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**Stress and myths related to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on remote work**

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# **Stress and myths related to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on remote work**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Study consequences brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the workplace in order to develop research strategies related to human and organizational behavior from a business perspective.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Quantitative, exploratory, and based on primary and secondary sources. An online, 33-item questionnaire was designed and applied in Mexican organizations, during the period from March 7 to 16 (the same week that the World Health Organization, WHO declared the COVID-19 emergency a pandemic). We analyze 332 individual responses.

**Findings:** Descriptive analyses show perceptions that people had about the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent, reliability tests show alpha Cronbach indexes greater than 0.8. At the beginning of the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, a relationship was shown between stress and several aspects related to the arrival of COVID-19, showing evidence of its impact on the workforce.

**Implications:** This project contributes evidence-based ideas for academics, managers and human resource areas to promote the growth and development of people. The aim is comprehensive well-being in the workplace, better working conditions through remote work as a successful strategy in the function of human resources, in the workplace and in the improvement of society in general.

**Originality:** This research, in addition to being carried out with empirical information obtained in the first weeks of March 2020, presents a model with recommendations to design future research projects and to analyze the post-COVID-19 effects in the workplace, from a business, human, and organizational perspective.

**Keywords:** Organizational Behavior, Human Behavior, Telecommuting, Home office, COVID-19 outbreak, Mexico

# **Estrés y Mitos Relacionados con los Efectos de Pandemia de COVID-19 en el Trabajo Remoto.**

## **Resumen**

Objetivo: Conocer las implicaciones que tiene el COVID-19 en el entorno laboral para desarrollar estrategias de investigación relacionadas con temas de comportamiento humano y organizacional en la perspectiva empresarial.

Diseño/Metodología: De tipo cuantitativa, exploratoria basada en fuentes primarias y secundarias, se diseñó y aplicó un cuestionario en línea con 33 items que fue aplicado en el entorno laboral mexicano, durante el período del 7 al 16 de marzo, es decir, en la misma semana que la OMS hizo la declaración de pandemia por el COVID-19, obteniendo un total de 332 respuestas.

Resultados/Hallazgos: Con los análisis descriptivos realizados se pudo conocer la percepción que tienen las personas sobre diversos aspectos relacionados con el COVID-19, posteriormente se realizaron las pruebas de confiabilidad correspondientes, obteniendo índices alfa cronbach mayores de 0.8. Al inicio de la declaración de la pandemia de COVID-19, se demostró una relación entre el estrés y varios aspectos relacionados con la llegada del COVID-19, evidenciando su impacto en los trabajadores.

Implicaciones: El desarrollo de esta investigación aporta ideas para los académicos, responsables de las empresas y en particular de las áreas de recursos humanos para que puedan fomentar el crecimiento y el desarrollo de las personas con la finalidad de lograr bienestar integral en su lugar de trabajo, generando mejores condiciones laborales debido a la propuesta de lograr que el trabajo a distancia sea una estrategia exitosa en la función de recursos humanos, en el ámbito laboral y en el mejoramiento de la sociedad en general.

Originalidad/valor: Esta investigación además de que se realiza con información obtenida en las primeras semanas del mes de marzo de 2020, presenta un modelo con ideas y temas para diseñar futuros proyectos de investigación y poder analizar los efectos post COVID en el entorno laboral, con una perspectiva empresarial, de comportamiento humano y organizacional.

Palabras clave: comportamiento organizacional, comportamiento humano, teletrabajo, trabajo en casa, brote de COVID-19, México

## **Estresse e mitos relacionados aos efeitos da pandemia do COVID-19 no trabalho remoto.**

### **Resumo**

Objetivo: Conhecer as implicações do COVID-19 no local de trabalho para desenvolver estratégias de pesquisa relacionadas a questões do comportamento humano e organizacional desde uma perspectiva de negócios.

Desenho / Metodologia: Quantitativo, exploratório, e baseado em fontes primárias e secundárias. Um questionário online com 33 itens foi elaborado e aplicado no ambiente de trabalho mexicano, durante o período de 7 a 16 de março, ou seja, na mesma semana em que a OMS fez a declaração da pandemia de COVID-19, obtendo um total de 332 respostas.

Resultados: Com as análises descritivas realizadas, foi possível conhecer a percepção que as pessoas têm sobre diversos aspectos relacionados ao COVID-19. Posteriormente foram realizados os correspondentes testes de confiabilidade, obtendo-se índices alfa de Cronbach superiores a 0,8. No início da declaração da pandemia do COVID-19, havia uma relação entre o estresse e vários aspectos relacionados à chegada do COVID-19, evidenciando seu impacto nos trabalhadores.

