

# IMPACT OF LONG WORKING HOURS ON WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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## ABSTRACT:

With the emergence of globalization and the vast increase of competition in the market place, the trend of long working hours has grown increasingly common among the workforce and has become a norm in the social organization. However, women who are in the hopes of climbing their career ladder, gaining more empowerment and improving their productivity are still struggling in combining work-life balance where gender gap still exists.

This research attempts to identify the impact of long working hours on women socio-economic empowerment and the hidden costs that result from pursuing their jobs under challenging conditions. It also examines the evolution for the dual role of women and the critical implications of long working hours on women's health, productivity and work-life balance and on the organizational performance as a whole.

It furthermore focuses on the level of responsibility differences between both genders and their effect on the stability and quality of the partnership. This issue imposes important impacts on social relations and family income stability which otherwise could lead to conflicts in relationships.

**Key words:** long-working hours, women, socio-economic, hidden costs, work-life balance.

## INTRODUCTION

Long working hours has become a norm in all societies, especially with the emergence of globalization, competitive market force and rapid technological changes. However, complying with these changes in order to survive in such competitive markets put firms under challenging conditions and obliged them to operate for long hours, and ignoring the human nature of the limited daily productive hours.

According International Labor organization standards of working time (2000) defines long working hours as the number of working hours that exceeds 40 hours per week. Moreover, The origin of long working hours lie to the late 18th century during the industrial revolution, where factories had to operate for 24/7a week. However, in 1914, Ford company took the initiative to cut down

daily working hours to become 8 hours instead of 10 -12 hours per day after they noticed that working for long hours were brutal and harmful more than beneficial. After that, many firms followed it.

Therefore, despite the vast increase in the engagement of women in the workforce and a significant increase of resources and policies found to provide the support for women to develop their own competencies and achieving higher positions in the organization, working for long hours hinder them from achieving their work-life balance and resulting in persisting gender gap.

As the result, the effect of long working hours for women poses new challenges in the workforce and in the families. Where women help in the national welfare contributing in improving the living standards of their families, many challenges occur and result from long working hours and forced women to create flexible conditions that balance their work development and family obligations (Pearson, 1990).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

With the emergence of globalization and the vast increase of competition in the market place, the trend of long working hours has grown increasingly common among the workforce and has become a norm in the social organization. However, women have become more wrestle in achieving work-life balance and struggling to improve their career development, especially after the breaking of "Glass Ceiling".

Therefore, the conflict between long working hours and the challenges facing specifically "women" which related to work-life balance, health aspects and socio- economic empowerment, are affecting the whole organizational performance.

## **AIMS**

Due to continuous and rapid technological, cultural, and economic changes in the financial institutions in general and in the banking sectors in specific, the need of working for long hours has increased dramatically among bankers especially after the banking crisis of 2008. This put bankers under stress in coping with these changes and obliged them to experience many implications of long working hours resulting in many health problems, reduced productivity and family conflicts.

Therefore, working as a Credit Relationship manager, in a challenging, competitive and stressful culture, oblige me as a responsible banker to comply with regulatory changes, preventing fraud actions and responding to clients' demands. However, working in such conditions not only hinders employees from enjoying their social lives but also harm their health and put their lives under risk of having chronic diseases. Moreover, listening to daily employees' complaints (especially women) for the long hours they spend at the bank without having the time for pursuing their personal needs, visiting doctors, spending time with their families and kids, exercising and bringing their homes at work, obliged me to take the initiative and choose to study and research the topic of the impact of long working hours on women socio-economic empowerment and the hidden costs on the organization itself.

The aim of this research is therefore to carry out the intervention in my institution "Blom Bank" using the socio-economic methods and tools in order to help the company to reduce the hidden costs and transform them into value added, transform threats into opportunities and create a positive culture that would be beneficial for both parties in a way that giving employees .

The main objective is then, to apply the socio-economic methodology in such tough and stressful organizational culture, analyze the hidden costs and come up with valid outcomes and to convert hidden costs into added value activities.

## **HYPOTHESES**

### *Core hypothesis*

Long working hours are considered by organizations as the key source of higher productivity that increases economic growth and competitiveness. However, consuming longer hours on low added value activities hinder productivity and come up with hidden costs that have negative internal (front line managers, employees and clients) and external implications (family& society) on both parties including work-life balance, women socio-economic empowerment, Health & safety and the overall organizational productivity. Therefore, working with flexible hours on added value activities would be more competitive and profitable, resulting in more enhanced attractiveness for the bank regarding its employees (females and males).

