BEYOND SALARY: KEY FACTORS IN TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION DURING THE PANDEMIC IN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the working conditions of faculty members in higher education institutions underwent profound transformations, ranging from the modalities of course delivery to perceptions of job satisfaction. Nevertheless, there remains limited clarity regarding which factors most significantly influenced job satisfaction, or whether their impact varied according to individual faculty characteristics. This exploratory study addresses the central research problem of identifying the key determinants of faculty job satisfaction in crisis contexts, considering variations by contract type, gender, age group, and institutional funding model. For this, a quantitative methodology was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire and a multiple linear regression model applied to a sample of 239 faculty members. The findings indicate that economic perceptions, organizational climate and culture, as well as social capital, are the most influential factors overall, although notable differences emerge based on faculty profiles. The study concludes that strategies aimed at enhancing job satisfaction must be tailored to the specific characteristics of faculty members to be effective in contexts marked by uncertainty.

KEY WORDS: Job satisfaction; Factors; Teachers; Higher education institutions; Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

During periods of instability, organizations must adopt measures to maintain operational continuity. Some of these measures include salary reductions and increased work intensity, which lead to a decrease in job satisfaction (Gutiérrez-Banegas et al., 2022).

Research on job satisfaction shows that this concept is a significant factor in talent management, employee retention rates, job performance, commitment, and stress reduction during times of crisis (Gutiérrez-Banegas, 2020).

Like any organization, higher education institutions (HEIs) face global changes,

increasing complexity in the educational system, and instability, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result of the lockdown, the educational paradigm underwent a significant transformation, promoting new work modalities, with remote work being the most representative (Anita, 2021). This transition substantially altered working conditions by incorporating technology as a key tool to facilitate educational processes (Soni & Jain, 2021). However, implementing these changes in contexts with limited infrastructure led to adverse effects, such as the deterioration of psychological well-being and teacher burnout (Seminara, 2021).

This raises the question of which organizational factors most influenced teacher job satisfaction during the pandemic, and whether their impact was similar across educators.

The literature indicates that a crisis, such as the one caused by the pandemic, does not generally affect job satisfaction, mainly because individuals still have employment; however, it does alter the perception of specific components of job satisfaction, with economic perceptions and job security being the most affected (Gutiérrez-Banegas et al., 2022). Similarly, Baluku et al. (2024) state that job insecurity negatively impacted job satisfaction, affective commitment, and teacher engagement; nevertheless, teachers remained in their positions due to extrinsic reasons, such as economic perceptions.

Therefore, the central issue addressed in this research is identifying the impact these changes had on teachers' job satisfaction and, particularly, which organizational factors significantly influenced this perception during the pandemic.

Although the literature acknowledges the importance of job satisfaction in academic staff performance and retention, there is a gap in empirical literature regarding its impact based on individual characteristics such as contract type, gender, age group, or the type of institutional funding.

Consequently, the objective of this article is to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and the factors mentioned in the literature, focusing on HEI teachers in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, changes in interrelations will be studied across strata defined by teacher contract type, gender, age group, and type of HEI funding.

The importance of this research lies in the fact that, contrary to what is established in talent management literature, not all factors directly and equally affect job satisfaction, nor can all teachers be treated the same way. Therefore, these results will enable the development of retention strategies focused on the most significant factors and the characteristics of each teacher.

This article is structured as follows. First, a literature review on job satisfaction with a focus on higher education teachers is presented. Second, the methodology is described. Then, the research results are presented. Finally, conclusions and a discussion of the results are

provided, along with limitations and directions for future research.

DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review

The concept of job satisfaction can be traced back to Hoppock, who, in a 1932 study, asked employees what they liked and disliked about their jobs. He identified pay, job autonomy, and interpersonal relationships with supervisors and coworkers as potential causes of job satisfaction (Bowling & Cucina, 2015).

According to the classical definition by Locke (1976), job satisfaction is a positive and pleasant emotional state resulting from an individual's evaluation of their job or work experience. Based on the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), autonomy, task significance, variety, standardization, and feedback influence employee satisfaction and performance. Thus, job satisfaction is defined as a positive or negative evaluative judgment about one's job or work situation (Mérida-López et al., 2019).