Implicações: O desenvolvimento desta pesquisa fornece ideias para acadêmicos, gestores e áreas de recursos humanos promovendo o crescimento e desenvolvimento de pessoas. O objetivo é alcançar o bem-estar integral no local de trabalho, gerando melhores condições de trabalho através do trabalho remoto como estratégia de sucesso na função de recursos humanos, no local de trabalho e na melhoria da sociedade em geral.

Originalidade / valor: Esta pesquisa, além de ser realizada com informações obtidas nas primeiras semanas de março de 2020, apresenta um modelo com ideias e tópicos para desenhar futuros projetos de pesquisa e poder analisar os efeitos pós-COVID no ambiente de trabalho com uma perspectiva empresarial, humana e organizacional.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento Organizacional, Comportamento Humano, Teletrabalho, Home office, surto COVID-19, México

## **Introduction**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), as of Aug 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 exceeded 23.3 million people and there were over 800,000 deaths all around the world. According to the United Nations (2020), it had a massive impact on the world's economy, exceeding 50 million dollars, thus affecting various sectors and industries, including tourism and airlines (Quintana, 2020).

China is considered the country where the virus originated in December 2019. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020a; 2020b) concluded that COVID-19 is indeed a pandemic; days later, WHO and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) made a joint statement in which they pointed out that “the COVID-19 pandemic is a global health and societal emergency that requires effective immediate action by governments, individuals and business. All business have a key role to play in minimizing the likelihood of transmission and impact on society. Early, bold and effective action will reduce short-term risks to employees and long-term costs to business and the economy”.

In recent years, there have been various manifestations of situations generating global and economic crises, which have had financial and economic repercussions in many countries of the world; for example, the crises occurred in 2000 and most recently in 2008. There is also evidence of social crises, such as social inequality, poverty, hunger, and migration. In terms of the environmental aspect, such as climate change, Damián (2015) mentions, another type of crisis are related to health contingencies caused by outbreaks, epidemics, or pandemics, such as SARS, Ebola or H1N1.

A similar health contingency occurred in Mexico during a two-week period between April and May of 2009, due to the unexpected spread of the influenza A N1H1 virus. This virus did not have such an elevated number of casualties, but alternatives including isolation and/or social distancing were implemented (Alonso Reynoso, 2010; Fajardo-Dolci et al, 2009). Eleven years later, a new virus appeared, commonly known as COVID-19 (coronavirus disease first detected in 2019), and at the time of writing this paper, it has spread practically to all corners of the world, causing a situation of maximum emergency and alert by health authorities, with an important impact on economics and society.

Authorities have been forced to make decisions related to closing borders, cancelling social, academic, and sport activities where a considerable number of attendees might meet. This has the purpose of keeping people in isolation and using confinement as one of the best strategies to minimize the number of infections but causing strong effects in the economy and in various business sectors (Smith-Bingham and Hariharan, 2020).

The need to understand and analyze the effects of the COVID-19 on people is essential. For this reason, in this paper, we study implications that this pandemic is presenting in the workplace, in order to develop research strategies related to issues of human and organizational behavior (Caligiuri, et al. 2020). This paper is structured as follows: we start with a conceptual framework, followed by the method used throughout the research; the results obtained are shown near the end where the discussion and conclusion sections can be found. We generate a series of ideas that can help develop future lines of research in hopes of helping managers, academics, and company executives, to support their business decisions.

## **Conceptual framework**

### Business perspective

Given the social and business circumstances impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an important issue to consider is the concern for survival. One way to address this concern is through business continuity management or organizational resilience (Elliot, Swartz and Herbane, 2010), which refers to the set of processes focused on reducing organizational impact and protect the key

stakeholders (e.g., communities and employees) of an eventuality. SchWeber (2013) identifies four phases principles for business continuity management: mitigation, preparation, response and recovery. At the same time, she discusses that to support the process for developing resilience in uncertain contexts, four principles can be considered: ability to make decisions in unknown contexts, develop organizational agility, practice DIY (“Do-it-yourself”), and take advantage of existing resources to obtain additional support.

Currently, many company managers are facing overwhelming challenges, which leads them to navigate in troubled waters with very costly aftermaths caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, as the strategic processes had to change and we have had to learn to adapt (Brammer, Branicki and Linnenluecke, 2019). This has become a priority of immediate solution, focusing on supporting collaborators, customers, and suppliers so that the supply chains in which they participate are not interrupted. In addition, companies are trying to stabilize their income so they do not make decisions without justifiable bases; they are taking care of their clients, remodeling their products and / or services to adapt themselves with the rapid evolution of the market so they can find new growth paths.

Given these situations of uncertainty, it is necessary to point out the relevance of Entrepreneur's Vision, competencies and leadership, to be able to identify the initial effects in adverse situations to develop survival strategies. Considering COVID-19, the most important strategy is to maintain the sources of employment and the company, implementing austerity measures in order to survive the economic effects. Among others, the activation of technical stoppages, the reduction of expenses, the adjustment of executive compensation or suspension of hiring temporary employees (Aycañ and Kabasacal, 2006, Armstrong-Stassen and Cattaneo, 2010; Jiménez and Sánchez, 2006; Keller, 2011).

