

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ride.v11i22.914>

Artículos científicos

Incertidumbre en la gestión de capital humano ante la contingencia covid-19 en la industria automotriz del estado de Guanajuato, México

Uncertainty in the management of human capital in the face of the COVID-19 contingency in the automotive industry of the state of Guanajuato, Mexico

Incerteza na gestão do capital humano diante da contingência covid-19 na indústria automotiva no estado de Guanajuato, México

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Resumen

Tanto en México como en el mundo la pandemia de covid-19 ha cambiado considerablemente el desarrollo de la industria y, con ello, la gestión del capital humano. Guanajuato no es la excepción, por lo que en este trabajo se dan a conocer las estrategias que los ejecutivos del capital humano en empresas del sector automotor de ese estado han aplicado para implementar el trabajo en casa y cambiar el imaginario del trabajador. El objetivo es conocer los principales efectos y estrategias aplicadas durante la contingencia por covid-19 en la gestión de capital humano en empresas del referido sector de dicha entidad. La investigación fue cualitativa, con alcance descriptivo y diseño no experimental. Se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas a ejecutivos de capital humano de la industria automotriz privada del estado de Guanajuato. En cuanto a los resultados, se puede indicar



que en los entrevistados la incertidumbre fue un sentimiento recurrente que surgió con el anuncio de las medidas de confinamiento, ya que varias empresas no estaban preparadas para la crisis sanitaria. Sin embargo, y a pesar de esta situación, se mantiene un clima de optimismo para aplicar estrategias preventivas y se considera que la pandemia por covid-19 puede ofrecer una oportunidad de evolución. En definitiva, en este trabajo se muestran las estrategias que los encargados de la gestión de capital humano en varias empresas de Guanajuato implementaron para hacer frente al covid-19 y sus consecuencias durante la contingencia.

Palabras clave: capital humano, covid-19, estrategias.

Abstract

Both in Mexico and in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has considerably changed the development of the industry and, with it, the management of human capital. Guanajuato is no exception and in this paper the strategies that human capital executives in companies in this state have applied to implement work at home and change the worker's imagination are presented. Our objective is to know the main effects of the contingency due to COVID-19 on the management of human capital in companies in Guanajuato, Mexico. The research is qualitative with a descriptive scope and non-experimental design. Semi-structured interviews were applied to executives of human capital in the State of Guanajuato from the private sector. Uncertainty is a recurring feeling in executives of human capital. This sentiment began with the announcement of the containment measures because several companies were not prepared for the health crisis. Despite the uncertainty, a climate of optimism remains in the application of strategies and the COVID-19 pandemic is seen as an opportunity for evolution. This work shows the strategies that those in charge of human capital management in several companies in Guanajuato implemented to deal with COVID-19 and its consequences during the contingency.

Keywords: human capital, covid-19, strategies.

Resumo

Tanto no México quanto no mundo, a pandemia covid-19 mudou consideravelmente o desenvolvimento da indústria e, com ela, a gestão do capital humano. Guanajuato não é exceção, portanto este trabalho apresenta as estratégias que executivos de capital humano de empresas do setor automotivo daquele estado têm aplicado para implementar o trabalho em casa e mudar o imaginário do trabalhador. O objetivo é conhecer os principais efeitos e estratégias aplicadas durante a contingência covid-19 na gestão do capital humano em empresas do referido setor da referida entidade. A pesquisa foi qualitativa, com escopo descritivo e desenho não experimental. Entrevistas semiestruturadas foram aplicadas a executivos de capital humano da indústria automotiva privada no estado de Guanajuato. Em relação aos resultados, pode-se apontar que, nos entrevistados, a incerteza foi um sentimento recorrente que surgiu com o anúncio das medidas de confinamento, uma vez que várias empresas não estavam preparadas para a crise de saúde. No entanto, e apesar desta situação, permanece um clima de otimismo para a aplicação de estratégias preventivas e considera-se que a pandemia de COVID-19 pode oferecer uma oportunidade de evolução. Em suma, este trabalho mostra as estratégias que os responsáveis pela gestão do capital humano em várias empresas de Guanajuato implementaram para lidar com o covid-19 e suas consequências durante a contingência.