This concept encompasses extrinsic rewards, such as salary and other economic benefits, as well as intrinsic rewards derived from job performance, including stimulating and challenging activities, autonomy, and influence over work processes (Pichler & Wallace, 2009). Therefore, in any organization, enhancing perceptions of job satisfaction is essential to improve performance and productivity, while reducing absenteeism and staff turnover. In the case of HEIs, it is also crucial to contribute to the intellectual development of individuals and communities (Gutiérrez-Banegas, 2020).

Various studies have found that the factors contributing to job satisfaction among HEI faculty are similar to those in other types of organizations. These include salary and other economic incentives, work environment, participatory culture, and professional growth opportunities (Gutiérrez-Banegas, 2020). According to Muspawi et al. (2025), a positive work environment and organizational culture enhance faculty well-being and performance, while factors such as motivation, school accreditation, and gender influence the work experience.

Generally, faculty members face recurring challenges such as job insecurity, low wages, and limited access to resources (Muspawi et al., 2025). However, the lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic introduced profound changes in both personal and professional life, with remote work being one of the most significant (Anita, 2021). In this context, technology became a key tool in the teaching process (Soni & Jain, 2021), intensifying virtual work and consequently harming job satisfaction (Ezzeddine et al., 2024).

The literature indicates that a crisis, such as the one caused by the pandemic, does not generally affect job satisfaction as long as individuals remain employed. However, it does alter perceptions of specific components, with economic concerns and job security being the most affected (Gutiérrez-Banegas et al., 2022). Baluku et al. (2024) report that job insecurity

negatively impacted job satisfaction, psychological well-being, affective commitment, and faculty engagement. Nevertheless, faculty members remained in their positions due to extrinsic motivations.

Table 1
Definition of factors

Factor	Definition
Economic Perceptions	Extrinsic rewards include highly competitive and attractive salaries, as well as other financial benefits or compensations (Sharma, 2014).
Work Activity	Intrinsic rewards related to engaging and challenging tasks, independence, available time to complete work, comfortable schedules, and workload (Pichler & Wallace, 2009).
Performance	Recognition policies, including opportunities for professional advancement or monetary incentives (Dorasamy & Letooane, 2015).
Training	The educational institution offers development programs that support faculty professional growth (Dorasamy & Letooane, 2015).
Organizational Climate and Culture	Individual perception of current organizational conditions, relationships among work groups and employees, job performance, loyalty, and identification with the organization (Domínguez Aguirre et al., 2013).
Social Capital	Organizational characteristics, such as trust, norms, and networks, enhance group efficiency by facilitating coordinated actions, as outlined by Putnam's concept.

On the other hand, Fute et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of institutional support and faculty adaptability in the face of the challenges of virtual work. They recommend considering commitment to improve job satisfaction in demanding educational contexts, such as during the pandemic.

Mosquera et al. (2022) show that interaction with students, student engagement, flexibility, and technology are relevant factors for faculty satisfaction with online teaching. Moreover, having control over one's work and favorable working conditions contribute to the overall well-being of faculty members.

In conclusion, faculty job satisfaction in HEIs during the Covid-19 lockdown was influenced by economic aspects, work relationships with both colleagues and students, the promotion of a participatory culture within HEIs, recognition, workload, and opportunities for professional growth.

Based on the above, Table 1 defines each of the factors that, according to the literature, influence faculty job satisfaction and aligns them with the approach adopted in this study.

Methodology

This research is exploratory, with a quantitative approach that is both descriptive and correlational, using descriptive analysis and a multiple linear regression model.

Instruments

A questionnaire was developed for this study, based on surveys conducted by Spector (1994) and Adeniji et al. (2018). It consists of two sections: the first gathers general information such as age, gender, type of contract, and type of HEI funding; the second includes 43 items addressing topics reviewed in the literature. These items are grouped into sections on economic perceptions, work activity, performance, training, organizational climate and commitment, social capital, and overall job satisfaction (Appendix 1). Responses are measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot test was conducted with a sample of 29 faculty members to determine the instrument's reliability in terms of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.9211) and the average inter-item correlation (0.2135) were calculated for standardized data, indicating that the instrument is reliable.

