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Organizational Strategies and Their Impact on Employee Commitment during the Health Emergency

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Abstract: The emergence of a new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has generated multiple consequences that have affected the lives of all human beings, imposing a new normal where social distancing and mobility restrictions have become the norm. This situation has also affected organizations forcing them to create or strengthen strategies to respond to the situation to guarantee their survival and growth, which has made it essential to have full commitment from employees. Structural equations were used to design an instrument that was used with managers and middle managers at 130 Mexican companies. Once reliability and validity were tested and confirmed, the study found that there is a positive and significant relation between organizational strategies applied during the health emergency and employee commitment with the organization.

Keywords: COVID-19; organizational commitment; internal communications; organizational ideology; infection-spreading prevention

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1. Introduction

The global COVID-19 epidemic caused by the new SARS-CoV-2 virus has affected people in many ways in all areas of their lives. On 11 March 2021, the World Health Organization (OMS) declared COVID-19 a pandemic because of three main reasons: the fast spread of the disease, the severity of the disease and the lack of action from governments [1]. Each country's government responded in a different way initially, from a position of ignorance, disbelief or negation. Measures taken in most countries were insufficient, but they made it possible to handle the situation despite a great number of deaths and adverse health effects in those who have been infected. At the time of writing, the WHO has determined the existence of four concerning variants of SARS-CoV-2 and five variants of interest [1]. This requires caution to prevent the spread of the infection as each variant must be studied to understand how it is transmitted and how it affects people's health. Vaccines have been created and used, but not in large enough numbers to reach the so-called heard immunity threshold. Therefore, the end of the world pandemic is not in sight yet, and it is necessary to adapt to a new reality. The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed changes in most people's daily lives around the world and humanity is still trying to understand and grapple with the consequences.

For the first few months of the spread of the health emergency, companies took voluntary "business closure" measures voluntarily depending on their type of business which, for the most part, affected employees. According to [2], the main strategies companies considered to face the contingency caused by the pandemic were as follows: working from home, social distancing, adopting new technologies, changing production plans, reevaluating the supply chain, identifying key workers, digitalising delivery systems,

prioritising human resources, communicating effectively, changing the rules and regulating workspaces, among others. These measures have been reassessed once vaccines have been developed and applied, but it is essential to consider the resistance and consequences of the new SARS-CoV-2 variants are still unknown.

The main objective of this study is to determine if employee commitment has prevailed, bearing in mind the initiatives in their organizations, including strategies implemented to prevent the spread of the SAR-CoV-2 virus and to strengthen communication and the prevalence of basic principles of the central ideology of the organization.

The research question of this study is to identify how organizational strategies have influenced middle management workers in relation to their commitment to their organization, considering the efforts made in communication and the actions implemented to prevent risk contagion of SAR-CoV-2. These questions were generated from the increase in cases in Mexico and especially in the State of Guanajuato, where the population is around 6 million people and the registered infections have risen to 200,000; the number of deaths has been 13,000 people according to official statistics. Unfortunately, the number of vaccines applied in both the first and second doses barely exceeds the amount of 5,000,000 [3]. The only provider of vaccines of COVID-19 in Mexico is the government and the Mexican health policy do not allow vaccination to minor of 18 years so far, only in cases with serious comorbidity such as diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, etc. In this sense, much of the population is still at risk due to the virulency of the virus.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

The year 2020 was a period of economic, social and personal changes in all nations around the world. Measures imposed by governments in each country in terms of limiting movement as a result of the pandemic caused significant changes in the lives of people and organizations, and there is potential for this process to continue for some time as new variants have emerged. The authors of [4] think that this possibly the most profound change seen from even before the Great Depression or the Second World War. The International Monetary Fund forecast a loss of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the world of around USD 9 trillion [5]. This will be felt more acutely in countries such as Mexico [6]. Social distancing and the use of new information technologies to perform tasks outside of the workplace have contributed to the prevention of the spread of the disease at the workplace but, on the other hand, they have generated profound social, economic and health-related repercussions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is determining how companies will be run in the next few years because of the consequences felt in the production and service sectors. An example is the situation of the tourism or hospitality industry, which has had to close spaces or reduce capacity to prevent the spread of the virus. Another example is that of the car industry, which, due to lack of production materials, has had to stop production. In addition, the health industry has been heavily affected because the workers in this sector have been the frontline fighting the pandemic.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has changed notably in recent years. Since the middle of the last century, [7] proposed that social responsibility should be included in executive decision making considering the values of society; this was the beginning of CSR as a movement within administrative approaches that continues today. However, it was not until [8] raised the bases of CSR from a broader point of view as he considered the economic, legal, and ethical aspects; he additionally proposed the expectations that society has of organizations in this regard. During the 1990s, authors such as [9] contributed to the development of the concept. However, [8] proposed the CSR pyramid where the steps that a company must follow to be a "good corporate citizen" are marked. The contributions of [10,11] were very important because these authors incorporated CSR as an organization strategy to achieve a competitive advantage. Some researchers think that after the pandemic, this concept will become even more important in their pursuit of ever more sustainable strategies [12]. At present, companies must adapt

