HOW IS HUMAN RESOURCES DEALING WITH THE NEW MODELS OF CONFLICT

NOW THAT EVERYONE IS WORKING FROM HOME

by

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Abstract

Conflict resolution has evolved and brought alternatives in order to reduce the court activity when addressing conflicts of not great complexity over the recent years. The presumption of Human Resources being the responsible area of addressing conflicts in the workplace and the growing use of mediation as an alternative dispute resolution in the workplace was one of the motivations that made this study an interesting topic to be explored. This study evaluates how the new model of conflict have been addressed to HR in the workplace, even while everyone is working from home and how it has been dealt with in the companies. Also, this dissertation explores the COVID-19 pandemic effect in the way people relates to their workspace.

To show how people see themselves when involved in a conflict in their workplace and how they report it to HR or not, this study have elaborate a questionnaire where the participants were able to express their opinions and point of view in the topic. The results show that people are still not likely to see HR as a mediator when it comes to alternative dispute resolutions in the workplace, but it also shows that mediation would be something that people consider as a relevant technique when solving professional conflicts. On this basis, the concept of workplace mediation and the figure of the HR professional as a mediator should be taken into consideration by the companies when addressing conflicts in the workplace.

Introduction

The covid outbreak (COVID-19) has brought us as a society considerable changes in our daily life routine. As an attempt to stop the spread of the virus and to control the pandemic from taking even bigger proportions, worldwide one of the most popular strategies is the social isolation. Losekann and Mourão (2020) explains that as a result of the pandemic, many aspects of human life have been impacted, among those it is the work relations, with a considerable increase of home office operations.

Literature show us that a higher investment in human capital, implementation of HR practices (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999; Ang et al., 2013) and having engaged employees (Kahn 1990, 1992) will contribute to organisational success (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Anitha, 2014). It is possible to see a considerable growth in the literature about home office and its implications since the beginning of this historical pandemic that we are currently in. It is also possible to find relevant information about the Human Resources (HR) role in the workplace. However, the relation between the role of HR in the workplace related to the increase of home office was still not found during this first research, what highlights the importance of this topic.

The aim of this research is to comprehend if people are feeling that they have a safe place to talk to HR when dealing with workplace conflicts via internet. And by clarifying that point, understand the importance of the HR support when dealing with conflicts in the workplace and avoiding a possible increase in the turnover. Considering that, it also becomes a questions whether the human resources professionals are an useful tool when it becomes to mediating conflicts in the workplace.

Chapter one is a review of the literature. Firstly, it will be presented an overview of the role of Human Resources in the workplace and its effectiveness. Also, the role of Mediation in the workplace as an alternative dispute resolution. In addition to the changes that are in place since the start of COVID-19 pandemic and how it affected the way we used to work and the workplace into perspective. Also, it will be analysed the understanding of conflicts and how it surges in the workplace.

Second of all, chapter two will expose the research methodology and methods to explain (i) how the study will be conducted to answer the research questions; (ii) the philosophy and approach adopted; and (iii) as a quantitative dissertation, the research design and methods.

The following chapter, chapter three will gather the data found in the study and will show how mediation can be an alternative dispute resolution technique useful by the Human Resources in the workplace when related to the new models of conflict.

Ensuing, chapter four will bring analysis of the data and findings of the survey applied online, from different countries around the world, being able to show if people are still working from home and how are the companies dealing with this specific situation and new model of work.

Chapter number 5, being the last chapter, will be the discussion, specifically how Human Resources has been dealing with the new models of conflict and how home office has impacted people lives since the start of the pandemic. Considering the increased use of mediation in the workplace as an instrument for alternative dispute resolution.

Based on the chapters above, this study requests a critical analysis of the role of the Human Resources in the workplace, how it has been dealing with the new models of conflict, since the COVID-19 pandemic started and changed the way we all have been working, and the way it has impacted the employee-employer relation, in addition to the way people see their workplace; considering the use of Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution in the workplace and evaluating its effectiveness.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to comprehend if people are feeling that they have a safe place to talk to HR when dealing with workplace conflicts via internet. And by clarifying that point, understand the importance of the HR support when dealing with conflicts in the workplace and avoiding a possible increase on the turnover.

Times have changed and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we work and relate to people has also changed. Interpersonal relationships seem to be more difficult after the lift of the lockdown restrictions and the return to the office has become a challenge for some people. On the other hand, the arise of new models of conflict in the home office, have impacted negatively the productivity of some employees and some companies were not ready, as well as their Human Resources areas, to deal with this, making people uncomfortable in their positions.

First of all, people have been forced to bring their offices into their homes, invading their spaces and sharing it with their family and housemates. But now, two years later, that it has all came back to normal slowly, it has also shown that there is a new normal and if people were once reluctant on welcoming their offices into their homes, now they are reluctant on going back to all the stress of commuting and not being able to cook their own food and be in the comfort of their homes.

In order to find this, this dissertation intends to answer three main questions, those being: (i) Are people feeling they have a safe place to talk to HR when dealing with workplace conflicts via internet? (ii) How is HR being notified about conflicts when people are not in the workplace? (iii) How Mediation can be an alternative in many cases of conflict in the workplace?

Human Resources play an important role in the companies and due to COVID-19 pandemic needed to readapt its model of work such as so many people worldwide. Hence, the main objectives where this research is based are:

- to understand how the HR management have been being notified about the team conflicts now that people are not in their workplace;
- to find out how employees and HR are coping with the new model of conflicts that were brought to the workplace by the home office and
- to clarify how the use of Mediation can have an important role in the Workplace related to Interpersonal and/or Team Issues.

1. Review of Literature

1.1 Understanding Human Resources management

1.1.1 The role of Human Resources (HR) and its effectiveness in the workplace

Effective organisations have employees who are engaged in their jobs (Gruman and Saks, 2011) and the Human Resources can be a great addition to the company in order to analyse and point out strategics that can improve the well-being of their employees and improve their performance as a result of that.

Many people believe that talent management has evolved into a crucial competitive tool for global businesses. (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Several studies have demonstrated the importance of human-organization fit and how it impacts employee recruitment and retention. (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). As a result, past research has demonstrated the critical role that organizational culture can play in attracting and retaining people, as well as the significant impact it may have on talent management initiatives.

Given that, it is crucial to understand the role of HR practices referring to talent management and organizational culture, as it is the responsible sector in the workplace to pass it through the company, by attracting, training and retaining the right people to the right positions in the companies, by a meticulous profile analysis and availability to conflict solving and frequent organizational climate analysis. Some researches shows that the organizational climate has an impact on employment resources and demand (e.g., Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

Interpretations about a remarkably constant set of value orientations for the company as a whole, key aspects of effective management style, values of the organization, and allowed behaviours, which impact employee members' behaviour with respect to organizational effectiveness, are defined as organizational climate. (Sparrow, 2001)

HR can be valuable for companies that consider their human capital as an important resource for their organizational performance, and by its good practices can develop competences and implement important projects for the company, such as job rotation programs, training for specific roles, among other. Human resource management methods can aid employees in providing high-quality service. On the one hand, these approaches give employees with the skills, resources, and discretion they require to fulfil their goals and customer demands, making them able to deliver high-quality service (Liao and Chuang, 2004).

Human Resources team will assist employees feel more engaged at work by creating a positive work environment and giving appropriate training. Employees, on the other hand, can actively change or 'sculpt' the design of their employment by selecting tasks, debating workplace conditions, and attributing significance to their workload (Parker & Ohly, 2008).

It is worth noting that HR professionals are frequently motivated by a desire to solidify their positions within the company and gain legitimacy; these factors highlight the strategic partner role of HR and the improvement HRM can provide to the company and its stockholders through strong employee management. Some HR professionals adopt the business partner position, while some of them might prefer the employee advocate. Both being valid and influencing positively in each company's specific strategies and retention programs.

Furthermore, the HR function is expected to take on a more active role as a knowledge facilitator and assist in the establishment of structured knowledge management systems inside the workplace (Mello, 2006). Knowledge management has been demonstrated through studies to be positively connected to organizational performance, to assist organizations in coping with environmental uncertainty, and to mitigate the impacts of culture on organizational effectiveness. (e.g. Fugate, Stank, & Mentzer, 2009; Liao, Chang, Hu, & Yueh, 2012).

Human resource professionals frequently strive to portray themselves as organizational business associates in order to promote the HR method's validity and reliability, as well as to strengthen their own status within businesses (De Gama, McKenna, & Peticca-Harris, 2012; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2009; Wright, 2008) by openly promoting the organization's goal and responding quickly to evolving business conditions.

There has been a lot of data linking Human resource practices to employee performance over the last few years. (Huselid, 1995). Keeping track of employee performance (Gruman and Saks, 2011) and how they handle their personnel are critical components of any business plan. In today's world, where every organization must satisfy its standards, employee performance has a huge impact on overall organizational success.

Human Resources practices are the structures and processes that enable organizations, teams, and individual employees to identify and meet their characteristics of effective learning. These practices refer to the procedures, strategies, and methods that grant and reward employee performance, having a major impact on the organization's emotional and relational processes (Whitener, 2001).

In the area of Human resource management, the impact of HR policies and practices on organizational effectiveness is a hot topic. Through the acquisition and development of a company's human capital, HR procedures have an impact on employee abilities. (Huselid, 1995).

There are several well-developed theoretical frameworks that describe how Human Resource processes can lead to strategic advantage. As a clear example of that, there is Becker et al.'s (1997) HRM-performance model, that illustrates how HRM systems that support and develop employee skills and motivation lead to enhanced productivity, creativity, and discretionary effort, which leads to better performance, profit, and growth.

Swanson (1995, p.207) elucidates HR as "a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personal training and development for the purpose of improving performance". As a result, HR policies are viewed as indicators of an organization's intent toward its personnel. Furthermore, "HR practices communicate messages constantly and in unintended ways, and messages can be understood idiosyncratically, whereby two employees interpret the same practices differently" [Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), p.206].

HR practices are efforts made by an organization to improve performance. (Ang et al., 2013) and organizational development, which improves the organization's competitiveness and effectiveness in the long haul. Effective HR management strategies are critical for increasing organizational effectiveness and retaining outstanding people (Dessler, 1999).

From the point of view of a strategic human resource management, employee performance and organisational performance are directly shaped by a well setup Human Resources Management practices. (Huselid 1995; Huselid et al., 1997; Combs et al., 2006). When the HR is efficient in its practices, it also encourages the employees to do their roles efficiently. (Huselid, 1995). According to the same author, it is possible to see the increase of high-quality service from the employees when there is an effective HR practice in place in the workplace.

