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Student's Full Name:	Ahmed Hassan Dahab Mohamed Abdou
Student ID:	EIU751804
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E-SIGNATURE: Ahmed Hassan Dahab

DATE: 6 sept. 2021

EIU Paris City Campus

Address: 59 Rue Lamarck, 75018 Paris, France | **Tel:** +33 144 857 317 | **Mobile/WhatsApp:** +33607591197 | **Email:** paris@eiu.ac

EIU Corporate Strategy & Operations Headquarter

Address: 12th Fl. Amarin Tower, 496-502 Ploenchit Rd., Bangkok 10330, Thailand | **Tel:** +66(2)256923 & +66(2)2569908
Mobile/WhatsApp: +33607591197 | **Email:** info@eiu.ac

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1- Action Research Topic:

Performance Management during Covid 19 pandemics

2- Abstract:

The main objective of this action research paper is to focus on the performance management during covid 19 crisis in the companies.

In this research, we put a spot light on the covid 19 crisis and how it affected the companies in terms of the performance of employees putting into consideration the remote working culture that was adapted in most companies.

And this definitely made it so complicated for employers to track individuals' performance effectively as well as to keep it fair as much as we can.

Over the past few period, we have heard that a lot of organizations have decided to either cancel their current or coming performance cycles, or to go with alternatives like giving all employees the same rating, or any other easy solutions like those.

But also, there are many other HR leaders are still trying to figure out what is the most practical and fair ways to manage performance reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this research, we will provide some alternatives, perspectives, & factors to consider before you end up your current or start your next performance cycle.

We will discuss this issue and will try to set some practical solutions for employers to track employees' performance, and this will include utilizing the most recent technologies to apply.

In addition, we will go thru the performance management as a process and what is the different types of performance management and what is the importance of performance management.

No doubt that performance management has been a real obstacle to monitor and manage during the corona pandemic in most companies due to the need to work remotely for long period of times which affects definitely the organizational performance as well as the individual performance.

And from here came the idea to discuss this subject and highlight how to address this problem and provide solutions on how to tackle it and benefit from it in addition.

3- Rationale for the research:

The international economy has declined obviously as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through out the 2nd quarter of 2020, the U.S. economy declined 35% compared to the exact period of time recent year (Reinicke, 2020), in addition, the Eurozone economy declined by 12.1% almost compared to the 1st quarter of the year. Spain witnessed the biggest decline at 18.5% (Amaro, 2020).

These financial difficulties are disturbing talent management in considerable ways. First, several companies have executed recruiting freezes and cutoffs. For example, starting with the end of March 2020, 42% of organizations in the US& Canada immobilized or decreased hiring, while another 28% were taking into consideration doing the same (Willis Towers Watson, 2020). In the US, the entertainment& hospitality business lost 7.7 million vacancies solely in April 2020, which symbolize 47% of total vacancies (Franck, 2020). in the same way, about 397,000 people within the European Union have been ceased from their jobs in April (Davies, 2020). Even businesses usually tagged as secure like high technology have witnessed unexpected layoffs. Matter of fact, high-tech organizations in Silicon Valley have sacked bigger than 40,000 vacancies between March & May, 2020 (McBride & Cannon, 2020). In the UK& Europe, almost 38% of high -tech organizations have immobilized the majority of their hirings (Wauters, 2020).

As a 2nd group of talent management challenges, several employees who were able to retain their jobs had encountered pay immobilization, bonuses revocations, & pay cut offs. Internationally, 29% of employers have executed salary cuts offs, 42% salaries hold, & 37% a bonus revocations (Korn Ferry, 2020). Across the globe& in all businesses, 67% of top management, 56% of middle managers, and 49% of regular employees& team leaders encountered decreases in pay (Korn Ferry, 2020).

A 3rd considerable talent management challenge directly attached to the crisis is how work is done. Distant working has become a tradition for several employees, & as of May 2020, 76% of organizations request that almost all or the majority of employees work from home (McKinsey, 2020). Before the Covid 19 pandemic crisis, only 5.4% of the labor force in the EU-27 countries frequently worked from home, and only 15% of the labor force had ever teleworked (European Commission, 2020). During the Covid 19 pandemic crisis, it is expected that about 25% of recruitment took place in businesses that were “teleworkable” (Fana et al., 2020). That was when at least 62% of the labor force was working distantly (Brenan, 2020), employees did not have permission to physical resources & equipment in the office as they used to. furthermore, under distant working, natural interpersonal interactions is decreased to a minimum; companies need to depend on informal communication networks to spread knowledge, make innovation easier, & raise productivity (Nonaka, 1994; Rogers, 1983).

