

Multidimensional scale to measure the determinants of labor abandonment derived from the pandemic in the Mexican manufacturing sector

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Abstract

The present study aims to develop a scale to evaluate the different psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly fear of infection, burnout, intention to quit, stress, and its possible adverse effects on the preparation for return to work in the average Mexican worker. A total of 594 valid questionnaires were collected from workers of legal age from different industries. The methodology used for the statistical treatment of the data consisted of an exploratory factor analysis showing that the items used are structured similarly to their theoretical antecedents, while a confirmatory analysis allowed validation of their multidimensionality. The results indicate that the proposed scale proved to be adequate to measure the phenomena described, which could allow the development of strategies to consider these psychological elements within the strategic planning of companies.

Keywords: COVID-19, job dropout, stress, burnout.

1. Introduction

The new normal in a world emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it unprecedented challenges that have impacted various aspects of people's daily lives (Dang & Hong, 2020). Also, the need to create new labor reforms to maintain and increase productivity in organizations, the recovery of jobs, and the way they operate to generate secure, successful, and rewarding careers (Catalyst, 2020; McKinsey, 2020b; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020a). Thus, many organizations around the world have been able to demonstrate their ability to meet these challenges by responding with strategies and

plans to create new working conditions to protect workers during the health crisis that will linger for some time to come and to emerge from the economic crisis that threatens emerging regions and countries, especially economically less developed ones such as Mexico (Cobos, 2012; Gartner, 2020a; KPMG, 2020d, 2020e; Mikusová & Horváthová, 2019).

Under this premise, Mexico is presenting a critical situation in many of its economic sectors as it faces the pandemic on a large scale, limiting the development of the labor field of professionals, involving psychological wear, coupled with the demands of everyday life,

increasing the level of needs and stress in most aspects of work (Provencio, 2020; Ruiz, 2020).

The pandemic has changed the way Mexicans work, which has raised the levels of stress, since the pressure to meet the needs of the new ways of operating the activities, coupled with the various constraints that do not contribute in a positive way to work processes, but these psychosocial risks are directly related to physical and psychological illnesses as fatigue, depression, hypertension, anxiety, and cardiovascular diseases, among others (Navines et al., 2016), (Montes de Oca, 2020).

In addition to the above, people are beginning to consider the option of quitting their jobs, as the obligation to adapt to the new normal is taking up a large part of their lives, such as, for example, student life, which for the duration of the pandemic was transferred to virtuality, which came between work attendance and childcare, demanding greater effort and dedication for working adults (Lopez, 2021). Likewise, the health crisis also provoked a fear or uncertainty about returning to work pre-pandemic, and under the pressure of the current pandemic, the fear of making the wrong decision jeopardizes the sense of security about physically returning to work areas (Holera et al., 2022; Hunik et al., 2014).

For this reason, in this research it was proposed to carry out a scale validation to assess the impact of fear of COVID-19, intention to quit, burnout, and stress on willingness to return to work. For this purpose, a document has been structured as follows: i) literature review on burnout, work stress, and intention to quit in times of pandemic, ii) generation of the proposed scale, iii) data analysis to validate the developed scale, and iv) conclusions generated from the results obtained.

Since the new normality derived from the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, the work situation in companies has been affected by the emergence of new needs to return in a face-to-face way, which have notoriously led to problems of various types such as physical and mental health (Navines et al., 2016). This health and economic crisis cause employees to be

exposed to continuous personal burnout, deriving consequences such as stress, low levels of job performance (De Lucas Ancillo et al., 2021; Barros-Bastidas, Turpo, 2020), as well as burnout syndrome, which is described as the feeling of low morale and job alienation (Ramírez & Lee, 2011).

Burnout is a process that occurs among professionals who provide care whose object of work are people such as health care workers, education, hospitality, customer service, security, social services, technical support, and retail sales, among others. The concept was proposed in 1974 as the result of the relationship established between the professional and his work, which leads to physical and emotional exhaustion due to working conditions (Méndez Venegas, 2004).