#### ❖ *Descriptive hypothesis: (observation) (Dysfunctions and hidden Cost)*

Long working hours are not as efficient as considered by organization, resulting in many dysfunctions including: Poor working conditions, Lack of Communication (superiors do not care of women's social life), coordination & cooperation between management and staff and lack of Time management which leads to invisible and hidden costs such as higher turnover and absenteeism rate as well as non-quality and direct productivity gap. (Output of 12 working hours does not differ much from the output of 6 hours, and working for 6 hours might be more efficient than working for 12 hours)

#### ❖ *Explicative hypothesis: (root causes)including:*

Lack of sensitization: lack of awareness of analyzing the dysfunctions and the hidden costs resulting from the impact of long working hours on women as well as on organizational performance. (Calculating in a narrow-minded framework)

✓ Lack of synchronization of actions; the bank is not being synchronized enough with the day to day activities with strategic piloting( by converting low added value activities into high added value activities)

✓ Lack of Cleaning up in time management and in working hours. (Calculating the number of working hours instead of measuring the highly performing working hours).

❖ *Prescriptive hypothesis: (interpretation) management tools*

Implementing priority action plans by identifying the high added value activities in the priority action plan of the project phase stemming from the internal and external strategic action plans and should be synchronized with the overall strategic plans of the bank, in order to reduce the need of long working hours and resulting in more efficient performance.

- Adopting continuous cleanup by identifying the low value added activities and dysfunctions in order to reduce the need of working for long hours and through the implementation of socio-economic management tools.
- Identifying the Baskets of the project: whether the solutions enabling and streamlining the processes so that employees can perform activities in less time than expected.

## **RESEARCH FIELD**

### *Overview of the company*

BLOM BANK is a leading Lebanese bank and a highly reputable institution in terms of ethics, transparency and service quality. It has been selected as the Best Bank in Lebanon for many years, and ranked as one of the best banks in Lebanon in terms of profits, outstanding service and proficiency. Blom bank has over 2000 knowledgeable, highly skilled and qualified employees in Lebanon only.

Blom bank provides many universal banking services including: Commercial Banking, Corporate Banking, Private Banking, Investment Banking, Asset and Wealth Management, Retail Banking, Islamic Banking, Brokerage Services, and Insurance Products and Services.

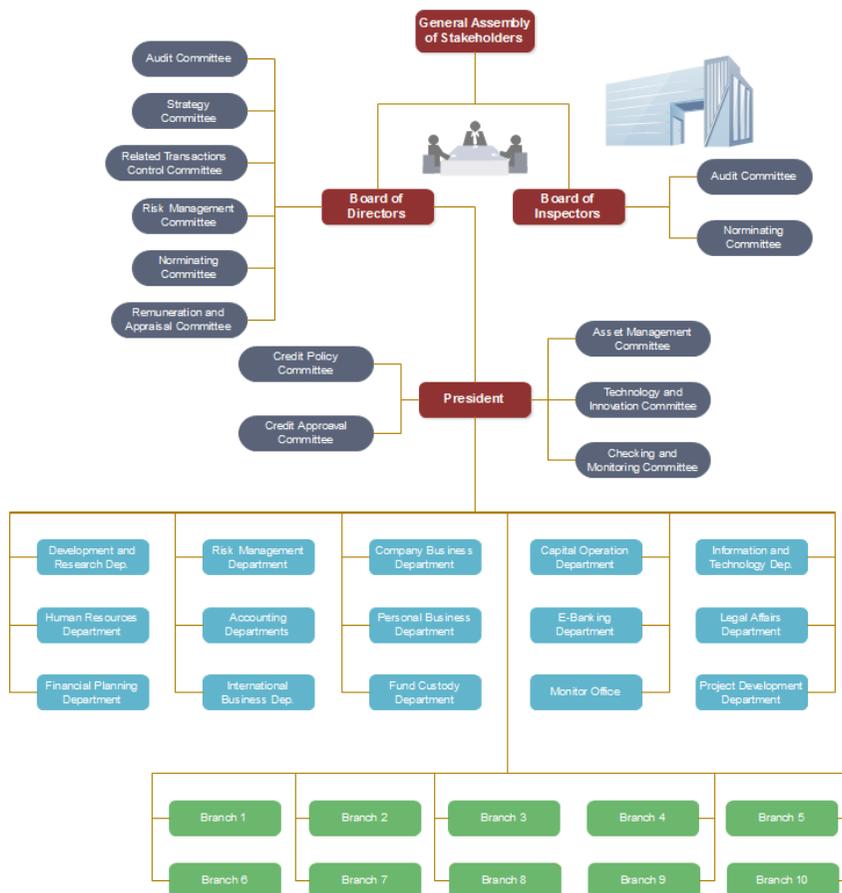
As one of the oldest and biggest banks in Lebanon, Blom bank is facing many social, economic, political and global challenges, Blom bank has to comply with the international standards and sanctions that force the institution to fight money laundering, to comply with the international and US sanctions against Iran and Syria and coping with technological changes unstable political environment.