1.2. The applicability of Mediation in the workplace

1.2.1. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Mediation: an overview

Conflict is an unavoidable, essential, and integral element of human interactions. Having to deal with it has always been a part of humanity. Nomadic tribes and clans dealt with problems in a different way than we do now. The attitudes of former life practices did not fit the current desire to form relationships over time. In that historical environment, the eldest member of those tribes was chosen to settle the issue since he or she had more understanding of the conflict.

Workplace conflicts, like many others, rarely require solely a legal solution. Often, strong emotions are involved, which should be considered when looking for a long-term and constructive solution.

Nowadays, conflict resolution is a contentious and broad topic that is being argued all over the world. However, various approaches to improving and increasing the effectiveness of conflict resolution have been examined and researched over the years.

Alternative Dispute Resolution is not a brand-new concept. For ages, communities have designed non-adversarial and informal conflict resolution techniques. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of the usage of ADR techniques in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Assyria's early civilizations. (Law Reform Commission, Consultation Paper Alternative Dispute Resolution, 2008).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to a set of techniques for resolving conflicts outside of the courtroom. Mediation, arbitration, and conciliation are the most popular practices. The technique entails the use of an impartial third party to help the disputants in resolving their differences. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has proven to be the most important and widespread mechanism for resolving conflicts. With the increased promotion and use of ADR, some people are wondering whether sort of dispute resolution surpasses the other benefits and drawbacks.

ADR assists in the early resolution of disputes. Early settlement can benefit the disputant financially as well as emotionally. It could also imply that a valuable relationship can be restored and sustained, which in combative litigation could be at stake. Although it is accurate that lawyers frequently negotiate and settle cases, sometimes on the courthouse steps, a successful negotiation often hinges on the weight of the legal rights-based arguments, which can only be developed properly after costly and time-consuming processes such as discovery. Other routes of settlement possibilities, which may better meet a client's needs and interests and requirements, are sometimes overlooked by this legalistic approach. (Fiadjoe, 2004, p.10).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques have recently gained a lot of traction in the legal system. Individuals are increasingly choosing ADR over the traditional method of going to court to resolve their problems.

One of the most well-known ADRs, Mediation, has evolved over time to promote approaches that value efficacy and efficiency as an alternative to the traditional form of dispute resolution, which has always been litigation. Studies shows that there is strong evidence that mediation improves satisfaction, reduces costs and time, and empowers the parties. Mediators play an important role in the mediation process. Instead of assessing the parties' rights and selecting the mediation outcome, they should support them and foster conversation between them.

Mediation a confidential process, where a third and neutral party intervene in a conflict in order to help the parties involved to find their own solution to their problem. The Mediator helps the parties through the process, during this alternative dispute resolution. Mediation is a non- judgmental

process and do not say who is right and who is wrong in the dispute, it helps the parties communicate and see the conflict from each other's perspective.

Even though the Mediation has had its practice expanded in the past five decades, just from the start of the 21st century that the institutionalization of Mediation became a reality (Moore, 2014, p.69).

Contextually, Mediation is a process where a neutral and independent party, such called a mediator, take part in a dispute in order to support the stakeholders to work out their issues (Roberts, 2008, p. 7). This mediator's neutrality and impartiality are an ideal yet not always achieved.

The mediator's responsibility includes avoiding bias and operating with objectivity and impartiality. Without a doubt, many mediators are becoming more adept at honing their skills as mediators and avoiding imposing their personal thoughts and opinions. Biases, on the other hand, are a natural part of the human experience, and not always can be avoided. As a result, the mediator faces a difficult duty in not allowing it to interfere with the process.

Some mediation characteristics, such as confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the process, and the mediator's position as a facilitator, are highlighted in the Mediation Act 2017. Despite the development of Facilitative Mediation in Ireland, alternative approaches such as Evaluative, Narrative, and Transformative Mediation are also valid (Linden, 2000). The concept of a facilitative approach to mediation is certainly conservative and idealistic. Despite the fact that it is the most organized form of mediation (Linden, 2000), most mediators employ a combination of methods in practice, based on user preferences and the specifics of each case (Imperati, cited in Zumeta, 2018).

Although impartiality and neutrality are sometimes used interchangeably in the mediation area, there is a distinction to be made. Neutrality refers to how the mediator approaches and administers the process, whereas neutrality refers to the mediator's approach toward the parties. Another essential element of the mediation process is self-determination. It is based on the belief that the parties would be able to resolve their differences and achieve an agreement without the intervention of others (Nolan-Haley, 2005, p. 277). As per Zumeta (2018), the parties must own the outcome, whereas the mediator is merely in charge of the process. Nolan-Haley (2005, p. 279), on another perspective, claims that the extension of self-determination is reliant on both the style and nature of mediation (independent or court-based).

Cooperation, respect, justice, equity, empowerment, empathy, and a variety of other components and ideals are all engrained in mediation. As well as neutrality and impartiality, that are two principles of paramount importance for mediation. The open and consensual style of mediation

encourages parties to talk about their underlying feelings, worries, and expectations. This not only encourages the parties to reach a mutually acceptable settlement, but it also promotes a better connection once the dispute is addressed. (a different outcome than what is usually expected in arbitration, for example) (Gourlay and Soderquist 1997–1998; Dolder 2004).

According to Field (2003), a frequent phrase to refer to the mediator's behaviour and opinion on the issue of the dispute is neutrality in its conventional sense. As the mediator, you are a neutral third party with no vested interest in the outcome of the conflict. Furthermore, none of the parties are affected. He frequently refers to neutrality as a "key principle of mediation," emphasizing its relevance.

Exon (2008) asserts that neutrality is the "refusal to ally with, support, or favour any side in a dispute," assuming the same assumptions as Field in the quotation above. Once again, the mediator's impartiality is characterized by the third party's engagement or interest in the matter.

According to Frenkel and Stark (2018), the mediator does not have to act or appear to act on behalf of any of the parties in the mediation context, meaning that all participants must be treated equally, using the term "evenhandedly" to emphasize this.

According to Bernard and Garth (2002), impartiality means "freedom of favouritism and bias in word, action, and appearance." The mediator is not permitted to provide any privileges or provide additional assistance to any of the parties. Furthermore, impartiality is included as one of the mediator's obligations in section 2 (b) of the Mediation Act 2017, making it an extremely vital feature to argue and follow in any case or circumstance.

Bias is commonly defined as an unjust tendency toward one side of a dispute, in which the Mediator gives disproportionate weight to one of the parties. A few experts, according to Savun (2008), believe that if bias is discovered in a mediation, it will most likely fail. A biased mediation, on the other hand, has a reduced chance of working out and being accepted by the less fortunate side. One of the most important aspects of mediation is that the process must be fair and free of bias in order for the parties to feel at ease with a neutral third party being a participant of their mediation process for resolving their differences.

Izumi (2010) investigates the concept of implicit bias and the illusion of Neutrality as a mediator. Defining implicit bias as a scientific process in which human beings are not fully aware, cognitively speaking, of what others think about them in general. In this circumstance, neither the emotions nor the acts are under control. The mediators' judgment and impressions are likely to shift his or her impression creation and regulate their actions or behaviours, so affecting neutrality or impartiality, often undetected by the source of the behaviour. It is also stated that this implicit bias is "automatic" and is often linked to one's background.

As a result, there are also concepts of attainable explicit biases or thoughts, such as the assumption that "all the boys like to watch and play football," as Tolchin (2018) explains. The mediator should prevent these behaviours in order to comply with the Mediation Act 2017 (Ireland), which states that the process must be impartial and non-biased.

From an organizational standpoint, neutrality is described as "scrupulously giving each disputant equal attention and doing exactly what is needed by each disputant" according to Cohen, Dattner, and Luxenburg (1999, p. 342). The same writers expound on the significance of a Mediator remaining impartial in terms of the content of the Mediation session while maintaining control over the mediation process and conflict resolution.

Despite greater encouragement and implementation of mediation in most countries, empirical studies on organizational mediation has been lacking. There are just a few thorough tests of workplace mediation's impacts and effectiveness. The main purpose of workplace mediation is to resolve interpersonal employee issues that arise from an ongoing or terminated job relationship. (Brim 2001; Dolder 2004; Doherty and Guyler 2008).

Workplace mediation may be used to settle disputes concerning working conditions, cross - functional and cross conflicts, and the reintegration of employees returning from a leave of absence (Shaw et al. 2008), disputes over an employee's dismissal are also common. They can also handle sexual harassment allegations. (Bond 1997; Oser 2004–2005), discrimination (Stallworth, McPherson, and Rute 2001; McDermott and Ervin 2005), bullying (Doherty and Guyler 2008; Fox and Stallworth 2009), Conflicts involving multiple parties and/or other businesses (Rome 2003).

It's worth noting that the decision to use mediation in the workplace can be influenced by the sort of disagreement, its stage, and, most importantly, the type of resolution sought. According to Shapiro and Brett (1993) "the type of outcome obtained from a dispute resolution procedure (e.g. a win, lose or compromise) may influence processes underlying judgements of procedural justice [by participants]" (p. 1170). It is the responsibility of the disputants to discover and agree on a satisfactory outcome. Mediation can be employed at any stage during a conflict, however it is recommended that it be done as soon as doable (Gibbons, 2007).

There have been some critics of the applicability of mediation in the workplace. Case in point, Dickens (2008) strongly advises against blindly accepting mediation as a viable method to resolving workplace conflict. Other authors have questioned mediation's suitability in dealing with bullying and harassment, a common source of conflict in the workplace. For example Branch et al. (2009), while acknowledging the value of mediation for early intervention, believes that in some

situations it might exacerbate the situation if, for example, "retaliatory conduct" by one of the parties occurs later. (p. 530).

The increased use of mediation in the workplace reflects shifts in the employer-employee relationship. As union membership has fallen, collective employment have changed to personal ones, in which employees negotiate their own individual agreements. (Lipsky, Seeber, and Fincher 2003; Dolder 2004; Goldman 2011).

1.3 Workplace into perspective: pros and cons of home office

According to Cambridge dictionary, "workplace is a building or room where people perform their jobs". But it can be considered a not so actual definition, as due to the actual restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the employees turned their homes also into their workplaces. Losekann and Mourão (2020) bring to the attention that even though home office was an actual practice for some companies; from the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic it became an urgent matter for most of the companies, affecting employees worldwide. In addition, the authors resalts that what it was in the past considered an exception, it then became a rule.

