowering employers where, as they are exploiting the precariousness of the flexible workers, the employers stopped hiring on a contractual basis (Rofcanin and Anand, 2020).

Moreover, in the retail sector, certain tasks cannot be managed in a remote setting. In other words, it is essential to keep a reserve of talents for those tasks to be done. This strips few workers of their entitlement to working remotely in a flexible working setting, which creates a source of conflict within the workplace. In some cases, as Rofcanin and Anand (2020) have further noted, it takes the form of role conflict. Moreover, as was illustrated earlier, the nature of flexible working is highly gendered. In food retail, for instance, the delivery staffs are significantly low-paid and, hence, must encounter the challenge to find a suitable place for working (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020).

One of the primary concerns of inequality in introducing flexible working arrangements is the possibility of gender bias which means better access to flexible working opportunities for women. While the primary purpose of introducing flexible working arrangements is to improve diversity and facilitate the equal opportunity of participating in the workforce, significant bias leading to inequality can become a barrier to effective diversity management. Chung *et al.*

development of the employees. Apart from the strategic use of flexible working arrangements to facilitate maximum access of the employees through rotational shifts, introducing flexible roles within specific departments can enable equal access to the benefits of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements can lead to extended working hours which can cause greater stress and affect the mental well-being of the employees. Kelliher *et al.* (2019) noted the importance of caring activities like elderly care, disabled care, caring for pets, non-work related training, organizational training for further education, and engaging in community activities for improved work-life balance and reducing stress.

HR can help workers dependent on children to balance some of the activities with work. Carnevale and Hatak (2020) noted that for adjusting the well-being of the employees, introducing on-site child care and childcare subsidies can be effective in promoting equality. HR can suggest unique solutions like on-site child care for single parents, and working mothers and focus on facilitating parenting leaves for both men and women for addressing the concerns related to inequality.

Addressing the scope of income inequality and the unequal distribution of the benefits associated with flexible working arrangements, HR can specifically focus on evaluating the existing practices and the remuneration as well as the skills and resources gap affecting equal access to the benefits of flexible working. Addressing the issues while designing job roles, and making significant changes in the schedules and duration of work considering the possible inequalities can help in leveraging the maximum benefits of flexible working arrangements.

Conclusion

It is evident from the case that this report makes in favor of flexible working arrangements that they can make those people participate in the labor market that is usually underrepresented due to the barriers like age and disability. Moreover, flexible working can overcome the gender pay disparity, which is persistent in the majority of workplaces. Flexible working, as this report notes, promotes inclusion and diversity not in terms of race or ethnicity only but also in terms of lifestyles, thinking, and mindsets. However, the proposition is also fraught with encouraging inequalities in the workplace. In the retail sector, as this report focuses on, the transition to remote working, which is an integral part of flexible working, is not smooth for everyone. Here, the primary role that HR can play is to promote a rotational shift to avoid inequality. This report also highlights the roles that HR can play to make the gender pay gap shrink.

Reference

list

- Anderson, D. and Kelliher, C., 2020. Enforced remote working and the work-life interface during lockdown. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 35(7/8), pp.677-683. <https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1826/16054/work-life-interface-during-lockdown-2020.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>
- Assets.publishing.service.gov.uk. 2022. [online] Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1019526/flexible-working-consultation.pdf> [Accessed 1 April 2022].
- Azar, S., Khan, A. and Van Eerde, W., 2018. Modelling linkages between flexible work arrangements' use and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 91, pp.134-143. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sana-Azar/publication/327991776_Modelling_linkages_between_flexible_work_arrangements'_use_and_organizational_outcomes/links/61027ec11e95fe241a969729/Modelling-linkages-between-flexible-work-arrangements-use-and-organizational-outcomes.pdf
- Bonacini, L., Gallo, G. and Scicchitano, S., 2021. Working from home and income inequality: risks of a 'new normal' with COVID-19. *Journal of population economics*, 34(1), pp.303-360. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-020-00800-7>
- Carnevale, J.B. and Hatak, I., 2020. Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, pp.183-187. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc7241356/>
- Chung, H. and Van der Lippe, T., 2020. Flexible working, work-life balance, and gender equality: Introduction. *Social Indicators Research*, 151(2), pp.365-381. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-018-2025-x>
- Chung, H., Birkett, H., Forbes, S. and Seo, H., 2021. Covid-19, flexible working, and implications for gender equality in the United Kingdom. *Gender & Society*, 35(2), pp.218-232. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/08912432211001304>
- Clydeco.com. 2022. *Flexible Working – new challenges ahead for retail employers? : Clyde & Co.* [online] Available at: <<https://www.clydeco.com/en/insights/2021/10/flexible-working-challenges-for-retail-employees>> [Accessed 1 April 2022].

PRIMARY SOURCES

INTERNET SOURCES

2%

SIMILARITY INDEX

1%

1%

PUBLICATIONS

1%

STUDENT PAPERS

1%

Submitted to London School of Marketing

Student Paper

1%

Heejung Chung, Holly Birkett, Sarah Forbes,
Hyojin Seo. "Covid-19, Flexible Working, and
Implications for Gender Equality in the United
Kingdom", Gender & Society, 2021

Publication

<1%

www.consumers.gov.uk

Internet Source

Exclude quotes On Exclude

bibliography On

Exclude matches Off