Despite all of these challenges, Blom bank remains one of the main pillars of the Lebanese banking industry and won many rewards for many consecutive years. Recently Blom Bank received the following awards:

- ✓ Best Treasury & Cash Management Provider in Lebanon 2016 from Global Finance
- ✓ Best Consumer Digital Bank In Lebanon for 2016 from Global Finance
- ✓ Best Foreign Exchange Bank Providers in Lebanon for 2015 from Global Finance
- ✓ Innovators in Foreign Exchange for 2015 from Global Finance
- ✓ Best Bank in Lebanon for 2015 from EMEA Finance
- ✓ Best local trade finance bank in Lebanon for 2015 from GTR Magazine

- ✓ Best Bank in Lebanon for 2016 from Euromoney
- ✓ Best Bank in Lebanon for 2016 from Banker Middle East
- ✓ Corporate Bank of the year MENA 2017 from the European
- ✓ Bank of the year Lebanon 2017 from the European
- ✓ Best Retail Bank in Lebanon for 2016 from The Asian Banker
- ✓ Best Managed Bank for 2016 from The Asian Banker
- ✓ Strongest Bank in Lebanon for 2016 from The Asian Banker

### Organizational Chart



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH METHOD

There is no doubt that there are major consequences of working for long hours on women socio-economic empowerment as well as the hidden costs that result from those long working hours. Not to forget that actions are needed to be taken in order to achieve the effectiveness of long working hours and enhance work-life balance. Hence, identifying the main drivers and challenges for women to work for long hours will raise the question:

*How would organizations benefit and empower women in the workforce whilst women preserve their “idealistic: role and managing harmoniously work-life balance and society?”*

In order to answer these questions, Qualimetrics approach will be adopted aligned with SEAM techniques and tools. This approach combines three types of methods including: qualitative methods, quantitative methods and financial analysis, which allow the researcher to gain a complete understanding of what is happening in the organization. With the adoption of the Qualimetric approach, numbers will be produced, analyzed, displayed and interpreted. Moreover, the socio-economic method that will be adopted in this research includes three basic tools: analyzing dysfunctions, assessment of hidden costs and training job adjustment.

### ***Socio-economic intervention process:***

The socio-economic intervention method that will be used in this research is divided into four **stages**: Diagnostic phase, project phase, implementation phase as well as the evaluation phase.

1. In the diagnostic phase, dysfunction and hidden costs will be identified. Interviews will be carried out with different personnel (horizontal & vertical interviews) using the HORIVERT method as well as the assessment of the five hidden costs indicators. This method includes a descriptive study of functions, descriptive study of dysfunction regulations and an analysis of dysfunction causes related to structures and behaviors. It also includes the mirror effect of dysfunctions.(mirror effect)
2. The project phase will include the assessment of the hidden costs and it aims at preventing dysfunctions. This phase is complement to the first one, where it assesses the cost of regulations and helps in constructing improved ways of functioning.
3. The implementation phase includes planning and implementing various improvement actions designed during the previous stage.
4. The evaluation phase, a comparative balance sheet for the economic and social performance will be generated. A stage where the results of the improvement actions to assessed on the basis of qualitative, quantitative and financial data.

### **Synchronization of the three axis of intervention:**

1. Axis of improvement process start up by the diagnostic part through evaluation of dysfunctions, then building a socio-economic project

piloted by management followed by the implementation process and then evaluation of economic and social results.