their organizational strategies in all areas and involve stakeholders and the public more frequently in their decision making to face the new reality more effectively.

The theory of stakeholders [13] asserts that relationships between organizations and individuals or groups of individuals affect the operation of the business. Groups of stakeholders can be internal or external depending on their relation to the organization. One of the main groups of internal stakeholders is, of course, that of the employees. Throughout the pandemic, organizations have been using various strategies to change the way they relate to their employees. In Mexico, and worldwide, the strategies to keep employees working depended on the type of business of the organization. For instance, in companies whose productivity depended on direct manpower, such as assembly, food, tourism, hospitals, etc., frontline employees could not leave their workplace. In contrast, other types of employees such as teachers, accountants, lawyers, etc., whose work could be done online as their physical presence at the workplace was not essential, were removed from schools and offices to work at a distance through information and communication technologies. As the vaccination programs have been making progress around the world, each country has generated policies to return safely to workplaces with the right health conditions.

As a result of CSR strategies during the pandemic period, [14] classify the actions taken by organizations to mitigate the effects of this emergency in three main ways: philanthropic actions, transformations in their processes, and negative responses. Philanthropic actions were related to making donations of food, goods or services to those most in need. In Mexico, for example, private hospitals agreed with public hospitals to perform and care for their non-COVID patients in their facilities and deliveries were attended, as well as surgeries of all kinds so that it did not imply a risk for the patient catching COVID-19 in a public hospital. Various organizations donated their facilities to doctors and nurses at risk so that they did not go home and could rest safely because, at first, these personnel were unfortunately attacked by their neighbors due to the risk of contagion. Other organizations made changes to their infrastructure, for example, the "Centro Citibanamex" belonging to one of the largest banks in Mexico with North American capital. It was transformed into the largest hospitalization center for COVID in Mexico City; 600 beds were set up there. Most of the banks operating in Mexico made extensions to account holders in trouble due to health problems or lack of work. However, other organizations simply did not react to the needs of society in any way. Because of the changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, companies will face risks to their survival if they do not pay careful attention to economic indicators [15]. Therefore, the problem for organizations is how to balance efforts between environmental, economic and social priorities [12].

This must be reflected in the mission and vision of the organization to make it a joint effort. As a result, the crisis generated by the health emergency has also changed the way performance is assessed because risks to employees as they go about doing their jobs must be considered. For instance, factories that are labor-intensive do not want an infection rise spreading among the employees as this would affect their health and could cause production stoppages [16]

Even though activities were suspended in many sectors, other strategic sectors of the economy were not closed even when there was no vaccination program for the relevant groups. For example, supermarkets, food industries, healthcare and assembly factories could not stop. Even though there is no record of how many of these employees were infected with the virus, managers have to create mechanisms to protect employees systematically. Now more than ever, the health of the employees must be guaranteed, and their basic rights must be respected [12].

While the world has been facing the COVID-19 pandemic, the main physical stress factors plaguing employees [17] have been (a) fear of the unknown due to not knowing the risk of infection and the health consequences, which could go from a mild set of symptoms to complicated and severe conditions [18]); (b) fear of infection, as originally the way the SAR-CoV-2 virus was transmitted was unknown. Nowadays airborne particles are known to be the main transmission medium [19], even though bodily fluids may affect mainly

health workers, too. However, preventive hygiene measures have been implemented in workspaces and restricted access via temperature checks, for instance. (c) Physical and mental demands of the new normal: In many ways employees are highly stressed because some of their colleagues have lost their jobs and even they are at risk of being made redundant or losing income due to work schedule reductions. In addition, evidence shows [20] that there is an imbalance between gender and age.

