Organizational culture for enterprise sustainability

Cultura organizacional para la sostenibilidad empresarial

Cultura de organização para a sustentabilidade empresarial

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture studies are becoming increasingly relevant in the enterprise world, since its approach shows the reality of the organization as subjectivized by its workers. On the other hand, sustainability as a concept associated with organizational growth and development adopts, with more strength, principles and values that translate into the search for equity, social and economic justice, as well as respect for nature, aspects that need to be connected with the organizational dynamics that are generated from the cultural reality that the enterprise lives. The objective of this research is to design a socio-psychological training program for the transformation of cultural patterns in a recyclable material processing enterprise. For such purposes, a mixed research approach is used, where the quantitative stage corresponds to a descriptive transectional design and the qualitative stage to a participative action-research design. The results show that communication, management and interpersonal relationships are the cultural patterns that have a negative impact on human resource management. Based on this result, the training program is designed and implemented, validated by national and international experts. The implementation of the program shows indicators of positive

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change in the organization and constitutes a starting point for future research related to the subject, recognizing the importance of organizational culture in the process of human resources management for the achievement of enterprise sustainability.

Keywords: organizational culture; human resources; enterprise sustainability

RESUMEN

Los estudios de cultura organizacional alcanzan cada vez más relevancia en el ámbito empresarial, pues su abordaje muestra la realidad de la organización tal y como la subjetivan sus trabajadores. Por otra parte, la sostenibilidad como concepto asociado al crecimiento y desarrollo organizacional adopta, con más fuerza, principios y valores que se traducen en la búsqueda de equidad, justicia social y económica, así como un respeto por la naturaleza, aspectos estos que necesitan ser conectados con las dinámicas organizacionales que se generan a partir de la realidad cultural que vive la empresa. La presente investigación tiene como objetivo diseñar un programa de entrenamiento socio-sicológico para la trasformación de patrones culturales en una empresa procesadora de material reciclable. Para tales fines, se emplea un enfoque mixto de investigación, donde la etapa cuantitativa corresponde a un diseño transeccional descriptivo y la cualitativa a un diseño de investigación-acción participativo. Los resultados refieren que la comunicación, la dirección y las relaciones interpersonales son los patrones culturales que inciden negativamente en la gestión de los recursos humanos. A partir de este resultado, se diseña e implementa el programa de entrenamiento, validado por expertos nacionales e internacionales. La implementación del programa muestra indicadores de cambio positivos en la organización y constituye un punto de partida para que, futuras investigaciones relacionadas con la temática, reconozcan la importancia de la cultura organizacional en el proceso de gestión de los recursos humanos para el logro de una sostenibilidad empresarial.

Palabras clave: cultura organizacional; recursos humanos; sostenibilidad empresarial

RESUMO

Os estudos de cultura organizacional estão a tornar-se cada vez mais relevantes no mundo empresarial, uma vez que a sua abordagem mostra a realidade da organização como subjectivamente percebida pelos seus trabalhadores. Por outro lado, a sustentabilidade como conceito associado ao crescimento e desenvolvimento organizacional adopta, com mais força, princípios e valores que se traduzem na procura de equidade, justiça social e económica, bem como respeito pela natureza, aspectos que precisam de estar relacionados com as dinâmicas organizacionais que são geradas a partir da realidade cultural que a empresa vive. O objectivo desta investigação é conceber um programa de formação sócio-psicológica para a transformação de padrões culturais numa empresa que processe materiais recicláveis. Para este fim, é utilizada uma abordagem de investigação mista, em que a fase quantitativa corresponde a um desenho transeccional descritivo e a fase qualitativa a um desenho de investigação de acção participativa. Os resultados indicam que a comunicação, a gestão e as relações interpessoais são os padrões culturais que têm um impacto negativo na gestão dos recursos humanos. Com base neste resultado, o programa de formação é concebido e implementado, validado por peritos nacionais e internacionais. A implementação do programa mostra indicadores positivos de mudança na organização e constitui um ponto de partida para futuras pesquisas relacionadas com o tema, a fim de reconhecer a importância da cultura organizacional no processo de gestão de recursos humanos para a realização da sustentabilidade empresarial.

Palavras-chave: cultura organizacional; recursos humanos; sustentabilidade empresarial

INTRODUCTION

Science is advancing at an accelerated pace in the attempt to promote the development and sustainability of labor organizations, especially those that respond to the problems of organizational subjectivity.

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According to Carro, Sarmiento and Rosano (2017, p. 2): sustainable development, technological advancement and globalization in the world have also generated a new perspective in the development of enterprises; thus, for a enterprise to be successful today, it must seek new strategies to generate value in its products, processes and human capital with a sustainable approach, through a culture that values the creativity and innovation of its members.

In recent years, culture has become an important aspect of research, especially because it allows to understand the inner workings of organizational dynamics and establish strategies to influence those cultural patterns that require change or modulation.

