

# Design and validation of an instrument for the insertion of emotional salary in the face of COVID-19

# Diseño y validación de instrumento para la inserción del salario emocional ante la COVID-19

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#### **Abstract**

The labor sector has responsibly faced the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the adversities that this epidemic causes, however, this human group is not exempt from risks and psychological effects due to the seriousness of the situation in the workplace, which you can resettle into the family. His performance is consistent with reality, although he needs different emotional conditions that allow him to continue in his performance. The research had as objectives: to design an instrument to measure the emotional salary and validate the instrument created for the insertion of the emotional salary before COVID-19. The methodology used was non-experimental, descriptive, and transversal, and as a variable of study interest: the Emotional Salary. An instrument was designed and validated to measure emotional salary, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.925, which was applied to a sample of 207 workers. Respondents expressed a favorable predisposition to the instrument and their perception of emotional salary is considered high. As conclusions, the reaffirmation of the insertion of the emotional salary is obtained, with strategies of attention to human resources in a personalized way, with respect to their emotions in the workplace in the face of COVID-19.

#### Resumen

El sector laboral se ha enfrentado responsablemente ante las afectaciones del coronavirus (COVID-19) y las adversidades que esta pandemia ocasiona, no obstante, este grupo humano no está excepto de riesgos y de afectaciones psicológicas por la gravedad de la situación en el ámbito laboral, que puede reasentar en la familia. Su actuación es consecuente con la realidad, aunque necesita de condiciones emocionales diferentes que le permitan continuar en su desempeño. La investigación tuvo como objetivos: diseñar un instrumento para medir el salario emocional y validar el instrumento creado para la inserción del salario emocional ante la COVID-19. La metodología empleada fue de tipo no experimental, descriptivo y transversal, y como variable de interés de estudio: el salario emocional. Se diseñó y validó un instrumento para medir el salario emocional, con un alfa de Cronbach de 0,925, el cual fue aplicado a una muestra de 207 trabajadores. Los encuestados manifestaron una predisposición favorable al instrumento y su percepción de salario emocional es considerada como alta. Como conclusiones se obtiene la reafirmación de la inserción del salario emocional, con estrategias de atención al recurso humano de forma personalizada, con respecto a sus emociones del ámbito laboral ante la escalada de la COVID-19.

#### Keywords | palabras clave

Satisfiers, workload, compensation, worker motivation, emotional salary, work environment, remuneration, instrument validation.

Satisfactores, carga de trabajo, compensaciones, motivación del trabajador, salario emocional, ambiente de trabajo, retribuciones, validación de instrumento.

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### 1. Introduction

Society in general, and man in particular, faces adverse situations for which he is not prepared, in each situation the worker gathers his own resources of his inner nature, therefore, the responses cannot always be measured in equally, resilience is inherent in the individual responsibility of each person. This is how the performance and response of each professional and worker to the COVID-19 pandemic was represented, in all countries and institutions, with greater rigor in the health sector.

All personnel, in general (administrative, health, operational, service, technical, etc.), work in unusual conditions, for which it is necessary to make adaptations of protocols, shift changes, organization of work teams, all about the working day and the adaptation of processes (De Caneva et al., 2020). For these adaptations, flexible and motivating leaders are required, who place trust in man (Fundación más Humano, 2020) and the characteristics that are mostly manifested are those of cooperation and human sensitivity, everyone takes care of their own life and their family.

The ECLAC Special Report No. 3 (ECLAC, 2020) for Latin America, concludes that COVID-19 occurs in times of crisis, which implies that poverty continues and that the greatest consequences will occur in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. It is also recognized that "The world is facing a health and humanitarian crisis unprecedented in the last century ... this is not a financial crisis but a people, health and well-being crisis" (Bárcena, 2020, slide.6), however the numbers of infections and deaths are not numbers, they are related to people and we must act, it is necessary to provide benefits to workers who are immersed in contagion, to give them some measure of satisfaction and the recognition they deserve, for everything they deliver to society.