Sample size

Since a comprehensive list of faculty members was not available, a cluster sampling method was employed, using the 32 federal entities of the country as a basis. Initially, eight entities were selected using population and faculty data to form an unrestricted random sample. Subsequently, a maximum estimation error of 0.0004 was established, which led to

expanding the sample to 17 entities. These were randomly selected, and the number of surveys was proportionally assigned according to the representation of higher education faculty per thousand inhabitants in each entity (Table 2).

Table 2
Sample size by state

State	Number of Higher Education Teachers	Number of Teachers/1000	State	Number of Higher Education Teachers	Number of Teachers/1000
Baja California	11,799	12	Nuevo Leon	13,848	14
Chiapas	7,265	7	Oaxaca	5,493	6
Mexico City	60,261	60	Puebla	16,442	16
Coahuila	9,387	9	Queretaro	7,748	8
Mexico	13,345	13	Sonora	8,895	9
Guanajuato	4,280	4	Tabasco	5,246	5
Jalisco	36,688	37	Tamaulipas	9,252	9
Michoacan	8,109	8	Veracruz	12,900	13
Morelos	6,234	6	**Σ**	**237,192**	**237**

Source: Prepared by the authors with data obtained from the Sistema Interactivo de Consulta de Estadística Educativa Ciclo 2019-2020 (Secretaría de Educación Pública, n.d.)

Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out as follows: an email was randomly sent to directors or academic secretaries of HEIs, inviting them to participate in the study through a link to the website containing the online questionnaire.

Anonymous surveys were collected between March and May 2022. By the end of this period, a total of 239 completed questionnaires were obtained, corresponding to 25 HEIs located in 17 of the selected federal entities.

Results

As this is an exploratory study, a significance level of 0.10 was chosen for data analysis (Herkenhoff, 2025), as the initial goal is to identify potential relationships between the factors. Statistical analysis was performed using STATA 19.0 software.

Descriptive Analysis

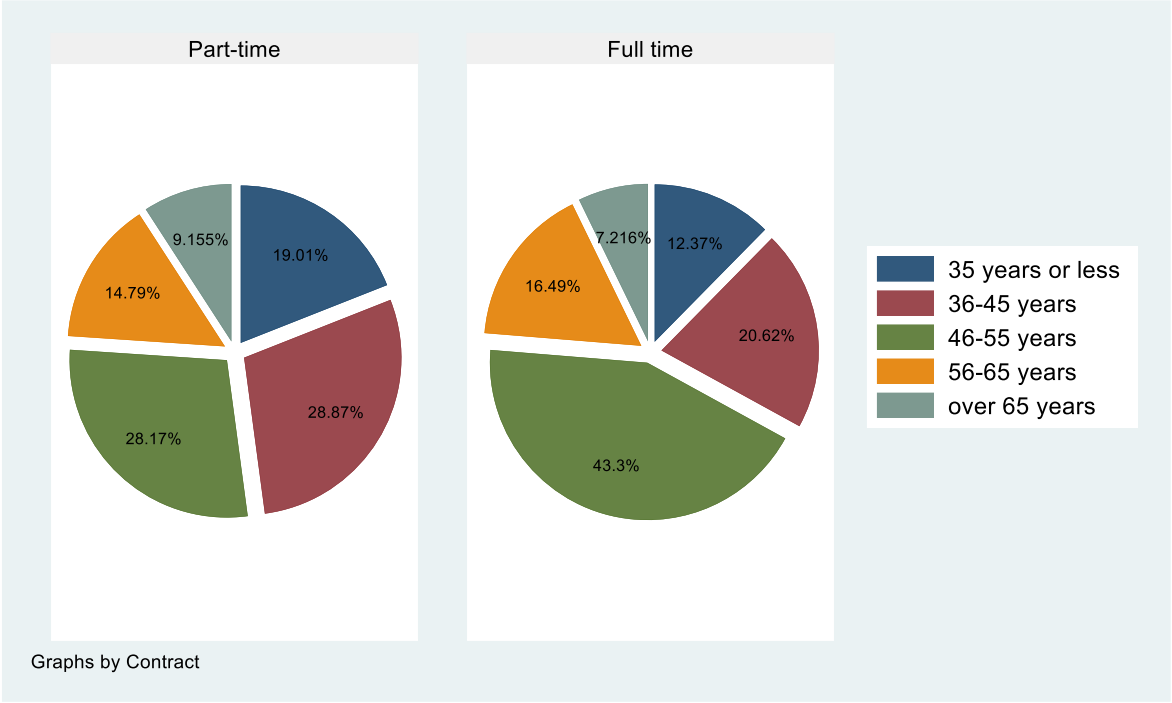
Of the 239 participants, 30.96% belong to public HEIs, while the remainder work in private institutions. Regarding gender, 55.56% of respondents identified as male, 43.21% as female, and 1.23% preferred not to specify.