Crisis situation that arise from various causes, whether natural, economic, political or health, should be considered, both by companies and by individuals, as a window of opportunity, as they have to carefully review their capabilities to turn them into alternatives for improvement (Grewal and Tansuhaj, 2001). In this case, by COVID-19, many companies have filed for bankruptcy, so the use and application of technology, the diversification of the products and services it offers and



entering new markets are aspects that must be taken into account from a business perspective in order to move forward and continue competing as the main actor in the post COVID-19.

From the business perspective, the urgency and complexity to enter a new normality is what is being considered, where in order to reopen businesses, in order to overcome uncertainty, they have to follow strict and rigorous health protocols that offer confidence and security to all clients and collaborators. Mercer (2020) advises a series of reflections on the business recovery process which are: 1) Know how to respond to the pandemic, answering the following question, what must be done to ensure business continuity? Some companies may benefit from the unexpected changes that are taking place. Next, 2) return and adapt as soon as possible, since it is vital to seek a balance between the economic aspects of the business and the well-being of the collaborators. Finally, 3) reinvent, because in such a changing environment, companies must redefine new ways of working and doing business.

Some of the impacts that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on companies, are on production process. This is given restrictions on people to make business trips, as well as the constant interruption of supply chains due to the shortage of raw materials, and declining demand for services, particularly affecting the sectors such as tourism, entertainment, aviation, education, infrastructure, electronics, and consumer and luxury goods (Accenture, 2020; Smith-Bingham and Hariharan, 2020).

#### Human Behavior Perspective

Behavioral economics has been one of the aspects that has become more relevant in recent years, because it analyzes the way in which psychological, social or cognitive factors affect the decisions that people make, also integrates ideas related to the areas of psychology, neuroscience and microeconomics. (Cifuentes-Faura, J., 2020), in this research includes these ideas related like an important issue to engage with the human and organizational behavior.

#### COVID-19 stress and anxiety

Regarding the new business strategies that are being implemented in the workplace, Dreger (2020) mentions that "there is a lot to enjoy in this new way of working, but suddenly encountering life-

altering changes can also cause fear and anxiety". For this reason, it is important to analyze the impact of both COVID-19 and the changes that are being experienced in the current environment.

In the last few years, stress has become a common theme in our society and over the last few years it has become a growing problem that calls for attention inside the workspace. Stress has been a topic to study since it has been shown to be a factor that affects professional performance, it is a complex and current issue that is constantly increasing, and if not properly handled, it can get out of control. Considering the current situation of confinement and/or isolation caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, levels of anxiety and stress are rising. Mercer (2020b) mentions that employees are experiencing mental health issues, while Deloitte (2020b) recommends establishing communication mechanisms with employees, customers and suppliers, to maintain closeness with people, in addition to developing strategies for the physical and mental well-being of employees.

In the same way that certain cardiovascular diseases and diabetes can affect us, stress is considered the silent enemy, since it can trigger emotional and physiological problems. On the report "The organization of work and stress", WHO (2004: 3) describes stress as: "the reaction that any individual may have due to work demands and pressures that do not fit their knowledge and abilities, and that test their ability to cope with the current situation. "

On the other hand, people's emotional state and mental health affect people's ability to be productive in the workplace. In times of crisis or adverse situations, high levels of stress can be identified, Castro-de-Araujo and Machado (2020) mention that there is a high impact on people's mental health due to the high level of uncertainty and the economic crisis. Although other studies carried out under normal conditions observe a stronger relationship between well-being and productivity, compared to the relationship between stressors and productivity (Donald et al., 2005), it is probable that the current situation has affected these relationships.

#### Organizational Behavior Perspective

The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020) indicates in a statement the possible impacts this could have in the workplace, mentioning three key dimensions amount of work, quality of work and effects on specific groups. The amount of work, relating the direct impact on the

workforce, such as unemployment and underemployment. The quality of work, for example in wages and salaries, as well as in people's access to social protection. Effects on specific groups, that is, those who are most vulnerable by the constant market effects or adverse market outcomes. They also mention the relevance of protecting workers in the workplace, stimulating the economy and labor demand, finally supporting employment and incomes, like key pillars to fight COVID-19 based on international standards.

Many companies have the opportunity to develop new strategies and the competences to achieve this, such as being more digital, streamlining processes, automating work areas, designing more flexible cost structures, reacting to decision making, having the right technological support, creating secure alternatives for online commerce, delivery and distribution. These ideas should be considered by business leaders as they are considered fundamental for the reopening of businesses in the post-COVID-19 era (Caligiuri, et al. 2020; Deloitte, 2020a; Henke, Puri and Saleh, 2020; Korn Ferry, 2020).

