

Systematic literature review: Mental health promotion in organizations during the pandemic by COVID-19

Revisión sistemática de la literatura: promoción de la salud mental en las organizaciones durante la pandemia por COVID-19

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SUMMARY

It is essential to review the working conditions of the organizations and the risk factors that arose in the midst of the pandemic and that generated repercussions on the mental health of the collaborators, highlighting the strategies or protective factors that were used to reduce them.

Objective: *To characterize the strategies and programs implemented by different organizations as mental health promotion responses during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Method: *We analyzed 17 research and review articles in different continents, under the search criteria, mental health, organizations, and COVID-19.*

Results: *The design and implementation of a positive and resilient organizational model, early psychological intervention teams, adaptive leadership, and the implementation of a corporate policy that encourages independent work are recognized within*

organizations, mainly oriented to collaborators in the health and education sectors. Results: The COVID-19 contingency forced organizations to undertake restructuring processes, in which job roles, performance, and competencies affected the integral development of employees, leading institutions to design strategies to safeguard the life, health, and safety of each of their employees.

Conclusion: *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated and favored processes of innovation, and technological development and marked the path to follow on the implementation of remote work as a widely feasible work modality, but also increased the challenges already present in the assessment, intervention, and promotion of mental health in organizations.*

Keywords: *Mental health, organizations, COVID-19.*

RESUMEN

Resulta indispensable revisar las condiciones laborales de las organizaciones y los factores de riesgo que surgieron en medio de la pandemia y que

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generaron repercusiones en la salud mental de los colaboradores, resaltando las estrategias o factores protectores que se utilizaron para su reducción.

Objetivo: *Caracterizar las estrategias y programas implementadas por distintas organizaciones como respuestas de promoción de la salud mental durante la pandemia de COVID-19.*

Métodos: *Se analizaron 17 artículos de investigación y de revisión en distintos continentes, bajos los criterios de búsqueda, salud mental, organizaciones y COVID-19.*

Resultados: *Se reconoce dentro de las organizaciones el diseño e implementación de un modelo de organización positiva y resilientes, equipos de intervención psicológica temprana, un liderazgo adaptativo y la implementación de una política empresarial que fomenta el trabajo independiente, principalmente orientadas en colaboradores del sector salud y sector educación.*

Discusión: *La contingencia por el COVID-19 obligó a las organizaciones a procesos de reestructuración, en el cual los roles, desempeño y competencias laborales afectaron el desarrollo integral de los colaboradores, llevando a las instituciones a diseñar estrategias para salvaguardar la vida, salud y seguridad de cada uno de sus colaboradores.*

Conclusiones: *El impacto de la pandemia del COVID-19, claramente aceleró y favoreció procesos de innovación, desarrollo tecnológico y marcó la ruta a seguir sobre la implementación del trabajo remoto como una modalidad de trabajo ampliamente factible, pero también aumento los desafíos ya presentes sobre la evaluación, intervención y promoción de la salud mental en las organizaciones.*

Palabras clave: *Salud mental, organizaciones, COVID-19.*

INTRODUCTION

The current contingency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected organizations, including their internal dynamics and aspects related to the well-being of their collaborators; the consequences are unprecedented and are felt worldwide. The labor scenario is deeply affected by the global pandemic of the virus, in addition to being a threat to public health, the consequences at the economic and social level, endanger the long-term livelihoods, welfare, and mental health of millions of people (1).

The situations and problems experienced by the population during the pandemic led organizations to question what strategies could

be implemented to improve the mental health conditions of employees, which, together with the pressures of the context, affected humanity and impacted productivity (2).

In this sense, mental health is a fundamental factor in organizations, related to extrinsic and intrinsic factors of the human being; as defined by the World Health Organization (3), it is a state of well-being through which individuals recognize their abilities, and can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to their communities.

The literature (4) reports a trend in different countries indicating that strategies or policies aimed at emotional and mental aspects were not prioritized in the face of the health emergency decreed, and the subsequent impacts of social isolation and the changes associated with the loss of job stability, loss of loved ones that put coping strategies and psychological resources to the test.

Likewise, as stated by Salanova (5), the situation of adversity generated by COVID-19 will not only spread discomfort and many negative emotions but will also allow the development of individual and collective resources and strengths that may have been unknown until now and that need to be put into practice. It is therefore essential to review the working conditions of the organizations and the risk factors that arose during the pandemic and that had repercussions on the mental health of employees, highlighting the strategies or protective factors that were used to reduce them. To this end, a systematic review of the literature was conducted to identify ¿which mental health promotion strategies have been implemented in organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic?.

