

The CYHRMA in collaboration with Professor Eleni Stavrou-Costea, Director of MSc Human Resource Management, University of Cyprus, carried out a survey amongst its members to better dive into how COVID-19 has impacted and will impact HR and ways of working.

Businesses and other organizations across the globe are now faced with tough choices on how to ensure their continuity and even survival. HRM's responses have ranged from enforcing stringent policies on employee health and safety to actively changing employee policies such as moving towards remote working. These steps have all required HR to generate faster, more frequent and robust internal communications to keep everyone informed while the changes have taken place. They have also required closer collaboration between the HR function and the rest of middle and top management as well as external stakeholders (i.e. ministries, unions etc). Overall, HR is called to find ways for organizations to become more flexible in relation to managing people and saving jobs

### **Survey demographics**

The survey was conducted between 18th of May to 22nd of May and we received 77 valid responses. The demographics of respondents were:

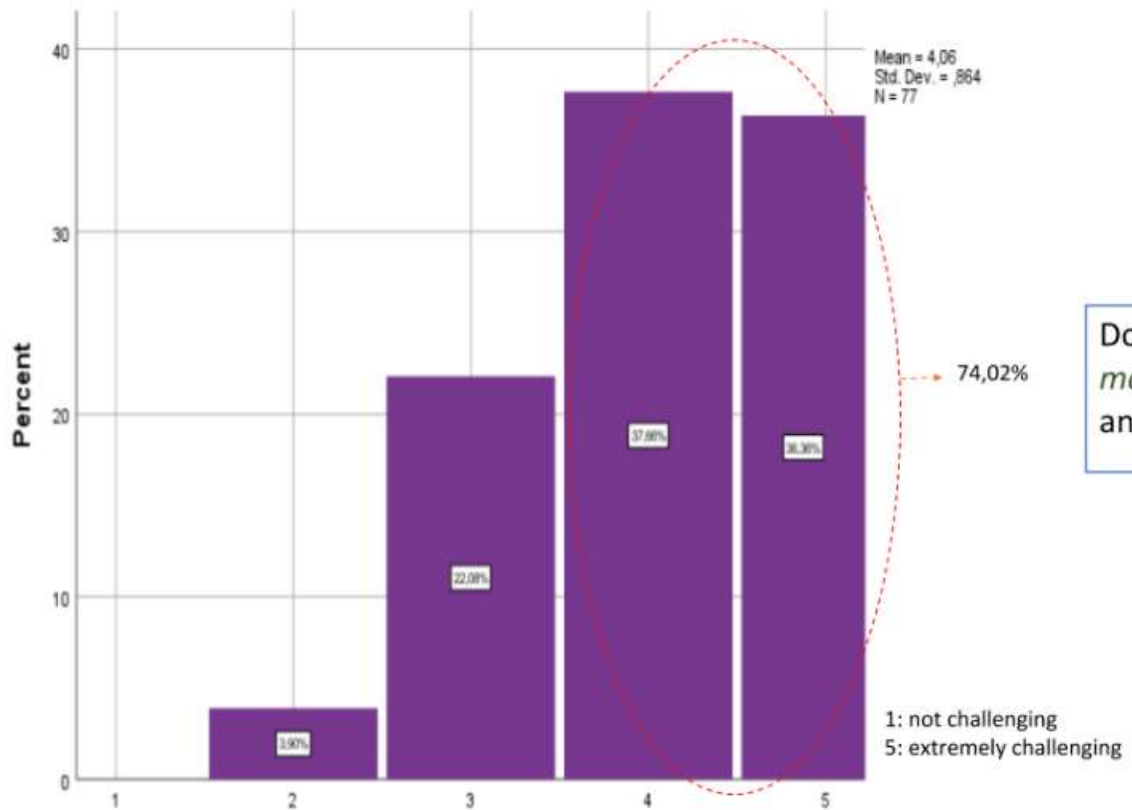
- ▶ 65% were in HR and 14% were in top executive positions
- ▶ 39% had non-managerial and 61% managerial positions
- ▶ The sample consisted of 30% males and 70% females
- ▶ Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 49
- ▶ 47% had children under 18 years old
- ▶ Their employment tenure, practically full-time, varied: 35% had 1-3 years; 49% had at least 4 years; 16% had less than a year
- ▶ The industry in which the respondents worked varied: education, commerce, pharmaceutical, financial, etc - with the majority in services

*Overall, the demographics were not significant factors in the results*

We outline below key findings, as well as insights based on these findings combined with research conducted across the globe on the topics covered by the survey.