Palavras-chave: capital humano, covid-19, estratégias.

Fecha Recepción: Octubre 2020

Fecha Aceptación: Abril 2021

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic, a virus first detected on December 8, 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. . This is a virus of the coronaviridae family, and so far the most accepted hypothesis among the scientific community indicates that it is an evolution of a bat virus (such as Bat CoV RaTG13), which was transmitted to humans through intermediate hosts. like pangolins (Cyranoski, 2020; Lam et al., 2020; WHO, 2020; Saif, 2020).

The most common form of contagion of COVID-19 occurs through the secretions of infected people or by contact with contaminated surfaces - it is currently known that the virus can survive 4 hours in copper, 24 hours in cardboard, 48 hours in stainless steel and 72 hours in plastic (Chin et al., 2020; Hung, 2003) -. Regarding its behavior, this virus has a median

incubation period of 5-6 days, with a range of 1 to 14 days, and symptomatic cases develop, on average, 11.5 days after infection (WHO, 2020). Recovery time, from the onset of symptoms, ranges from two weeks in mild cases to 3-6 weeks in severe or critical cases. Mild cases present only common cold with a seasonal pattern in winter, and severe cases lead to atypical pneumonia and severe respiratory failure (WHO, 2020).

Due to the seriousness of the situation generated by this virus, since the first half of 2020 all areas of daily life have been affected, which caused social confinement as a preventive measure. This, in the particular case of Mexico, has shown the country's fragile economic situation and the lack of organizational strategies in an emergency situation. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the global economy has been unstable for more than a decade, specifically since the global financial crisis of 2008. After that year, economic growth has not been significant : in the period 2011-2019 the growth rate was 2.8% and in 2019 the world economy had its worst performance since 2009 with 2.5% growth. In this context, and with a downward forecast for 2020, what ECLAC has chosen to call "a health, human and economic crisis unprecedented in the last century" has reached the world. (Cepal, 2020, p. 1).

Until now, the covid-19 has worsened the world panorama due to the suspension of economic activities. Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the areas with the lowest growth, is currently the epicenter of the pandemic and the figures for job losses, in addition to the forecasts of a serious economic decline, are worrying. The same ECLAC (2020) has warned about the effects in the short, medium and long term, which will translate into higher unemployment, lower wages and incomes, increased poverty and extreme poverty, higher costs, fragmentation and inequalities of access in health systems, bankruptcy of companies, reduction of private investment, lower economic growth, less integration of value chains and deterioration of productive capacities and human capital.

In other words, while social distancing prevents the spread of the virus, the consequences of this measure on economic activity are catastrophic due to the slowdown or total interruption of production. In this context, quarantine also implies important challenges for organizations in their human capital: effective management of health measures for staff, flexibility in payment of salaries despite suspension in activities, efficiency in social security procedures, knowledge of the procedures provided by the Ministry of Health and the International Labor Organization for contingency cases, sensitivity for cases of partial or total dismissals due to

low production, implementation of remote work through digital platforms, work in the imaginary of the worker regarding labor dynamics, etc.

According to various sources (Lomelí, 2020; Marcos, 2020; Rodríguez, October 7, 2020), Mexico will have serious economic consequences in various sectors; Some of the most affected areas will be the banking sector with a growth of more than 2.1% in the loan portfolio, the energy industry due to the abrupt drop in prices and the automotive companies due to the lack of demand. The economic problems of the latter sector directly affect the job stability of the state of Guanajuato. According to forecasts, the impact of the pandemic on the productive sector will be negative in the medium term. In fact, statesmen predict that foreign direct investment (FDI) will be reduced by 40% in 2020-21, which could reach its lowest levels in two decades (Lomelí, 2020).

In the case of Guanajuato - the eleventh state with the highest investment in Mexico - the main investors are concentrated in two countries: Spain and Japan; the first of them has had unfavorable economic consequences due to the covid-19 epidemic and investment expectations for the future are low.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for its part, has warned that Mexico will be one of the nations most affected by the pandemic due to a possible annual drop of 6.6% in gross domestic product (GDP) and a minimum contraction of 8% . Other figures presented in some partial reports are worrying. According to the calculation of institutions such as the IMSS and the Ministry of Finance, from March to April 2020, approximately 14,453 jobs were lost every 24 hours (Bazán, 2020). In a survey conducted with several important businessmen in Mexico, a large percentage (94.4%) agreed that there will be an economic recession at a global and local level. In fact, 72.9% assure that there will be a significant rate of bankruptcy in micro and small companies and 41.4% are sure that the GDP will fall substantially (Bazán, 2020).