METHOD

We conducted a systematic review of publications on mental health and organizations or in the workplace, during the global health emergency caused by COVID-19. The search was conducted in the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and ProQuest databases, which were selected due to their recognition and academic quality. The systematic review seeks to identify, evaluate, and synthesize scientific research, using

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a systematic and explicit method of information collection (6).

described in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and MetaAnalysis Protocols (PRISMA) (7), establishing the inclusion criteria for the identification and screening phase of the records, and the exclusion criteria in the eligibility phase for full texts. These criteria (Figure 1) allow studies not relevant to this work that was picked up by the search code to be discarded.

SELECTION CRITERIA

For the selection of studies, we used the elements for systematic review and meta-analysis

Table 1
Study selection criteria

Inclusion criteria	C1	The study integrates the variables: mental health and organizations (referring to the workplace)
	C2	The study presents the variables of interest referring to organizational and/or work environments during the health emergency
	C3	This is an empirical study (qualitative and/or quantitative) or review of the literature
Exclusion criteria	E1	The full text cannot be located
	E2	The full text is in languages other than Spanish or English
	E3	The study is carried out in different contexts and periods other than the health emergency caused by COVID-19

Source: Own elaboration.

The description of the study selection process (Figure 1) is made using the PRISMA flow chart (7).

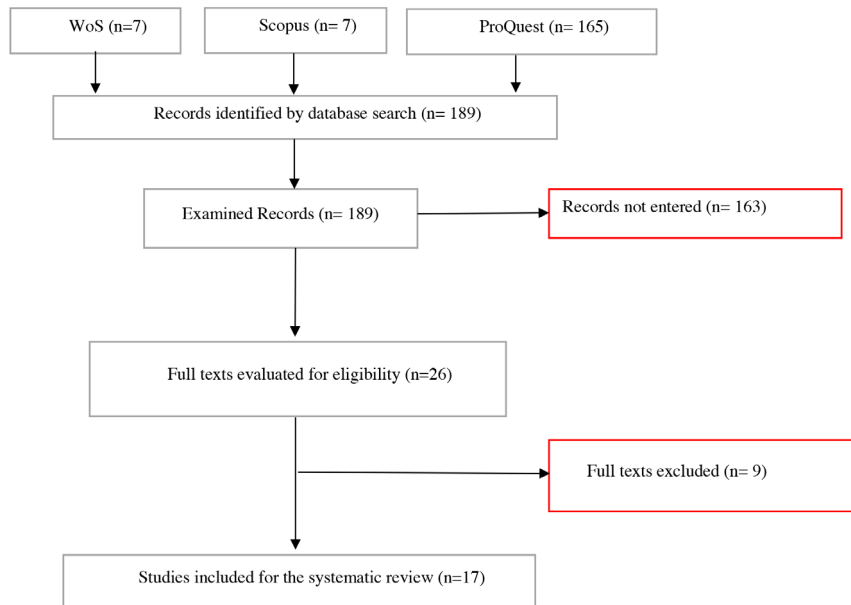


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of the study selection process.
Note: Adapted from page (7).

For this article, 17 documents were reviewed between scientific articles and previous literature reviews under the search criteria mental health, organizations, and COVID-19.

RESULTS

Characterization of the research was carried out considering three units of analysis: the

country where the study was produced, the year of publication, and the type of study. The results are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the largest number of research studies related to mental health in organizational settings during the COVID-19 pandemic have been conducted in South American countries (59%), followed by European countries with (23%), Asia (6%) and finally, globally (6%).

Table 2
Characterization of the publications reviewed

Unit of analysis	No. of studies	%
Country where the studies are produced		
Central America (Mexico 1)	1	6
South America (Colombia 3, Chile 5, Ecuador 1, Perú 1)	10	59
Europe (Spain 4)	4	23
Asia (Indonesian 1)	1	6
Global	1	6
Year of publication		
2020	3	18
2021	13	76
2022	1	6
Type of study		
Quantitative	5	29
Qualitative	12	71

Source: Own elaboration.

With respect to the year of publication, it is evident that there is a growing trend of publications on the subject, with 2021 representing the year of publication of the most important publications 76% of the publications reviewed and 6% so far in 2022, at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, 18% of the studies were identified. Regarding the type of study, it was found that 71% of them used a qualitative methodology, and 29% are quantitative studies. In relation to mental health promotion strategies used in organizations during the pandemic of COVID-19, in Table 3, the following results were classified.