Burnout is considered a syndrome in three dimensions: i) emotional exhaustion, i.e., the described feeling of not being able to give more of oneself and can manifest itself both physically and psychologically; ii) depersonalization, which is represented through negative or distant attitudes, and iii) personal fulfillment, manifested by feelings of failure and low self-esteem (Álvarez-Pérez & López-Aguilar, 2021; Hederich-Martínez & Caballero-Dominguez, 2016). The importance of studying this phenomenon comes from the need to study work stress processes, likewise, it emphasizes that companies have increased concern for addressing the quality of the work-life they offer to their employees (Ramírez and Lee, 2011).

As a result of burnout, several health problems have been detected in the short, medium, and long term and have been studied with caution, among which stress, lack of concentration on work tasks, and eating disorders stand out (Yang & Hayes, 2020). Similarly, some consequences severely affect companies, both in terms of production and quality, caused by lack of motivation, job dissatisfaction, or job abandonment (Jun et al., 2021; Limón et al., 2022).

On the other hand, another factor resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is the uncertainty or fear of physically returning to businesses, as it

has had unprecedented effects on workplaces around the world, as the scope of the viral infection, illness, and casualties transformed or closed many businesses and organizations, leading to large numbers of people working from home, furloughed or unemployed. However, as the severity of the pandemic diminishes, businesses are beginning to reopen, albeit under extraordinary rules of physical distancing, protective equipment, and physical guards (Shaw et al., 2020; Montes de Oca, 2020).

In addition, the COVID-19 crisis created a new hazard for the workplace, which can be a major source of stress, anxiety, and even job abandonment, represented by the fear of infection, especially true in places where the physical presence of workers is indispensable because the risk of contracting the disease is higher, increasing the levels of psychological distress and returning to an uncertain work environment is an additional stress factor that can further affect the mental health of workers (Løvvik et al., 2014).

2. Method

The research conducted is quantitative, descriptive-correlational in scope, and with a non-experimental and cross-sectional design since it was carried out in a snapshot in time through a questionnaire applied during the period July-September 2021. Following the above, a research instrument was developed based on the literature review, consisting of items on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 represents Not characteristic of me and 5 represents Very characteristic of me), with 13 items for fear of COVID-19 (Snell Jr. & Finney, 1998), 6 for intention to quit (Mobley et al., 1978; Sujdak, 2002), 8 for burnout (Hederich-Martinez & Caballero-Dominguez, 2016), 11 for stress (Cohen et al., 1983) and 6 for readiness to return to work (Franche et al., 2007) as well as the sociodemographic data of the companies (sector and line of business, whether local or franchise) and the people who answer the surveys (age, gender, level of schooling, seniority, etc.).

For this study, a non-probabilistic convenience sample was collected, and applied to persons of legal age who were working. A total sample of 594 people was collected, of which 344 were women (58%) and 250 men (42%), with ages ranging from 18 to 74 years old. In terms of education, more than 81% had completed their bachelor's degree. Regarding the sector in which they work, most of them (43%) work in education, followed by the health sector and food and beverages. Meanwhile, 51% work in a local establishment and 21% in a national establishment, and the workers have a high seniority threshold (from 1 to 35 years working in their current job). For the dimensional validation of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was applied and subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess the construct validity of the questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis

Once the collected information was captured, the process used for the statistical treatment of the data was first to perform an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to obtain the theoretical validity of the inferred constructs (Gil et al., 2000). The EFA was used to check the dimensional structure of the scales and to validate the reliability of the proposed variables (Lloret-Segura et al., 2014) using SPSS version 24 software by applying the principal axis factorization and Promax rotation extraction method.

