

Employment and COVID-19 in rural communities**Empleo y COVID-19 en comunidades rurales**

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Received August 21, 2022; Accepted December 17, 2022

Abstract

The objective of this research was to descriptively analyze employment, income and work performance in times of COVID-19 pandemic. The research was quantitative and descriptive, an analysis was conducted with a sample size of 300 employees residing in rural communities. In addition, a semi-structured survey with general and employment data sections was applied to collect the information. The fieldwork was conducted in the period from June to July 2022 in rural communities. The contribution is that it was an analysis of employment with emphasis on the loss of employment to people in rural communities. In the results it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico in rural communities presented a 24% unemployment rate; likewise the monthly income of employees was affected by the pandemic, also the existence of support from the government was minimal in terms of employment.

Pandemic, Analysis, Rural**Resumen**

El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar de forma descriptiva el empleo, el ingreso y su rendimiento laboral en tiempos de pandemia por COVID-19. La investigación fue de tipo cuantitativa y descriptiva, se realizó un análisis con un tamaño de muestra de 300 empleados que residen en comunidades rurales. Además, para recopilar la información se aplicó una encuesta semiestructurada con secciones de datos generales y de empleo. El trabajo de campo se realizó en el periodo de junio a julio del 2022 en comunidades rurales. La contribución es que fue un análisis del empleo con énfasis de la pérdida de empleo a personas de comunidades rurales. En los resultados se encontró que la pandemia por COVID-19 en México en comunidades rurales presentó un 24% de desempleo; de igual forma los ingresos mensuales de los empleados se vieron afectados por la pandemia, asimismo la existencia de apoyos fue mínima por parte del gobierno en cuanto a empleo.

Análisis, Pandemia, Rural

Citation: PÉREZ-CASTILLO, América Nohemi & JIMÉNEZ-GARCÍA, Martha. Employment and COVID-19 in rural communities. *Journal- Labor and Demographic economic*. 2022. 6-11: 15-20

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused health concerns worldwide (Olaimat et al., 2022). Due to its characteristics, containment measures were applied, such as: the use of masks, confinement, quarantine, social distancing, among others to avoid possible health risks (Lin et al., 2021). But rural communities rejected these care and prevention measures implemented by the government due to distrust (Muñoz Martínez, 2020).

The year 2020 became a turning point in everyone's life as the way we relate to each other inside and outside the workplace had to be modified (Costa & Castro, 2021). According to WHO (WHO, 2022), in Mexico, the number of accumulated deaths is currently 330,279 and the number of accumulated confirmed positive cases is 7,103,339.

The effects of COVID-19 in rural areas are more prominent due to the lack of health resources (Ruiz & Bombal, 2020). The Mexican government implemented COVID health centers and hospitals, but they are difficult to access for rural communities as they are located in cities (Muñoz Martínez, 2020).

Likewise, the labor world has been harmed (Lominchar, 2020), national and international trade was paralyzed (Sedano-Chiroque et al., 2020). In Mexico, the closure of non-essential businesses and companies (Ramirez et al., 2020) implied a high cost not only for workers but also for companies where they created unavoidable delays in processes (Larue, 2020).

The indigenous population was left unemployed since in Mexico they migrate to urban destinations where they occupy jobs and due to the pandemic this was impossible (Dahal et al., 2022). The hypothesis proposed is that the pandemic due to the covid-19 disease has generated labor-related effects in rural communities.

The objective was to descriptively analyze employment, income and labor performance in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper presents literature related to employment in pandemic, labor performance in pandemic, as well as aspects of rural communities facing COVID-19, methodology, results, conclusions and references.

Pandemic Employment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, due to virus containment measures or also called non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as closing businesses where social interactions take place, closing schools, ordering people to stay home, and banning large gatherings that involved reductions in economic activity, there is concern about the potential damage that NPIs could have caused to the economy and the labor market (Kong & Prinz, 2020). This has forced people to work from home (Jaspreet Singh, 2020), but in rural communities for employers the limited knowledge within workplaces on how to manage a partially or fully remote workforce is a barrier and for employees participation in remote work is almost zero (Davies, 2021). It is therefore important to analyze employment in rural communities in the face of a pandemic.

Job performance in pandemic

Isolation, duration of isolation, change in routine, particularly with less activity, and 3-5 people in the household, are associated with stress as a result of pandemic (Ramirez et al., 2020). In addition, many employees face extreme levels of work-related stress and anxiety due to COVID-19 (Kang et al., 2021).

On the other hand, high rates of depression, anxiety, fear, panic, anger and insomnia have been documented worldwide during the pandemic (Fiorillo et al., 2020) also worsening eating habits and sedentary lifestyle influenced seriously affecting health, employment and quality of life (Canello et al., 2020). Therefore, it is also important to minimize such stress.

Rural communities facing COVID-19

In rural communities there was a context of skepticism, so it was very common to hear the majority of the population say that the Coronavirus did not exist, that it was an invention of the government to keep them locked up; this caused people to have a perception of very low or no risk of the disease, which interfered in the practices of sanitary measures (FLORENTIN, 2020).

In addition, poverty in rural areas has historically been greater than in urban areas, which caused concern, since in the event of a positive case in the families of these communities, they would not have the necessary measures to isolate people with the COVID-19 virus, or the economic resources to receive timely medical care (Eisenkölbl Closs AR, 2021).