As it is a relatively new subject that is becoming a trend, the literature and studies are also very new and still imprecise, but as it has become an even more relevant matter since the start of lockdowns worldwide, the study of this subject has become even more relevant. Furthermore, it increases the relevance of this actual research, by helping through some data collected during the easing of the restrictions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and its permanent results on the way some companies relate to their employees and the way they work.

The thinning of the borders between the domains of home and work, which are defined by separate sets of connections, commitments, and values, is at the root of many of the complications surrounding working at home (Perin, 1998). It is of great importance to analyse the impact that the transition to home office generates and also the issues it raises about not only how an individual worker interacts with their company, but also how the transition affects family exchange ties.

Psychologically speaking, it is important for people's mental health to have a clear separation of work life and personal life, in order to keep a balance and appropriate breaks from their obligations. But since people are now working from their home, which used to be their exclusively personal spaces, it has become a trend that some people actually do never stop working. Some people report to forget even to take toilet breaks, considering that they have an internal fear of being misinterpreted in case they are away from their laptops for too long and being considered

to not actually being productive while they are working from home as much as they would be if they were working on-site, under strict supervision by their leaders.

While it is important to notice that the workplace has changed a lot over the past few years, since the COVID-19 pandemic, where the world population were forced to self-isolate for a long period of time, so the way the world relates to the workplace has also changed a lot in the past two years. People had to manage not just their jobs, for the ones who were able to be moved to home office base, but also their mental health, since it was a non-precedent situation for most of the population alive at the time it started. In addition to balance the physical distance not just from the office, but also from their relatives and friends that turned out to be more difficult than expected, as the lack of interpersonal relationships was something completely new as well, considering that great part of the population are now used to be connected 24/7. It also brought consequences on how people relate and interact to each other. But as it is a new subject, the relevant literature based on that is still vague.

Due to the increased flexibility of work responsibilities and the option to work in a familiar and comfortable atmosphere, people who work remotely, in home office, are usually more productive and have fewer work-life conflicts (Hill et al., 2003).

Working from home has been suggested as a way to alleviate work-related stress by eliminating daily commuting (Anderson et al., 2001). Home office, on the other hand, may cause an unintended overlapping of domestic tasks and work requirements since it contextualizes work responsibilities in the daily lives setting (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), which is clearly capable of exacerbating distant employees' feelings of exhaustion (Kim et al., 2015). While working from home, the feeling of constant tiredness may be intensified, as a result of extended working hours and activities.

In addition, working from home is likely to result in a significant interest in working at odd hours, such as late at night or on weekends and bank holidays (Kristensen and Pedersen, 2017). The companies do appreciate that, as it can also increase the productivity and positive results for the organization. But on another perspective, remote employees' work-life harmony may suffer as a result of this unusual working hours (Greubel et al., 2016).

It is assertive to say that, in general, the perception of working from home brings more comfort and it could increase the employees productivity, by reducing the commute time and traffic stress that it may cause. Working from home can increase family communication while also saving money on clothes, groceries and mobility (Kelly, 1988; Kossek, 2001; McCloskey & Igbaria, 1998; Mirchandani, 1999; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001).

On the other hand, home office based employees are more likely to describe a lack of separation between work and family responsibilities (Kossek, 2001), what some authors comment as increasing the fatigue and stress, also the feeling of being overwhelmed and in some more extreme cases, even becoming workaholics. As it shows another study, suggesting that some people based in home office and not on-site may have showed workaholism aspects due to a lack of boundaries between work and family responsibilities, according to the study (Olson and Primps, 1984)

Some leaders initially argue about the benefits and effectiveness of home office, as they are not sharing the same space as their team, it seems at first that they will not be able to observe and analyse their performance in an appropriate way, or the way they are used to. This needs a switch away from a "face-time culture" and toward a "results-oriented culture" (Hill & Weiner, 2003). Focusing on this performance indicators, it's no shock that some data has found a correlation between remote work and verifiable efficiency gains, reduced absenteeism, cheaper direct labour costs, and overall improved organizational efficiency (Kelly, 1988; Kraut, 1989).

According to some researchers point of view, by eliminating time-wasters, employees tend to be more active and dedicated to their positions, increasing not just their satisfaction while working, but also their self-confidence and motivation to work (Hill et al., 1998). Another research shows, on the other hand, that there was no difference in job satisfaction between employees that are home office based and those who goes to the office, according to the study. (Kraut, 1989)

2. Research Methodology and Methods

The techniques by which researchers go about their work of finding, explaining, and predicting phenomena are referred to as research methodology. It is also known as the study of information-gathering methods. S. Goundar (2012) explains that a systematic approach to solve an issue is referred to as research methodology. It is a look at how the analysis should be conducted.

The methodology is a complete and exact description of every activity taken during the research process. It is a description of the type of study, the instruments used, the projected time, the research team and labour division, the methods of data tabulation and treatment, in short, everything that was implemented in the research.

When the appropriate type of study is identified and defined as well as the policy, theory, time horizon, methods, accompanied by correct procedures and techniques based on his or her research work, research methodology constitutes the internal setting. Furthermore, the study methodology acts as a central hub by limiting fundamental research and facilitating good research effort. Internal and external environments must adhere to the proper study approach. (Goundar, 2012).

Saunders et al. (2013) use the term methods to refer to techniques and procedures used to obtain and analyse data. Methods, therefore, include questionnaires, observations and interviews as well as methods of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (non-statistical) analysis, and the main emphasis of this book is, as you have probably gathered from the title. The word methodology, on the other hand, refers to the philosophy of how research should be carried out. (Saunders et al., 2013, p. 3).

The research methodology is a crucial part of a research project, it guides to where the current research will be based. Saunders research onion model is quite famous in the academic background and is often chosen by researchers. It does promote comparison and understanding in different areas related to the research based on the precis data analysis.

As shown in the image below, the steps in the development of a research project, the Saunders Research onion is illustrated and was created by Saunders et al. (2013).
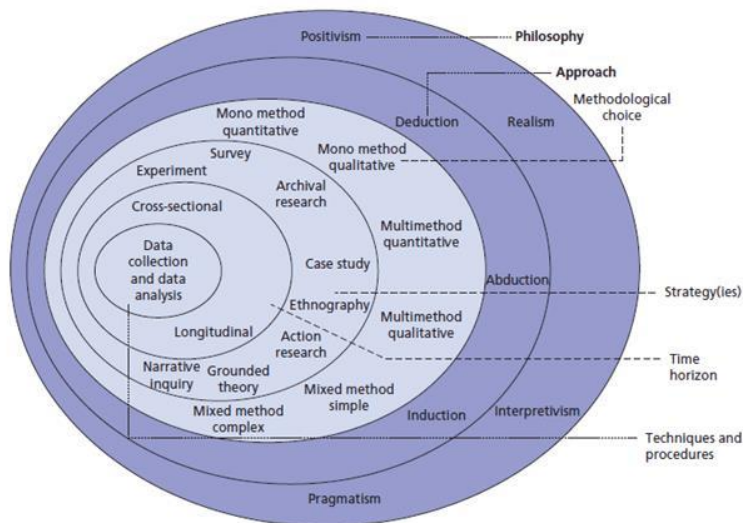
Figure 1. Research Onion by Saunders et al. (2013)

The onion layers, in other terms, provide a more comprehensive explanation of the stages of a research process. It represents a substantial advancement in the ability to construct a research approach. Its benefit comes from its capacity to adapt to practically any type of research approach and its versatility in application. (Bryman, 2012).

To explain the stages that a researcher must go through when developing a realistic methodology The research onion was developed by Saunders et al. in 2007. For the study to be completely credible, the researcher must have arguments and explanations for each stage of the methodology decisions. (Stainton, 2020).

As a result of this, it will be feasible to separate the many disciplines of scientific research and so place it in the context of this dissertation, which is the impact of COVID-19 and the new models of conflict in the workplace, now that people are working from home and the applicability of mediation as an alternative dispute resolutions in some of the cases.

2.1 Research Question

According to Saunders et al. (2013, p.20) before you begin your study, you should have a rough notion of what you want to accomplish. It is most likely the most difficult, yet crucial, aspect of your study endeavour. It is difficult to plan how you will research anything if you don't know what you are going to research. So, before starting any research, the researcher needs to carefully thinks and decide on the most important thing of it, a good question for the study.

Being mindful of that, this study is based on three main questions: (i) Are people feeling they have

a safe place to talk to HR when dealing with workplace conflicts via internet? (ii) How is HR being notified about conflicts when people are not in the workplace? (iii) How Mediation can be an alternative in many cases of conflict in the workplace?

Since everything has been changing so fast from the beginning of the pandemic until the present moment, and that the companies have had to readapt its policies and the way they actually work, it is crucial to understand if how the Human Resources area is being notified of the new models of conflict that are arising between employees and the importance of considering an alternative dispute resolution for cases where the conflict has escalated disproportionally, considering that now most of the employees are working from their own homes.

2.2 Research philosophy and approach

Research paradigm is the hypothesis about how things should work, Saunders (2019) refers to that as Philosophies. These philosophies are usually alluded to as Ontology and Epistemology. Ontology shows the factualism, dealing with what is actually true and if the reality really does exist. When showing the nature of reality, that are two possible philosophies. Realism, being the one that understands one and only universal truth. And Relativism, where it is understood and accepted that depending on the contents of the research, many truths are possible.

Said that, the ontology chosen for this research is the relativism, decision made based on its nature; which will be dependent in the findings and personal understanding of the HR professionals and employees that are currently allocated in home office. In order to determine the truthfulness that defines the EMIC epistemology, interaction with HR professionals and employees are made necessary on this research.

Practical issues will have an impact on the philosophy adopted in the research. However, your particular perspective on the relationship between awareness and the method through which it develops is likely to have the most impact. The fact-seeking researcher, such as the resources required in a manufacturing process, is likely to hold a totally different perspective on how research should be carried out in the same production process, from a researcher interested in the workers' thoughts and opinions about their management. Not only are their ideas and approaches likely to differ greatly, but so are their perspectives on what is important and, perhaps more importantly, what is applicable. (Saunders et al., 2013, p. 108).

Following the onion layers, the second layer of the research onion includes the concepts deductive and inductive. Previous levels may have an impact on the choices you make on this level. It is critical that you determine your research goal and restrictions.

Referring to this work, it will be based on the inductive approach. Based on the information gathered from participants and checking for possible patterns in order to get the findings. There is more than one truth that can be found on this approach.