For the AFE, the normality of the items used was first analyzed, verifying that they retained a skewness and kurtosis within the threshold of ± 1.4 , resulting in not all items falling within the proposed interval, indicating that the observations for these indicators did not fall into a normal distribution, but were heavily loaded toward one end of the scale, which could incur problems for subsequent analyses of the AFE. As for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.905) as Barlett's test of sphericity of 14429.34 ($p < 0.001$), they indicate

that the sample is adequate to continue with the dimension reduction process of factor analysis. The extracted variables show that five

components contribute 66% of the total variance extracted (Table 1).

Table 1. Explained variance of the extracted factors.

Factor	Sums of squared saturations of extraction			Sum of the saturations squared by rotation
	Total	% of the variance	% Accumulated	Total
Fear	8.278	28.545	28.545	6.427
Burnout	5.306	18.296	46.841	5.099
Stress	3.560	12.275	59.116	6.443
RRTW	2.011	6.935	66.051	3.039
Intention to quit	1.791	6.177	72.229	3.053

Regarding the structure of the variables used, the threshold for factor loadings for samples with more than 200 observations is 0.4 (Hair et al., 2007), some of the items obtained loadings lower than recommended, so they were eliminated (F1, F7, F8, F9, ITQ1, ITQ4, ITQ6, BU6, ST1, ST7, ST8, ST11, RRTW5, and RRTW6) to continue with the analysis (Table 2).

Once the analysis of the factor loadings was performed to indicate the relationship of the items with the factors detected in the literature, regarding fear of COVID-19, intention to quit,

burnout, stress, and preparation for return to work, an analysis of the internal validity of the constructs was performed through convergent and discriminant validity, in addition to internal reliability through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α). Beginning with the discriminant validity, in Table 3, it can be observed that the factors extracted have adequate discriminant validity by having a correlation of less than .700 between them. Table 4 shows that all the constructs show adequate levels of Cronbach's alpha, i.e., they have adequate internal consistency.

Table 2. Factor loadings of the extracted variables.

Factor	Item	1	2	3	4	5
Fear (F)	F2	.776	.013	.248	-.148	.073
	F3	.817	.015	.300	-.192	.086
	F4	.845	.005	.266	-.149	.090
	F5	.679	.031	.384	-.242	.043
	F6	.690	.014	.396	-.204	.018
	F10	.750	.027	.374	-.173	.091
	F11	.816	.030	.366	-.205	.135
	F12	.786	.036	.415	-.147	.265
	F13	.763	.082	.299	-.042	.189
	ITQ2	.081	.008	.278	-.103	.782
Intention to quit	ITQ3	.166	-.022	.420	-.230	.795
	ITQ5	.130	.004	.363	-.212	.859
	BU1	.040	.745	.033	.145	.035
Burnout (BU)	BU2	.039	.914	-.003	.187	-.033
	BU3	.015	.966	-.012	.190	-.022
	BU4	.022	.957	.002	.173	.003
	BU5	.040	.948	.015	.164	.020

	BU6	.041	.935	.003	.151	-.010
	ST2	.363	.025	.821	-.248	.356
	ST3	.490	.031	.822	-.283	.333
	ST4	.349	-.008	.894	-.318	.324
Stress (ST)	ST5	.308	.023	.835	-.277	.387
	ST6	.335	-.037	.846	-.253	.349
	ST9	.299	.005	.732	-.245	.284
	ST10	.360	.014	.811	-.276	.341
Readiness for Return to Work (RRTW)	RRTW1	-.218	.069	-.300	.588	-.186
	RRTW2	-.121	.171	-.236	.648	-.204
	RRTW3	-.146	.143	-.231	.734	-.100
	RRTW4	-.133	.134	-.197	.811	-.125

Table 3. Discriminant validity of the extracted factors.

Factor	1	2	3	4	5
1	1.000	.037	.429	-.211	.145
2	.037	1.000	.008	.183	-.002
3	.429	.008	1.000	-.333	.405
4	-.211	.183	-.333	1.000	-.193
5	.145	-.002	.405	-.193	1.000

Table 4. Internal reliability of the extracted factors.