Eventually, the pandemic has increased workers tension & burnout. In the United States, 45% of workers reported that they were burned out in May 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an effective part into this unusual high level of pressure due to the increased workloads (45%); the necessitate to cope with personal & professional life (35%); the missing of interaction, feedback, & support (32%); increased time tension (30%); & ambiguous & varying performance anticipations (26%) (Eagle Hill Consulting, 2020). Furthermore, opposite to a commonly held consideration, working from distance can lead to a stress, which has a negative effect on workers' health & performance (Al-Badarneh et al., 2019; Demerouti et al., 2014) & therefore, the performance of the company. The cause is that the decreased commute time & flexible working hours are usually repealed out by the projection that more output should be done with less resources. For instance, pre the covid 19 pandemic, 66% of distant workers believed they were burned out, compared to 64% of workers who attended to office on a daily basis (Swanner, 2019).

As a conclusion, as companies of all sizes & across business types has went thru significant income decline & budget shortfalls, they witnessed huge talent management challenges including recruitment immobilizations & termination; salary hold, canceled bonuses, & pay cut offs; how work is executed (i.e., distant working); & high employee pressure & burnout. These are challenges that, somehow, had already been present. But, they have been increased because of the pandemic.

Performance management is weakly understood & subsequently usually underused talent management function that can assist companies manage crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. furthermore, executing clue-based performance management practices can not only assist in managing pandemic-related talent management challenges but also permit companies to sustain after the covid pandemic is done. We tackle these issues in specific in the following.

Performance management is “a nonstop process of defining, measuring, & improving the performance of persons & groups and line up performance with the organizational objectives of the company” (Aguinis, 2019b, p. 8). subsequently, performance management is essential for talent management as it aids individuals become more proficient, dedicated, & motivated; smoothes organizational change; illustrates organizational objectives; distinguish stars from poor performers; and assists companies take equitable and more suitable corrective actions, which in turn preserves companies from lawsuits (Aguinis et al., 2011). Without an effective performance management system, companies are incapable to take appropriate corrective decisions (e.g., layoffs, bonuses, pay increases, & promotions), effectively inspire and involve their employees, keep top calibers, gather information to assign resources properly, & tackle human resource disruptions (Aguinis, 2019a; Claus, 2019).

Because of its essential role, there is an enormous scholarly writing on performance management—regularly originating in OB&HR management, but also in other sectors including psychology, finance, information technology, business administration, marketing, health & human services, and grown-up learning (e.g., Aguinis, 2019a; DeNisi& Murphy, 2017; Farndale et al., 2019; Schleicher et al., 2018). But, performance management is often mistaken incorrectly with performance appraisal & performance reviews (Aguinis et al., 2011). Performance appraisal is the measurement & explanation of an individual strengths & weaknesses (Aguinis, 2019a), and it is just one factor of performance management.

a number of characteristics distinguish performance management from performance appraisal. First, performance management is a continuous and nonstop process, whereas performance appraisal is considered normally just a one time evaluation & review and minor attempts to give feedback and mentoring for development on a constant basis. So, even though performance management is continuous, it is all the way contrary of “policing” employees in a way that generates more pressure & challenges; rather, it is an continuing discussion about performance & how managers and the organization can give extra support when needed. Matter of fact, we look at performance management as a mean for moral, caring, and accountable leadership as continuing talks about performance are as well crucial for managers to understand if employees may be exploited, help them keep a healthy work–life balance even when they are distant working, & become conscious of personal conditions that may be obstructing performance. Second, performance management includes an correlation between employees’ actions & outputs and the organization’s strategic objectives and, as a result, makes the employee’s impact to the organization obvious. Thus, performance management, in contrary to performance appraisal, is aligned with calls to entrench talent management systems in its wider context (Thunnissen& Gallardo-Gallardo, 2019) & take into account the relationship between macro and micro levels of talent systems (King & Vaiman, 2019). Third, performance management concentrates on both performance in the earlier period (performance appraisal) as well as performance in the future, using individual development plans in addition to incentives that support individual, division, and organizational objectives (Aguinis et al., 2013; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2015). Keep in mind that development plans are not just about the forthcoming year. Rather, they tackle four linked but different issues: (1) How can I constantly realize & develop in the following year? (2) How can I perform better in the future? (3) How can I escape from performance problems encountered in the past? (4) Where am I now & where would I love to be when it comes to the career path? (Orlando & Bank, 2016). Last but not the, the possession of performance management remains among all contributors of the process, including both appraisers (managers, colleagues) & appraisees (employees), where as performance appraisal is a task mostly held by the human resource department (Aguinis et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, several companies apply only performance appraisal rather than performance management. Although 83% of companies world wide request from employees to adjust performance objectives, more than half of the personal goals are set in a vacuum & without

making specific & solid associates with the mission & vision of the employee's function and the company in general, which bounds employees' realization of how they impact to the business (Mercer, 2019). moreover, the employees of only 2% of companies trust that their company has an environment that motivates regular, comprehensive, and first-class response. Consequently, Directors & employees see less benefit in the performance evaluation cycle. For instance, between Fortune 1,000 companies, 95% of leaders are not pleased with their company's performance evaluation cycle & 90% of HR specialists don't trust their companies' performance appraisals provide precise info (Meinert, 2015). Furthermore, 66% of employees say performance appraisals actually interfere with, rather than improve, their productivity (Meinert, 2015). These opinions are not totally groundless as it is hard to evaluate performance dependably, validly, and fairly (Murphy, 2020). More over, even when performance is evaluated well, feedback is usually not precise & helpful when it comes to improving performance in the future (Murphy, 2020).