In the history of contagious diseases and pandemics, COVID-19 is transmitted with causing great effects and impact on society. To face this crisis, teamwork offers encouraging results, where everyone's effort prevails, some separated by distance, and others creating limits to avoid contagion, but with the willpower efforts and commitments come together.

In the local context, when the 58 confirmatory cases of COVID-19 were registered in Ecuador, a series of strategies were put into practice to reduce the probability of transmission, such as restrictions on public spaces, strengthening of hospital services, opening to teleworking as a unique work modality during confinement, and border closures. As the months passed, the restrictions were gradually lifted by virtue of the urgency to reactivate the economy, which strongly hit the cost of living of citizens in general. However, the labor outlook was never the same due to overexposure to risk factors to the health of workers (Ortega, 2020). Therefore, job performance is decisive in the face of the health crisis of COVID-19 (Puitiza et al. 2020); and recognition of the worker for his performance must be part of the work environment, with favorable conditions that also recognize worker participation as a human need. (Vásquez et al. 2019).

Considering also that, "The labor market is and has been the means to sustain the lives of people, their families and social development" (Cedeño & Chávez, 2020, p. 145), work is vital for man (Torrens & Real, 2019). However, at present, the salary or remuneration is not enough (Hernández & Osorio, 2016), since the employees have different perceptions and needs. The worker prepares and grows in experiences, which makes him react differently from the worker of previous years, according to Gómez (2011, p. 5) "therefore the importance of having a strategy that helps achieving the satisfaction of the personnel in their work".

Currently, salary or economic remuneration is not the only indicator used by job competition, since it is no longer decisive, employees for their permanence and satis-

faction focus on other types of remuneration such as benefits that represent greater satisfaction, not only professionally, but that encompasses much more. For today's man, it is important to satisfy personal and family needs, which the authors refer to as emotional benefits, that greatly contribute to the quality of life of the person (Howatt, 2011; Muñoz, 2011).

The worker expresses perceptions regarding their work, their difference is given by the nature and variety of needs of each worker, taking into account their expectations and aspirations, which are influenced by their culture and personality, and refer to the expectations each worker has for his future. Regarding this, Gómez (2011) states how important it is: "to have a strategy that helps staff satisfaction in the performance of their job" (p. 5).

In labor relations between the employee and the employer, compensation is of great importance and can influence other indicators of the organization, therefore compensation is a determining factor in the level of job satisfaction of an employee (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017). Actions have been applied in both public and private companies in South Africa.

In the case of Mexico, there is the NOM-035-STPS-2018 standard, (applied as of October 2019), named as "anti-stress" (Cázares, 2020), whose application in companies is mandatory and its main objective is for entities to have beneficial work environments for the worker, taking into account the prevention of psychosocial risks in the work environment. For the author Cázares-Sánchez (2020) there is great concern regarding compliance with the norm, where she states that the application of it "implies the design of an emotional salary strategy in which a distinction is made between the emotional demands of each job, based on a case-by-case study" (p. 602), aspects that individualize the actions of each organization according to its characteristics and internal needs of the work environment and the needs and perceptions of its workers. In Mexico specifically, this policy has not been effective and this may be because the emotional salary, as a concept, is not widely disseminated, as reported by Quintero and Betancur (2018) and Rubio et al. (2020).

In the case of Spain, the emotional salary is applied in the escalation of COVID-19 by Human Resources managers from different sectors, it is a representation of what should really be provided in times of health crisis (Fundación más Humano, 2020; Emotional Salary Barometer, n.d) and in these actions, Spanish managers have offered a more humane character in the workplace.