The automotive industry in the state of Guanajuato reliably contributes to the growth and economic development of the entity, since it is one of the most important in terms of export, production and employment generation, as well as the reception of direct foreign investment. In short, this industry is a pillar for the entity's economic activity due to its great dynamism within manufacturing, since 60% of the automotive industry sector in Mexico is

concentrated in Guanajuato and represents 20% of the state's domestic product. (National Institute of Statistics and Geography [Inegi], 2014).

Guanajuato is considered the most dynamic automotive cluster in Latin America, since it is the only state where five automobile assembly plants are concentrated: General Motors, Mazda, Volkswagen, Honda and Toyota. In addition, it has a presence in 23 municipalities: Apaseo El Grande, Celaya, Comonfort, Cortázar, Irapuato, León, Salamanca, San Francisco del Rincón, Silao, Abasolo, Acámbaro, Dolores Hidalgo, Jerécuaro, Juventino Rosas, Ocampo, Pueblo Nuevo, Romita, San Diego de la Unión, San Felipe, San José Iturbide, San Miguel de Allende, Valle de Santiago y Villagrán.

According to Rodríguez (2020), from 1992 to March 2020, 19.8 billion dollars have been invested in the automotive sector, which translates into more than 149,000 jobs, hence the exports of this industry represent 78% of all those generated in the state of Guanajuato. Therefore, for this entity, strongly linked to the automotive industry, the forecasts are uncertain. According to Rodríguez (2020), the expectations that were had in the assembly plants for the year 2020 were optimistic: a production of five million cars per year and sales of up to two million vehicles were predicted; however, the pandemic wiped out all plans for growth and stability. The current forecasts are not encouraging, as it is expected that there will be a drop in global demand: sales will decrease by almost 11 million vehicles and, in the particular case of the United States, one of the most affected nations, sales will fall from 17.1 million units in 2019 to a maximum of 14.4 million in 2020. Given that 70% of automotive production in Mexico is destined for that country, the consequences could be serious for Guanajuato in terms of unemployment, lack of economic dynamics and social inequality.

For this reason, this work focuses on the challenges that some automotive companies in Guanajuato (Mexico) have had to face since the beginning of the covid-19 contingency, as well as the consequences that this has caused in the areas in charge of resources. and human capital. Here, the positive and negative experiences that those responsible for the human areas have had to face and what strategies they have implemented to continue promoting organizational health are shown, in voice. Many of these strategies, as they themselves comment, have been learned and implemented in the march due to the lack of training in epidemiological and global health issues.

Theoretical framework

The concept of human capital is used to "designate a hypothetical factor of production dependent (...) on the degree of training and productivity of the people involved in a production process" (Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2012, p. 11). For Becker (2003) human capital is "investment in providing knowledge, training and information to people; This investment allows people to give a higher yield and productivity to the modern economy "(p. 1). In other words, human capital theory is generally responsible for analyzing the links between education, production and work. In its beginnings, this theory considered that education was linked to material capital and, therefore, was an investment that resulted in a calculable return (Becker, 1983; Schultz, 1983); however, the passage of time created a gap between the educational ideal, wages in labor fields, the standard of living of productive people, and social inequality (Aronson, 2007; Thurow, 1983).

The decline of the classical theory of human capital came when works such as those of Boudon (1978) and Thurow (1983) showed that there was no correspondence between wages and the educational level of workers, as well as between equal educational and educational opportunities. the decline in social inheritance. Overeducation, as a natural consequence of a theory that privileged the educational dimension, also became a factor of imbalance not foreseen by it. Finally, the consideration of extra-economic elements (race or sex) as factors of labor and social segmentation showed that the educational level was not the center of the problems. Criticisms of the theory of human capital focused, then, on the relationship between school success, social origin and standard of living (Bonal, 1998).