Table 3 shows the scarce existence of research related to the promotion of mental health in times of COVID-19 pandemic, most of the studies have been conducted in the health sector as frontline health workers, followed by the education sector

due to the need to implement remote education and the challenges it has implied.

Within the documents analyzed, it is identified that in countries such as Chile, Colombia, Spain, and Indonesia, workers have perceived little or no psychological support strategies in terms of prevention and control of situations of high emotional impact in pandemics (8,9,13,17,21). Betancur et al. (13) evidenced that health care workers in Colombia use personal resources to adjust to the psychological demands produced by the pandemic such as a positive attitude with hope, isolating themselves from the media, or thinking about quitting their job. Similarly, López-Núñez et al. (19) highlight the protective role of personal resources in psychological adjustment during COVID-19 confinement in workers in Spain.

Table 3
Mental health promotion strategies used in organizations during COVID-19

Authors	Year	Country	Sample	Type of research	Occupation Participants	Variable or Category	Strategy
Plaza, Jorques, Salgado.	2022	España	3	Qualitative	Doctor/Nurse	Psychological impact	Little or no ongoing training or psychological support in the prevention and management of high emotional impact situations in pandemics (8).
Calquín, Guerra-Arrau, Araya	2021	Chile	15	Qualitative	Psychosocial workers	Exposed life, suffering, and moral injury	No training or psychological help (9).
Osorio-Parraguez, Arteaga, Galaz, Piper-Shafir.	2021	Chile	17	Qualitative	Working mothers	Psychosocial consequences	*Provisioning and social support. *Self-care (10).
Acuña-Hormazabal, Mendoza-Llanos, Pons-Peregort.	2021	Chile	408	Quantitative	Education, commerce, health.	Burnout, engagement, and management practices	Daily support practices by leaders and managers (telephone contacts, via text message, social networks, or in-person interviews). *Model of healthy and resilient organizations (11).
López, Rivera-Aguilera, Gonzalez, Nova, García, Forján.	2021	Chile Colombia	77	Qualitative	Health professionals	Epic narrative/health professionals/pandemia	Exaltation of individual values based on heroic prose. Attributes such as determination, a conviction in success, and total dedication to the task, "putting on the shirt", "the first line of defense", and "the first line of defense" are highlighted (12).
Betancur, Rojas, Pulido, Aguilar	2021	Colombia	109	Qualitative	Professionals and nursing assistants	Caring for the patient	*Uncertainty and no support. *It is faced with a positive attitude with hope, isolating oneself from the media or thinking of quitting one's job" (13).
Peñañel-León, Ramírez-Coronel, Mesa-Cano, Martínez-Suárez	2021	Ecuador	92	Cuantitativo	Health professionals	Psychological impact, resilience and coping.	*Coping strategies and resilience. * Psychological treatment (14).
Ramos, Inga, Anzuñueldo, Díaz.	2021	Perú	14	Qualitative	Teachers and students	Teachers and students	*Strengthening the use and adequate management of technological resources. *Coping strategies to continue with their hard work (15).

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Authors	Year	Country	Sample	Type of research	Occupation Participants	Variable or Category	Strategy
Ramos, Inga, Anzueto, Díaz.	2021	Perú	14	Qualitative	Teachers and students	Teachers and students	*Strengthening the use and adequate management of technological resources. *Coping strategies to continue with their hard work (15).
Benítez-Saña.	2021	España	N/A	Qualitative	N/A	High-performance work systems and a healthy organization model.	Design of a positive, healthy, and resilient organization model (16).
Lázaro-Pérez, López, Galán, del Pino.	2021	España	40	Qualitative	Health professionals	Communicative and cultural approach	None (17).
Tolsa, Malas	2021	España	49	Qualitative	Healthcare Personnel	Psychological Impact, Risk Factors, and Psychological Interventions.	*Programs based on the solution of immediate problems related to personal and family safety, lack of protective materials and equipment, effective rest, and lack of training to care for these patients. *Early psychological intervention teams (18).
López-Núñez, Piqueras, Falcó	2021	España	440	Quantitative	Active and inactive workers and students	Personal resources, Two-dimensional mental health (psychological well-being and distress).	*The protective role of personal resources in psychological adjustment during COVID-19 confinement is highlighted (19).
Villavicencio-Ayub, Quiroz-González, García-Meraz, Santamaría-Plascencia	2021	México	724	Quantitative	Work Experience	Personal and Organizational Affects	*Exercise inspirational leadership and company policies that allow and encourage independent work. *Preventive and hygienic measures for work at home (20).
Iskandarsyah, Shabrina,	2021	Indonesia	200	Quantitative	Nurses, pharmacists, general practitioners, medical specialists, and laboratory assistants.	Mental health, job satisfaction, and quality of life.	*None. *Five themes emerged regarding the source of encouragement and strength: Religiosity, Social support systems. The moral responsibility of the profession. Following health and safety positive attitudes toward the future (21).