## 1.1.Emotional salary

Based on the studies consulted, the first definition of emotional salary is from the year 2003, previous research considers other dimensions such as compensation and rewards to the worker. For Huete (2003) "The ability to make people feel well paid for their effort, with something more than money" (p. 156). On the other hand, for Gay (2006) it is a non-monetary way of rewarding the worker for the performed work, while for Temple (2007) and Melo et al. (2018) are the non-monetary reasons that make a worker develop their activities happily and feel committed to the organization. Authors such as Rocco (2009) consider that they are all factors that are not related to the economic monthly payment and that ensure their permanence, in addition, to give them greater satisfaction. On the other hand, Jiménez (2009) adds to the aforementioned statement: that these compensations provide the worker with peace of mind and efficient and effective performance and that they must also allow teamwork, for which cooperative leadership is required. In this case, Gómez (2011) places more emphasis on the fact that compensation must be aimed at satisfying the affective and psychosocial needs of work-

ers, which influence their emotional well-being. It also considers its favorable impact on the productivity and competitiveness of the company. It is defined by Montalvo-Poveda (2018) as the intangible benefits that the worker receives and its objective is to complement the economic salary and generate worker's commitment to their organization. For Betancur and Quintero (2018), the emotional salary must be part of strategic planning, as one of the organizational objectives that in turn motivate the worker.

Finally, the authors of the research declare the emotional salary as the factors and satisfiers that achieve emotional well-being in the worker and allow his/her professional and family development, in addition to considering that the emotional salary must be analyzed by the employers and those responsible for its implementation since it can respond to the multiple unknowns such as how to resolve the dissatisfaction of employees with respect to the work they perform?, and it must be constituted from the particularities and flexibilities (Guzmán & Del Pilar, 2018) without implying monetary expenses (Rocco, 2009). They also argue that the emotional salary corresponds to creative and individualized actions that give satisfaction to each worker.

For Minchán-Rojas (2017) the emotional salary has an impact on the worker in a professional way, so it must be taken into account in compensation, both in the work environment and personally, he also recommends that these benefits should "be taken and confronted with multidisciplinary academic and professional instruments related to the management of human talent at the institutional level" (p. 18).

Therefore, in the face of this situation generated by the health emergency of COVID-19, public and private institutions, regardless of the type of company and the sector they represent, must use different ways to balance the emotional state of their workers, as well as their satisfaction for the performance of their activity and their organization.

The authors declare as objectives for this research: to design an instrument to measure the emotional salary and validate the instrument created for the insertion of the emotional salary in the face of COVID-19.

#### 2. Materials and method

The study has a quantitative approach, with a non-experimental and cross-sectional design, the first stage of which was developed in the period between April and August 2020.

The variable of interest in the study was the emotional salary and age, gender, and seniority in the institution were taken into account as characterization variables, which allowed characterizing the population.

An instrument was designed for the Ecuadorian context, based on the expertise of the authors with more than twenty years related to the issues of human resources, organizational psychology, and business administration.

#### 2.1.Instrument construction

During the last semester of 2020, four activities were carried out that allowed the validation of the emotional salary instrument. The first was content validation in which the operational and conceptual definitions of motivation were investigated, ranging from the definitions of equity, labor justice, and worker perception. Based on the theories of (Adams, Grifol & Siegrist, 1962; Littlewood-Zimmerman & Uribe-Prado, 2018).

Also, to better complement the understanding of the phenomenon, the concept was explored through an in-depth interview with experts in the area of human talent, having as an initial question: How can emotional salary be measured? During the in-depth interview, the keywords that helped define the concept of emotional salary

were noted, recording the interviews on audio to later locate the keywords that allowed the concepts to be grouped.

Based on the aforementioned activities, three dimensions were established that explain the variable of this study: the environment, professional development, and flexibility.

In this sense, in the work environment, statements were included about the rewarding conditions on the part of the employer and related to comfort criteria such as culture, climate, training, and concern for the employee. In professional development, questions were raised about estimation about training and positive feedback from bosses. Finally, in the case of flexibility, organizational aspects were placed in relation to flexibility and licenses. All questions were worded in affirmative sentences. Of the 37 initial questions, only 18 statements were confirmed, after further refinement and analysis.

The list of items was prepared using the Likert scale, whose responses were the following 1: never; 2: rarely; 3: occasionally; 4: frequently; 5: very frequently, and 6: always. The final list was approved through an expert judgment made up of three (3) professionals with a Master's Degree in Human Talent Management who confirmed the relevance, sufficiency, and clarity of the wording.