Currently, human capital continues to refer to education as a factor of economic and social progress, as well as an area that provides the necessary capacities to perform satisfactorily in the labor field (Aronson, 2007). In this sense, considerations towards the state as a promoter of education and towards society as a generator of educational demand are also maintained. Despite these shared characteristics, the current approach to human capital differs on several points from classical theory (table 1).

Tabla 1. Comparación entre teorías de capital humano

TEORÍA CLÁSICA	TEORÍA CONTEMPORÁNEA
Predominio de una educación de carácter instrumental basada en contenidos: educar para dar seguridad en el desarrollo laboral y elevación de ingresos.	Énfasis en lo inmaterial en detrimento de lo instrumental: educar para formar competencias y habilidades para enfrentar la incertidumbre.
Sociedad estratificada y abierta.	Sociedades estructuras en torno a las tecnologías de la información. Estas tecnologías determinan las fuentes de crecimiento económico, las relaciones sociales y las relaciones de poder.
Trabajo fragmentado y repetido basado en modelos de producción en serie. Afán por la especialización rígida.	Importancia en el trabajo cognitivo-intelectual. Flexibilidad de campos y no especialización rígida.
Individuo como capitalista que invierte en su educación, que se preocupa por la adquisición de capacidades productivas y acumulación de conocimientos.	Individuo como portador de una nueva obligación que provoca la necesidad de la autogeneración de inserción social.

Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en Aronson (2007)

In summary, human capital encompasses the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences of workers, as well as their ability to update, adapt, share and make it increasingly productive for the organization (Mathis and Jackson, 2008). In a more practical sense, human capital is also called the total human resources that a company or economic institution has. At the organizational level, human capital implies responsibility when business decisions are made due to the consequences they have on labor groups and on the organization itself; The organization is, then, a social and development space for human capital (Sen, 2002). The current importance given to human capital is part of the awareness that is had regarding the role that human resources play in business value processes (Khandekar and Sharma, 2005).

The current currents of this theory consider that human capital integrates the capitals of being, in this way, the theory dialogues with a holistic perspective on the human being and its essential aspects. By considering the capitals of being and applying them to the work environment, an important development is achieved for the staff and the organization. From the labor perspective, the four capitals of being are described as follows (TEC, 2012, p. 12):

1. Intellectual capital: Ability to obtain, create, process, assimilate, apply, optimize and evaluate the information and knowledge associated with certain productive, recreational or associative demands.
2. Intuitive capital: Ability to generate cognitive and innovative associations.
3. Emotional capital: Willingness to identify, summon, take advantage of, control and guide emotions in favor of constructive purposes.
4. Relational capital: Human attitude of relating to establish interactions that ensure organizational growth as a consequence of personal growth, and growth.

The specific approach within the theory of human capital adopted in this work is that of strategic management by competencies (Buelna, 2011; Chiavenato, 2009; De Luna, 2008; TEC, 2012). To understand the strategic management of human capital by competencies, it is necessary to define what a competency is and what impact it has on human capital management.

Generally, the term competence is related to academic, educational and institutional fields; However, the multidisciplinary approach that the organizational discipline has acquired has led to applying the concepts of competencies to the economic field. There are several definitions of competence (Agudelo, 1998; Bunk, 1994; Gallart, 1997; Gonzci, 1996; Kochanski, 1998), but in this work one focused on work is used: competence is the effective capacity to carry out successfully a fully identified work activity (TEC, 2012). Competence is, therefore, an objective and demonstrable ability that is structured around five axes: knowing, knowing how to do, knowing how to be, wanting to be and being able to be.

In the areas in charge of human capital management, these five axes are taken into account to implement strategies that increase the knowledge and skills of human resources to improve the personal and organizational quality of the company. The strategic management of human capital by competencies is, then, "a process that consists of managing the intellectual and intangible assets that competencies represent in individuals" (TEC, 2012, p. 13).

This process is carried out strategically considering the difficulty that a person has to develop complex knowledge and skills, then human capital is managed through actions focused on people and their difficulties to, finally, integrate intellectual capital to the organization for individual development and organizational.