2. Axis of permanent management tools: This includes the internal and external strategic action plan, the priority action plan, competency grid, time management, the strategic piloting logbook and the periodically negotiable activity contract.

3. Axis of policy and strategic decisions, includes strategic development of human resources, choice of a management system, strategic choice, organizational and procedural change and technological change.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The entry phase started by sending an email to the head of HR, requesting the permission to conduct the first interviews with the board of directors at Blom bank. However, since the company that I want to conduct the intervention in is a financial institution, they requested a detailed email about the questions that will be asked during the interviews and the exact members that I will meet during the socio-economic intervention. At this moment, I am still waiting for their approval to start my intervention.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to initiate double loop learning, starting up with an informal research contract inside the firm that I work in by focusing on identifying the critical impacts of long working hours and the importance of work-life balance and its impact on organizational performance.

The socio-economic diagnostic process will be presented first to the top management and executives followed by middle management and employees, identifying the dysfunction costs and the reasons behind them and highlight the improvements needs to be adopted through the "mirror effect process" through the horivert intervention process.

During the socio-economic intervention, three guiding principles of horivert process will be adopted:

1. Launching the intervention: during this phase, the company will be clustered horizontally and vertically to insure the link between the socio-economic intervention and the company's strategy. Therefore, this double action process allows the researcher to identify and resolve the operational and the strategic dysfunctions. After that, this process envelops middle management with sort of pincer movement representing the two actions. In the horizontal cluster (CLUSTER A), the top management and executives of the company will be interviewed. However, in the vertical cluster, the intervention will be carried out among the organizational departments and employees

to attempt to discover hidden costs design and implement solutions.

2. Promoting the internal dissemination of the intervention through training and management tools.
3. Involve more actors over shorter time periods

The horivert intervention process will include two clusters:

- Cluster A consists of the CEO, Assistant General manager, head of HR, head of Retail banking and head of Blom invest, head of main departments (credit, finance, compensation and benefits, etc.), branch managers.
- Cluster B: head of main departments (credit, finance, compensation and benefits, etc.), branch managers, department employees and branch employees (secretaries, office boys, tellers, customer service officers, credit officers, teller controller, customer service controller, compliance officer, assistant managers).

Dysfunction of the intervention will be classified into 6 categories:

1. Working Conditions
2. Work Organization
3. Communication-Coordination-Cooperation
4. Time Management
5. Integrated Training
6. Strategic Implementation

✓ All interviews will be semi-structured, anonymous, objectives, registered as notes but not recorded.

✓ Each interview will take between 1h and 1.30 hrs.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND POSITIONING**

With the emergence of globalization, a materialistic and a competitive culture has become overwhelmed in the labor market. Working for long hours has become a necessity for employees and they became working under tremendous pressure to cope with these conditions in order to survive in this culture and secure their jobs (Kanai 2009).

However, coping with this trend urged the site for many healthcare researchers as well as authors to shed the light on its deleterious impact on employees' health (specifically women), work productivity, work-family balance, and on the organizational performance as well (Callister,2007)

Moreover, working for long hours put employee's health under the scope of many physical and mental health problems including: fatigue, stress, heart diseases, Diabetes, Sleep disorders, blood pressures and non-skin cancer (Dr. Nieca Goldberg, 2016). These problems are mostly common among working women who bear the pressure of performing multiple roles and making them more wrestle between their traditional roles and their working conditions.

Despite all these constraints, women are still regarded as the key players in social and economic to achieve development and struggling to achieve better

positions while pursuing their dual roles and creating the best conditions for their family stability.

Thus, this research will examine the impact of long working hours on women socio-economic empowerment and the hidden costs that result from its deleterious effects on their Health well-being, work-life balance, career productivity as well as their economic conditions and its long term effects (Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012; Schor 2010).

It furthermore focuses on the level of responsibility differences between both genders and their effect on the stability and quality of the partnership. This issue imposes important impacts on social relations and family income stability which otherwise could lead to conflicts in relationships (Allard Dembe, 2016).

This research examines the impact of long working hours on women's socio-economic empowerment and the importance of the economic role of women and the hidden costs that result in more health problems including, fatigue, depression, poor sleep level, heart disease as well as cancer (Dr. Nieca Goldberg, 2016).

However, this research will cover also the positive aspects emerged from working for long hours like the extra incentives, promotions, work commitment and work development (Fursman, 2009).