Recently, companies have been creating adaptation strategies for their collaborators in the face of various scenarios caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in order to be able to stay competitive and take care of the employees' jobs (Mercer, 2020a). Human resources management has become one of the key areas to be able to propose changes in new forms of work such as, for example, work at home, flexible compensation schemes and reduction of attractive working hours.

Flexibility is a strategy that human resources is using to contribute to the achievement of goals in companies. Aaker and Mascarenhas (1984), Milliman, Von Glinow and Nathan (1991); Ibarra-Cisneros and Gonzalez-Torres (2010), Martínez, Vela and Pérez (2011), define it as the ability to respond quickly, efficiently and variedly to adapt and / or anticipate the different types of changes that are continually affecting organizations. Madero and Barboza (2015) describe flexibility practices have been incorporated, among which outsourcing service practices, flexibles contracts, remote work and flexible hours stand out, although recently open workspaces and variable compensation. Flexibility is related to telecommuting, presented below.

Telecommuting

Although statistics in various countries show that the growth rate of flex-time and telecommuting has stabilized over the past five years, it is estimated that more than a quarter of the workforce is currently involved with one of these work options (BLS, 2017; Mercer, 2020a; McMEnamin, 2007; WorldatWork, 2005).

The topic of the future of work has considered as one of the current disruptive trends, since it involves connectivity, new models for talent management and the working tools that are changing (Deloitte, 2016). Thus, having an impact in the function of human resources in companies.

Currently, home office is a strategy or alternative that involves radical changes in the ways of working, generating a series of reflections and learning in the short and long term, caused by the presence of COVID-19. Many organizations are reacting to move forward in the market, both global and regionally. According to the estimates shown by Mercer (2020), it is expected that in the next few months, work activities will continue to be carried out remotely.

With the various aspects analyzed above, the basis for the design of a conceptual model can be established. This will serve as a guideline for the development of research topics, highlighting the business perspective, that is, the point of view the manager of a company has in order to face the effects of COVID-19. Immediately, the aspects related to human behavior. We need to analyze people's reactions to a pandemic situation that had not been experienced in the world in modern times. We are considering remote work (work from home) as one of the main topics of study, as it was the flexibility strategy that received the most support in companies to offer its collaborators as a work alternative. Next, we present the methodology developed.

----- insert figure 1 here -----

## **Method**

For research purposes, a questionnaire was designed in order to know the perceptions of people about the impact that COVID-19 could have on the Mexican work environment and to design proposals to develop new lines of research due to isolation and remote work. Based on the work

of Madero and Flores (2010) and (2009) related to stress, the use of technology and remote work, a questionnaire was designed with 33 items divided into 5 constructs. Likert-type scales were used throughout the questionnaire, with 1 being “totally disagree” and 5 being “totally agree”. The structure of the questionnaire is shown below: Myths and facts about COVID-19 (7 items); Stress perceived by COVID-19 (7 items); General effects of the arrival of COVID-19 (6 items); Effects of COVID-19 in the workplace (8 items); Telecommuting (6 items) and 5 items were considered for demographic data.

The period of application of the questionnaire was carried out synchronously with people who work in Mexico, during the period from March 7 to 15, 2020, using the authors' contact networks, obtaining a total of 332 responses.

## **Results**

The following table shows the results from the people who answered the questionnaire. A majority of respondents (58.7%) are female, while 41.3% of them identified as male. Also 49.7% of the participants have a formal job within their company (see table I).

----- insert table I here -----

In order to explore respondents' perceptions of COVID-19, first we present our descriptive analysis. According to the myths or thoughts about the perception of the arrival of the coronavirus (Gobierno de México, 2020), in this sample 69.6% mention that it is a reality, 73% that it is not a lie and that it will have negative effects. Then it is necessary to be careful, even by those who thought that it was just a distraction due to the trade war between China and the United States (30.7%) or to hide some other problems that faced at the time (32.0%). This can help understand how Mexicans received this information at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak (see Table II).

----- insert table II here -----

Regarding the possible economic effects, Quintana (2020) and Hernández (2020) point out that due to the arrival of COVID-19 in Mexico, as well as in various other countries of the world, GDP will decrease, therefore affecting various industrial sectors. According to the information obtained in the month of March 2020, it can be mentioned that neither individuals nor companies were prepared to face the impact that it could have had, as they have caused the closure of many small companies, restaurants and other businesses, considered as “not essential” (Saldaña, 2020). From a work perspective, it has brought dismissal of personnel, causing the loss of more than 700,000 jobs (González, 2020). (see table III).

----- insert table III here -----

It is important to mention that, in times of high uncertainty in the economic and work environment that consequently generate unstable environments, the impact on aspects related to people's emotional well-being, due to anxiety, tension and stress. As we can see at the beginning of the lockdown, in general the third part of the sample feel affected by this. This will have an effect on the current workforce (see table IV).