Consequently, it is reasonable that too many companies look at performance appraisals as a load & that managers look at them as "a box to tick" so they can satisfy HR and move ahead to their "real jobs." The importance of performance appraisals is mainly doubted during a time of crisis such as COVID-19. As employees at different levels are dragged in different directions & requested to performing more with less, time becomes one of the most precious assets. Under normal situations, finalizing performance appraisal cycle takes a huge amount of time, which is usually deemed to be an extra layer of load to employees and managers beside their several current obligations (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021). At The Period Of a crisis, when time is at a top priority, many organizations have chosen to demote, postpone, or even cancel performance evaluation all together. For example, Marygrove Awning Co. in Livonia, Michigan deleted most of the components of its performance reviews because as its CEO Mike Falahee set it clear: "After all, how can we assess somebody who can't perform their job the way they're assumed to doing it?" (O'Connell, 2020). Others have chosen to make the performance evaluation system simpler. Facebook, for example, has stated that all of its 45,000 FTE would obtain the same "exceeding expectation" in their 1st-quarter performance appraisal in 2020 (Seetharaman, 2020).

4- Research Questions & Research objectives.

- i. What is the role of performance management in the organization?
- ii. Why is it crucial to have an effective performance management process in the organization
- iii. What is the outcome of applying performance management?
- iv. What is the advantage of performance management?
- v. What are the consequences of applying a wrong model of performance management?
- vi. How Covid 19 pandemic has affected the performance management cycle during the pandemic?
- vii. How different leaders has dealt with the Pandemic issue in different ways ?
- viii. How the Covid 19- pandemic has opened new doors for technology to invade the performance management cycle in organizations?
- ix. How to make use of the Covid 19 pandemic and turn it from a weakness point to a strength point?
- x. What is the recommendations for organizations to apply so that they won't be affected with the Pandemic?

The objective of the research:

The objective of this research is to put a spot light on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the HR of the organizations and specially the performance management function, and how it make it way complicated to hire the right talent with the right pay, how to develop and train them, how to motivate and retain them and how to tackle their performance fairly and instantly.

In addition to providing some recommendations on how to deal with these issues on order to get out of the situations with as much profit as possible without affecting the business.

5- Literature Review:

Why the pandemic has created a revolution in performance management?

For many HR Managers, the Covid-19 pandemic has driven with it a set of beliefs. Indication from the experiences of the 1,700 specialized Top Employers globally during 2020 proposes, in specific, they have become deeply aware of the influence of employee-centricity in driving performance: there's an acceptance of flexibility about the idea of the workplace, where and how work roles are done, and the impact of providing employees more independence and chances to be more risk-taking.

A noticeable conclusion from the study was how stages of client satisfaction appreciated by Top Employers in the UK were rising despite of the Covid-19 crisis & the disturbance and hard times created. Two-thirds stated boosts in customer satisfaction levels, with only 1% stating a reduction over the same period of time. 68% stated enhanced profits increase (compared to 61% the preceding year) and 56% a climb in productivity (up from 49% in 2019).

A guiding power behind that success story was a transformation in performance levels. Boosted shift in practices & innovation around performance management was already providing quantifiable business outputs. Obvious Review's UK Performance Management Report, started just pre the pandemic, revealed that between companies more broadly, more than 70% were still applying annual appraisals, in spite of years of fear around their influence in enhancing performance. Hardly a quarter had shifted to an on-going model, even though the massive majority (92%) of HR pros approved that this was an issue they needed to resolve "in the coming 12-18 months".

A sense of necessity around the must for change has been on the rise. The clue from Top Employers suggests minimum 3 new areas of center of attention: an enhancement in the focus provided to talent thru performance management, to engagement strategy & practice, & the high priority being provided to diversity & inclusion.