In terms of age, 59.83% of faculty members are between 36 and 55 years old, while the group aged 65 and over is the least represented (8.37%).

Regarding contract type, 59.41% of respondents reported being adjunct or part-time faculty, while 40.59% hold full-time or permanent positions.

Figure 1

Age group distribution by contract type



Note: Own elaboration.

Among adjunct or part-time faculty, 57.04% are between 36 and 55 years old; whereas among full-time or permanent faculty, these age groups represent 63.92% (Figure 1).

General regression model

Each section of the questionnaire corresponds to a construct that influences job satisfaction, according to the literature review. The results from each section were summed and adjusted to a scale ranging from 1 (minimum level) to 10 (maximum level), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Factors that influence job satisfaction

Variable		Obs	Media	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
Economic Perceptions	PE	239	6.851	1.665	2	10
Work Activity	AL	239	6.572	1.009	2	10
Performance	D	239	6.875	1.976	2	10
Training	C	239	6.569	1.872	2	10
Organizational Climate and Culture	CCO	239	8.256	1.783	2	10
Social Capital	CS	239	7.824	2.082	2	10

Note: Own elaboration.

Following the descriptive analysis, the next step is to identify the variables that have a significant relationship with the concept of job satisfaction, for which the correlation matrix is analyzed (Table 4).

It is observed that the relationships between the constructs and job satisfaction are direct and significant at the 0.10 level, with Organizational Climate and Culture and Social Capital being the strongest associations. It is worth noting that the correlations among constructs are also direct and significant.

Table 4
Correlation matrix

	JS	EP	WA	P	T	OCC	SC
JS	1.000						
EP	0.426*	1.000					
	0.000						
WA	0.407*	0.434*	1.000				
	0.000	0.000					
P	0.482*	0.434*	0.477*	1.000			
	0.000	0.000	0.000				
T	0.514*	0.422*	0.358*	0.669*	1.000		
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000			
OCC	0.634*	0.396*	0.475*	0.585*	0.675*	1.000	
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
SC	0.653*	0.432*	0.411*	0.615*	0.646*	0.823*	1.000
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

A linear regression model was applied to the entire sample. With a significance level of 0.10, it is concluded that Economic Perceptions, Organizational Climate and Culture, and

Note: Own elaboration.

Social Capital are the factors that influence the job satisfaction of faculty members at HEIs (Table 5). Additionally, the variance inflation factors (VIF) are below 5, indicating that the correlations among independent variables (multicollinearity) are moderate.

In this case, the linear model is significant at the 0.10 level and explains 47.0% of the variability in job satisfaction.

Table 5

Coefficients and statistics of the general regression model

	General model			
JS	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**
EP	0.064	0.024	[0.018,0.111]	1.42
WA	0.067	0.163	[-0.012,0.146]	1.52
P	0.006	0.830	[-0.043,0.055]	2.22
T	0.023	0.481	[-0.031,0.077]	2.41
OCC	0.105	0.014	[0.035,0.175]	3.70
SC	0.135	0.000	[0.076,0.193]	3.48
_cons	1.003	0.000	[0.552,1.453]	-
R^2 Adjusted	0.470			
F	36.19			
Prob>F	0.000			

Note: Own elaboration.

The following sections present the behavior of the linear regression model for job satisfaction, comparing the following strata:

- Type of contract: Adjunct/part-time, Tenured/full-time.
- Gender: Female, Male.
- Age group: 35 years or younger, 36 to 45 years, 46 to 55 years, 56 years or older.
- Type of HEI: Publicly funded, privately funded.