It should be added that the COVID-19 pandemic made clear the failures in the relationships between governments and rural communities, showing the governance gap that exists and continues to harm these communities (Iglesias-Osores et al., 2020).

Methodology

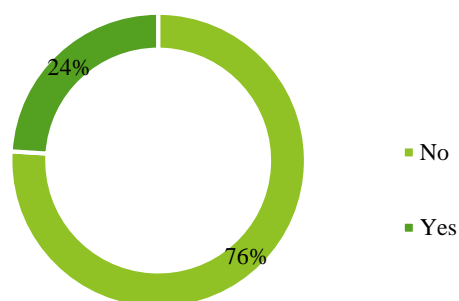
The research was quantitative and descriptive; an analysis of employment, income and labor performance in rural communities in Mexico was carried out.

A sample size of 300 employees was used.

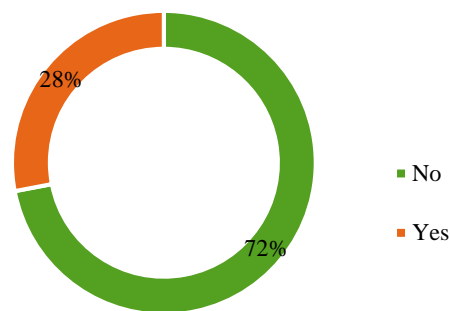
A semi-structured survey was applied with a section of general data and another of employment and income in the COVID-19 pandemic in the period from June to July 2022. The survey was administered face-to-face to persons who were employed.

Results

Figure 1 shows that 24% of the employed lost their jobs due to the pandemic, while Figure 2 shows that 28% of the surveyed population lost their development opportunities in urban cities. lost their development opportunities in urban cities since they had to return to their rural communities of origin.

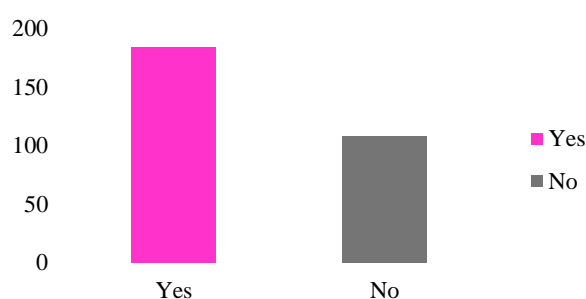


Graph 1 During the pandemic period did you lose your job?
 Source Own elaboration with survey data



Graph 2 Because of the pandemic, did you have to return to your community of origin?
 Source Own elaboration with survey data

Graph 3 shows that most of them have seen their income, salary or monthly earnings decrease due to the pandemic, which has caused their work or academic performance to be affected as shown in Graph 4.



Graph 3 During the pandemic period did you reduce your monthly income level?
 Source Own elaboration with survey data

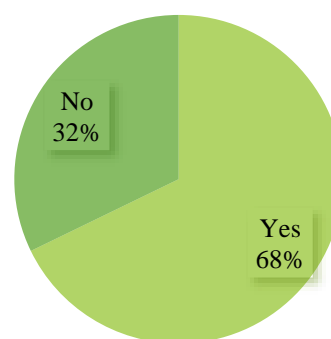


Figure 4 Do you consider that your work or academic performance has been affected by the pandemic?
 Source: Own elaboration with survey data

Graph 5 indicates that the majority of the population in rural communities did not receive employment support from the government during the pandemic.

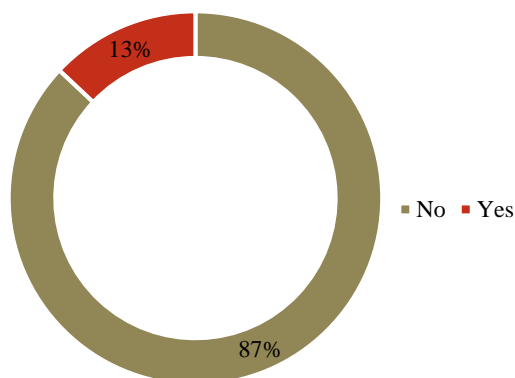


Figure 5 Does your community government provide employment support during the pandemic?"

Source Own elaboration with survey data

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Instituto Politécnico Nacional and CONACYT, project SIP 20221051 "Análisis de efectos del COVID-19 en el empleo en comunidades rurales" (Analysis of the effects of COVID-19 on employment in rural communities).

Conclusions

With the analysis of the results presented it is concluded that: 1) The COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico presented 24% unemployment, 2) 28% of employees had to return to their rural community since they lost their jobs in urban communities, 3) The monthly income of employees was affected by the pandemic, 4) The pandemic also originated a low labor performance, 5) The government minimally supported employees with some support due to the pandemic.

Mexicans, as well as local, state, and federal governments, must work together with unprecedented efforts to dramatically change the course of this pandemic, which has already claimed thousands of vulnerable lives (Ibarra-Nava et al., 2020).

It is hoped that further quantitative research will be conducted in future research to predict the factors for higher labor productivity and employment in the face of any pandemic, perhaps with the inclusion of information technologies.

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