The reasons for investing in responsible actions during the pandemic can vary from organization to organization [14]. These can be motivated by government regulations due to the achievement of some certification, by pressure from the employees themselves or simply by achieving the "common good". According to [21], there are antecedents for the adoption of strategic measures in relation to CSR, how it could be in the case at hand in this situation derived from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the model presented by these authors, a relationship is shown between the strategic decisions made by senior management and the reasons for the implementation of strategies in favor of the protection of employees. Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *There is a relationship between the central ideology in the organization and the strategy to fight COVID-19.*

Communication strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic have been very important to secure the uptake of preventive measures within the organization. Information from federal and state media has permeated at all levels of society and the quality and clarity of the information have been key to setting collaborative strategies within the organization. The authors of [22] argue that every activity from the management team must be taken for the benefit of essential organization stakeholders. In this case, the most vulnerable stakeholders during a pandemic are the employees. The authors of [23] claim that frontline employees are in contact with clients and colleagues and are afraid they may become infected and put their families at risk. This should be avoided as much as possible, and to that end, the organization must put in place strategies to make the employee feel confident.

Effective communication through official media is essential during health emergencies as it can strengthen resilience and confidence within the organization when taking the necessary measures to reduce the risk of infection [24]. Even though some effective communication models had been developed during the H1N1 pandemic in 2009, which considered affective and behavioral aspects [25], these were created taking into consideration that in the previous pandemic, the risk of death was lower. Thus, communication strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have been modified as the pandemic grew in size.

Organizations must be accountable for their actions and therefore must share clear and accurate information about the health emergency to support decision making for their employees based on reasonably supported arguments [26]. Giving reliable information can reduce anxiety, rumors and uncertainty [27]. The strategy used during the pandemic by organizations is very important to prevent unexpected consequences such as the spread of the disease or collective panic among workers. WHO experts, among other specialists in disasters [28], elaborated a list of 10 recommendations to manage a transition to the "new normality". These considerations are 10 recommendations that emphasize the communication between the communities and the authorities or the employees and the managers so that the stakeholders can be engaged in the situation. These experts recommend permanently evaluating the advances in the process using surveys, online means or any other strategy to be aware of how the communities are informed about the situation.

Discussion platforms are also important to clear queries, as open communication is needed given the changing environment [29]. Recently, [30] have published a study related to employee behavior claiming that strategies used by organizations significantly influence attitudes in their employees in a COVID-19 situation. As a result, we propose two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *There is a relationship between the COVID-19 prevention strategy and the organization's communication strategy.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *There is a relationship between the central ideology and the organization's communication strategy.*

COVID-19 has changed the way most employees work. It has forced organizations to adapt to new ways of working, creating schemes of work that are either work-based or remote. Naturally, human resource (HR) administration has also undergone a change in terms of strategy. HR must involve stakeholders now, especially employees, to avoid conflict that could emerge as a result of changing roles and functions [31].

Some authors [32] mention some strategies to keep employees involved at work in times of crisis. These strategies include keeping the focus on central values of business, providing assistance and support to the employee during difficult times, asking for feedback and keeping the communication clear and effective during these times to make the employees identify themselves with the organization. In general, in times of crisis, companies expect employees to be more flexible and to adapt, but in exchange, they just offer an economic incentive [33]. They must strive for business sustainability and confidence in the future in relation to the jobs to increase confidence across the organization.

If employees perceive that there is a deficiency in the communication during a crisis their commitment to the management actions could be seriously compromised [34]. According with these authors, the information crisis should be managed in two different ways. The informational aspect that must direct employees in "can be allowed and don't be allowed". For example, the use of masks: how, when, etc. The other aspect is the relational communication. Relational communication is related with the understanding of the stakeholders that are involved in the crisis [35]; encourages participation and accountability and mutual respect.

At all times, but especially during times of crisis, employee commitment is key to achieve objectives, and therefore it is necessary to promote strategies that increase attachment to the workplace [29]. In a study conducted by [36] in Italy during COVID-19 lockdown showed that communication can be considered a key element to enhance employee commitment during the pandemic. Employee commitment at any level in the hierarchy involves their involvement in the success of the mission and vision for the organization and seeking excellence daily [37]. The concept of organizational commitment refers to an individual's involvement with work and persistence through difficulties [38]. In this case, difficulties are related to the environment as they came about as a result of the pandemic. As a result, hypothesis 4 states the following:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *The organization's communication strategy is related to employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

From the above hypotheses, the following hypothetical model has been generated as shown in Figure 1.