The deductive approach, that would be another alternative for this layer, is based on existing theories that seek one and only truth, it is commonly used in scientific research. But on the inductive approach, from the start, you concentrate on the theory's working title. It implies that you are not required to consider an existing hypothesis. (Research Onion – Made easy to understand and follow, 2017).

In this study, the inductive approach is applicable because the factors influencing the COVID-19 pandemic are relatively unknown because such an unprecedent crisis has not been endured in the modern working world. Based on the information gathered from participants and checking for possible patterns in order to get the findings. There is more than one truth that can be found on this approach. Another alternative approach would be the deductive approach, which is based on existing theories that seek one and only truth, it is commonly used in scientific research.

2.3 Research design and methods

The following stage of the research onion method is the methodological choice, in which, according to Saunders et al. (2013) the method of data collection, which could be mono-method qualitative, mono-method quantitative, multi-method quantitative, mixed methods simple, or mixed methods complex, is referred to as the concept.

Based on that, methodology research can have three different choices. The mono method, where just one of the qualitative or quantitative methods is chosen; mixed method, where both quantitative and qualitative methods are mixed and used or the multi method, which involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, just as mixed, but the implementation of the research is made separately and afterwards it is then triangulated.

The most adequate choice for this research is the monomethod, which will be used in a quantitative approach in order to identify the role of the HR in the workplace within the new models of conflict.

Based on a congruent group, the case study strategy is used by a researcher that have chosen that unified group to perform a precise study. Another example of strategy that can be used by the researcher is the Survey, where an exemplary group is taken from the population.

The most adequate strategy for this study is the survey, where questionnaires will be applied for the representative groups of the population (HR professionals and employees home office or

hybrid based).

While the cross-sectional study means that the research is being done at one point in time, the longitudinal research is used when there is an extended timeframe.

At last, Saunders et al., 2013, p. 155 explains that a simple method for determining the type of time frame for study They said that when arranging your research, one key question to ask is: 'Do I want my research to be a "snapshot" taken at a particular time or do I want it to be more akin to a diary or a series of snapshots and be a representation of events over a given period?' (Of course, the correct response is 'It depends on the research question.') The 'snapshot' time horizon is referred to as cross-sectional in this context, whilst the 'diary' perspective is referred to as longitudinal.

Due to the time limit of this research and limited project's deadline, the most adequate time horizon for this research is the cross-sectional, that will be done throughout a closed questions survey. A cross-sectional study is distinguished by the ability to compare distinct demographic groups at a particular point in time.

The audience targeted for this research is people who have been reallocated to home office due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the HR professionals. However, due to the massive employee's group in Ireland that have been working in home office since the beginning of the pandemic, not every element of the group will be covered to use the probability sample. Due to this, a non-probabilistic sampling will be used, in which some people of the group will have no chance of selection. The self-selection sampling technique of 90 to 100 questionnaires with closed questions will be used.

3. Presentation of the data

Decisions about how to display quantitative data are required when communicating scientific findings. (e.g., Loftus, 1993). In this paper, data will be presented from primary sources, based on the questionnaire applied in 93 participants.
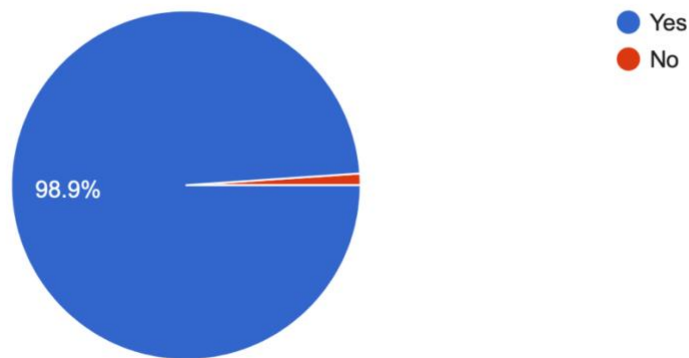
Are you currently working?
93 responses

Figure 2. Question 1 of the survey

On the first question, almost all of the responders are currently working, being 92 people, against just 1 person who is not currently working, the graphic showing that 98.9% of the responders are employed.
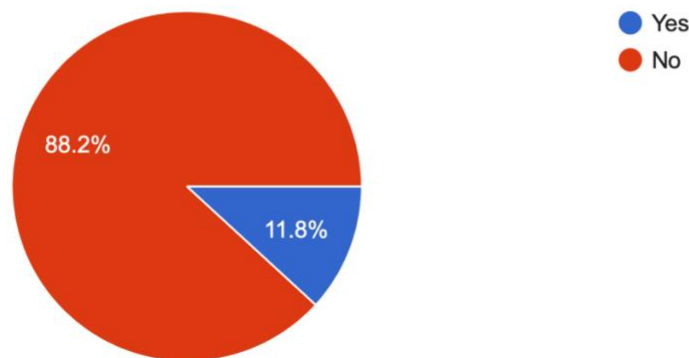
Do you work in HR?
93 responses

Figure 3. Question 2 of the survey

The following question shows that just 11.8% of the responders work in Human Resources, while 88.2% work in other areas. Showing that just 11 of the responders work in that specific area, while 82 have different backgrounds.

Are you currently working exclusively from home?
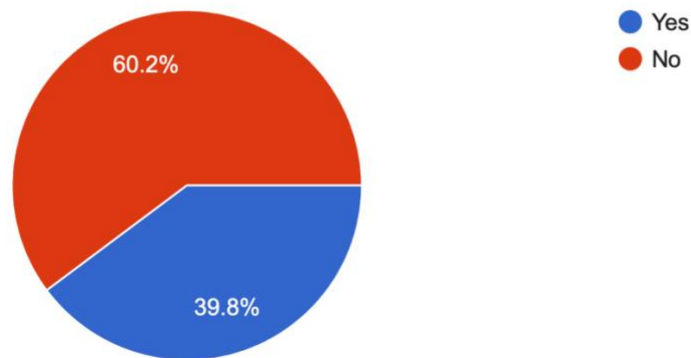93 responses

Figure 4. Question 3 of the survey

In this question, while the graphic shows that 60.2% of the people are not exclusively working from home anymore, 39.8% still does. Representing that 37 responders are working remotely, while 56 people are not.

Is your work hybrid (part of the time you work from home and part in the office?)
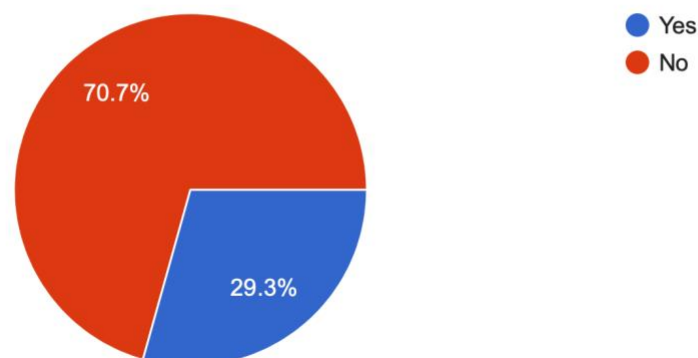92 responses

Figure 5. Question 4 of the survey

On what refers to a flexible and hybrid type of work, as the graphic shows, 70.7% of the people do not have this flexibility, while 29.3% can work from home and in the office part of the time. This question had one less responder, demonstrating that 27 people are in an hybrid employment.

If you could choose, you would rather work from home or in the office?
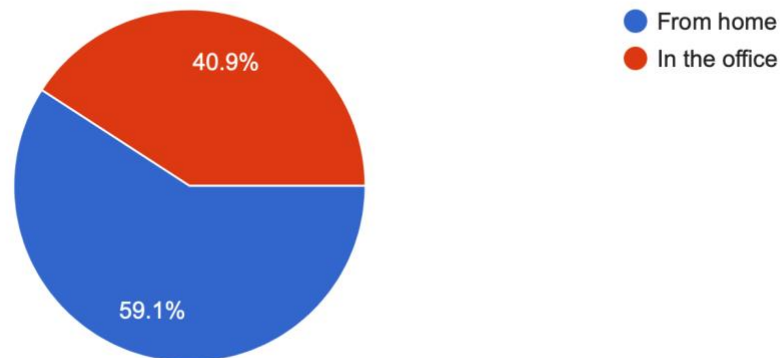93 responses

Figure 6. Question 5 of the survey

In a more personal level, question 5 of the survey shows that 59.1% of the participants would rather be working from home, if they were to choose, while 40.9% of the responders would choose working in the office. Demonstrating that 55 of the responders are adapted and would rather be in home office, against 38 responders that would choose going to the office.

Have you ever had a conflict in your workplace?
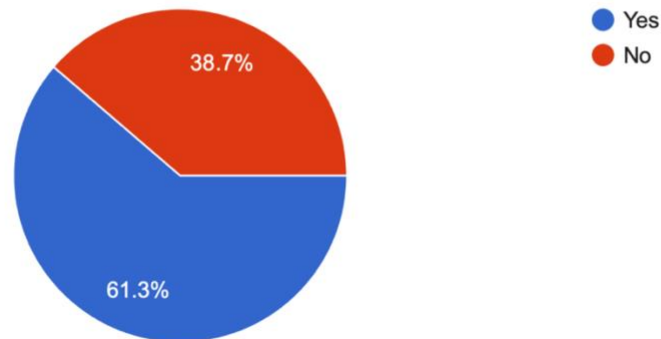93 responses

Figure 7. Question 6 of the survey

This question shows that 61.3% of the responders have had a conflict in their workplace, while 38.7% haven't experienced that. The presented data shows that 57 participants have had some kind of conflict in their workplace, while just 36 responders have never had a conflict at work.

Have you ever had a conflict with a colleague working remotely?
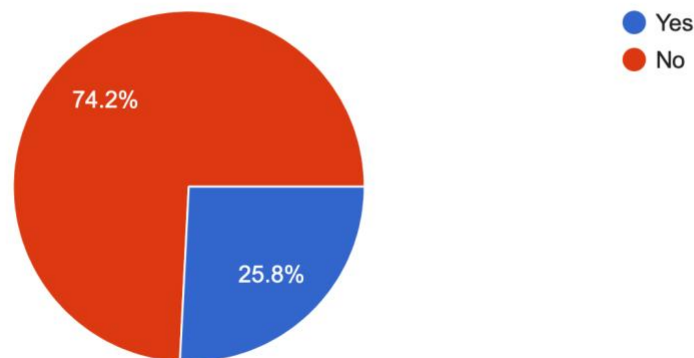93 responses

Figure 8. Question 7 of the survey

In a working from home sense, the majority shows that have never experienced a conflict with a colleague while working remotely, being that 74.2% in contrast with the 25.8% that have experienced a conflict with a colleague while working from home. From this percentage, 24 people voted yes, they had a conflict, while 69 responders said no, they haven't had a conflict remotely.