Factor	Item	α
Fear of COVID-19	F2 I am afraid of catching COVID-19 at work	.921
	F3 I am afraid of the consequences of getting sick with COVID	
	F4 I am afraid of getting COVID19 from contact with a family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker.	
	F5 feels anxious when I talk to co-workers about COVID19	
	F6 The covid19 is a very stressful experience for me.	
	F10 I am stressed by the increase and speed in the number of COVID19 infections.	
	F11 I am concerned that I may have the COVID19 virus.	
Intention to quit	F12 I am afraid of spreading covid19 to a friend, family member, or neighbor.	.887
	F13 I am afraid of spreading COVID-19 to a co-worker.	
	ITQ2 I am constantly looking for a better job	
Burnout	ITQ3 I often think about taking on another type of work.	.967
	ITQ5 Over the next few months, I will be looking for a new job.	
	BU1 I feel apathetic about my work.	
	BU2 I have become cynical about the value of my work.	
	BU3 Effectively solve problems that arise in my work.	
	BU4 Contribute effectively to what my organization does	
	BU5 Performing adequately in my position	
	BU6 Achieving my work objectives	

	ST2 I have felt that important things in my life are getting out of control.	
	ST3 I have been feeling nervous and stressed.	
	ST4 I have felt insecure about my ability to handle my problems.	
Stress	ST5 I have felt insecure in handling my problems at work.	.936
	ST6 I feel that things are out of my control.	
	ST9 I feel I am not on top of things.	
	ST10 I have become angry about things beyond my control.	
	RRTW1 Concluded confinement: I felt ready to return to my job.	
Readiness for Return to Work	RRTW2 I found ways to do my job safely.	.784
	RRTW3 I was trained in the proper use of protective equipment in the company.	
	RTW4 Received help from my colleagues to work safely and efficiently	

Once the EFA information was obtained to define the dimensional structure of the proposed constructs, the CFA was performed to demonstrate the theoretical validity of these deductions, i.e., the solutions obtained using the EFA were validated (Gil et al., 2000). For this, in addition to validating the construction of the applied questionnaire, the CFA was performed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis with the AMOS statistical package version 24 (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999) applying a structural covariance analysis to a sample of 2 to 7 indicators selected for each construct, to identify the model that significantly reproduces the scores used for the variables studied.

19, burnout, stress, intention to quit, and willingness to return to work are valid as they satisfactorily represent the constructs established by the literature review. Figure 1 shows the covariance model of the proposed constructs, highlighting mainly the negative covariances between stress, fear, and willingness to return to work, indicating that there is a negative correlation that mainly affects the desire to return physically to the workplace.

However, to verify that the results were statistically valid, the invariance of the model was tested, starting with the internal consistency of the indicators, the convergent and discriminant validity, and finally the goodness-of-fit index.

The results obtained from the CFA indicate that the scales proposed to measure fear of COVID-