The second and third activities were the construct validation and reliability calculation in a pilot test. The technique used was the methodology of Nunnally (1978), which indicates that for each item, five subjects should be validated. As such, the test was applied to 300 workers of a government entity.

The pilot test was carried out in the Ecuadorian public sector in the province of Manabí. The entity has a population of 300 workers, also using the following selection criteria: workers older than six months were included, those who were on leave were excluded, and collaborators who delivered the instrument incomplete were eliminated. However, only 207 of the surveys delivered could be included in the study due to errors such as double answers or lack of them, which invalidated the rest. A schedule of meetings was made for the calls of the workers, which included areas and shifts, in which they were provided information on the research to be carried out, the object of study, the content of the survey, the importance of honesty in the responses, the anonymity of the study and the form of assessment. The explanation was complemented with useful content for the workers in order to give added value for the entity and not only for the evaluator.

To confirm the proportion of the variability of the results, Cronbach's Alpha was used and when ratifying a high-reliability value, a factorial analysis was carried out to determine the groups of items in their final dimensions through the reduction of dimensions, with initial solution, KMO Barlett's sphericity test, and Varimax rotation.

Finally, for the calculation of the scales, the 33rd and 66th percentiles were identified to have the significance of low, medium, and high perception of emotional salary.

The workers gave their consent to participate and the ethical principles related to the administration and use of the information collected were respected, as well as the Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association, including its updates (World Medical Association, n.d.).

#### 3. Results

A total of 207 workers were surveyed, of these 186 are male (89.9%) and 21 female (10.1%). The age of the female group is between 16 and 44 years old, and that of the men between 16 and 65.

Sociodemographic variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic variables

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-24	18	8,7
25-34	119	57,5
35-44	47	22,7
45-54	22	10,6
65-o more	1	,5
Total	207	100,0
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	186	89,9
Female	21	10,1
Total	207	100,0
Seniority	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	42	20,3
6-10	77	37,2
11-15	33	15,9
16-20	24	11,6
Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	15	7,2
26-30	16	7,7
Total	207	100,0

Source: Own elaboration.

## 3.1. Item refinement and internal consistency

The emotional salary survey was finally made up of 18 items, containing three factors (factor 1, factor 2, and factor 3) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.925.

The rotated factor matrices showed three factors that explained 60.12% of the accumulated variance. These factors and their questions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors of the emotional salary survey instrument

Dimension	# Question	Question	
	1	Bosses or managers usually greet staff	
	4	The company provides you with training that you then apply to your work or personal life	
Factor 1 7	5	You have developed friendships with your co-workers	
	7	When someone has a family problem (illness or accident), your superiors show solidarity and help	
	12	You feel happy to be part of this company	
	17	When you wake up you like the idea of going to work and meeting with your colleagues	

Dimension	# Question	Question	
	2	They provide you with training that you then apply to your work or personal life	
	8	There are merit-based promotion possibilities	
Factor 2	10	Your opinions, reports or suggestions are well received by your superiors	
	13	They recognize with gestures, phrases, or congratulations when you fully comply with a special task	
	16	They take you into account for activities, jobs, or special commissions that the company must comply with	
	18	If you resign, you think they would ask you to stay	
Factor 3	3	Permission may be requested for banking, legal or personal matters	
	6	They develop sports or recreation activities with all staff	
	9	You have the opportunity to eat during your work day	
	11	can you count on your breaks (weekends, holidays, or days off) without being interrupted or called from work?	
	14	You have spaces to share a coffee or a joke with your coworkers	
	15	They give you some flexibility in schedules if you have an emergency or want to study.	

Source: Own elaboration

## 3.2. Internal consistency criterion

The reliability values are shown in Table 3 for each of the final factors of the instrument.

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha values by variable

Variables	No initial	Final $\alpha$
Factor 1	6	0,97
Factor 2	6	0.96
Factor 3	6	0.98

Source: Own elaboration.