#### Impact of long working hours on Work- family balance

In the last decades, the emergence of dual incomes has increased dramatically due to the changes that took place in the economical, cultural, environmental and demographical spheres as well as technological advances (Osoian Lazar 2009), especially after the integration of women in the workforce, the concept of work-life balance has started to take the attention of many individuals "especially women ", researchers and authors (Devi & Rani, 2013) and became the main concern of healthcare researchers.

Due to these changes, women have become more struggled and overwhelmed in finding the equilibrium between their workforce involvement and their personal lives that ends up with the concept of work-family conflict (Hudson, 2005). This type of conflicts will have an adverse effect on their productivity, health, social life as well as on the organizational performance (Pencavel, 2014).

On the other hand, another study reveals that working for long hours have a positive impact on the family's mental health and psychological well being (Allis and O'Driscoll, 2008). Moreover, working for long hours seems favorable & challengeable for many executives for achieving their targets (Hewlet & Luce, 2006), and the feel of satisfaction derived from that, affect positively the quality of their social life (Barnett, 1988).

In spite of the widely- held view that long working hours adversely affect the work-life balance, there's another study reveals that, the overlap between work and family roles might result in conflict as the outcome of a bad quality of social life, where not only work can have negative or positive effect on family role, but rather, the family role is the strongest factor that either affect positively or negatively the outcome of the work (Beutell and Wittig-Berman, 2008).

However, working for long hours is not necessarily an obstacle for women in managing their dual roles, nor the reason behind the work-family imbalance, but rather, the more support they gain from their families, the more

quality of work-life balance they gain . Moreover, the satisfaction and the rewards gained from pursuing their jobs and achieving their targets brings about a strong family enrichment (Carlson et al, 2006).

Therefore, there are two types of conflict, work-family conflict and family-work conflict(Boyar et al,2008).

#### Impact of long working hours on Health:

Climbing the career ladder and getting more incentives, put you in extended working hours at your office and contributes to having unhealthy behavior. However, long hours will harm your health and increases the potential for a variety of health conditions including chronic diseases in the long run (Allard dembe,2016).A large recent study made in 2015 on 600k employee in Europe, USA and Australia shows that, excessive work, especially workers who increased their working hours to over 55 hours per week could pose a serious risk to your health and especially risk of Stroke (33% higher risk) and Heart diseases (13% higher risk (Mika Kivimäki, 2015).

Another research (Ohio State University-2016) showed that women and especially women who have to struggle different roles and who work for 55 hours or more per week are more likely to pay ax steep price and showed a triple risk of having illness, diabetes, heart diseases and all types of cancer except for skin cancer (due to work and family pressures) (Allard Dembe, 2016).

Other studies revealed that, people who work between 41 & 48 hours a week experience increased consumption of tobacco and alcohol among men and increased depression and stress among working women (Nakamura et al., 1998) & (Shields, 1999).

Also employees who work above 40 hours per week have higher risk of getting stroke compared to those worked between 35 & 40 hours a week, while the percentage of risk increases with the increase of the number of working hours and might reach 27% of higher risk when people work between 49 & 54 hours a week. For a while, when people spend more than 50 hours a week at their work , feeling anxious and stressed to get your work done, all these symptoms play a role in increasing adrenaline and cortisol hormones that affect your blood pressure and blood glucose and increases the risk of stroke (Narula,2015).

This will end up with many indirect costs like: increased absenteeism and turnover rate, lower productivity and increased insurance and health care costs as well as error and mistakes costs (John Pencavel, 2015).

Although many studies showed that working for long hours harms your health, a recent study shows that going to work early and leaving late is the heaven of some people and the secret to happiness for having a great healthy lifestyle (Staples, 2015). Moreover, working for long hours improves your wellbeing where the need of presenteeism at work protects people from the hard thinking of losing jobs and protects their hearts and mental health from the worry of redundancy and being insecured (Cooper, 2015). However, some people may have the capacity and the ability to work for long hours than others , but working for long hours for a long period will end people up with illness and sickness, (Cooper, 2015).

#### Relationship between working hours and productivity:

Quantifying the number of working hours for employees is not a real measurement of productivity level and it does not necessarily yield to higher

outcome, where the best and the most productive workers at work might be those who work for fewer hours (John Pencavel, 2015). Therefore, measuring employees based on the number of hours they put is a real mistake (Cooper, 2015).