----- insert table IV here -----

Regarding the work environment, there are several points of view that should be analyzed, one of them being the impact generated by the collaborator towards companies, caused by absenteeism, staff turnover, and modification of rules (OIT, 2020). Other points of view include the internal policies and procedures that meet customer demands, as well as excess labor and the need for training of people to acquire new skills and to meet the requirements of the positions to achieve the various indicators or metrics of new jobs. Another impact would be the one that is generated between the same companies in the sector by affecting their supply chains due to the role they have of customer-suppliers (see table V).

----- insert table V here -----

Faced with this situation (COVID-19), in which it is necessary to face new challenges, design changes, the planned contingency is a critical aspect in order to support the company's strategic plans, since it is necessary to monitor and make the required adjustments in an unexpected situation, if it cannot be too late, as mentioned by Simpkins (2009).

This is how the use of information technology becomes relevant to improve the existing interactions between the areas and people that make up an organization, so it is necessary to propose some variations in the way of working, either in the same workplace or from a virtual office that could be the worker's home, becoming an increasingly common practice, as mentioned by Golden (2009).

Telecommuting is a reality in many Mexican organizations, they have not been able to avoid this technological convergence and they have naturally implemented modalities where work and workers are not in the same physical space. It is considered relevant to take an additional step in this line of research that has been little investigated in Mexico, when asking about the aspects that affect whether a worker is willing to accept a home office scheme, Madero and Flores (2009), See table VI.

----- insert table VI here -----

This study helped to understand the perception that people in Mexico had of various aspects related to COVID-19. Continuing with the descriptive analysis of the variables included in the questionnaire, we carried out an exploratory factor analysis using main components and varimax rotation. The corresponding reliability tests resulting in the following Cronbach's alpha: myths and/or thoughts people have about COVID-19 ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), stress perceived by COVID- 19, ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), effects of the arrival of COVID-19 ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), effects of COVID-19 in the workplace, ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ), telecommuting ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), resulting in the highest factor loads items a, b, d and f. (see annexes)

Due to the good results in validity and reliability for the applied instruments, it was decided to make a correlation matrix, so that there is evidence of the affectation among the constructs evaluated. (see table VII)

----- insert table VII here -----

Three significant correlations are observed in this matrix. Being prepared for the effects of the arrival of the COVID-19 and the stress ( $r=0.315$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The effects of COVID-19 on the workplace and stress ( $r=0.209$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In addition to between the effects of COVID-19 in the workplace and the effects of the arrival of COVID-19 ( $r=0.277$ ,  $p<.01$ ). A less significant correlation was found between the COVID-19 myths and events and stress ( $r=-0.135$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In the same way as between the effects of the arrival of COVID-19 and the myths and events of COVID-19 ( $r=-0.118$ ,  $p<.05$ ). As can be seen, three of the constructs shows the relations with stress.

## **Discussion**

Smith-Bingham and Hariharan (2020) propose that the use of the various communication platforms sometimes amplifies uncertainty and information, generating speculation that goes viral on various social networks. Due to the expansion of COVID-19 throughout the world, in Mexico, various institutions highlight the importance of establishing a series of principles to deal with the health contingency. In order to develop awareness in the civil society, particularly in employees. This might help to implement the measures for facing the contingency and avoiding confusion due to the lack of information on the subject. Companies might device and implement preventive workplace policies and practices, as indicated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, KPMG and the Business Coordinating Council (Consejo Coordinador Empresarial, in Spanish).

According to the model proposed in Figure 1 and the results from the statistical analysis presented, we suggest a business perspective approach. We propose business' managing team as the unit of study, in order to share their experiences, ideas and reflections to identify the success factors to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to learn about the strategies that have been developed in the new stages of the business life, to generate new ideas in business diversification mainly due to the decrease in income caused by the drop in sales, as well as the identification of possible austerity measures that may be successful.



Next, the effects, both positive and negative, that COVID-19 brought upon its arrival in various countries in the world will be analyzed, mainly the pandemic has led to increased cross-border distance problems, and is necessary adjust the “new normal” of the post-COVID in the international context, Caligiuri et al (2020). Guterres (2020) discuss that societies are in crisis and the economies of several countries of the world are in a delicate situation. Thus, it is important to address the devastating social dimensions that could be derived from the COVID-19 outbreak, paying special attention to those most affected, such as the elderly, low-wage workers, and small and medium-sized companies. Additionally emphasizing that solidarity is required among all citizens in order to help everyone so that the various problems do not increase and thus we will be able to build a better world, Brammer et al (2019).