If you had a conflict, did you bring it to the HR?
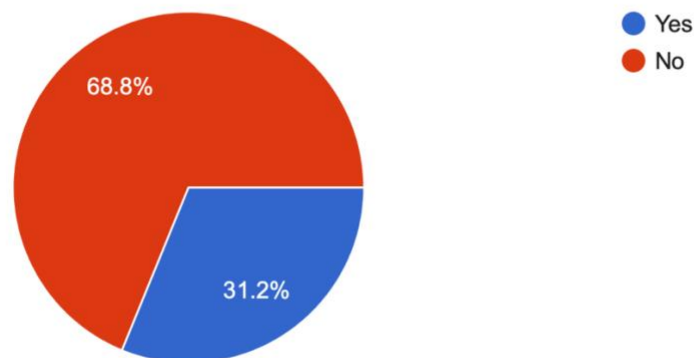93 responses

Figure 9. Question 8 of the survey

The figure shows that the minority of people who experienced a conflict in their workplace, actually brought the issue to the Human Resources area. While 68.8% of the people did not bring to HR, just 31.2% of the participants reported the issue. Representing that less than 30 people responding actually brought it to HR.

Do you have it clear the role of the HR in your company?
93 responses
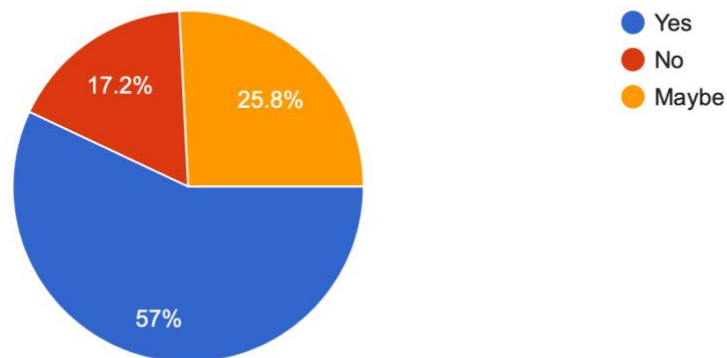
Figure 10. Question 9 of the survey

Most of the participants, being that 57% of the people, do have it clear the role of the Human Resources in their companies. Contrasting to 17.2% of the participants that does not have it clear, and 25.8% of the responders that answered that maybe they have it clear.

While 53 people answered yes, 16 said no, they do not know and 24 responders said that maybe they have it clear the role of HR in their workplace.

Do you think those conflicts could have been avoided if you were working in the office?
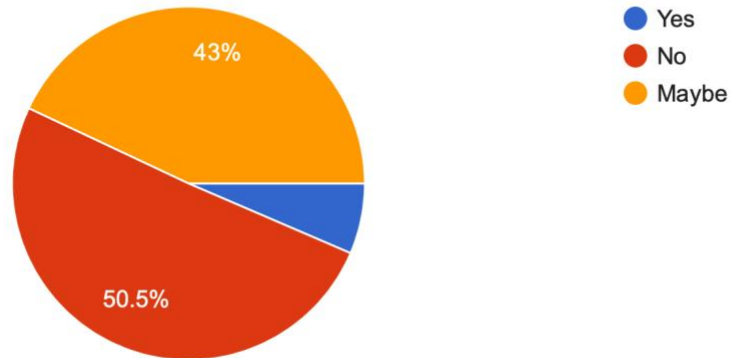93 responses

Figure 11. Question 10 of the survey

When referring to the conflict prevention, a bit more than half of the responders thin that the conflict would not have been avoided if they were working in the office, while 43% thinks that maybe it could have prevented the conflict and a minority thinks that yes, it could have been avoided. Showing that just 6 participants actually think that working from the office would have prevent a conflict, compared to 40 responders that maybe think it would be possible and 47 that actually thinks that working in the office would not have prevented a conflict.

Have you find it difficult to express yourself towards your colleagues in this new model of work (from home)?
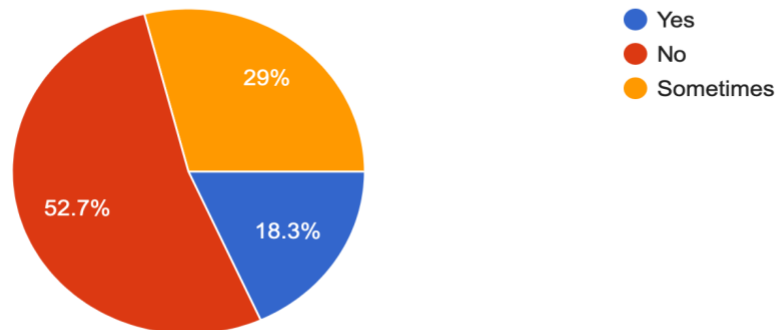93 responses

Figure 12. Question 11 of the survey

When it comes to expressing themselves towards their colleagues while working from home, the majority (52.7%) understands that this is not a problem for them, while 29% thinks that sometimes it can be a problem and just 18.3% consider it a difficulty that they face while working from home. While 49 participants said no, 27 people said that sometimes they find it difficult expressing themselves while working from home and just 17 participants find it difficult.

Had the conflict have an impact on your productivity at work?
93 responses

Figure 13. Question 12 of the survey
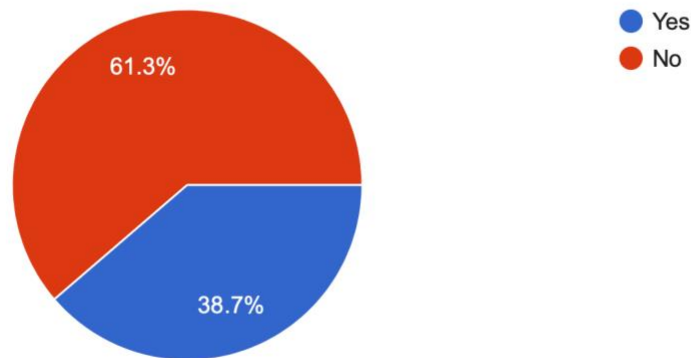
In this figure it is possible to see that the majority of people do not consider that being in a conflict have had an impact in their productivity at work, representing 61.3% of the responders. In comparison to 38.7% that consider that their productivity was affected when involved in a conflict. While 36 people voted yes, it impacted them, 57 voted that no, their productivity was not affected.

Has the HR in your company provided support for the employees that are working from home?
93 responses

Legend:
● Yes
● No

37.6%
62.4%
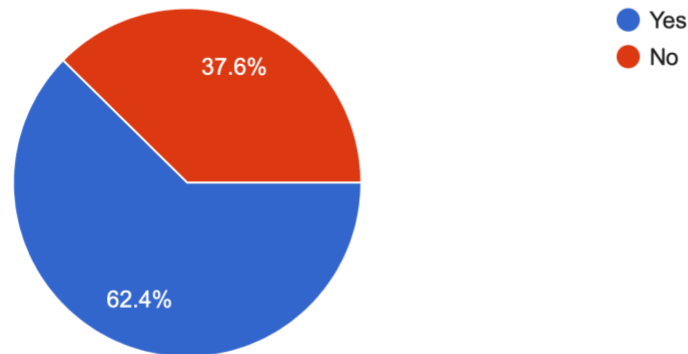
Figure 14. Question 13 of the survey

The majority of people who took part in the survey answer that the Human Resources have had provided support for the employees that are working from home; while 37.6% did not get this support from HR, 62.4% did have. Representing that 58 participants did have support and 35 did not have support in their companies.

Have you had any training on how to manage the new model of work?
93 responses

Legend:
● Yes
● No

69.9%
30.1%

Figure 15. Question 14 of the survey

Considering the new model of work, most of the people who took part in this research did not have any training on how to manage it, in comparison to just 30.1% of the people who had some

kind of training related to this new model of work. Being that 65 negative responses compared to 28 positive ones.

Can you separate your working time from your personal time now that you are working from home?

93 responses

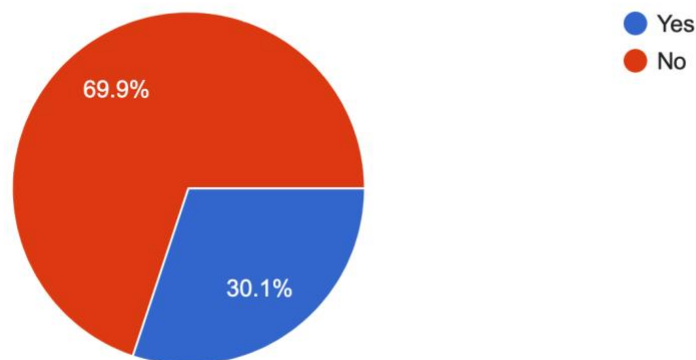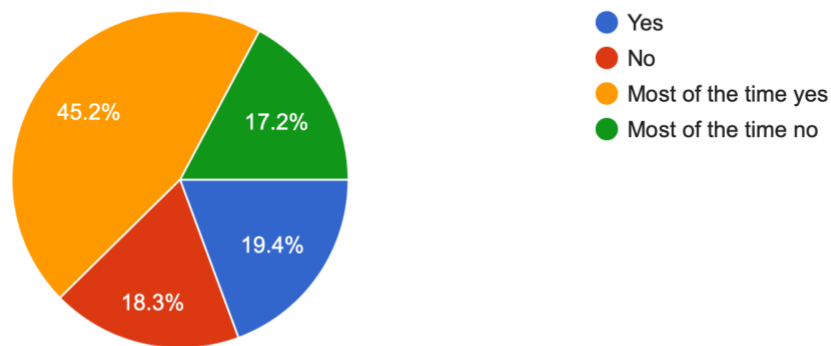*Figure 16. Question 15 of the survey*

In reference to time management, the majority of the responders consider that most of the time they can separate their working time from their personal time while working from home, representing 45.2% of the participants. Compared to 19.4% that yes, can separate it, while 18.3% is not able to separate personal and working time while in home office and 17.2% that most of the time no, cannot separate it. Being that 42 answers for most of the time yes; 18 responses for yes; pretty similar to the ones who can't, that had 17 answers for no, and 16 responses for most of the time no.