Senior managers were discovered to be aggressively engaging themselves in the performance management system (99% constantly doing so); there was a high level of accessibility of mentoring (87%) for leaders who needed more support to assist them to help out others in their team and, critically, in ensuring that performance goals were connected directly to business strategy. What is shifting most in terms of process is the attention to detail when providing individual development plans. This has turned out to be possible by the increasing importance of technology in providing personalization. This trend will keep on worldwide, as well as in the

UK. McKinsey and Co research states that around two-thirds (63%) of managers anticipate to use the same amount or more on “IT-staff augmentation” in the forthcoming months. Much of this will be invested in the other potentials that technology provides, as well as feedback & appreciation software, that can be shared at all levels of the organization, together with a more complicated utilize of data analytics.

Among Top Employers, 84% say that all employees have the opportunity to create and follow up on their PDPs supported by technology. At this stage, 42% have performance management technology allows them to conduct cross-analyses, look at year-on-year comparisons and identify trends and opportunities. More employers are looking at the need for linking performance and productivity. With remote working now widespread, some employees may need to be given time in the short term to regain and exceed prior levels of performance. In turn there is a stronger case for transitioning to an outcome-based performance management system, complete with a new set of KPIs. (<https://www.thehrdirector.com/why-the-pandemic-has-created-a-revolution-in-performance-management/#:~:text=Among%20Top%20Employers%2C%2084%25%20say,and%20identify%20trends%20and%20opportunities.>)

Beyond formal processes, there has been more attention on staff engagement – and on what additional forms of flexibility and empowerment can be used to enhance performance. Among Top Employers, 83% have a defined engagement strategy that details how they will measure engagement and follow up; 80% measure employee engagement annually – and 69% use more regular ‘pulse’ surveys. 61% expect managers to be working towards KPIs for improving employee engagement. 89% involve employees in creating action plans on engagement. (<https://www.thehrdirector.com/why-the-pandemic-has-created-a-revolution-in-performance-management/#:~:text=Among%20Top%20Employers%2C%2084%25%20say,and%20identify%20trends%20and%20opportunities.>)

The use of personalized rewards schemes is one avenue being explored by Top Employers. Personalized schemes rooted in flexibility and employee experience – some even allowing employees to design their own packages – are an opportunity to create competitive advantage in the war for talent. Employers who can’t afford the highest base salaries will be able to offer bespoke working arrangements (such as remote working, flexi-hours, task-based not hours-based roles) or increase the variable element of pay.

But engagement surveys highlight development and career development as the key areas where employees are looking for improvements – exactly the kind of offerings most affected by this period of uncertainty and the need to focus on core operations. Top Employers are looking to take the lead in re-skilling the workforce to make it more resilient to change: giving employees

the skills, fortitude and ability to be redeployed elsewhere in future times of difficulty, lessening the need for these companies to make abrupt layoffs and salary cuts. For example, global intelligent power management company Eaton has set up an internal marketplace for ‘stretch’ gig and short-term assignments, offering flexible opportunities for employees to grow their careers in line with both individual aspirations and business requirements. In this way Eaton has been able to build agile teams from a mix of skills and keep a wider range of people motivated by the opportunities available. LTI UK is using Artificial Intelligence to predict future skills needs and uses a career vacancy system that provides full visibility: for hiring managers the visibility of currently available employees, and for employees the upcoming vacancies. (<https://www.top-employers.com/en/insights/workforce-planning/lti-case-study/>)

Performance management has been in a groove for several years, stucked in a traditional cycle of formal annual reviews. The re-concentrating of urgencies has speeded up fundamental change. The break in routines & the critical need for high levels of performance & engagement, will permit ideas to thrive that are more align with brand new methods of working, established on a new world of employee independence & internal entrepreneurialism.

6- Description of participants of the study:

No. Of Participants	Job Function	Country	Industry	Level		
				Specialists	Managerial	Top Mgt
50	HR	Arab	Telecom	18	30	2
32	HR	Arab	Oil & Gas	26	6	0
16	HR	Arab	Management Consulting	8	8	0
22	HR	Arab	Agri Business	17	4	1
44	HR	Arab	F&B	29	12	3
9	HR	Arab	Steel industry	6	3	0
173	Total			104	63	6
34	HR	Europe	Automotive	20	11	3
18	HR	Europe	Banking	9	7	2
23	HR	Europe	FMCG	12	10	1
29	HR	Europe	IT	12	15	2
15	HR	Europe	Retail	7	7	1
119	Total			60	50	9
30	HR	America	Medical	18	10	2
14	HR	America	Logistics	7	7	0
9	HR	America	Real estate	6	3	0
27	HR	America	F&B	7	16	4
30	HR	America	Management Consulting	7	20	3
110	Total			45	56	9
402	Grand total			209	169	24

As Shown Above,

402 total working individuals have participated in the study world wide; where 173 of them work in the arab countries, 119 in Europe & 110 in America.

In the Arab countries, 104 of the total no. of participants are within the specialists level, while 63 in the managerial level & 6 are top management level.

In the European countries, 60 of the total no. of participants are within the specialists level, while 50 in the managerial level & 9 are top management level.