Strategic management by competencies goes from being a management system to one of effective communication between employees and the organization. This means that the needs of the employees can be met and an environment conducive to productivity and

multidirectional development is generated. A company with human capital management by competencies has the optimal and adequate human resources in all its areas, which implies meeting the selection, remuneration, training, evaluation and promotion objectives that every human capital area has (TEC, 2012).

The management of human capital by competencies is crucial when facing organizational crises directly related to personnel. The pandemic caused by covid-19 and the consequent health contingency have represented a great problem for companies and economic institutions around the world. In this sense, the year 2020 has been a challenge for the human resources areas. The best position, according to the Mexican Association in Human Resources Management (Amedirh) (2020), is to have openness and flexibility to meet the demands of a time as adverse as the present.

Guanajuato, with the automotive industry as one of the most important production sectors, is no exception to this problem. Since March 2020, this industry closed productive activities to avoid the massive contagion of the virus and until now (June of the same year) production is being re-established in a phased manner. Both in the beginning and now with the so-called “new normal”, human capital managers in automotive companies have had to find strategies to avoid a negative effect on the performance and development of individuals and the organization.

The challenges posed by confinement have not been easy. From combating the uncertainty due to a possible dismissal to addressing in the best way the mood swings of the staff due to the change in life, organizations have had to consult and reconnect with the theoretical and practical tools of human capital. Coping with social distance has required not only actions in the human field, but also in the technological tools necessary to continue working from home.

The voices of this work give an account of how the partial ravages of covid-19 have been experienced in labor matters, what challenges they have represented, what strategies have been followed to overcome them and what is the general feeling about an unusual event in recent times.

Method

Type of study

The applied methodology was qualitative with a descriptive scope and a non-experimental design. To obtain the results, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 executives (seven men and thirteen women) of human capital from the automotive industry in the state of Guanajuato. These human capital executives were managers, although it must be taken into account that the title of the position depends on the structure of the organization. The interviews lasted between ten and twenty minutes, and were focused on eight questions related to four dimensions: 1) strategies, 2) human capital, 3) leadership in times of crisis and 4) fear of motivation (Table 2). The interviews were recorded in their entirety and then fully transcribed for analysis. The years of the interviewees in charge of human capital in their companies ranged from one to fifteen, and they held the positions of bosses, managers, coordinators, directors and legal representatives. The education of the interviewees was balanced (ten with bachelor's degrees and ten with masters), while the number of employees was located in the range of 80 to 5000.

Interpretation method

The method of interpretation of results was the triangulation of data, with a phenomenological approach. The reliability of the instrument was based on confidentiality, since the professional secrecy of the informants was established as a guarantee. In other words, a consent agreement was drawn up to safeguard the name of each participant and the company. Finally, the informants had the right to know the information collected and the respective transcription (Table 2).

Tabla 2. Dimensiones

Dimensión	Descripción general
Estrategia	La estrategia se caracteriza por tener múltiples opciones, múltiples caminos y múltiples resultados; es más complejo su diseño y son más difíciles de implementar que otras soluciones lineales (Davies, 2000).
Capital humano	Es el conjunto de conocimientos, habilidades, actitudes y experiencias de los trabajadores, así como su capacidad para actualizarlo, adaptarlo, compartirlo y hacerlo cada más productivo para la organización (Mathis y Jackson, 2008).
Liderazgo en tiempos de crisis	Cómo alinear voluntades del equipo de trabajo ante un contexto cambiante donde las relaciones interpersonales son a distancia.
Del miedo a la motivación	Son las emociones que se despiertan en los directivos de capital humano cuando ven obstaculizados sus objetivos y la incertidumbre de no saber cómo actuar la contingencia de una pandemia.

Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en Davies (2000) y Mathis y Jackson (2008)

Results

At the beginning of the pandemic in Mexico, most of those interviewed learned about covid-19, as well as contingency measures and labor processes through internal communications or from the chambers of commerce. Other news media were newscasts, digital platforms, and official communiqués from federal, state, and municipal governments. Within these processes, the Mexican Association in Human Resources Management

(Amedirh) (2020) urgently recommended, at the national level, to privilege the health care of employees and also to maintain the health of the business from the continuity of activities. Amedirh's recommendations, in addition to government measures, were issued in late March and early April 2020. The receipt of this news in capital management departments was accompanied by uncertainty and anxiety. None of the heads of these departments had dealt with a crisis situation like the one caused by covid-19, so there were few adequate strategies to cope with a contingency of this magnitude.