### **COVID-19 challenges for organisations**

How would you rate the COVID-19 as a challenge to your organisation overall?

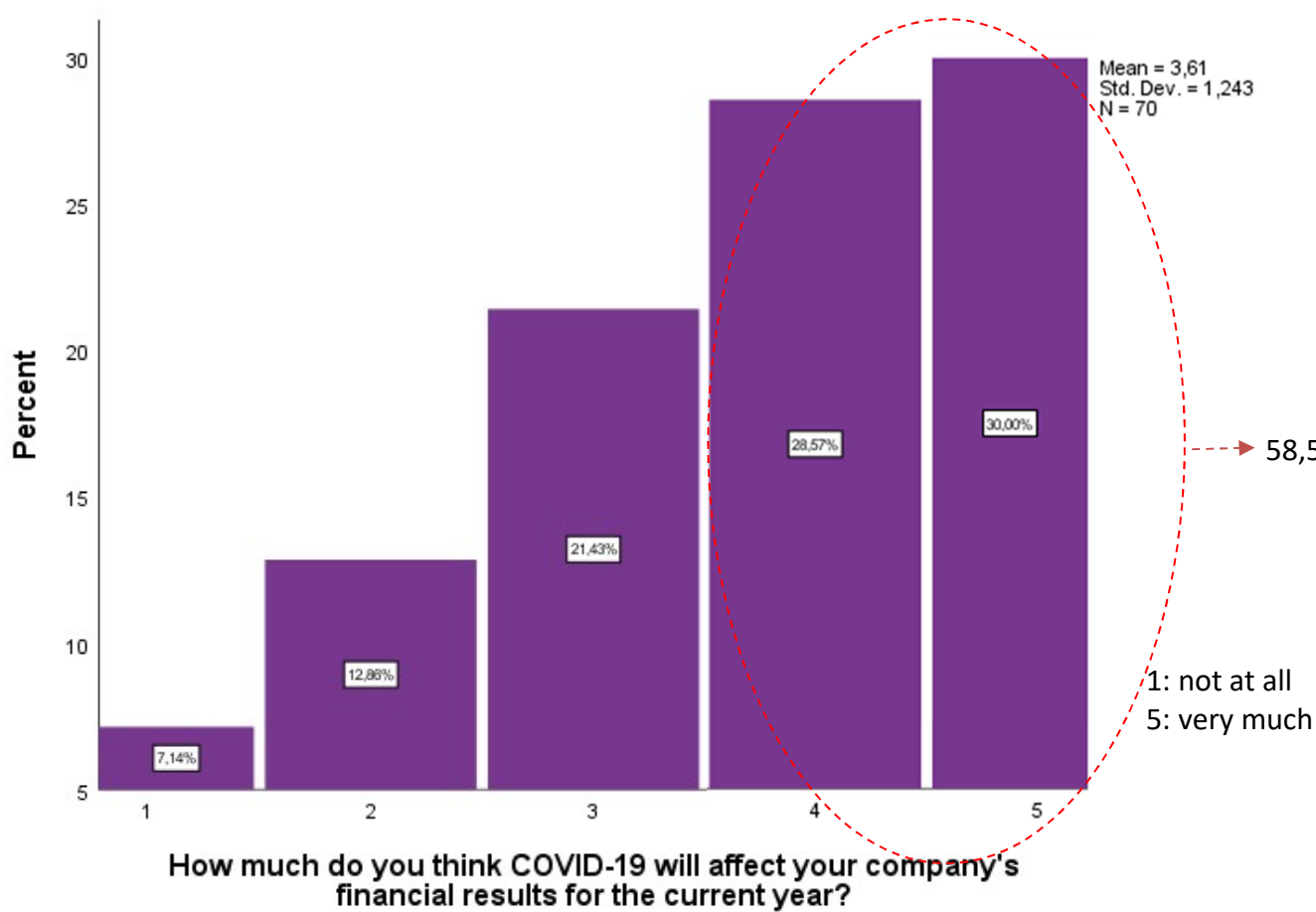


Does that call  
*management*  
and training?

How big of a challenge do you consider the situation created by COVID-19 for your organization, in the following areas?

Challenges	Mean
Management of stress and high morale among employees ( <i>women slightly more than men</i> )	3.73
Change management and / or implementation of measures under COVID-19	3.66
Managing daily operations	3.53
Recruiting	3.40
Hiring decisions and job offers	3.35
Onboarding new employees	3.35
Communication and cooperation among employees	3.32
Learning and Development of employees	3.29

How much do you think COVID-19 will affect your company's financial results for the current year?



### Working from home before and during Covid-19

- ▶ While prior to Covid-19 about 47% of organizations offered work from home, such arrangement was infrequently picked up by employees then, whereas 60% never used it; 1.3% used it all the time; 25% used it once a month while about 14% used it during the week
- ▶ During Covid-19 56% of respondents worked from home
- ▶ The overall experience of working from home was from good (46%) to very good (32%). Only 3% considered their experience poor.
- ▶ While most respondents reported being neutral (42%), about 35% reported preferring working from home (versus 14% who preferred not to work from home). Results showed that family status, gender and children were not significant factors
- ▶ Working from home increased their levels of commitment, while job satisfaction remained unaffected
- ▶ During the Covid-19 period the daily working hours reported were as follows: 5-6 hours among 12% of employees; 7-8 hours among 27% of employees; 9+ hours among 51% of employees

- ▶ It was slightly more challenging for those who had kids at home to work from home and to handle change management and the implementation of COVID -19 measures. But those with children felt slightly more productive.