In the America, 45 of the total no. of participants are within the specialists level, while 56 in the managerial level & 9 are top management level.

Ovreal through out the 3 Geographical areas, 209 are Specialists level, 169 are managerial level & 24 are top Management.

7- Data Collection tools and procedures:

I Followed several methodologies and tools during conducting the study, I prepared the online Survey and shared it thru the following channels:

i. **Linkedin network:**

I headhunted the targeted audience for the survey out of my linkedin network, and started to message them directly and follow-up with them until I had collected the data of different levels of participants, different industries & different geographical zones.

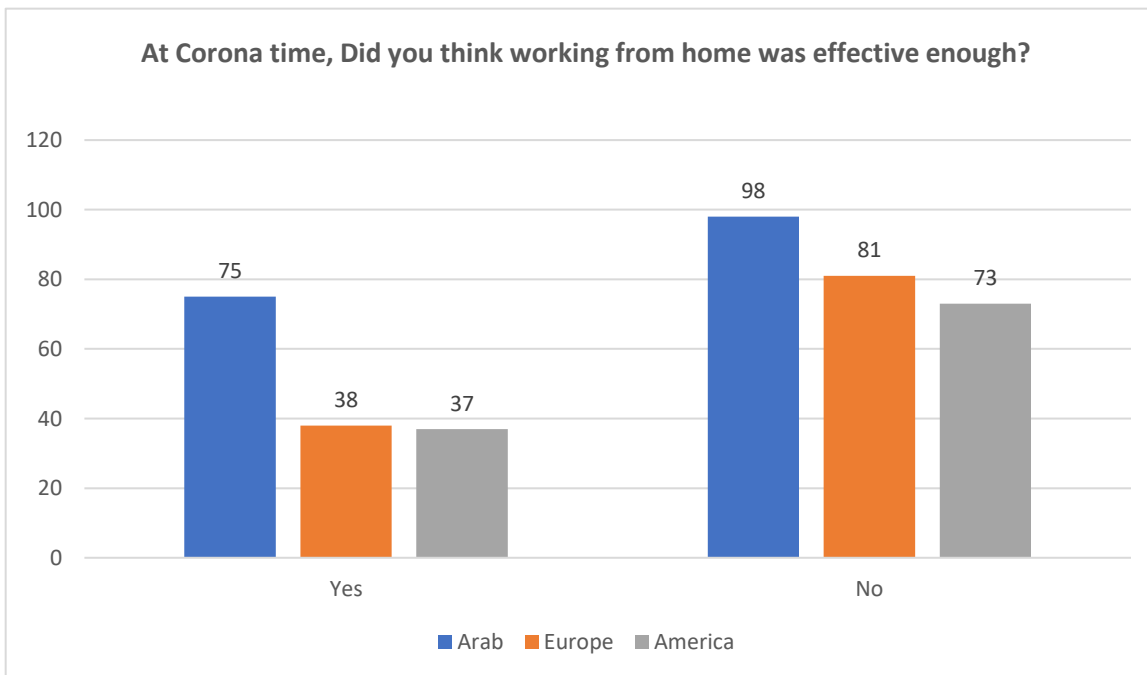
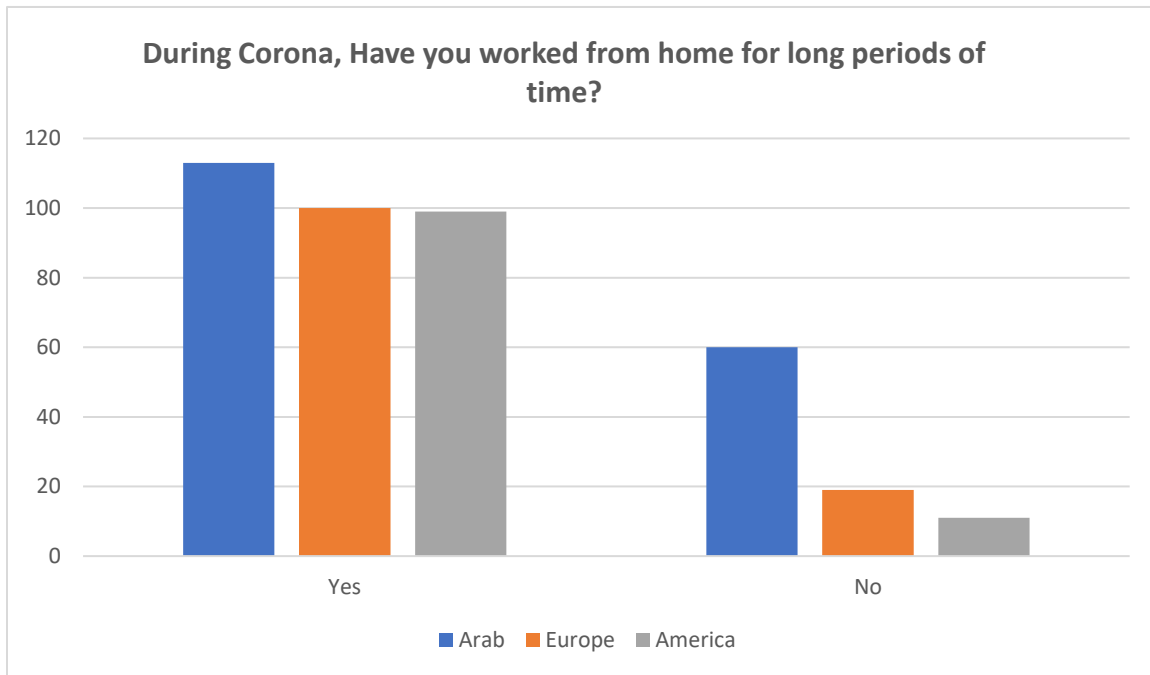
ii. **Paid Survey platform:**