## 3.3. Instrument rating scale

To qualify the scale, the 33rd and 66th percentiles of the results of the 18 items of the instrument were calculated based on the three possible responses. Three scales are obtained, as shown in Table 4.

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Table 4. Instrument rating scale

Variables	Low	Medium	High
Factor 1	6-25	26-29	30-36
Factor 2	6-19	20-25	26-36
Factor 3	6-22	23-27	28-36
TOTAL	6-69	70-83	84-108

Source: Own elaboration.

The response of the surveyed personnel yielded results that could well be described as surprising, by showing us their position in relation to the non-monetary compensation received at their workplace, since the results were positive.

In the emotional salary, three dimensions have been considered: the environment, development, and flexibility, in addition to the global value of the emotional salary as such and it can be noted some relevant values that allow orientation towards circumstances that people consider more valuable or significant importance.

The first analysis reviewed is the results by gender of the participants in the research, indicating that, of the 207 valid tabulated surveys, 89.9% correspond to the male gender and 10.1% to the female gender.

In order to interpret the results, guide parameters were established, so that those results that range between 1 and 12 correspond to a LOW rating, those that range between 13 and 24 a MEDIUM rating, and those that range from 25 to 36 HIGH.

Gender 27,42 26,39 25.52 27,22 30 23,23 25,43 25,13 22.74 25 20 15 10 0 **Emotional Salary** Flexibility Environment Development ■ Men ■ Women

Figure 1. Emotional salary by gender

Source: Own elaboration.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the perception of non-monetary compensation or emotional salary of both female and male staff is high and women have given it a higher value, although with a not very marked difference in relation to what the men consider.

When making a breakdown of the dimensions, a slight difference between genders can be noticed, with women presenting the highest percentage in all of them.

When the results were reviewed for each question, it can be noted that 89% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that their suggestions, reports, or opinions are well received by their superiors; Similarly, 79% state that they feel happy to be part of the company, the first appreciation corresponds to the development dimension and the second to the environment dimension. In the flexibility dimension, 64% agree and/or strongly agree that they are given a space to eat their meals; and, 59% indicate that the company allows them to leave their work to carry out personal activities. The results give us a clear orientation to situations in which the company has managed to generate positive responses from its staff, at no cost or with a low impact cost.

There are also the opposite cases, that is, those questions where the response percentage was highly unfavorable, hence 42% answered that they "disagree" and "strongly disagree" that there are possibilities of promotion based on merits, which should raise institutional alarms and review what is causing this perception in its staff. Another approach that generated 30% negative perception, is related to the possibility that their bosses asked them to remain at their job in the event of a resignation, on this point I must indicate that only 38% gave a positive response and the remaining 32% are in that intermediate that must also be considered negative.

Regarding the direction taken by the emotional salary in relation to the time spent in the activity, those professionals who had more than 25 years of service, reflect the highest index of emotional salary but only represent 7% of the respondents. They are followed by the group of workers who have between 16 to 20 years of work and represent 9% of those surveyed, both groups present a high level of emotional salary. The group of workers with one to five years, represent 20.38% of the respondents and show a high emotional salary (25.64), and the group of workers with 21 to 25 years of service, (7% of the respondents) presented the lowest index of emotional salary (22.31).

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The Crombach alpha value obtained in the reliability analysis of the instrument corroborates that the factors, the number of items, and the wording of the questions do not interfere with the variance error of the surveyed subjects. In this regard, Oviedo and Arias (2005) indicate that reliability values above 0.80 guarantee the application of consistent and valid instruments.

On the other hand, the confirmatory factor analysis carried out with the data from this survey revealed the presence of three factors that explain more than 60% of the total accumulated variance. However, the arrangement of the items in these three groups did not correspond with the exact position of the questions in the categories environment, development, and flexibility. Based on the considerations of (Lloret et al., 2014) the items of a scale are organized according to their high correlations with each other, but although the factor analysis confirms the construct validity, it is the decision of the author of the instrument to adopt the ordering. If, for example, the factors generated are not related to the conceptual and operational definitions of the studied variables, it is better to accommodate according to the theoretical criteria and recalculate the confirmatory analysis with a second population sample.