The immediate reaction of all those interviewed to the announcements of extreme sanitary measures was to find out about the organizational options to avoid their collapse. Some questions that arose were the following: what is done with the personnel whose work is eminently operational and face-to-face? What is appropriate in terms of salary in cases like these? How to train administrative personnel to achieve effectiveness in remote work? How long will the contingency last and how much liquidity does the company have to maintain its workforce despite the suspension of production? How to calculate, if necessary, how much staff will have to be permanently suspended from their work and what legal strategies, Labor and human rights must be followed to avoid an unfavorable reaction? How will the contingency affect performance emotionally and financially during and after the period of confinement?

During the interviews, most human capital managers agreed that they were not prepared to answer these questions. While everyone has the theoretical and practical experience to cope with daily adversities, the truth is that the current situation has put their knowledge and skills to the test to overcome it. Once the “healthy distance” day was announced by federal, state and municipal governments, institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and Amedirh were sources of Obligatory consultation to know the strategies to implement in the economic institutions. In the specific case of some interviewees, they also resorted to the statements and strategies of the local business coordinating councils and the state government.

The main queries made by local human capital managers were those related to the legal provisions for cases of partial and total suspensions due to health contingency, the authorized options for the continuation of work, the regulations to avoid contagion, the public health insurance policies. and private, training opportunities, etc. At first, for example, the OECD (2020) issued a series of recommendations to avoid exposure to covid-19 in the workplace.

Measures included learning about, training, and convincing staff about the benefits of remote work; Collaborations with technology companies were also suggested to obtain better access and better communication tools. In cases where remote work is not possible, the OECD recommended negotiating guidelines to reduce exposure to the virus.

In addition to the OECD, the Ministry of Health (SS), the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) and Amedirh issued their own suggestions. In the early stage of the contingency, when productive activity was not yet limited to essential shifts, some of these organizations recommended staggered schedules, mandatory use of face masks and antibacterial gel, established and marked distance between staff, cancellation of industrial canteens to avoid crowds, etc. That moment, which coincided with several of the interviews conducted for this work, served to implement the first human capital strategies.

According to the information collected, most of the interviewees agreed on the first strategy: to identify the most vulnerable personnel and send them home to avoid a serious situation. In these cases, some of the managers reviewed the replacement tables in order not to lose productivity and avoid deaths in the high-risk population. The personnel who continued working within the work centers were informed about the sanitary measures and in most of the plants a sanitization module was installed where the use of gel was forced and face masks were given. The accesses were also controlled, the relevant distances were marked and in a couple of cases the temperature of all the personnel who entered was monitored.

The application of all these measures was complemented by a strong information strategy by the human resources and internal communication areas. Digital media were the most used, especially email and the WhatsApp application. In the plants where there was the equipment for mass communication, informative capsules were made that were projected on institutional screens and the loudspeakers were used for the same purpose. Non-digital media included notice boards, personal meetings with area managers, circulars, and informational posters.

The announcement of total contingency was received in different ways between the managers of human resources and the personnel of the companies. With the measures implemented in non-essential activities (the automotive industry was one), came the mandatory confinement and the stoppage of productive activities. The personnel of administrative areas continued with their work due to the possibility of carrying out the work remotely; however, the

operational staff had to be sent home with no opportunity to continue work. Economic and personal uncertainty was inevitable, especially in the latter group.

The first concern of the staff, according to the interviewees, was the economic issue. The natural deduction for most workers was that their wages would be suspended or lowered to the minimum possible. In only two of the twenty interviews it was explicitly mentioned that all staff were sent home with the guarantee of receiving full pay. In several of the companies there was a salary reduction in different percentages and one or another had to dispense with personnel services through temporary or permanent suspensions.