I subscribed to an online survey platform who is responsible to share my survey with a random sample of participants according to a set of filtered criterion set by me, and they provide me the feedback within an agreed deadline.

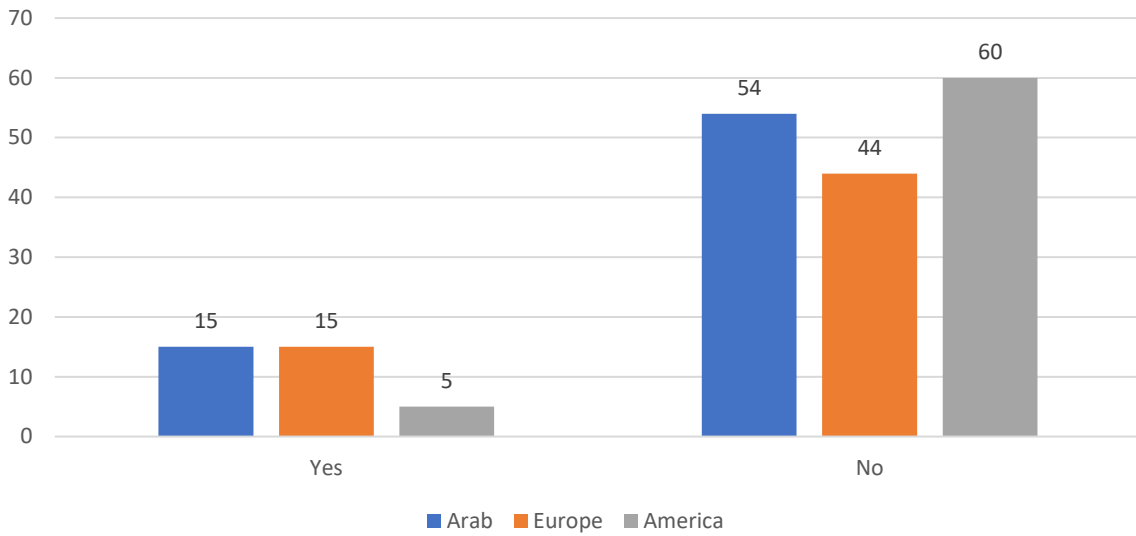
iii. **Real network of colleagues:**

I shared the survey with my personal network of colleagues whom I know personally from my current & previous professional experiences and within the targeted field for the survey.

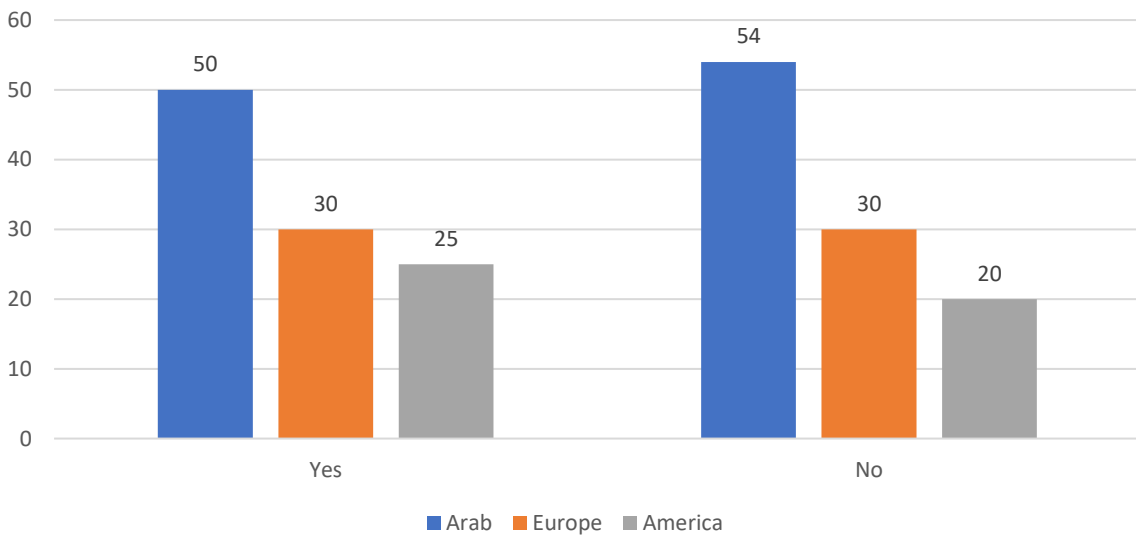
Data Analysis & Results of findings:



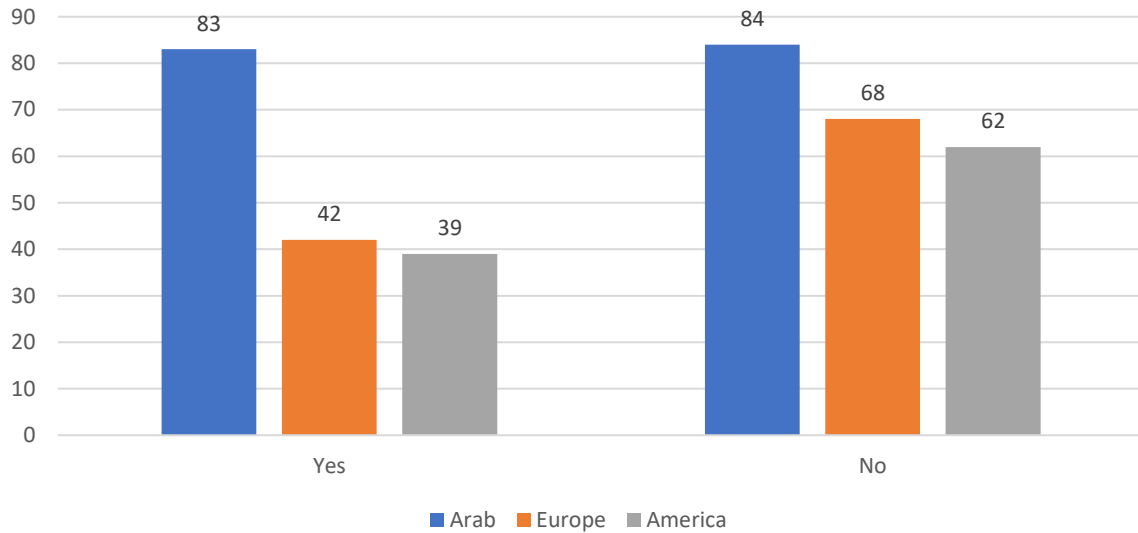
At Corona time & As a Manager, was it easy managing your team who are working from home ?



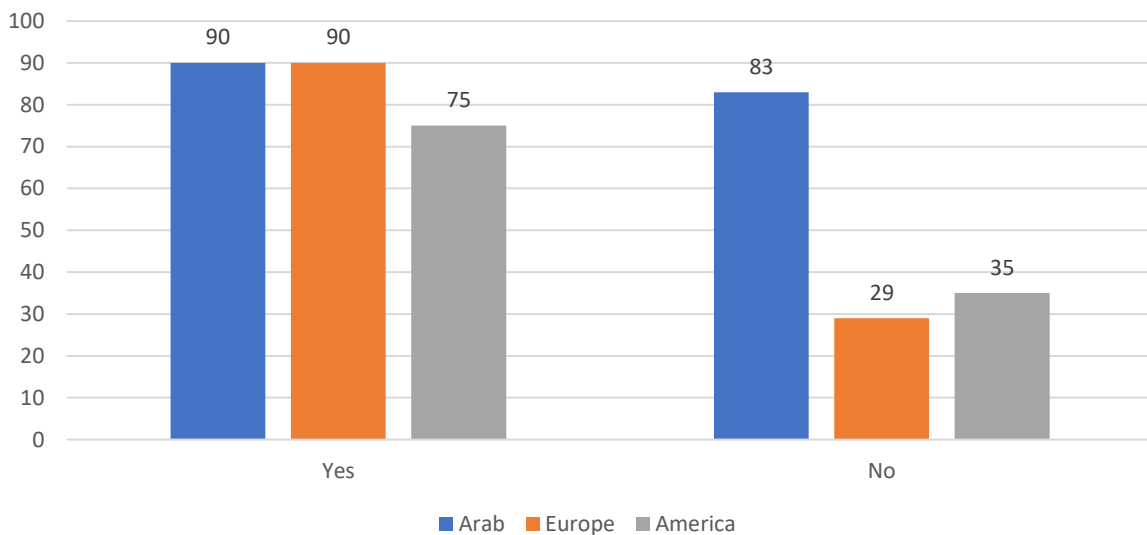
At Corona time & As an employee, was it easy delivering your work effectively ?