Because the effects of the coronavirus pandemic have been unfortunate for many small companies, it is necessary to include in this section the relevance of topics related to corporate social responsibility to continue analyzing the strategic lines mentioned by the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (CEMEFI). Particularly in the development of social impact actions and in the improvement of the quality of life of its collaborators. This is aligned to the theory of the psychological contract, Tena (2002); Robinson, Kraatz, and Rousseau (1994); Rousseau (1989) and with the theory of contingencies (see fig. 2).

Now, taking into account the various aspects related to human behavior, Madero (2020) proposes some lines of research that should be included in the proposals to make in the future, since they have a relation to the values and principles of people (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Olivas-Luján, et al., 2009). Due to the situation of risk and uncertainty that affects the environment, it is necessary to analyze from a perspective of change the acceptance of the new conditions that favor home office by people, as well as the changes in behavior arising because of a closer coexistence between people in their homes and more distance in the workplaces.

According to the aforementioned, it is relevant to design researches related to behavioral economics. Because due to confinement, many analyses could done from the point of view of people's behavior and the effects it has on their various areas of influence. Therefore, they could be classifying into three aspects: first, attitudes or thoughts from the perspective of mental health,

second, the creative and innovative ideas generated by each of the people when they are in isolation, and finally, related to personal growth or career management.

Madero (2020) proposes and mentions three aspects (influence of stressors on people when doing home office, adapting to change and modifying the rules of coexistence in the new workplace) that can serve as some lines of research for the post-COVID-19 stage, which aids in the process of knowing the effects of stressors on the emotional balance and mental health of women. Whenever doing remote work activities, factors such as stress, anger, annoyance, tolerance, fear, frustration, in terms of character and personality, have been presented in adverse situations of risk and change, where it can be related to the way to get ahead by creating innovative or entrepreneurial ideas, by developing creativity, testing the entrepreneurial spirit, trying to propose new ideas and doing things differently in order to make isolation more bearable and come up with new business ideas. With regard to the third element related to personal and professional improvement, sensitivity is highlighted to offer recognition towards others, to have a feeling of gratitude for the things you have compared to others, as well as empathy and solidarity. You can include principles of entitlement theory, well-being theory, humanistic management theory and positive psychological capital.

From the perspective of organizational behavior, Madero (2020) proposes some lines of research to consider in the COVID-19 stage, such as motivation, the design of new jobs, communication, employee value proposition, human resources practices, and adaptation to change. In situations of contingency, it is important to consider what Schwartz, Hatfield, Scoble-Williams and Volini (2020) indicate about the possible effects that people could have when they return to carry out their work activities.

Taking into account one of the phrases shown in Table II, which says “Do you think that companies can develop strategies to deal with the coronavirus? Mercer (2020) proposes some actions that companies have adopted. For example, using protective equipment and sanitation of facilities, disseminated protective gear for employees to use at their discretion, arranged special flexible working hours, and providing employees with a “work from home” (home office) option.

Given that COVID-19 is considered as high risk and contagious, in addition to the conditions that are presented, (isolation, social distance) they are very suitable for companies to propose flexibility strategies, such as remote work, since it is a practice that has already been used previously and there are people who think that working from home is the best thing for the moment, or prefer to be at home than in the workplace. However, it is necessary to ask themselves, are there adequate conditions so people can carry out their activities from home? All of this on terms of connectivity, technological infrastructure, and available physical space. Now, it is worth mentioning that it will happen to people who, due to the nature of their work or their profile, cannot carry out their activities from home, since it is an object of study that must be considered as a relevant aspect of research.

Based on the evidence that has been presented in recent years, it is important to mention the relevance that labor flexibility practices have on the performance of the company and on the co-creation of value for the employee, (Burrel, 2018; Chung , 2018; Kerkhofs, Chung and Ester, 2008), mainly telecommuting, which has been one of the most used tools by companies in the COVID-19 situation. And what can be seen according to the results of the research participants is that they do like the home office due to the circumstances that exist in the world.

At this point it is convenient to indicate that the data collection was carried out at the beginning of the emergency situation. At that time, the only reference that the population had was the short period that these measures were applied during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009, it was difficult to be aware of the extension of time for confinement by COVID-19. (CDC, 2019).

----- insert figure 2 here -----

In this time of coronavirus contingency, it could be considered that the ideal conditions exist to facilitate the processes to home office. However, for the human resources management, there will be new challenges related to the integration of technology in the automation and digitalization of each of the operational processes as more questions arise (Deloitte, 2020). How to make onboarding more efficient? What is the best way to attract talent? What has been designed for the monitoring and compliance in the achievement of goals? How is the change in the level of

commitment or engagement in staff working remotely? How to design and offer attractive compensation schemes for staff working at home? Are employee leaders prepared to manage people's talent in conditions other than the work environment? Do they really have the skills to work in flexible environments?