Aliaga-Tovar (2007) in his work on psychometric tests, recommends that when the scales are constructed, they should be endowed with their respective validations through the external consistency criterion. Therefore, although the emotional salary scale obtained significant reliability values, it will be necessary to calculate the statistical correlation of its results compared to another instrument that evaluates this phenomenon to ensure the total validity of the criteria.

The perception of high emotional salary satisfaction in the research is opposed to that found in the conclusions of Chaparro-Espitia (2006). The workers value the economic part positively and put aside incentives such as incentives, recognition, or flexibility. In this study, fraternity is valued more than the emotional aspects of the company's compensation. In contrast, the research by López-Más (2005) emphasizes that workers, even those who receive lower remuneration, incorporate emotional incentives in their perception of satisfaction that do not directly generate capital accumulation, but that develop their knowledge, and skills generating self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy.

At present, there are no recognized and specific quantitative instruments to measure the perception of emotional salary. The vast majority of the work environment surveys present dimensions that describe the satisfaction that workers feel towards remuneration. In this sense, the Gómez-Rada (2004) survey incorporates in the factor called support, the emotional rewards that the company provides to its workers. The validation process presents similar actions (content, criterion, and construct validation), with a number of five times more questions than the emotional scale of this study. The final Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.84 with the refinement of 70 items. Regarding the factor analysis, four factors were confirmed that explained 53.55% of the variance. At this point, the makers of this work environment instrument had to readjust the questions, since the factorial groups did not correspond to the initial definition.

In other validation studies of work environment instruments (Chiang-Vega et al., 2008; Arica-Rodríguez et al., 2015; Salaiza-Lizárraga & Vela-Nava, 2008) it is found that Cronbach's alpha value maintains the Scores from 0.8 to 0.9, with factorizations that do not explain more than 50% of the total variance, and with a similar number of questions that answer the emotional salary in aspects such as environment, development, and flexibility. However, it must be emphasized that the sample for the construction of these predictors amounts to a much larger number than that of the present investigation. This allows understanding the records of their variances. Another feature of these instruments is the standardization of their population since the predictors are designed for specific occupational groups such as doctors, office workers, or teachers, thereby ensuring greater precision in the final data.

The people surveyed showed satisfaction with the group of questions and considered them pertinent and adjusted to the reality of their environment, however, the applied study only shows that this group of professionals has compensatory situations that complement their monetary salary, but the level of influence of these non-monetary compensations is not determined on their willingness to remain in their workplace, in their work or professional activity, nor the relationship they have with the monetary salary.

When measuring the emotional salary study variable with respect to the rest of the demographic variables, a slight growth in the value scored by women is verified, this small difference may be given by the diversity of the occupations in which they are: be those responsible for the family (single mother), for the contracts for a specific time, which gives them insecurity, aspects that must be taken into account for future investigations.

Under an administrative analysis, it could be asserted that this group of professionals, despite the adverse conditions, have received good treatment from their superiors which, to some extent, is not only compensatory but also allows them to maintain a certain level of motivation to appropriately carry out their tasks.

This first publication is the starting point for future studies, where it is intended to continue the line of research, which allows analyzing the workplace and human talent immersed in current conditions, where it occupies a different dimension in the organization due to its importance, and for the contributions it provides, as Chiavenato (2011) states. It is not conducive to continue with stereotypes from other decades, which do not recognize the value of the employee and his influence on the final results of organizations. This research arose from the need to recognize the importance of the emotional state of the worker in their performance, however, a more generalized practice and socialization of the concept and benefits of the emotional salary is necessary.

The results presented in the study constitute the preamble for subsequent research in different sectors, in which the public and private sectors can be included indistinctly, with a larger sample, and with greater diversity, for which an inter-institutional research project will be formed.

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