The actions corresponding to salaries and contingency suspensions are stipulated in the Federal Labor Law (2019) and the interviewees had to seek advice to know what strategies they would implement in labor matters. According to the law, contingency work suspensions do not require approval or authorization from the Conciliation and Arbitration Court, but the employer agrees to pay compensation of one day of the general minimum wage in force for each day of suspension, not to exceed one month (2019). The employer is also empowered to reduce the salary by contingency and the worker, in case of disagreement, can request a termination for this reason without liability for him. In case of termination, the employer must pay compensation depending on the type of contract and the time.

The reduction of salaries, in addition to the new work dynamics for those who continued, changed the organizational culture in several of the companies studied here. As stated by the majority of those interviewed, the first reaction of the staff was disbelief and resistance. This generated the implementation of more strategies to convince of the damages that health neglect had. At first, the work environment was one of fear, uncertainty and estrangement; The fear was encouraged by social networks and the personnel departments were in charge of mitigating it with information, the uncertainty slightly affected the performance and the estrangement dissolved as the days progressed.

A different situation regarding the work culture occurred with those workers who were able to continue at a distance. In these cases, the experience of the interviewees was divided. In an interview, her area coordinator accepted that Mexico is a culturally dishonest and irresponsible country when it comes to working at home. Along with her, other interviewees affirmed that the transition to remote work has not been easy because it implies a radical change in daily dynamics. On the other hand, there were other companies whose workers were willing to adapt to the circumstances; This, according to human capital managers,

facilitates the application of strategies and allows to take full advantage of the competencies identified in each person.

The change to remote work in all companies represented a significant challenge for the leadership of the interviewees. Two of the main challenges were managing time and resources to work remotely, as well as having metrics for the home office and maintaining the role of leader despite the apparent relaxation that working at home implies.

The management of time and resources has not been that complicated according to the opinions of the interviewees. In two cases, there were problems to reconcile regular activities with the temporary peculiarities of remote work, but these difficulties were resolved in time with adequate strategies. The main strategy to manage performance by time was to establish specific goals, prioritize activities by delivery times and request reports on the work carried out in a given time. With these strategies, a specific monitoring of the general and particular performance in each of the areas involved in remote work was achieved.

Resource management, in most cases, did not represent difficulties due to the organizational disposition to provide equipment to all personnel. The loan of laptops and devices necessary for the performance of particular activities was carried out without complications and with an adequate response to the circumstances. In the case of personnel who already worked with their own equipment, the processes were facilitated and it was only necessary to manage complementary equipment when necessary.

Motivation is a theme that encompasses leadership, empathy and the capacity for positive conviction. These characteristics must be part of a human capital manager to achieve satisfactory results when it comes to facing crises such as covid-19. With personnel out of the plant due to contingency, the issue of motivation takes on new dimensions and challenges. Digital communication, in this sense, has two poles: it can be an ally for motivational strategies or it can be an insurmountable barrier if not handled properly.

At first, when they were still working in person, the interviewees used conventional motivational strategies. One of the most used was the clarity and veracity in the messages about the virus, as well as the possible economic, social and personal consequences that it could have. Internal communication, as an official information instrument, was crucial in managing the initial crisis. Another strategy was the opening of direct communication channels between employees and key areas in charge of processes related to the pandemic.

The measures of social distancing and the consequent confinement represented the use of digital platforms to continue with motivation. The conditions of the staff, when

changing their workplace, changed significantly and it was not easy at first. Some of the most recurrent adversities were related to time management and achievement of objectives, in addition to the pressure, lack of concentration and lack of differentiation between work spaces, rest and coexistence that full-time family life causes. The best way to mitigate the negative effects of the home office, according to the participants, was to avoid the reduction of salaries and benefits, to continue with constant communication, feedback and recognition of the achievements obtained day by day, to establish anticipated protocols to return to normality to generate positive expectations, provide official information to avoid panic and fear, etc.

Discussion

The set of facts presented in the previous section is a reflection of an atypical situation in recent decades. At a business and economic level, the forecasts regarding the consequences of covid-19 are not encouraging. The ILO (2020) has forecast an adverse outlook in three fundamental aspects of working life: the quantity of employment, the quality of work and the effects on vulnerable groups. In mid-March 2020, this organization presented an estimate of 5.3 million unemployment in the most favorable scenario after the pandemic. In the least favorable scenario, the millions of unemployed would reach 24.7. Either amount would add to the more than 188 million base unemployed in 2019. At present, it is expected that the actual results could exceed those estimated by the ILO in the worst-case scenario.