On the other hand, it is necessary to design research projects with a longitudinal perspective to be able to make comparisons before, during and after the pandemic. These involve some of the aforementioned aspects from the business, human and organizational perspective, considering the evolution of people's competences, resilience, coping strategies, solidarity, productivity, etc.

## **Conclusions**

The most important challenges that come with the arrival of COVID-19 include the emergence of new lines of research that are interesting to consider, since the effects before and after March 12, 2020 must be known through research methods and models, the home office could be a relevant strategy for the improvement of companies and for the professional growth of people. It is also necessary to highlight that the physical work environment, the place where work activities are carried out and open spaces are important elements to consider in the implementation of joint work (co-working) and in new ways of working (smart- work).

It is convenient to point out that, in the design of the investigations, the relationship with certain variables such as satisfaction, productivity, motivation, adaptation to change, achievement of results is sought, using mixed methods, that is, that deductive processes be a complement to deductive or vice versa.

Finally, it is important to mention that the contributions that this work has are in order to contribute ideas for academics, managers of companies and in particular the areas of human resources that can promote the growth and development of people with the aim of achieving comprehensive well-being in the workplace, generating better working conditions due to the proposal to make remote work a successful strategy in the function of human resources, in the workplace and in the improvement of society in general.

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**Table I**  
***Characteristics of the people who answered the survey***

<b>Demographic data</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender		
Male	133	41.3%
Female	189	58.7%
Civil status		
Single	160	49.7%
Married	153	47.5%
Other/ prefer not to answer	9	2.8%
Year of birth		
1963 or before	23	7.1%
Between 1964 and 1980 (inclusive)	94	29.2%
Between 1981 and 1995 (inclusive)	166	51.6%
After 1995	39	12.1%
Current situation		
Study	25	7.8%
Study and work	96	29.8%
Permanent job in an established company	160	49.7%
Other activity	41	12.7%
Work experience (seniority)		
Less than 1 year	40	12.4%
Between 1 and 5 years	80	24.8%
Between 6 and 10 years	53	16.5%
More than 10 years	149	46.3%
	n = 332	100%

**Table II**  
*Myths and facts about COVID-19*

	<i>Disagree 1-2</i>	<i>Indifferent 3</i>	<i>Agree 4-5</i>	<i>Average (AV)</i>	<i>Stand. dev.</i>
	Frequency of the answers				
a.- It is a smokescreen to hide more serious problems.	145 45.0%	74 23.0%	103 32.0%	2.74	1.39
b.- It is a lie.	235 73.0%	68 21.1%	19 5.9%	1.77	1.03
c.- It is a distractor created by the powerful.	199 61.8%	64 19.9%	59 18.3%	2.19	1.27
d.- It is real and we need to be careful.	25 7.7%	73 22.7%	224 69.6%	3.99	1.02
e.- We do not need to worry too much about it; the media is blowing things out of proportion.	165 51.3%	99 30.7%	58 18.0%	2.48	1.18
f.- It is only a mechanism to create worldwide instability.	113 35.1%	80 24.8%	129 40.1%	3.03	1.42
g.- The coronavirus COVID-19 is being used to affect trade relations between China and the rest of the countries.	141 43.8%	82 25.5%	99 30.7%	2.74	1.39

**Tabla III*****Perception of preventing the effects of the arrival of COVID-19***

	<i>Disagree 1-2</i>	<i>Indifferent 3</i>	<i>Agree 4-5</i>	<i>Average (AV)</i>	<i>Stand. dev.</i>
	Frequency of the answers				
a.- I feel prepared for the arrival of the coronavirus to the place where I live.	166 51.6%	89 27.6%	67 20.8%	2.53	1.19
b.- I think companies should develop strategies to deal with the coronavirus.	54 16.8%	62 19.2%	206 64.0%	3.72	1.21
c.- I think that the coronavirus will affect people's work activities.	25 7.8%	47 14.6%	250 77.6%	4.11	1.01
d.- I think the coronavirus will affect social activities in your city.	34 10.6%	61 18.9%	227 70.5%	3.95	1.09
e.- The coronavirus will be used as a reason for people to not go to work.	60 18.6%	54 16,8%	208 64.6%	3.73	1.26
f.- I think the coronavirus will negatively affect the economy and finances of most companies in the city.	26 8.1%	41 12.7%	255 79.2%	4.20	1.05