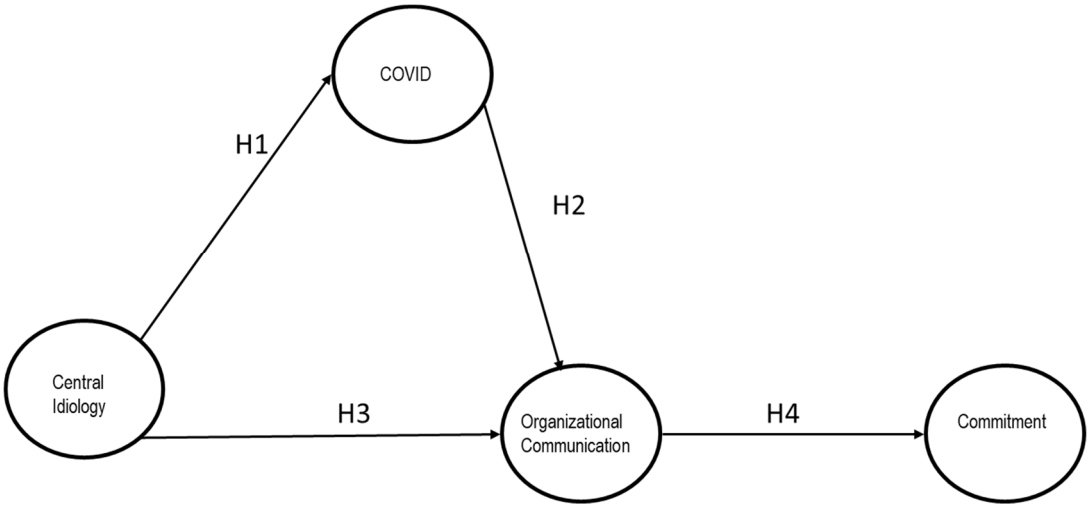

Figure 1. Hypothetical model.

3. Method

This is a cross-section quantitative study conducted by means of a single assessment of each of the sampled organizations, though more than one person from each organization was allowed to respond to prevent bias in the results [39]. This technique is usually used to evaluate indicators or latent variables in a time through questions that are measured via perceived actions of individuals or organizations. Because the questionnaire was created for a specific purpose, the reliability was tested as a first step. As a second step, the interrelation of variables was tasted using a structural equations model (SEM). SEM is a multivariant statistical method that facilitates the understanding of how several variables intervene in a model that goes beyond multiple linear regressions. The aim of the SEM model is to respond to complex equations that involve latent variables [40]. According to [41], SEM is a variant of traditional multivariate models because a structural equations model is a system of multiple regressions where a series of variables are interrelated through regressions. The idea behind structural equations models is to represent causal relations between two or more variables simultaneously. The authors of [42] suggest that SEM is useful when assessing the effects of mediation, as shown in Figure 1. There are different techniques to develop structural equations, and this study has used the maximum likelihood estimation technique. This statistical technique is the standard used in research work related with organizational behavior, marketing, or other disciplines.

3.1. Developing the Questionnaire

To measure the variables associated with the model, teaching researchers at the University of Guanajuato (Mexico) developed a questionnaire in collaboration with the State of Guanajuato's Work and Pensions Department (STPS, in Spanish) during 2020. STPS is a state department that belongs to the federal government, whose main role is to regulate labor relations in Mexico. To prepare the questionnaire four health-sector recommendations and some Mexican work norms were considered: Mexican Official Norm 035, the Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection Law, the Federal Labor Law and the Health Law, among others. The meetings for the development of the questionnaire were face to face in the offices of STPS in February 2020; since this is not the first exercise conducted, the team took the experiences from previous years, but in this case, the COVID-19 variable was added.

The instrument deals with the need stemming from the Work and Pensions Federal Department and its Job Promotion and Development Department to monitor health control measures as part of the social responsibility of companies. The focus was on activities companies carry out voluntarily internally and in relation to the community by means of actions and training in social responsibility, health and safety and health emergency

control. To assure the voluntary participation of the companies, the STPS sent an electronic email to all the companies registered in the State of Guanajuato inviting them to participate. In acknowledgment of their participation, the SPTS extended the company a recognition that could be used to obtain a certification in other instances.

Data for the study were collected between May and August 2020 in two phases. Firstly, the questionnaire was applied in three parts: questions about the type of business of the company, who is responding to the questionnaire and social responsibility and health emergency actions. Companies submitted evidence related to the variables of the study. In other words, they submitted statements of mission, vision and values and ethical codes, etc. They also provided evidence of the implementation of health measures such as meeting minutes, health codes, photographs of protected workplaces, training courses, etc. All this information was kept for subsequent analysis by the researchers.