Regression model by type of contract

By stratifying the sample by type of contract (Adjunct/part-time and Tenured/full-time) and fitting a regression model, it is concluded that, at a significance level of 0.10, Economic Perceptions and Organizational Climate and Culture are the factors that influence job satisfaction among faculty members at HEIs with Adjunct/Part-time contracts. In contrast, for Tenured/Full-time faculty, the influencing factors are Economic Perceptions, Work Activity, and

Social Capital (Table 6). Since the VIF values are below 5, multicollinearity is considered moderate.

The linear model for adjunct faculty explains 42.1% of the variability in job satisfaction, while for tenured faculty, it explains 52.7%. In both cases, the linear models are significant at the 0.10 level.

Table 6

Coefficients and statistics of the regression model for teachers by type of contract

	Type of contract							
	Adjunct/Part-time contracts				**Tenured/Full-time faculty**			
JS	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**
EP	0.064	0.091	[0.002,0.126]	1.58	0.084	0.054	[0.012,0.156]	1.32
WA	-0.024	0.697	[-0.124,0.077]	1.67	0.241	0.003	[0.109,0.372]	1.40
P	-0.008	0.832	[-0.071,0.055]	2.10	0.037	0.459	[-0.046,0.120]	2.77
T	0.013	0.737	[-0.052,0.079]	2.03	0.029	0.611	[-0.065,0.123]	3.05
OCC	0.119	0.027	[0.031,0.206]	3.04	0.075	0.289	[-0.042,0.192]	4.38
SC	0.151	0.001	[0.076,0.226]	3.02	0.099	0.083	[0.005,0.192]	3.92
_cons	1.536	0.000	[0.970,2.101]	-	-0.059	0.900	[-0.832,0.715]	-
R^2 adjusted	0.412				0.527			
F	17.49				18.82			
Prob>F	0.000				0.000			

Note: Own elaboration.

Regression model by gender

Subsequently, the sample was stratified by gender. This study only analyzed the genders within the conventional binary framework (female, male), as the number of participants identifying with other genders was insufficient.

The linear model for the female group explains 54.6% of the variability in job satisfaction, showing a better fit than the model for the male group, which explains 38.7%. In both cases, the linear models are significant at the 0.10 level.

Table 7

Coefficients and statistics of the regression model for faculty members by gender

	Gender							
	Female				Male			
JS	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**
EP	0.103	0.014	[0.035,0.172]	1.61	0.026	0.483	[-0.036,0.089]	1.32
WA	0.113	0.100	[0.000,0.226]	1.51	0.016	0.813	[-0.097,0.129]	1.70
P	0.001	0.973	[-0.066,0.069]	2.32	0.017	0.677	[-0.052,0.087]	2.09
T	-0.039	0.379	[-0.114,0.035]	2.71	0.106	0.025	[0.028,0.183]	2.12
OCC	0.134	0.015	[0.044,0.224]	3.66	-0.013	0.858	[-0.128,0.103]	4.12
SC	0.178	0.000	[0.099,0.257]	3.43	0.137	0.010	[0.050,0.224]	3.79
_cons	0.249	0.519	[-0.388,0.886]	-	2.007	0.000	[1.351,2.663]	-
R^2 adjusted	0.546				0.387			
F	28.27				11.31			
Prob>F	0.000				0.000			

Note: Own elaboration.

At a significance level of 0.10, it is determined that the constructs of Economic Perceptions, Work Activity, Organizational Climate and Culture, and Social Capital are the factors that influence the job satisfaction of female faculty members at HEIs. For male faculty members, the constructs with the most significant effect on job satisfaction are Training and Social Capital (Table 7). Once again, multicollinearity is observed to be moderate (VIF < 5).

Regression model by age group

For this analysis, a linear regression model was fitted for each age group.

Table 8

Coefficients and statistics of the regression model for faculty members by age group

	Age group							
	35 years or less				36 - 45 years			
JS	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**
EP	0.097	0.271	[-0.050,0.243]	1.20	0.075	0.206	[-0.023,0.173]	2.00
WA	-0.175	0.336	[-0.478,0.128]	1.60	-0.075	0.454	[-0.243,0.092]	2.18
P	-0.034	0.701	[-0.181,0.114]	3.02	0.180	0.010	[0.067,0.292]	2.75
T	0.019	0.852	[-0.152,0.190]	2.54	-0.004	0.949	[-0.109,0.101]	2.37
OCC	0.220	0.093	[0.005,0.436]	4.58	0.002	0.983	[-0.143,0.146]	4.12
SC	0.078	0.496	[-0.114,0.271]	4.97	0.144	0.029	[0.037,0.251]	2.90
_cons	2.079	0.083	[0.112,4.046]	-	1.524	0.001	[0.767,2.281]	-
R^2 adjusted	0.301				0.488			
F	3.80				10.52			
Prob>F	0.006				0.000			