Recent research found that employees' productivity declines and falls sharply after working for 50 hours per week, and any extra hour worked would produce nothing, but rather employees may become victims of working hours and end up in increased risk of errors and mistakes and absenteeism and turnover rate (John Pencavel, 2015). Moreover, long working hours imposes many hidden costs including utility costs, operating costs, job related injuries, Healthcare costs, reduced machinery lifespan, security and safety costs (Claire Caruso, 2014).

Managers are not able to differentiate between employees who work for long hours (less-productive) and those who work for limited hours (more-productive) and they punish those employees who work less while there's no evidence that people who are transparent for working less are less productive nor working with lower outcome (Erin Reid, 2016). Others believe that, working for long hours does not only affect our health but also the organizational performance and diminishes return. Where being overstressed, lead to plenty of health problems including fatigue, increased alcohol consumption, smoking (Dr. Rafael Alexander Ortiz) as well as diabetes and heart attacks and diseases which conversely increases absenteeism and turnover rates and increases health insurance cost (Marianna Virtanen,2006).

Recent research found that, even if you love your job and enjoying your work, working for long hours will adversely affect your output and your performance will be dropped- off and result in more errors and mistakes due to stress and exhaustion factors. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Organized labor forced companies to reduce workdays hours to 10hours and then to 8 hours, at that times however, employers were surprised by the output that increased obviously, where errors and mistakes decreased (Leslie Perlow and Jessica Porter, 2009)

Employers want their employees to donate their own times & hours responding to their job request 24/7 workdays without looking at their own social life (Dan Schawbel , 2015 ). However, there's another psychological version of working for long hours resulted from a combination of negative and positive inner drivers including: desire to climb the career ladder, motivation to get promoted, anxiety, ambition, being greedy for getting economic incentives , enjoyment and self satisfaction. Other researchers found that, for some employees, work is heaven and less stressful and anxious than their homes (Andrew Nguyen, 2015).

Long working hours leaves employees suffering from burnout syndrome, Fatigue, exhaustion, stress, lack of efficacy and sickness (Dr Montero-Marin ,2014 ).

While many studies showed the drawbacks of long working hours (Caruso 2006; Rogers et al. 2004), others believe that working for shorter hours is not ideal for all businesses especially when it comes to sales or customer

services, where companies should anticipate the customer needs and employees should be stand by for responding to their requests.

Moreover, working for shorter hours does not necessarily create less stressful environment, but rather working in a limited timeframe creates challenges and put employees under failure in finishing a certain mission and may end up with more errors and mistakes due to the limited framework.

Long working hours and gender:

The association between long working hours and diseases looks to be evident in women than in men (Allard Dembe, 2016). Women who log long hours at work have higher risk to be adversely affected than men of developing life threatening illness (Dr. Nieca Goldberg, 2016). Moreover, recent studies found that women who worked for 60 hours and more a week had the triple risk of having chronic diseases than those who worked between 31 & 40 hours a week including heart diseases, lung diseases, non- skin cancer, diabetes, etc.. However, comparing to women, men were not affected much by long working hours as women where men who worked for 40 to 50 hours per week had lower risk of such diseases than those who worked for less than 40 hours a week but they were only affected by contracting arthritis (Allard Dembe, 2016 )

The root cause of this gender difference might be resulted from the burden on women for juggling multiple roles, saddled with the brunt of domestic duties, balancing their work and social life roles and forgetting to take care of their health (Dr. Nieca Goldberg, 2016).

**TIME LINE FOR INTERVENTION**

Task Name	Start Date	End Date
Requesting approval for SEAM intervention	Feb-17	March-17
Submitting Doc. A	Jan.-17	Feb.-17
Submitting Initial Research Proposal / Doc. B	Feb-17	Mar-17
Getting approval for SEAM intervention	March-17	Apr-17
Conducting in-depth diagnostic interviews and focus groups to identify the main dysfunctions during the Horivert Intervention	Apr-17	Jul-17
Preparing Competency Grid and Time Management tools	May-17	Jul.-17
Conducting Meetings for Hidden Costs estimation	May-17	Jul.-17
Formulating baskets of solutions based on the identified dysfunctions and root causes	Jul-17	April-18
Writing of dissertation	May-18	Jun-19

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