Processing the information from the questionnaire was performed electronically, as was the data collection from participants by means of a web link. The questionnaire was kept on an Excel database and document-based data were kept on a database on a cloud, observing all due information security and confidentiality guidelines.

3.2. Sample

The scope of our study was the State of Guanajuato in Central Mexico. The sample was taken from 130 companies with participation from 675 executive and middle managers, as agreed previously with STPS representatives. On this occasion frontline employees were not considered given the time constraints and how long it would take to collect that type of data. Participating companies were as follows: 32% were large companies, 41% were medium-sized, 18% small and 9% microbusinesses. A total of 22% belonged to the car industry, 20% to manufacturing, 18% to services, 8% to shoemaking, 8% to retail and 24% to other types of businesses. The makeup of the participants was as follows: 53% were men and 47% women. A total of 44% had been with the company for under 4 years, 32% between 4 and 10 years and 24% for over 10 years. A total of 76% were middle managers and 24% executive directors. Of those, 35% had been in their post for under 2 years, 40% between 2 and 5 years, 20% for over 5 years and under 9 and 5% for over 9 years. A total of 21% of respondents worked in Human Resources, 20% in the company's administration, 20% in production and the rest, 39%, in other areas. Data were collected in León, Celaya, Irapuato and Silao (72%) because these are the cities with the biggest economic output in the state, and 28% in other locations.

For descriptive statistical analysis of the data, SPSS Statistics (v.25 IBM: Armonk, NY, USA) was used, and to test the validity of the hypotheses, an SEM model was developed using AMOS (v.25 IBM: Armonk, NY, USA).

Once the data had been collected, latent variables were correlated. Thus, a positive and significant relation [43–45] between latent variables can be established: organizational communication, central ideology, commitment and COVID-19, measured using the Pearson correlation coefficient, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics: Averages, standard deviation, variance and correlation of latent variables.

Variables	Average	SD	Variance	1	2	3	4
Organizational communication	4.62	0.56	0.31	1.00			
Central ideology	4.79	0.45	0.20	0.63 **	1.00		
Commitment	4.28	0.85	0.72	0.54 **	0.54 **	1.00	
COVID-19	4.63	0.61	0.37	0.46 **	0.46 **	0.49 **	1.00

Source: The authors. Note: ** $p < 0.001$.

3.3. Analysis of Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Organizational communication. To measure this construct, 5 variables were used such as those used on a five-point Likert scale, where one represents "completely agree" and five

"completely disagree". To assess the reliability of the instrument, we used Cronbach's Alpha (α) [46,47], McDonald's Omega (Ω) [48,49], and Dillon–Goldstein's complex reliability (ρc) [50]. The results of the instrument's reliability analysis (α = 0.71; Ω = 0.80; ρc = 0.80) were satisfactory [46–49].

The latent variable construct was tested for validity using a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) of the instrument by means of an SEM model using the bootstrapping technique and the maximum likelihood (ML) method with 1000 bootstraps. To validate SEM, a number of indices of goodness of fit were analyzed (χ^2 = 26.6 *df* = 8; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.02), and they were all satisfactory [51–55]. Similarly, the convergent validity was tested using standardized factorial loads [47,51] that showed a high level of significance, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Standardized factorial loads and Cronbach's alpha (α) of the instrument.