	Age group							
	46 - 55 years				Over 56 years			
JS	**Coeficiente**	**P>|t|**	**IC al 90%**	**VIF**	**Coeficiente**	**P>|t|**	**IC al 90%**	**VIF**
EP	0.020	0.671	[-0.057,0.096]	1.50	0.010	0.878	[-0.102,0.122]	1.92
WA	0.158	0.047	[0.028,0.289]	1.38	0.207	0.032	[0.050,0.365]	1.78
P	0.043	0.369	[-0.036,0.122]	2.49	-0.067	0.258	[-0.165,0.031]	1.80
T	-0.003	0.950	[-0.087,0.081]	2.58	0.059	0.421	[-0.062,0.180]	2.64
OCC	0.276	0.000	[0.156,0.396]	4.13	-0.003	0.977	[-0.162,0.157]	4.60
SC	0.007	0.910	[-0.095,0.109]	4.63	0.254	0.001	[0.129,0.379]	3.50
_cons	0.231	0.640	[-0.589,1.050]	-	0.711	0.184	[-0.174,1.597]	-
R^2 adjusted	0.561				0.504			
F	18.25				10.49			
Prob>F	0.000				0.000			

Note: Own elaboration.

At a significance level of 0.10, it is concluded that job satisfaction among faculty members aged 35 or younger is affected by Organizational Climate and Culture. For those

aged 36 to 45, the most relevant constructs are Performance and Social Capital; while for faculty aged 46 to 55, the key factors are Work Activity and Organizational Climate and Culture. In contrast, for those aged 56 and older, the most important constructs are Work Activity and Social Capital (Table 8). Since the VIF values are below 5, multicollinearity in the model is considered moderate.

Regarding the fit of the linear model, the explained variability for the age group of 35 or younger is 30.1%; for the 36 to 45 age group, it is 48.8%; for the 46 to 55 age group, it is 56.1%; and for those aged 56 or older, it is 50.4%. That is, the best fit is observed in the 46 to 55 age group, and the lowest in the group of 35 or younger. At the 0.10 level, the linear models by age group are significant.

Regression model by type of HEI

Finally, the sample was stratified by type of HEI: public or private funding. Thus, at a significance level of 0.10, it is concluded that Work Activity and Organizational Climate and Culture influence job satisfaction among faculty working at public HEIs. It is worth noting that Social Capital presented a p-value of 0.011. On the other hand, only Social Capital influences job satisfaction among faculty working at private HEIs (Table 9). Additionally, multicollinearity is moderate (VIF < 5).

Table 9

Coefficients and statistics of the regression model for faculty members by type of HEI

	HEI							
	Public				Private			
JS	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**	**Coefficient**	**P>|t|**	**90% CI**	**VIF**
EP	0.081	0.115	[-0.004,0.166]	1.64	0.051	0.152	[-0.008,0.110]	1.29
WA	0.144	0.080	[0.009,0.280]	1.74	-0.019	0.766	[-0.125,0.087]	1.49
P	-0.006	0.914	[-0.094,0.082]	2.12	0.010	0.770	[-0.049,0.071]	2.20
T	0.010	0.871	[-0.097,0.118]	2.72	0.047	0.233	[-0.018,0.111]	2.13
OCC	0.135	0.057	[0.019,0.251]	3.41	0.086	0.155	[-0.014,0.186]	3.91
SC	0.140	0.011	[0.050,0.229]	2.49	0.146	0.003	[0.065,0.228]	4.12
_cons	0.361	0.407	[-0.361,1.082]	-	1.516	0.000	[0.866,2.166]	-
R^2 adjusted	0.530				0.399			
F	14.72				19.13			
Prob>F	0.000				0.000			

Note: Own elaboration.