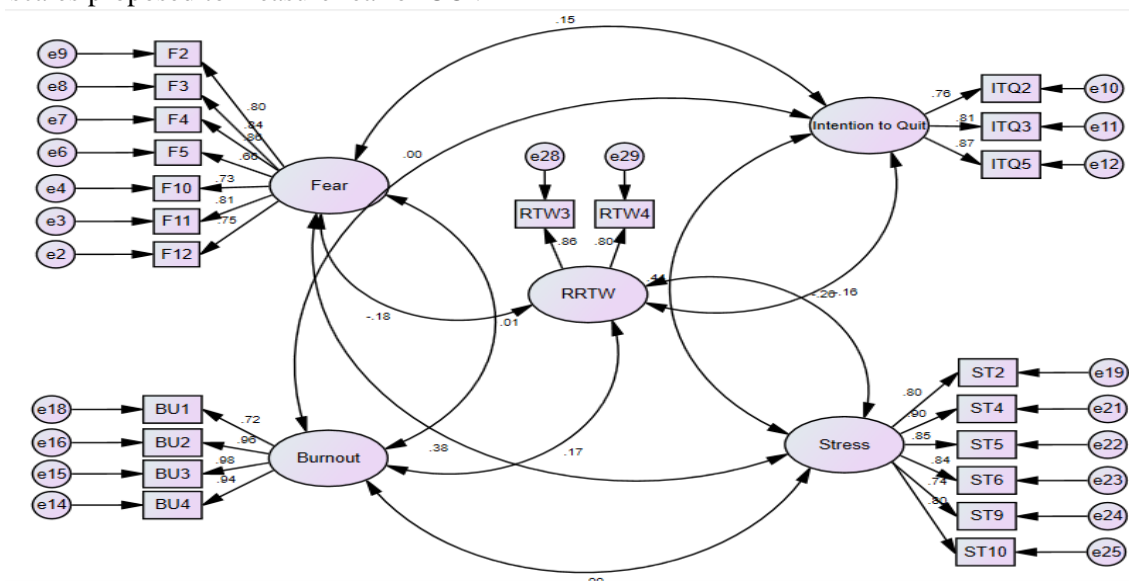


Figure 1. Model resulting from the confirmatory factor analysis. Source: Own elaboration based on AMOS 24.

For construct validity, first, the composite reliability (CR) was analyzed, verifying that each construct had a minimum value of .700 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) and that each construct had an appropriate Average Variance Explained (AVE), with a minimum value of .500. Likewise, it was also pertinent to analyze the discriminant validity of the model through the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations

(HTMT) matrix to ensure that the constructs are only the phenomenon for which they were proposed (Henseler et al., 2015), and as can be seen in Table 5, the constructs meet the criteria mentioned, in addition to having an appropriate discriminant validity, since the HTMT matrix indices have values below .850 (Henseler et al., 2015; Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Table 5. Composite reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity (HTMT criterion).

	CR	AVE	Fear	Intention to quit	Burnout	Stress	RRTW
Fear	.915	.609	---				
Intention to quit	.856	.666	.155	---			
Burnout	.947	.820	.025	.008	---		
Stress	.927	.681	.412	.440	.008	---	
RRTW	.819	.694	.183	.162	.169	.251	---

Finally, to evaluate the goodness-of-fit index of the model, it was assessed employing two absolute indices (relative chi-square [χ^2/df]) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and two relative indices (comparative fit index, CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Hu and Bentler, 1999), and as can be seen in the criteria included in Table 6, all the indices have satisfactory values, indicating that the model has an appropriate level of fit and that it is not measuring more information than it intends to estimate.

Table 6. Model adjustment.

Measure	Result	Acceptance threshold	Interpretation
χ^2	520.763	-	-
df	199	-	-
χ^2/df	2.617	1 - 3	Excellent
CFI	0.967	> .95	Excellent
SRMR	0.043	< .08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.052	< .06	Excellent
PClose	0.246	> .05	Excellent

Conclusions

The effects that have been occurring since the COVID-19 pandemic, have mainly focused on

the health and the economy of all countries, but especially in countries with emerging and underdeveloped economies. Identifying these effects is of great importance to determine the correct way to adapt to the new normality, for this, the present study focused on addressing various consequences of the health crisis that may have repercussions on the reincorporation of Mexicans into their work areas.

It is important to note that the generalization of the results of this paper should be taken with caution since the information collected for the sample was gathered in a single region and in a single snapshot in time. Nevertheless, the results allow making a first approach to the situation faced by the personnel, which causes indifference, stress, demotivation, low performance, and possibly even the intention to look for another job.

The main contribution of this study allows contributing to the discussion of the psychology and business literature, therefore, to contribute to the identification of those effects that cause the desertion of personnel in companies, from the scope of psychological damage caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, to develop a more concise guide to be considered during strategic planning by companies.

In future lines of research, future researchers are invited to consider more psychological elements, derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, that may propitiate the intention of job abandonment, such as depression, anxiety, chronic loneliness, physical health, and prolonged discomfort, among others. In addition, consider addressing these elements in a structural environment and analyze the possible causal relationships that can predict the intention to quit in companies.

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