Considering your experience, which do you consider being the most frequent cause of conflict in your company now that you are working from home:

92 responses

- Communication not being face to face
- Conflicting roles
- Time management
- Company policies are not appropriate to this kind of work
- Difficulty to express yourself through a computer
- Lack of trust from the leader as you are not sharing the same space
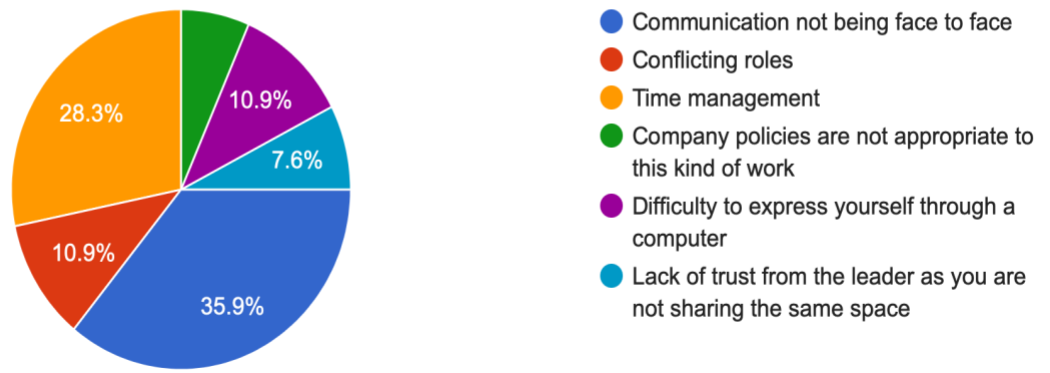
Figure 17. Question 16 of the survey

Considering the conflicts that may arise in the workplace, participants consider that the most frequent cause of conflict in their companies during home office is that the communication is not being face to face, getting 35.9% of the responses. Followed by time management, that got 28.3% of the votes, while conflicting roles and difficulty to express yourself through a computer getting both 10.9% of the answers. Lack of trust from the leader as you are not sharing the same space as well as the company policies that are not appropriate to this kind of work are both considered by 7.6% of the participants, with 1 response being blank. Referred by 33 responders the communication not being face to face, followed by 26 responses for time management got most of the votes in this question of the survey.

Do you feel like an important part of your company, even while working from home?
93 responses

- Yes
- No
- Not all the time

10.8% 30.1%

59.1%
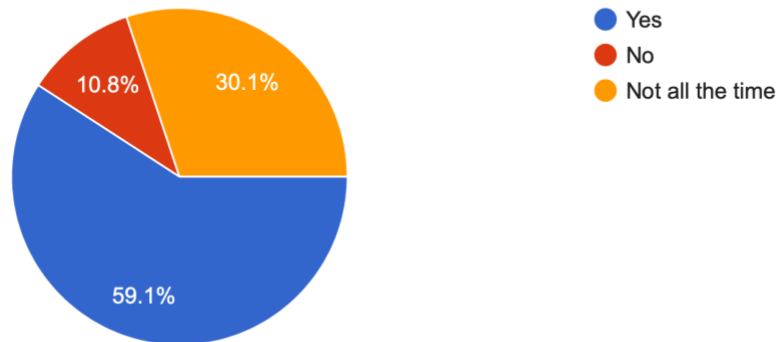
Figure 18. Question 17 of the survey

When asked if people consider themselves as an important part of their companies, even while in home office base, 59.1% of the participants answered yes, they do feel like that, while 30.1% does not feel the same way all the time, compared to 10.8% that does not feel like that at all. If we look into the 93 responders, the majority were 55 people, followed by 28 responses and the minority being 10 responses.

Do you consider important the participation of a third part when solving a conflict?
93 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

49.5%

9.7%

40.9%

Figure 19. Question 18 of the survey

When it comes to conflict solving, 49.5% of the responders do think that sometimes it is important to have a third party present, followed by 40.9% consider it is important to have the participation of a third party, compared to just 9.7% that does not think it is important.

In your opinion, who would you consider being the responsible for managing conflicts in your workplace?

93 responses

- The leader
- The HR
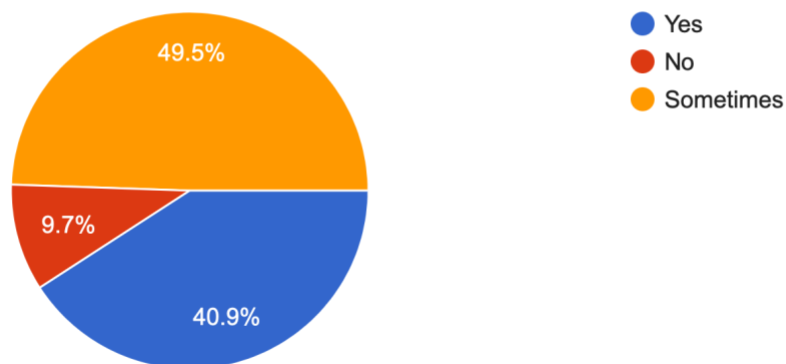- The parties involved in the conflict

33.3%

22.6%

44.1%
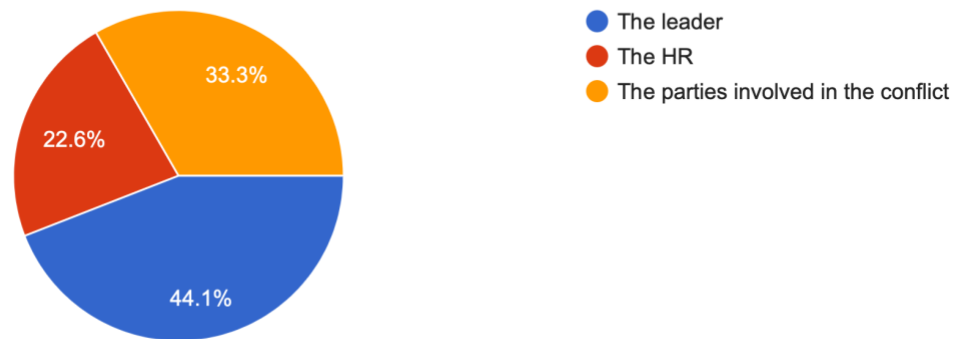
Figure 20. Question 19 of the survey

When asked to consider who would be the responsible for managing conflicts in their workplace, the majority of the participants consider their leader, representing 44.1% of the responders. While 33.3% consider that the parties involved in the conflict are the responsible for managing it and 22.6% would consider the HR as the responsible for managing conflicts in the workplace.

Mediation is a voluntary process of alternative dispute resolution in which a third and neutral party, being a Mediator, provides an open space for the pa... professionals, to solve organizational conflicts?

93 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

34.4%

57%
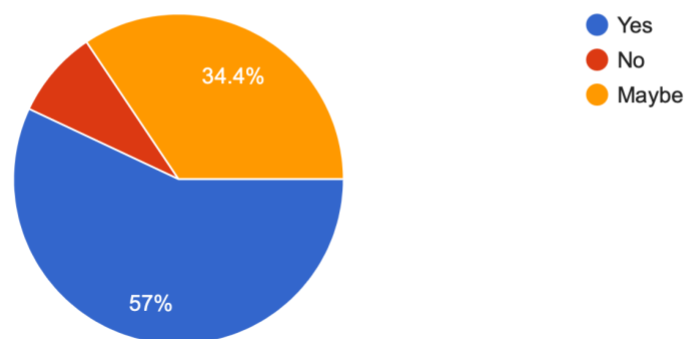
Figure 21. Question 20 of the survey

The 20th question was: Mediation is a voluntary process of alternative dispute resolution in which a third and neutral party, being a Mediator, provides an open space for the parties involved in the conflict to reach an agreement that both can live with. Do you consider that the ADR

technique would be helpful, for leaders or HR professionals, to solve organizational conflicts? For most of the responders, being those 53 people, Mediation would be considered to be helpful when solving organizational conflicts, while 34.4% thinks that maybe it would be and just 8 people considered it would not be a useful technique.

Have you ever been offered a mediation session in order to solve an organizational conflict?
93 responses
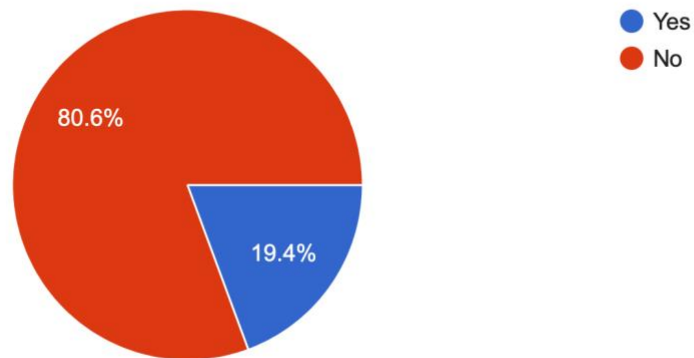
Figure 22. Question 21 of the survey

Most of the participants, represented by 80.6% have never been offered a Mediation session in order to solve an organizational conflict, while 19.4% have been offered. That means that 75 people who answered the survey have not been offered a mediation session in their workplace.

Has the HR in your company ever intervene in a conflict in your workplace?
93 responses
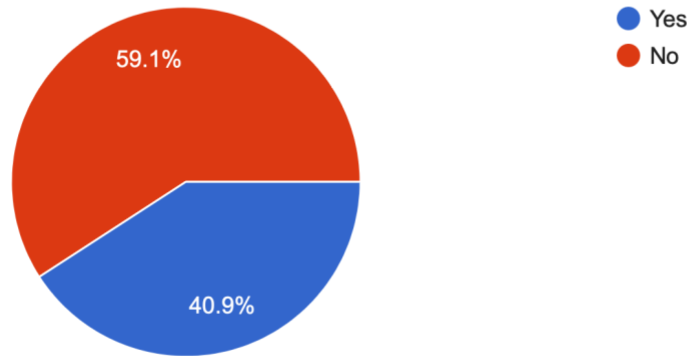
Figure 23. Question 22 of the survey

On the following question, the majority of the participants have never had a HR intervention when a conflict aroused in their workplace. While 40.9% had another experience and said that yes, HR have intervene in a conflict in their workplace. Said that, 55 of the participants voted no and 38 voted yes.