It is worth noting that the linear model for public HEIs explains 53.0% of the variability in job satisfaction. In contrast, the linear model for private HEIs explains 39.9%. In both cases, the linear model is significant at the 0.10 level.

Based on the previous analyses, Table 10 presents the statistically relevant factors. From this table, the following conclusions regarding job satisfaction can be drawn:

- Economic Perceptions are generally important. However, they are not significant for male faculty, the different age groups, or the type of HEI.
- Work Activity is relevant for full-time faculty, female faculty, those aged 46 or older, or those working at public HEIs.
- Performance is only significant for faculty aged 36 to 45, while Training is only representative for male faculty.
- Organizational Climate and Culture is important both in general and for the strata of part-time faculty, female faculty, those aged up to 35 and 46 to 55, or those working at public HEIs.
- Only faculty aged 35 or younger, 46 to 55, or those working at public HEIs show no relationship between Social Capital and job satisfaction.

Table 10

Summary of models

		Contract		Gender		Age group				Funded	
Construct	**General**	**Part-time**	**Full-time**	**Female**	**Male**	**35 years or less**	**36 - 45 years**	**46 - 55 years**	**Over 56 years**	**Public**	**Private**
EP	*	*	*	*							
WA			*	*				*	*	*	
P							*				
T					*						
OCC	*	*		*		*		*		*	
SC	*	*	*	*	*		*		*		*

Note: * Significant factors at 0.10 level

Note: Own elaboration.

CONCLUSION

In the face of adverse situations, such as the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations must respond quickly to maintain operational continuity. Often, this involves decisions such as salary reductions and increased work intensity. In the case of higher

education institutions (HEIs), remote teaching was primarily adopted to meet academic schedules.

As a result, the job satisfaction of faculty members at HEIs was influenced by economic perceptions, a paradigm shift in labor relations and interactions with students, increased workload due to new teaching methods, and job insecurity.

According to the literature, a crisis does not generally affect job satisfaction; however, it does impact the perception of specific components. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and the factors identified by various authors, focusing on faculty members at HEIs in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve this objective, indices were created for each factor based on the literature. A multiple linear regression model was then fitted with job satisfaction as the dependent variable to assess how these factors influence it. The sample was subsequently stratified by type of contract, gender, age group, and type of HEI funding to detect changes in linear relationships.

This study shows that the most important factors directly affecting job satisfaction among HEI faculty during a period of instability are economic perceptions, organizational climate and culture, and social capital. These findings align with the main conclusion of Fute et al. (2022), who emphasize that faculty members must understand the importance of work values to improve job satisfaction, especially when highly committed to their teaching roles. They also support Muspawi et al. (2025), who highlight that faculty satisfaction increases through a positive work environment and organizational culture.

When analyzing different strata, it is observed that economic perceptions are not relevant for male faculty or any age group. One possible explanation, as stated by Baluku et al. (2024), is that during periods of instability, faculty members remained in their jobs due to economic perceptions.

According to this study, the two constructs with the least impact on job satisfaction during the lockdown are performance and training. The former is only relevant for faculty aged 36 to 45, while the latter is only significant for male faculty.

Based on these findings, HEIs should design strategies to improve economic perceptions, establish recognition policies, and implement leadership styles that foster a culture of participation and respect among faculty. In doing so, HEIs will gain new tools to fulfill their mission: educating future generations, generating knowledge through research, and building connections with industry—contributing to societal development, with faculty playing a central role in designing quality educational programs, conducting academic research, enhancing institutional reputation, and engaging with the economic and social environment.

Drawing from the findings of this research, Table 11 outlines actions that may support the design of strategies to enhance faculty job satisfaction at HEIs, not only during periods of instability.

Table 11.
Actions to counteract job dissatisfaction

Author	Proposal
Kramer et al. (2014)	Establish a fair and unilateral seniority system to recognize faculty commitment.
Dorasamy & Letooane (2015)	Improve salaries and create a reward program including paid vacations, career advancement opportunities, and monetary incentives.
Okay-Somerville & Scholarios (2019).	Invest in workforce development.
Meng & Berger (2019)	Enhance commitment and job performance through organizational culture development.
Wijaya et al. (2020)	Design gender policies and create women-friendly environments.
Virgana & Fitriani (2025)	Empower faculty through transformational leadership.