Variable: Central Ideology									**Factorial Load**	**Reliability**		
IC1. The policies were inclusive									0.56 **			
IC2. The company's values are shared at all levels									0.67 **			
IC3. Executive personnel act in accordance with the company's values									0.75 **	0.6	0.80	0.80
IC4. Values are promoted among staff									0.78 **			
χ^2	*df*	**CFI**	**TLI**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**NFI**	**IFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**α**	**Ω**	**ρc**
26.6	8	0.980	0.970	0.980	0.960	0.980	0.980	0.05	0.02	0.6	0.80	0.80
Variable: Organizational Communication									**Factorial Load**	**Reliability**		
COM1. There is an internal communications system (notices, notice boards or boards, electronic newsletters)									0.7 **			
COM2. There is a system to listen to ideas, suggestions and complaints from staff (physical or electronic complaints mailbox)									0.61 **	0.72	0.72	0.72
COM3. There are regular executive team meetings as business as usual									0.68 **			
COM4. There are regular employee meetings as business as usual									0.55 **			
χ^2	*df*	**CFI**	**TLI**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**NFI**	**IFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**α**	**Ω**	**ρc**
2.69	2	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.990	0.02	0.01	0.72	0.72	0.72
Variable: Commitment									**Factorial Load**	**Reliability**		
COMP1. There is a rewards and recognition program to acknowledge employees' efforts to achieve the company's goals and objectives									0.72 **			
COMP2. Employees are involved in social activities									0.88 **			
COMP3. Employees are involved in sports activities									0.69 **	0.73	0.80	0.80
COMP4. There are events or programs to seek integration, care and/or development of the employees' families									0.40 **			
χ^2	*df*	**CFI**	**TLI**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**NFI**	**IFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**α**	**Ω**	**ρc**
1.26	1	1.000	0.998	0.990	0.991	0.998	1.000	0.02	0.007	0.73	0.80	0.80
Variable: COVID-19									**Factorial Load**	**Reliability**		
COVD1. Masks are used in workspaces and offices by employees and visitors									0.69 **			
COVD2. There are sanitising gel dispensers and hand wash areas in operation									0.72 **			
COVD3. There is an air extraction or air conditioning system in place, in working order and in use in operative and office spaces									0.58 **	0.77	0.8	0.8
COVD4. There is a contingency protocol ready to use									0.49 **			
COVD5. Staff have been trained in prevention of disease topics in and out of the company									0.51 **			
COVD6. Additional measures have been taken to support staff during the health emergency									0.64 **			
χ^2	*df*	**CFI**	**TLI**	**GFI**	**AGFI**	**NFI**	**IFI**	**RMSEA**	**SRMR**	**α**	**Ω**	**ρc**
42.8	8	0.965	0.935	0.978	0.943	0.958	0.966	0.08	0.03	0.77	0.78	0.78

Note: ** $p < 0.001$.

Central ideology. To measure this construct, four variables were used such as those used on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument's reliability was assessed. The reliability results (α = 0.72; Ω = 0.72; ρc = 0.72) were satisfactory [46,47,49,50].

As for the validity of the construct, we used a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) of the instrument by means of an SEM model using the bootstrapping technique and the maximum likelihood (ML) method with 1000 bootstraps. To validate SEM, a number of indices of goodness of fit were analyzed (χ^2 = 2.69 df = 2; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02; SRMR = 0.01), and they were all satisfactory [51,53–55]. Similarly, the convergent validity was tested using standardized factorial loads [47,51] that were satisfactory and showed a high level of significance, as shown in Table 2.

Commitment. To measure this construct, four variables were used such as those used on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument's reliability was assessed. The reliability results (α = 0.73; Ω = 0.80; ρc = 0.80) were satisfactory [46,47,49,50].

As for the validity of the construct, we used a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) of the instrument by means of an SEM model using the bootstrapping technique and the maximum likelihood (ML) method with 1000 bootstraps. To validate SEM, a number of indexes of goodness of fit were analyzed (χ^2 = 2.69 df = 2; CFI = 1.00; NFI = 0.99; IFI = 1.00; TLI = 0.99; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02; SRMR = 0.01), and they were all satisfactory [51–55]. Similarly, the convergent validity was tested using standardized factorial loads [47,51] that were satisfactory and showed a high level of significance, as shown in Table 2.

COVID-19. To measure this construct, six variables were used such as those used on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument's reliability was assessed. The reliability results (α = 0.80; Ω = 0.80; ρc = 0.80) were satisfactory [46,47,49,50].

As for the validity of the construct, we used a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) of the instrument by means of an SEM model using the bootstrapping technique and the maximum likelihood (ML) method with 1000 bootstraps. To validate SEM, a number of indexes of goodness of fit were analyzed (χ^2 = 42.80 df = 8; CFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.93; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.03), and they were all satisfactory [51–55]. Similarly, the convergent validity was tested using standardized factorial loads [47,51] that were satisfactory and showed a high level of significance, as shown in Table 2.

4. Results

The structural equations model (SEM) hypothesis was assessed using the bootstrapping technique and the maximum likelihood method (ML) considering a resampling of 1000 bootstraps (Figure 2). To that effect, the Chi-Square test was used (χ^2 = 464.16/df = 160; χ^2/df = 2.90; $p < 0.001$), as well as the absolute partial fit indices, the Goodness of fit (GFI = 0.92) and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = 0.90), and incremental indices, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.92), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.91), the Normalized Fit Index (NFI = 0.90) and the Incremental Fit Index (IFI = 0.92)

The model presented below in Figure 2 was generated using IBM SPSS AMOS v25 and illustrates the model used in this work. The structural model allowed us to understand that the model explains 0.84 of the workers' commitment. Since the maximum is one, we can conclude that this model effectively explains the role of organizational communication as regards COVID-19 and organizational ideology in the behavior and commitment of workers.