Human capital, as theory and practice, is facing a time of great challenges. This is demonstrated in the feelings of the people in charge of managing human capital in companies in Guanajuato, Mexico. The general sentiment of the executives interviewed, when asked to summarize the current situation in one word, is not one of complete enthusiasm. 50% of the people show unfavorable moods before the contingency: of the ten people, four affirm that uncertainty prevails between them and their collaborators. Other feelings expressed in this tone are constant stress, frustration that comes with confinement, and worry (especially financial).

The other 50% of participants show feelings related to enthusiasm. In this group of interviewees, the words to express their feelings are more diverse than in the previous one; Some of them connote enthusiasm, adaptability, empathy with the staff, innovation in processes, satisfaction with the results obtained and level of commitment and responsibility.

In general, the human capital executives in this group see this adversity as an opportunity to evolve as a society, organization and individuals. Some consider that the innovation capacity will be, in hindsight, a determining factor to survive and grow as a company.

As can be seen from the results of this article, the trends in each of the recorded responses are not determinative. Generally speaking, there is no sentiment that prevails over another, and the uncertainty about what will happen when the pandemic ends is projected into the ambivalence demonstrated by the responses. Perhaps the most pertinent way to interpret the words of the interviewees is not to accept a general tendency. Most of them have faced unforeseen situations and, despite maintaining the necessary enthusiasm to exercise the role that corresponds to them as human capital executives, there is awareness of negative scenarios in the short and medium term.

While it is true that the forecasts are not encouraging, the experience that has resulted and will result from the contingency will be useful to strengthen the perspectives and practices of human capital. This experience will begin to pay off once daily activities return to normal. The use of technologies as an obligatory alternative to continue working will lead to the diversification of tasks and, therefore, to greater management by competencies.

Conclusions

Covid-19 and the series of consequences it has brought to different levels of social life are unprecedented in this century. World organizations have recommended that the governments of all countries contribute support to the most vulnerable groups and facilitate economic reactivation with flexible financial policies. These recommendations are samples of a less than positive outlook for the remainder of 2020 and the beginning of 2021. The current economy has reached a major recession due to the total stoppage of production in several non-essential turns to prevent the spread of the virus.

On the labor issue, the situation is no different: the world already had an unemployment crisis at the beginning of this year and it will worsen in its second semester. The human capital areas within companies function as an interface between the organization and the staff, therefore, the work of human capital managers will have an important task in reestablishing favorable conditions that help global recovery.

In this paper, part of the organizational situation in Guanajuato (Mexico) was presented based on twenty interviews with human capital executives from the automotive industry. In the

responses obtained, it is possible to see a recurring feeling of uncertainty that began from the establishment of health measures for covid-19 and that anticipates the possible resulting negative scenarios. This sentiment is fed by information updates at the global, national and local levels; however, there is also the willingness to take advantage of the contingency and its consequences as an opportunity to evolve.

Human capital executives, due to their central role in organizational well-being, are responsible for seeking and implementing strategies to avoid crises that affect the organization and individuals. The optimistic attitude seen in some of the responses is part of the work that these people carry out in an effort to turn adversities into opportunities for change, adaptation and innovation.

According to several participants, the events related to covid-19 will set a precedent to strengthen human capital as an organizational, economic and social model. Just as it happened in the eighties with the theory of human capital when its proposals were no longer consistent with reality, the current times will be a watershed for the discipline. A new labor reality is approaching as a result of this crisis and those in charge of proposing adequate solutions for the new challenges will have to adapt to the inevitable changes.

Finally, the future lines of research that arise from the results of the study are three: a) strategies in the face of contingencies and emerging plans to face new challenges, b) adaptation to the new reality of labor work where professional skills to develop arise to be competitive in virtuality, and c) job flexibility, change performance evaluations and provide new working conditions where health is the most important thing. In short, a great challenge remains to intertwine motivation, productivity and health.

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