Note: Own elaboration.

Given all the above, and considering higher education as a strategic asset, Latin American countries such as Mexico will be able to generate knowledge and develop human capital to build a more just society and a more competitive economy. Moreover, focusing on aspects such as salary, communication, and work conditions during times of instability is crucial to increasing faculty job satisfaction and providing security during crises, thereby reducing turnover.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic represented a paradigm shift in teaching practices, it is necessary to consider the potential permanence of some of these transformations in the post-pandemic period. The accelerated adoption of digital technologies, the flexibilization of pedagogical models, and the reconfiguration of relationships among faculty, students, and institutions may not be temporary phenomena. In this regard, it is essential to continue monitoring and evaluating how these conditions persist or evolve beyond the emergency context.

Model Limitations and Future Research Directions

Among the methodological limitations encountered in this study, the first is that not all variables included were statistically significant across the different stratified models, possibly due to the presence of factors not considered in the instrument.

Although differences between strata were explored, interaction terms between variables were not incorporated into the models. Including such terms could help identify more complex combined effects —for example, between gender and type of contract, or between age and social capital —which represents a future line of research.

Additionally, alternative models were not tested due to the exploratory nature of the study. However, future research could compare different approaches to evaluate or confirm the robustness of the findings, using a larger sample size that allows for the application of other methodologies.

Another issue to consider is the potential self-selection bias, as participation in the survey was voluntary. Likely, faculty members with greater interest in the topic or with particularly positive or negative experiences were more willing to respond, which could limit the generalizability of the results—another future research direction.

Finally, it would be relevant to conduct a follow-up study to monitor and assess whether the conditions identified in this research have persisted or evolved after the pandemic. It is also suggested to analyze different strata of employment seniority to identify strategies to reduce turnover rates, especially during the first year of faculty onboarding.

Annex 1

Construct	Item
Economic perceptions (EP)	I am satisfied with the perceptions that I received in this institution.
	The perceptions I receive are competitive with other institutions.
	I am familiar with tabulators and the policies that determine salary increases.
	The increases in my perceptions are low and infrequent.
	The perceptions I receive are consistent with the responsibilities I have.
	I feel appreciated by the institution when I see my payment.
Work activity (WA)	I am satisfied with the work assigned by the institution.
	The work assigned to me by the institution is relevant and contributes to my professional growth.
	The institutional communication system enables me to access relevant information and prioritize it accordingly.
	Teamwork allows me to carry out activities effectively and efficiently.
	The performance of the faculty/department where I work is excellent.
	I consider that the standard of performance in the institution is low.
	I have time to do other activities, for example, research.
	I consider that I have more activities every day to do.

	I need to allocate more time to preparing course materials.
	I consider that my activities within the institution have not increased.
	I get too many instructions to do my job.
	Procedures get in the way of doing a good job.
	I think we spend a lot of time in meetings.
Performance (P)	The institution informs me of the performance evaluation system.
	The institutional performance evaluation system motivates my professional growth.
	The institutional performance evaluation system allows for my promotion.
	There is a culture of participation in setting goals.
	There is a performance recognition program.
Training (T)	The training courses offered by the institution are valuable for my professional growth.
	The training offered is of quality.
	The training offered by the institution is considered for a salary increase.
	My department offers support for professional development.
Organizational climate and culture (OCC)	The mission, vision, and objectives allow us to visualize where the institution is heading.
	The institution's mission, vision, and objectives allow me to visualize what the institution expects of me.
	There is good communication with my immediate boss.
	My immediate superior promotes a pleasant work environment.
	I consider my immediate superior boss to be a leader.
	My immediate superior manager supports my personal and professional development.
	My relationship with my colleagues is healthy.
	I have a good relationship with the support staff.
	The relationship with the administrative staff is cordial.
	In general terms, the work environment in the faculty/department where I work is pleasant.
	In general terms, I feel part of the institution.
Social capital (SC)	In the institution where I work, I can freely express my opinions.
	I can trust that the institution's decisions will benefit us all.
	I can trust my immediate boss.
Job satisfaction	In general, how satisfied am I with my job?

(JS)

Note: Own elaboration.

REFERENCES

Please refer to the articles in Spanish Bibliography.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Please refer to articles Spanish Biographical abstract.