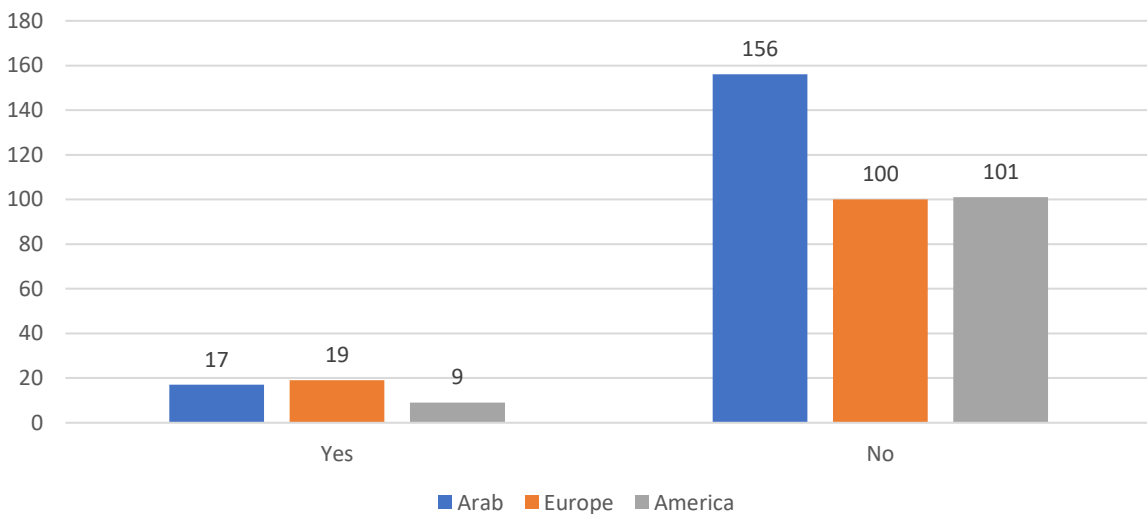
At Corona time & during the performance appraisal, did you find it easy to get a fair result for distant working employees ?



At Corona time, During the recruiting process, how effective was it to hire thru virtual interviews ?



During Corona time, Did your company provide you a training ?



Findings of the study:

From the conducted study, we came to some important conclusions:

- You will notice that There was an obvious correlation and relevance between the 3 geographical areas included in the survey in the overall feedback, so no matter where the employee work all over the world, it seems that they all have similar mindset.
- Almost 80% of employees within different levels have practiced the distant working during the Corona time for long period of time.
- While almost 75% of them believe that working from home was not as effective as physical attendance to office for different reasons.
- For Managers of the 3 different targeted areas, the majority of them by far think that tracking the performance of their subordinates was not easy enough during working from home, and that there were some difficulties manage their teams.
- Regular employees at the 3 different areas were hesitant or not sure enough that they could perform their tasks effectively thru distant working during covid time.
- When we came to the performance appraisal during covid time, the majority of the employees thought that they were not satisfied enough with their appraisals and that it might have been not that fair due to the fact that working from home did not provide them a clear and fair chance to present their work effectively to their bosses.
- In the recruitment process, there was a common agreement between employees and managers that virtual interviews during the covid times did not affect the quality of the recruitment process for them, but in the contrary it might have been facilitated the ease of scheduling the interviews as it can be conducted anywhere and anytime.
- Last but not least, there was an absolute clear feedback that almost 95% of the companies have not provided any types of training during the covid time and that this was not one of their top priorities during these times.

Conclusion & Recommendations:

To sum this up, The profits declines & budget gaps resulted by the COVID-19 crisis have led to a considerable talent management challenges. Under these difficult conditions, several organizations have chosen to demote & even completely stop performance appraisals & reviews. The fact that these procedures are being obsolete proves that a lot of organizations do not execute state-of-the-art performance management systems but, rather, only performance appraisal. In the opposite, performance management is specifically tailored to resolve the many talent management challenges produced by the COVID-19 crisis as it serves crucial administrative, strategic & communication, developmental, organizational maintenance, and documentation purposes. Particularly,

we offered 5 evidence-based suggestions to resolve talent management challenges:

- (1) Assess outputs in addition to behaviors
- (2) Assess adaptive performance,
- (3) Perform stay interviews to keep top performers,
- (4) execute multisource performance management systems, and
- (5) Receive and use PPS. These evidence-based procedures will not only aid organizations resolve challenges during a crisis but also let them to prosper after the crisis is over.

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10- Appendix:



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