#### **Productivity & performance while working from home**

- ▶ 50% of respondents reported that their productivity was not reduced, while 28% admitted that it was (the rest were neutral)
- ▶ 70% of respondents said that while working they felt concentrated and efficient, while 10% disagreed (the rest were neutral)
- ▶ 62% of respondents said they did not have difficulties to get work done, 22% while disagreed (the rest were neutral)
- ▶ 79% reported being satisfied with their work performance, while only 6% disagreed (the rest were neutral)
- ▶ Overall, compared to their work prior to Covid-19, 52% of respondents reported their performance as stable and 29% even as higher. Only 14% reported their performance as lower.
- ▶ Women's performance was reported to be higher than men's. The former's productivity and satisfaction were also slightly higher than the latter's.

#### **Satisfaction & commitment while working from home**

- ▶ 77% of respondents were satisfied with their job
- ▶ 75% of respondents were willing to put a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected in order to help the organization be successful (i.e. employees stepping in to help their organization)
- ▶ 82% of respondents felt loyalty towards their organization and 80% would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for their organization
- ▶ 75% of respondents agreed with their organization's policies on important employee related matters
- ▶ But only 39% of respondents stated that their *organization really inspires the very best in them* in a way of job performance

#### **Top issues to be dealt with as a result of Covid-19**

- ▶ Employee health and safety (i.e. formation of committees, policies/practices beyond those mandated by law, trainings, wellbeing, etc)
- ▶ High morale and low stress levels among employees (i.e. wellness programs, life-long learning activities, work-life balance options, etc)
- ▶ Employee productivity (i.e. management by objectives, utilise surveys, implement training programs, etc)