On the other hand, the goodness of fit indices whose model was of a parsimonious type were also analyzed, namely, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.05), the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR = 0.04) and the Standardized Mean Square Residue (SRMR = 0.03). Therefore, all the indices of goodness of fit were considered to assess the SEM model, and they were all satisfactory [51,54], as shown in Figure 2.

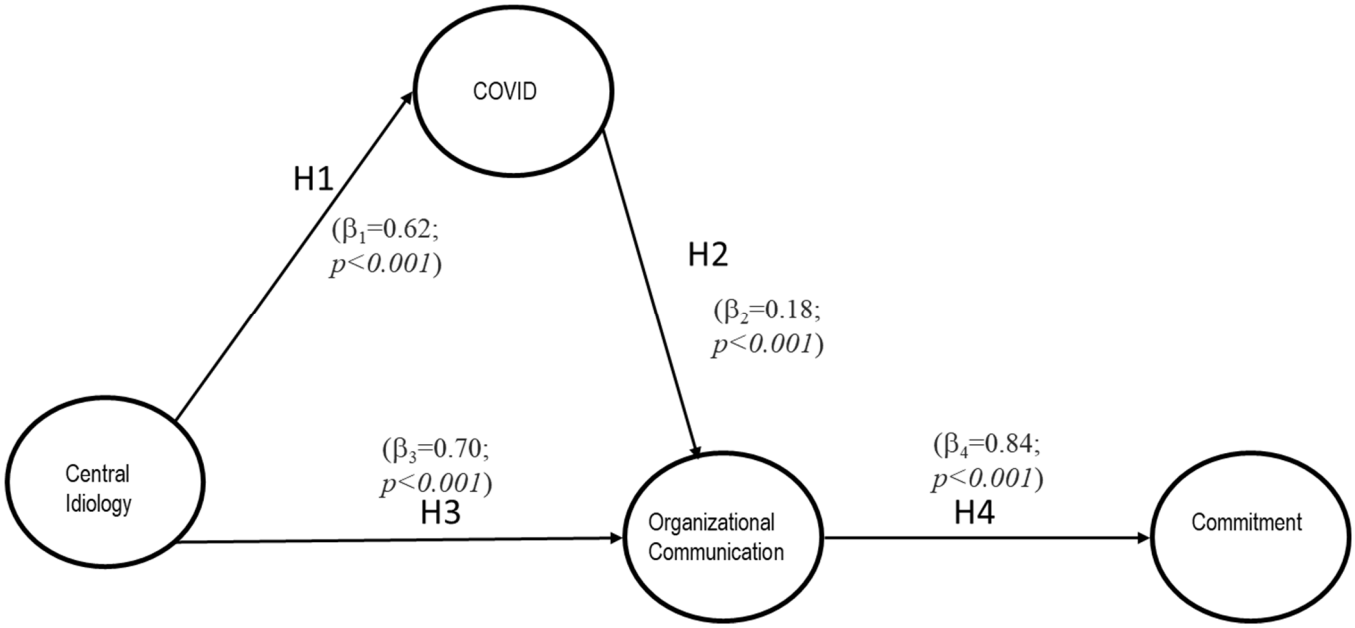

Figure 2. Structural model.

Next, hypotheses were assessed for the purposes of the present study. To assess hypothesis H1, there is a relationship between the organization's central ideology and the COVID-19 prevention strategy, the β_1 structural load was analyzed. All the values resulting from using the hypothetical model show that the organization's central ideology influences COVID-19 prevention positively and significantly ($\beta_1 = 0.62$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, there is a relationship between the organization's central ideology and the COVID-19 prevention strategy. As a result, hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Similarly, to assess hypothesis H2, there is a relationship between the COVID-19 prevention strategy and the organization's communication strategy, the β_2 structural load was analyzed. According to the values resulting from using the hypothetical model, the organization's COVID-19 prevention strategy positively and significantly ($\beta_2 = 0.18$; $p < 0.001$) influences organizational communication. Therefore, there is a relationship between the COVID-19 prevention strategy and the organization's communication strategy. Based on the statistical analysis, hypothesis H2 is accepted.

In turn, to assess hypothesis H3, there is a relationship between the central ideology and the organization's communication strategy, the β_3 structural load was analyzed. The values resulting from using the hypothetical model show that the central ideology positively and significantly ($\beta_3 = 0.70$; $p < 0.001$) influences organizational communication. Therefore, there is a relationship between the central ideology and organizational communication. As a result, hypothesis H_3 is accepted. In addition, the indirect effect of Central Ideology upon organizational commitment was calculated, and the effect was positive (0.11, $p < 0.001$). The percentage measured was 16%.