**Table IV**  
***Issues related to stress perceived by COVID-19***

	<i>Disagree 1-2</i>	<i>Indifferent 3</i>	<i>Agree 4-5</i>	<i>Average (AV)</i>	<i>Stand. dev.</i>
	Frequency of the answers				
a.- I feel tense or worried about the effects that the coronavirus might have. *	83 28.7%	87 30.1%	119 41.2%	3.15	1.25
b.- I feel anxious or nervous about the coronavirus.	144 44.7%	96 29.8%	82 25.5%	2.65	1.21
c.- I am scared of the situation we are facing due to the coronavirus.	130 40.4%	71 22.0%	121 37.6%	2.94	1.33
d.- Sometimes I neglect my daily activities because I am thinking about the coronavirus.	259 80.4%	36 11.2%	27 8.4%	1.71	1.08
e.- If the coronavirus situation continues to expand, I will not leave my house.	117 36.3%	69 21.4%	136 42.3%	3.10	1.37
f.- When I am home, I am often worried about work-related activities.	135 41.9%	66 20.5%	121 37.6%	2.84	1.43
g.- Sometimes I have trouble sleeping because I am thinking that the coronavirus might affect the place where I live.	284 88.2%	24 7.5%	14 4.3%	1.44	0.90

\* N= 289

**Table V**  
**Perception of the possible effects of COVID-19 in the workplace**

	<i>Disagree 1-2</i>	<i>Indifferent 3</i>	<i>Agree 4-5</i>	<i>Not apply</i>	<i>Average (AV)</i>	<i>Stand. dev.</i>
	Frequency of the answers					
a.- The organization where I work has been affected negatively by the emergence of the coronavirus.	156 48.4%	1 3.1%	163 50.6%	2 6.2%	3.03	1.01
b.- Production or service processes of the organization where I work will be affected in the next couple of months by the coronavirus.	0 0.0%	153 47.5%	166 51.6%	3 0.9%	4.02	0.99
c.- The coronavirus has put my workplace's operations at risk.	45 14.0%	49 15.2%	184 57.1%	44 13.7%	3.71	0.99
d.- The coronavirus will be a reason for more absenteeism than normal in my workplace.	26 8.1%	41 12.7%	224 69.6%	31 9.6%	3.94	0.87
e.- Imports of raw material in my organization have been negatively affected by the coronavirus.	39 12.1%	75 23.3%	99 30.7%	109 33.9%	3.48	1.01
f.- My organization's operations have been negatively affected by the coronavirus.	43 13.3%	90 28.0%	126 39.1%	63 19.6%	3.49	0.96
g.- My workplace has had to modify its operational processes due to the coronavirus.	61 18.9%	93 28.9%	99 30.8%	69 21.4%	3.28	0.99
h.- My workplace has had to modify its travel policies and guidelines due to the coronavirus. *	38 13.1%	49 17.0%	142 49.1%	60 20.8%	3.81	1.10

\*N=289

**Table VI**  
**Perception of telecommuting / home office**

	<i>Disagree 1-2</i>	<i>Indifferent 3</i>	<i>Agree 4-5</i>	<i>Not apply</i>	<i>Average (AV)</i>	<i>Stand. dev.</i>
	Frequency of the answers					
a.- I can cover my work responsibilities from home (home office).	75 23.3%	13 4.0%	209 64.9%	25 7.8%	3.74	1.38
b.- I have the right conditions to do my work from home.	69 21.4%	8 2.5%	220 68.3%	25 7.8%	3.77	1.31
c.- Due to the nature of my work, essential activities cannot be carried out from home or remotely.	143 44.4%	18 5.6%	125 38.8%	36 11.2%	2.89	1.56
d.- Due to the coronavirus, processes to work at home are being facilitated.	67 20.8%	44 13.7%	182 56.5%	29 9.0%	3.56	1.27
e.- Sometimes I think that working from home is the best option (at least temporarily).	96 29.9%	60 18.6%	136 42.2%	30 9.3%	3.26	1.30
f.- I like my job and I can do it anywhere.	52 16.1%	27 8.4%	214 66.5%	29 9.0%	3.86	1.22

**Table VII**  
**Correlations Matrix**

		Stress P.	Myths & facts	Effects arrivals	Effects workplace	Telecomm
Stress P.	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	322				
Myths & facts	Pearson Correlation	-.135*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015				
	N	322	322			
Effects of the arrivals	Pearson Correlation	.315**	-.118*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.034			
	N	322	322	322		
Effects on the workplace	Pearson Correlation	.209**	.026	.277**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.654	.000		
	N	297	297	297	297	
Telecomm	Pearson Correlation	.030	-.104	.045	.032	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	.069	.437	.589	
	N	306	306	306	290	306

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## ANNEXES

### Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Stress b	.899				
Stress a	.849				
Stress c	.827				
Stress d	.741				
Stress g	.733				
Stresss f	.480				
Telecommut b		.848			
Telecommut a		.846			
Telecommut f		.776			
Telecommut d		.765			
Telecommut c rev.		.596			
Effects d			.872		
Effects c			.794		
Effects f			.773		
Effects e			.769		
Effects workplace f				.805	
Effects workplace e				.781	
Effects workplace g				.758	
Effects workplace c				.643	
Effects workplace h				.546	
Effects workplace d				.536	
Myths c					.857
Myths b					.818
Myths a					.805
Myths g					.716
Myths f					.606

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.