Do you have access to the HR professionals in your company in case you have any issue related to your work or colleagues?
93 responses
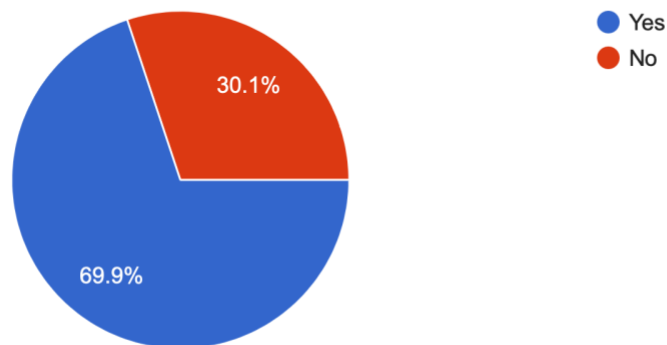
Figure 24. Question 23 of the survey

When it comes to HR accessibility in the workplace, almost 70% of the participants said that yes, they do have access to HR professionals in case they case an issue related to work/colleagues

in their company. On the other hand, 30.1% related that no, they do not have that access. Representing 65 people who voted yes and 28 that do not have.

Do you feel comfortable to access the HR services provided by your company?
93 responses
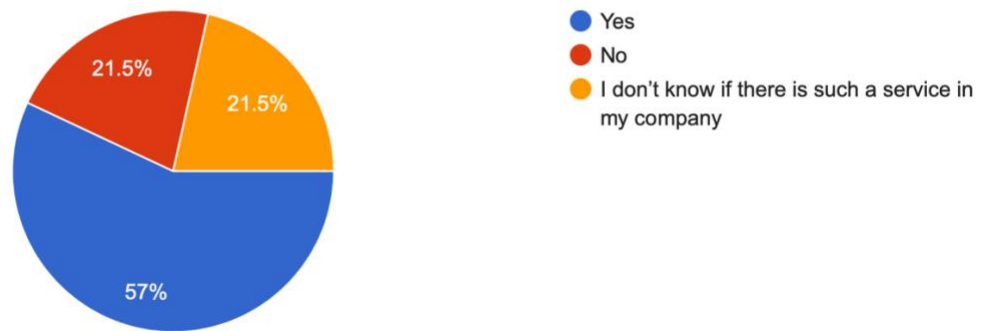
Figure 25. Question 24 of the survey

On the last question, the participants reported if they feel comfortable to access the HR services provided by their company or not. The majority said yes, they do feel comfortable, while 21.5% voted that they do not feel comfortable, same percentage of people who do not know if there is such a service in their companies. Representing 53 people who does feel comfortable, while 21 does not and 21 does not know about it.

4. Data Analysis/Findings

This dissertation seeks the strengths of quantitative research, based on primary data, to answer three main questions: (i) Are people feeling they have a safe place to talk to HR when dealing with workplace conflicts via internet? (ii) How is HR being notified about conflicts when people are not in the workplace? (iii) How Mediation can be an alternative in many cases of conflict in the workplace?

The questions and its implications will be discoursed and analyse throughout the topics and its relations based on the findings during this study and the questionnaire applied on 93 participants.

4.1 Human Resources reachability

With the increased number of people that were relocated to home office during the COVID-19 pandemic and are still in this position, it became unclear if those employees are feeling like they still have a safe place to talk to Human Resources professionals from their companies when they face conflicts with co-workers and leaders via internet. As per the confidentiality of the matter, it arouse the need to understand if the employees actually have this kind of service available and feel confident to use it in case its needed in specific conflict resolutions in the workplace.

Based on that, it was possible to see that 88.2% of the responders on this research do not work in the Human Resources area, representing just 11 responders that actually are from the HR background. Even though 98.9% of the participants are currently employed, most of them have different areas of expertise. In addition, based on this specific population, it is not the majority that is currently home office based, representing 39.8% of the responders, while 29.3% reported to be working hybrid, as part of the hours at home and part of the hours on-site.

The majority of responders suggested they have a clear idea of the role that Human Resources area play in their organization, being represented by 57% of this population. But while over 62% of the respondents were given the right support from HR when relocated to home office, just over 30% of the people had any kind of training on how to deal with this new model of work, when left their on-site jobs.

Furthermore, 10.8% of the responders do not consider themselves as an important part of the organization that they work for while they are working from home, in addition to more than 30% of the participants who have the same impression at some moments, answering that not all the time they feel like an important part of the company while working from home.

When it comes to dispute resolution, the minority of the population consider the Human Resources as being the responsible sector to manage conflicts in the workplace, being represent

by less than 23% of the participants in this study. Followed by over 33% who understands that the parties involved in the conflict should be the responsible for its settlement and the majority, represented by 44% of the population, who considers that the leader is the responsible for managing conflicts in the workplace.

While almost 70% of the participants said that yes, they have access to the Human Resources professionals in case they have any issue related to work colleagues, just 40.9% reported that the HR in their organization have actually intervene at some point when a conflict aroused in their workplace.

4.2 Conflict Resolution and home office

When it comes to the relation of working from home and conflict resolution, it is still hard to see how the organizations are dealing with the new models of conflicts that are arising since the start of this new working concept. So the aim of this research was to understand how the new models of conflict have been being dealt by the organizations and its human resources professionals, in order to avoid its possible escalation and further consequently employee turnover.

It is possible to see in the literature studies that reflect on the effects of the imposition of home office on professionals since the start of the pandemic, but without relevant research having been made so far, it is also possible to conclude that most of the findings of these studies are based on personal inference by the researchers.

Through this study, is was possible to see that the majority of people still have some difficulty on separating their working hours from their personal lives now that it has a shared space. Over 17% of the responders reported that most of the time they are not able to separate it properly, in addition to over 18% that are not able at all of splitting home office and personal time. On the other hand, more than 59% of the participants would rather stay working from home than on-site if they were to choose between both options.

Showing that even though people are still not able to organize their time properly in order to separate in an adequate form their home space and work space into the same structure, most of them would rather stay on the actual configuration, for most being so called "the new normal".

In addition to that, more than half of the population of this study consider that the conflicts that they once had with their peers, would not been avoided if they were working on-site. Contrasting to 43% of the responders that consider that it maybe would have been avoided and just a minority agreed that yes, it could have been avoided if they were in the office.

As sometimes, 29% of the participants consider it difficult to express themselves towards their colleagues when working from home, 18.3% do have this difficulty contrasting to the almost 53% that do not consider it as a problem for them when dealing with their colleagues online.

While almost 26% of the people did face a conflict with a colleague while working remotely, the study also shows that, when it comes to any kind of conflict in the workplace, over 31% of the responders did bring it to the Human Resources management.

Furthermore, the great majority of the participants considered that they do feel comfortable with the HR services provided by the organizations they are inserted in, representing 57% of the responders. On the other hand, 21.5% of the people are unaware if this kind of service exists or is provided by their company, in addition to 21.5% that do not feel comfortable on reaching the Human Resources services provided by their companies.

4.3 Mediation in the workplace

Considering the use of alternative dispute resolution as an instrument to solve the conflicts in the workplace, mediation is still a new option, but has been increasing their applicability in most organizations in the modern world. Human resources professionals are known to have been seeking new possibilities when it comes to conflict resolution, not just in order to settle some disputes that may arise, as people are adapting to the changes in the workplace, while recognizing themselves as professionals in the new structures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to understand this matter a bit further, this study looked deep into some important questions that must have been considered by the organizations and its human resources professionals, aiming to reduce turnover and increase employees satisfaction and feeling of belonging to their companies, no matter where their workspace is set up.

Most of the participants in this study, when faced with the concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation, do consider that the ADR technique would be a helpful instrument when HR professionals and leaders are dealing and solving organizational conflicts, being represented by 57% of the participants. While above 34% consider that it would maybe be an alternative, compared to just 8.6% that do not consider it as being a valid alternative for disputes in the workplace.

From this population, almost 20% have actually been offered to take part in a mediation session in order to solve an organizational conflict, contrasting to the over 80% of the participants who have never had been offered this opportunity.

In addition to that, almost 50% of the responders consider that sometimes it important to have a third party involved when solving a conflict. While over 40% does think that yes, it is valid to have the participation of a third party and less than 10% do not consider it is important the participation of a third party in conflict resolution.

When facing conflicts, almost 40% of the responders considered that it did have an impact on their productivity at work. On the other hand, over 60% of the participants did not face this issue, or related their productivity to conflicts involvement.

Overall, most of the participants, represented by over 61% of the responses, did face some kind of conflict in their workplace at some point, while less than 40% have never experienced this kind of situation in their organizations.

5. Discussion

As previously mentioned and discussed, the way people relate to their workplaces and jobs has changed a lot in the past two years, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of that, companies and employees have had to challenge themselves into the new perspective, not just of workplace site, that was brought into people's homes, but also the new models of conflicts that became into instance. In addition to that, the way the human resources sector of the companies handle and are informed of the conflicts that may have aroused between colleagues and/or leaders has changed as well, bringing into viewpoint the applicability of alternative dispute resolution techniques in many organizations.

As explained by Losekann and Mourão (2020), for the employees it has emerged loads of new challenges in the way that they relate to their jobs. It was imposed a fast learning method of new technologies, in addition to the way people communicate and interact to their peers and team. In addition, their personal lives had to encounter a balance with their jobs. Interconnecting private and public lives in a way never seen before in most of the cases. Whilst families have had to learn how to share their private and personal spaces with work duties, studies, house duties and lounge. The way that this interconnection have impacted people's lives are at this moment in time maybe not perceived anymore, because when it comes to this area, two years does feel like a long period of time and took a long process of adaptability from both sides of the coin; employees and organizations.

So, when reflecting on the problematic of the human interactions not being face to face anymore while they are working on the same projects, for example, has become emergent. The contentious question of if employees are feeling that they have a safe place to talk to human resources when

dealing with conflicts on their workplace via internet has not yet been discussed widely in modern literature, but it is possible to understand through the data collected that while people do feel that they have a safe space with HR, they do not bring their issues often to those professionals.

Human resource management, just like other organizational structures, must be able to build up methodologies, policies, and practices that adjust to modifications in the economic and social conditions, as well as changing company requirements (Lipsky, Seeber, and Fincher 2003; Dolder 2004; Goldman 2011).

Considering that, companies that used to have all structured policies and practices expected from their employees had to, all of a sudden, start all over, finding the need of rediscovering themselves as a company, being able to provide the same kind of support they used to do on-site, but now all through the internet, not face-to-face anymore. The Human resources professionals had a lot to think about during the first months of the pandemic, trying to find permanent solutions for a (hopefully), not so permanent problem.