Finally, to assess hypothesis H_4 in the study, the organization's communication strategy is related to employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the β_4 structural load was analyzed. According to the values resulting from using the hypothetical model, the organization's communication strategy positively and significantly ($\beta_4 = 0.84$; $p < 0.001$) influences employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is enough evidence to claim that the organization's communication strategy is related to employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hypotheses probed for our model corroborate the findings of authors such [21,28,34], among others. The models proposed by these authors emphasize stakeholder communication in CSR to assure the commitment of employees to obtain results. However, some considerations must be taken into account so far. The size of the organizations is different,

and the hierarchical level of respondents also varies; this could implicate that the channels of communications could differ depending on the size of the business and the level of the managers. The intention of this study was to generate standard information for decision makers that could be used in any business in order to take actions in the crisis.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Pandemics throughout history have significantly impacted upon the development of nations. For instance, the bubonic plague originated in China (1334), and its first wave killed more than 25 million people. Some researchers estimate that this terrible disease reduced the population in Europe by 60% with political and economic consequences and a significant loss of manpower. The Spanish flu (1918–1920) killed 100 million people and changed the course of the First World War, increasing poverty levels for the generations born after this period [56]. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are still to be seen as they are still unfolding.

The pandemic has made organizations learn new ways of conducting their business [57]. The companies in this 2020 study had to implement strategies that had an effect on the way people perceived the organization's central ideology. At present, organizations are busy in a turbulent environment where economic and job issues must be carefully addressed if they are to remain sustainable. The author of [58] argues that positive relationships between staff and management must be strengthened to achieve effective levels of communication, better leadership and to curb practices that may affect employees adversely, such as fearing for their job or health. In this sense, through this study, we have demonstrated that the company's central ideology fosters organizational practices that prevent the spread of the SAR-CoV-2 virus within the organization, improves communication and fosters organizational commitment in employees.

New organizational practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 raise a cultural challenge that people need to adjust to fast. High administration faces, surely for years to come, new challenges in work environments, such as working with new information and communication technologies, social distancing, adapting to new processes, integrating new supply chains, etc. [59]. This has made companies strengthen their values in ways that support more sustainable practices, managing their resources more effectively and efficiently and prioritizing societal needs [60].

In particular, managing Human Resources [61] must consider the new paradigm of working from home, distance work equipment and virtual leadership and administration. This means employees will have to face the loneliness of social distancing, which can have consequences for their mental health. It is essential to consider, too, the economic effects of the pandemic in terms of unemployment and inequities. In this environment, professionals and researchers have great opportunities to understand the changes that this pandemic is causing and to make sense of them and present creative and productive solutions for the benefit of employees and organizations.

Working conditions must be assessed, too, to ensure fair pay and optimal health and safety conditions [62]. As production line workers cannot do their job from home, human resource management must guarantee safe conditions for these employees to continue operating free of health risks. In this sense, researchers and academic staff can contribute positively by assessing and proposing models that may help understand and face these situations.

Our study answers a specific problem elaborated by the concern of a public entity (STPS) and the University of Guanajuato. In this sense, we think that result matches with similar studies done by researchers around the word in this pandemic time. Although the questionnaire we used was unique, it was written in such way that any manager could understand the content of the question specially in Mexico. We think our study could be replicated in other parts in Latin America by the similarity of language, culture and economy but may be not so easy to adapt by other cultures because working conditions could vary from country to country.

Regarding the Mexican case and considering Latin America as a whole, [63] conducted a study of Human Resources practices and social responsibility and found that workers value good communication, good feedback between the employee and line manager and having their families acknowledged and valued. As for social responsibility, Mexican employees are interested in ethical behavior, sustainable development and links with society. The author of [64] has compared traditions in local groups of people and has found links with the concept of social responsibility through that of "living well" and one of the conclusions is that involving society matters for the development of a better society.

As a final remark, we conclude that the communication process in the organization (informational and relational) is essential in crisis management as the generated by COVID-19. The communications process should be monitored to gain the commitment of employees and adapt strategies for further actions. In further studies, the conditions of the frontline workers should be evaluated for the region we studied. This natural disaster has led us to evaluate that the consequences of the strategies adopted should be accountable and be evaluated to prevent unexpected consequences.

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