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Authors	Year	Country	Sample	Type of research	Occupation Participants	Variable or Category	Strategy
Véliz, Dörner, Soto, Toledo.	2020	Chile	12	Qualitative	Senior management	University governance	*Crisis preparedness, strengths, difficulties, challenges, and lessons learned from management in times of pandemic. * Accompaniment and training plans for management teams with competencies to coordinate and motivate the work with others (22).
Tomer	2020	Colombia	113	Quantitative	Electricity sector workers	Adaptive leadership and performance	To exercise adaptive leadership is characterized by: 1. Addressing an adaptive challenge. 2. Managing an adaptive change. 3. Influencing during an adaptive challenge (23).
Castellanos, Quintana,	2020	Global	No report	Qualitative - Documentary review	Teachers and administrative staff	Stress at work	*Implementation of work at home as a strategy to counteract economic losses and prevent the rapid spread of COVID-19. *It is recommended to implement epidemiological surveillance systems on psychosocial risk to follow up on the mental health of the most vulnerable workers (24).

Source: Own elaboration.

The design and implementation of a positive, healthy, and resilient organizational model (11,14,16,22), early psychological intervention teams (18), and adaptive (23) and inspiring leadership and the implementation of a company policy that allows and encourages independent work, with preventive measures for working at home (20) are recognized within the organizations.

Similarly, Castellanos et al. (24) recommend to organizations the implementation of an epidemiological surveillance system on psychosocial risk to monitor the mental health of those workers who are more vulnerable to trigger stress due to the demands of working at home.

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 contingency forced organizations to restructure, reorganize and manage organizational change, in which roles, functions, performance, labor relations, and competencies affected the integral development of the worker, leading institutions to design and implement strategies to safeguard the life, health, and safety of each of their collaborators. From the human talent management systems of each organization, health measures established by the World Health Organization WHO and the protocols according to the jurisprudence or regulations of each country had to be adopted.

The first finding to discuss is related to the few studies that have been developed on the promotion of mental health in organizations during the pandemic of COVID-19, this confirms the need for further research from different organizational contexts or sectors since most of the articles were found related to the health area, understanding that by being in the front line in the care of patients with COVID-19 affectations, they showed an emotional overflow, which led to the implementation of various therapeutic resources.

Another finding is associated with the limitation of the reports in the studies reviewed on the design and intervention of mental health promotion programs in organizations in the face of COVID-19. However, we highlight from the

analysis of the articles the implementation of a positive, healthy, and resilient organizational model, which can generate benefits at various levels.

At the individual level, the employee feels involved and motivated, finds meaning and significance in the work he/she performs, and experiences a sense of belonging and well-being, which results in a higher level of performance. At the organizational level, there are advantages since an engaged employee can spread this feeling of engagement to other employees and groups in the same organization, which triggers an environment or work climate of engagement (16).

Finally, we note that we found two systematic review articles, both only related to healthcare workers and healthcare professionals, that report a sample of the strategies implemented in organizations to address mental health during the pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the analyzed documents, we can identify that there is a concern about the impact, still under consideration, on mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic. As pointed out in the review, in the labor and productive scenario we see one of the most important affectations considering the obligatory nature, in most cases, of the implementation of remote work and its challenges, as well as the demands of permanent operation for the health and education sectors.

This has led to greater attention being paid to these populations, to review and promote mental health promotion plans and in other cases strategies were implemented on the fly, associated with the context of uncertainty experienced at the time. However, it is necessary to disseminate the strategies implemented in other sectors, types, and sizes of organizations (small and medium enterprises), functions, and socioeconomic contexts that allow a more detailed evaluation of the impact and successful actions on mental health in the organizational environment.

We are beginning to understand that mental health in all areas, in this case in the workplace, has a sense of co-responsibility in which collaborators

and organizations at both levels are interrelated and demand the implementation of permanent promotion plans and/or systems with a response capacity according to the global and local context.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is just beginning to be evaluated, clearly accelerated and favored processes of innovation, and technological development and marked the path to follow on the implementation of remote work as a widely feasible work modality, but also increased the challenges already present on the assessment, intervention, and promotion of mental health in organizations.

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