Furthermore, requirements and expectations towards the employees needed to be thought over and over, every time the governments would implement new restrictions and/or extend a lockdown. Something that was supposed to last for two weeks, now have been present in people's lives for over two years and, most companies, have not returned to what was considered normal before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the other hand, it was a moment of reflection on what was working and what was not working on the companies and, for some of them, an opportunity to change their policies in a good way and improve their practices in order to become more attractive for people in general. Some companies even took the opportunity to attract new employees profile, as in a home office base, they could recruit people from basically anywhere in the world, without the need to relocate these people, generating a new and good mix of cultures in the company.

Moreover, when the participants on this study where questioned about the reachability of the HR in their workplaces and if they had knowledge of the role that the human resources area plays in their organization, most of the responders actually knew it, being able to understand and reach this important area of any workplace. On the other hand, when questioned if they did use their services when exposed to a conflict in a workplace, the majority did not reach HR to help and solve the dispute, even knowing that it would have been a possibility.

Thus, the conclusion is that the participants in this study do have an open and safe space when it comes to reaching the human resources area in their workplace, even when they are working remotely. Showing that the human resources areas are usually well structured and are presenting themselves in a way to be seen towards other employees in the companies they are inserted in.

Apart from that, it is not frequent that the employees do use the services provided by the HR area, bringing the idea that it is reachable in most of the companies, but its services have been underused by the employees. Even though it has been improved the workplace relations when it comes to the new model of work since the pandemic started, it has still a long way ahead when it comes to being reachable and understood by its employees.

The following question of this study has shown that when it comes to training solutions and the support received from human resources when people were forced to work from their homes, even the ones who did not have any experience on that, most of the population have had adequate support from the HR sector, while most of them also expressed the lack of training on how to deal with this new model of work and technologies when they left their organizational buildings and set up a home office base.

It is understood that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a surprise and unprecedent situation for the world population in general, and everyone had to deal with so many changes at the same time, facing the need to readapt basically all of the areas of their personal and professional lives. Even though the same has happened to the companies, it is also possible to see that we came a long way since the start of the pandemic and solutions have been temporary implemented, but after almost two years of the start of the pandemic and its restrictions, it is also certain to say that the temporary solutions should have been re-evaluated and restructured according to the, not so new anymore, reality.

It was also shown in this research that most of the people do not think that human resources play an important part when it comes to conflict resolution in the workplace, in contrast, most of the participants showed that, according to them, the leader would be the one in charge of solving disputes between employees and some participants also think that it would be of total responsibility of the parties involved in the dispute, not of anyone else in the company.

Furthermore, it became evident that, when it comes to how is HR being notified about conflicts when people are not on-site, most of the answers are no. If people do not understand that HR plays an important role when solving conflicts in the workplace, why it would be notified about that in the first place.

Therefore, the conclusion reached is that even though most of the people does know the validity and reachability of human resources professionals in the company that they are working at, and most of them do feel that they do have a safe space when it comes to reaching HR, even while working from home; most of the participants do not understand that the HR professionals would be the most suitable third party when it comes to conflict resolution in the workplace. Showing that while employees do think that they know of all the HR reachability, they do not know how

effective it can be when it comes to working as a mediator, being a third and neutral party in the dispute.

The third question to be considered during this research was about the applicability of Mediation as an alternative dispute resolution in the workplace. Authors have expressed that it is still a new development area when it comes to its insertion as an alternative for the workplace, but since the work relations have changed so much in the past few years, it has also become more and more usable by its HR professionals and leaders.

The increased use of mediation in the business world reflects shifts in the employer-employee relationship. As organized labour has fallen, employees' collaborative associations have evolved to personal ones, in which they negotiate their specific private agreements (Lipsky, Seeber, and Fincher 2003; Dolder 2004; Goldman 2011).

The way that employees relate to their companies have changed, especially since it was needed to bring it to inside their homes and families. Considering that, new models of conflict have also arisen, as well as the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques. Bringing mediation in the workplace into the spotlight once more.

When analysing the responders of this research have an understanding that Mediation would be a suitable alternative dispute resolution in the workplace to be used by HR professionals and leaders in order to solve conflicts. On the other hand, not many of the participants have actually had an offer to solve their disputes through Mediation in their workplaces.

Workplace conflicts, as well as many others, rarely require solely a legal solution. Often, feelings and emotions are in place, which should be considered when looking at the long run and useful solution. The transparent and cooperative style of mediation encourages parties to talk about their underlying feelings, worries, and expectations (Dolder 2004).

Related to that matter, when the participants of this study where questioned about the relevance of having a third and neutral party to help them solve their conflicts, the majority of them believes that just sometimes it would play an important role in conflict resolution. In addition, most of them do think that the parties involved in the conflict are the only responsible of solving the matter and reaching a settlement.

Considering that, it is relevant to take into consideration people's ignorance front such a new model of conflict resolution. When in face of an unfair dismiss or sexual harassment in the workplace, for example, most people would have as a first thought the necessity of take a legal approach in order to solve it. Authors in the literature have referred that people's would go straight seek legal advice to deal with this kind of conflicts, that are considered quite normal in the workplace, unfortunately.

It is important to point out that a big part of the participants had an impact on their productivity at work when facing conflicts, showing that the way the companies actually deal with conflict resolution are an important matter to be addressed and looked into, in order not just to keep the company's results, but also avoiding unnecessary turnover due to unsolved conflicts.

On the other hand, it is crucial to analyse that the urge of being productive during their work time, have also been an issue to most of the people that are now working from home. If before the COVID-19 pandemic, people were taught to be extra-productive and work non-stop even when finishing the tasks expected for the day, now that people have their jobs literally at their hands and are able to work from basically anywhere that is connected to the internet, this personal pressure have been increase exponentially, making a lot of people not being able to separate personal and work time, as it was reported during this study, as mentioned above.

Considering that more than half of the participants in this study have reported to have been in some kind of conflict in their workplace, it become even more relevant the importance of having a proper strategy in place when it occurs, in addition to having a proper way of communicating it and bringing to someone in the company who will show the options and the best way of dealing with it; expressing the importance of the HR being the right communication channel between employees and leaders for conflict resolution for most of the organizations. It is like centralizing and providing a proper support for employees when it comes to alternative dispute resolution in the workplace.

Conclusion

By analysing the data collected during this research on the impact of home office and the new models of conflict that became with that through the importance of the human resources being notified about that, even in working remotely perspective. This dissertation has shown different perspectives through the answers on a questionnaire made available to the volunteers participants, and how their perspective can vary according to their own experience and background.

This study was taken with a majority of professionals from different backgrounds, as it was mentioned above, even though it was of supreme importance for the findings of this study the participation of all the professionals that voluntarily took part on it, by answering the questionnaire, it shows that the human resources area, when it comes to being present on the companies and having different scopes on their actions taken on that, still has to improve on the way that they communicate to their employees, in order for them to understand and have it clear all the different positions that a HR can have in an organization.

It is also possible to see the incredible adaptability capacity that the human being is capable of. At the beginning of this study, most of the world population were still on lockdown, facing strict restrictions in most of the countries, in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19, that has caused so many deaths worldwide. Considering all the changes and difficulties that the population have been through, it is possible to see that most of people overcame that, without starting any kind of conflict in their workplace, keeping their jobs, or finding new ones, as the great majority of this responders are currently working and at least half of them are still working from home, even almost two years after the beginning of the restrictions and with most of the countries having lift most of its restrictions so far. It just shows that companies have adapted to the new models of work and conflicts that came with it.

Answering to the research question, it became clear that it has still a long way to go in order to Mediation actually becomes a reality in most of the workplaces, while the role of HR as a mediator is still questioned by most participants, that does not consider an involvement of a third and neutral party in the settlement of their workplace disputes. Said that, it is still unclear the way that HR is dealing with the new models of conflict now that everyone is working from home, even though most of the people does know the importance and the role that Human Resources plays in their companies.

As this study has shown through its participants perspectives, it is possible to see in a daily basis that some professionals from other areas, being part of the organization with a structured HR,

still look at the human resources area as the one responsible just for payments and contracts. Most of the time employees forget, or are not aware that it can actually be much more than that. If composed by qualified professionals, with the right study background, it can be composed by finance professionals, psychologists and much more.

Taking that into consideration, having the HR professionals as business partners and also employees advocate, is completely possible. As per the confidentiality, it is an area that demands this kind of skill, showing that being able to use the HR professionals as mediators in the organization is just a matter of time, until it becomes a reality in most of the companies that realize and improve their processes.

On the other hand, it is certain to say that a considerable amount of people have had conflicts in their workplace and it has affected somehow their productivity at work, emerging the necessity of the issue being addressed correctly in the companies. In addition to that, it is possible to say that people have different backgrounds and experiences and that so, companies does deal with conflict resolution on different ways.

Furthermore, it is known that alternative dispute resolution is an alternative to going to court and it has been evolving and increasing its studies and applicability during the past few years, said so, even with more researchers understanding the relevance of the subject, it still has a lot until it becomes a reality in the majority of the workplaces as a real technique when it comes to settling disputes and avoiding conflicts in the organizations.

Thus, considering the above, it is important to say that the role that the HR plays in the organization is really important when it comes to dispute resolution, as when addressed correctly, it can avoid unnecessary and inappropriate conflict escalation, avoiding further consequences for the companies, such as turnover.

Reflection

Reflecting on all the changes that have happened in the world in the past two years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, being able to start and finish this master's degree, in a second language, not just away from my country of origin, but also from my family, makes me really proud of myself and how far I became since I arrived in Ireland; thinking I was here just to improve my English and in eight months tops I would be back in Brazil.

Despite the fact that we all started this course during lockdown and all the challenges and adaptations I came through during this period, it was not easy at all to find the space and build the structure to work again after almost 10 years since I graduated from college; but this course and research were of great importance on my development, personal growth, resilience and knowledge on alternative dispute resolution and expertise as a possible future mediator.

The theme developed for this study, the reachability and conflict resolution by human resources and how it has been dealing with the new models of conflict, since people were relocated to home office, reflects greatly my professional background, since I graduated in Psychology and specialized in People Management in Brazil, I also have worked as a Human Resources Analyst for more than six years in my home country, before I moved to Ireland. I honestly have never thought I would be able of such great achievement and improvement on my professional career, especially during such difficult times for everyone.

Overall, it was incredibly rewarding to have the experience not just of studying such a relevant topic, but also to have written and developed a study and research in a foreign language.

It is a knowledge and growth that will guide me in my future experiences and when I look back, I will remember that it was really worth it, and that I was able to make the most of it, even during a worldwide pandemic.

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