- ▶ Frequent and clear communication channels among employees (i.e. frequent meetings, feedback sessions, social activities, etc)
- ▶ Unobstructed business operations (i.e. crisis management policies/practices idiosyncratic to our organizations, etc)
- ▶ Maintaining employee commitment (i.e. satisfaction and commitment surveys, etc)
- ▶ Long term (enhanced) sustainability of organization (i.e. integrate employee wellbeing into firm practices)
- ▶ Maximizing employee potential (i.e. training needs analysis, commitment, etc.)
- ▶ Layoffs (i.e. minimize them, etc)

### **HR opportunities and areas of focus**

So based on the above, which HR-related opportunities are resulting from the Covid-19 experience? In a nutshell its about *Restructuring & rethinking how we do business and approach employee welfare. Specifically, HR professionals should critically consider the following:*

- ▶ More remote opportunities and policies (*what knowledge, structures and processes do we need to achieve that?*)
- ▶ Becoming more flexible and less bureaucratic (*how can we do that?*)
- ▶ Increased and better use of technology (*e-learning, e-hiring, greater automation etc*)
- ▶ Change of culture (*greater trust between employees and management, higher collaboration, stronger bonds etc*)
- ▶ Measuring productivity more effectively (*rethink of productivity – i.e. focus on results*)
- ▶ Establish ways of dealing with crises and uncertainty (*establish a crisis mind-set, roles and procedures*)
- ▶ Dealing with employee mental health (*understand it, create strategies, educate employees*)

Where should we stand now as HR professionals?

- ▶ Ensure that business can sustain while job losses are minimized: work with senior leadership to reconfigure workflows, redeploy talent and/or reskill staff to help them stay relevant. This may include family-friendly policies for virtual work-life as well as further digitalization of HR.
- ▶ Offer greater education and training across the board (mostly virtually?): employees need to understand not just the current risks and new safety protocols, but also their respective roles in responding to risks *at all fronts* from disruptions in business continuity. Create an ecosystem devoted to creating an AI powered skills inventory, reskilling and exploring new partnerships with traditional and non-traditional institutions of learning.

- ▶ Often considered as the relationship managers of the business, HR needs to work closely alongside the line managers to ensure inclusivity and security are mainstreamed across all rank and file of employees.
- ▶ Working with the legal and regulatory teams is also necessary to lobby inside and outside the organization for policies and procedures that protect the jobs, incomes and wellbeing of employees.

How do we, now more than ever, recognize the human element in corporate sustainability?

- ▶ Covid-19 showed that people are motivated at the highest levels when they can connect their work contributions to a greater purpose and mission. *During the crisis, people showed resilience and adaptability.*
  - ▶ HR should do more than treat employees fairly and respectfully. It should facilitate a more profound connection between employee contributions towards both the organization and society as a whole by:
    - Creating clear connections across individual jobs, team objectives, and the organization's mission.
    - Building a resilient workforce that can adapt in the face of constant change.
- ▶ During Covid-19, employee physical, financial and psychological wellbeing became paramount
  - HR should embed well-being into every aspect of the design and delivery of work itself and to fundamentally redesign work in doing so.
- ▶ Covid-19 did not only "get" to the elderly and the physically weak, but to whole societies, including all types of employees.
  - HR should use analytics to segment and better understand employees' unique attributes and needs in order to develop targeted programs and policies that bring out employees' personal best while affording them what they need in order to do their work safely and effectively.
- ▶ Covid-19 showed that while technology can supplement work, it cannot replace (but can only supplement) humans.
  - HR can explore ways to integrate teams of humans and technology for greater productivity, efficiency and a knowledge-sharing culture.
- ▶ Covid-19 brought ethical issues to the forefront on the impact of organizational decisions on different types of employee groups.
  - HR should ask themselves critical questions to help them champion the perceived and actual ethical impacts of people decisions.

Overall, HR needs to assess if it is positioned to make the impact it *can* and *should* be making across organizations.

Adapted from Professor Eleni Stavrou-Costea presentation of the results during the webinar taking place on 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020