On the other hand, sustainability as a concept associated with organizational growth and development, adopts principles and values that translate into the search for equity, social and economic justice, as well as a respect for nature (Camacho Castro & Cereceres Gutiérrez, 2016; Kiesnere & Baumgartner, 2019), aspects that need to be connected with the organizational dynamics that are generated, from the cultural reality that the enterprise lives.

Influencing the transformation of organizational culture is fundamental for the development of sustainability, because it is not only about implementing techniques and strategies, but it has to do with a style and way of doing everything in the organization. Sustainability is embedded in the culture of all members of the organization. It is a new way of life, with a different vision and priorities that go beyond the purely economic (Camacho Castro & Cereceres Gutiérrez, 2016; Madero Gómez & Zarate Solís, 2016).

From this perspective, the present research project has been proposed, which has as its general objective: *To design a socio-psychological training program for the transformation of cultural patterns in an enterprise that processes recyclable material* (to preserve the identity of the enterprise, its name and geographic location are not mentioned).

The design of this training program starts with an initial diagnosis of the organizational culture, where the cultural patterns that have a dysfunctional expression in the organization are identified and from there the training program is designed, implemented and evaluated.

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As of the new process of economic organization that Cuba is undergoing, priority is being given to promoting highly innovative and flexible management methods in enterprises that encourage creativity, autonomy in management and promote endogenous local development.

It is imperative to be uprooted from centralized economic models and focus on alternatives that demand initiatives, good practices, boost exports, reduce imports, meet the demands of the domestic market, among other aspects. Research influences in this direction, which requires a change of paradigms and mental models, in short, a deep cultural transformation in our organizations that promotes innovation and sustainability of proposals.

Organizational culture and its influence on sustainable enterprises development

Given the importance of the study of culture (Schneider et al., 2017), more and more enterprises are focusing part of their efforts on the development of human resources, on strengthening this intangible capital that workers reflect in their activity within the organization. According to Salas, García and Murillo (2017, p. 90), all organizations should promote an innovative culture that facilitates greater participation and commitment of their workers.

According to Reyes Hernández (2018): Empowering a socio-psychological harmony in organizations makes individuals feed the system from a strong commitment and conviction for change, a path that constitutes a challenge so that the organizational culture is not only a direct reflection of what the subjects think, feel and live, but a horizon that permanently invites to discover, transform and improve.

Organizational culture is included as a pillar for a favorable sustainable development within each enterprise, being of vital importance for the improvement of working, socioeconomic and environmental conditions of the same, as well as the strengthening of socio-psychological phenomena such as: communication, leadership, work environment, interpersonal relationships, among others. This leads to a strengthening in the management of human resources practices, by reinforcing an identity that manages to establish harmony between individual and organizational interests.

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Who first coined the concept of organizational culture is Schein (1988), who defines it as: Pattern of basic assumptions that a certain group has invented, discovered or developed in the process of learning to solve its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way of perceiving, thinking and feeling in relation to these problems (pp. 25-26).

Multiple models have been used for the study of organizational culture, which points to a diversity and plurality of proposals for addressing this phenomenon, however, this research takes as a reference the Hartasánchez Model, which establishes for the study of organizational culture, a classification into four types of culture:

- *Function Culture:* Where it is declared as a fundamental norm, the strict compliance with the guidelines established in each position. It is also recognized as a bureaucratic culture
- *Culture of Power:* There is a predominance of a centralized and vertical management model, which does not give room for employee participation
- *Performance Culture:* What is most significant in this type of culture is the efficiency and positive impact of working in a team and being results oriented
- *Supportive Culture: The* merits of teamwork and the coincidence of visions, objectives and goals are exalted, at the same time that work motivation is increased

Theoretical approaches to the study of corporate sustainability

Currently, the development of a sustainability strategy at the enterprise level is a fundamental premise for the achievement of organizations of excellence. These organizations seek to align themselves with international concerns related to the transformation towards sustainable production and consumption models, environmental protection, as well as equity and social justice (Carro Suárez et al., 2017).

The enterprise sustainability approach involves recognizing the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects at the level of the organization's culture, being fundamental a deep process of cultural change (Paraschiv et al., 2012).

The starting point for understanding sustainability in organizations is the concept developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2014) under which the organization is placed at the center of three major areas: economy, society and environment. To speak of a sustainable organization is to integrate aspects related to the creation of jobs that generate productivity capacity, decent work and human growth within the organization.

With the premise of strengthening the development of the human dimension for enterprise sustainability, it is necessary to deploy strategies to align corporate values and influence the perception of workers to achieve human resources practices focused on sustainable development. The aim is to achieve certain cultural conditions that favor the performance of people and, therefore, automatically the results expected from the enterprise (Calderón Hernández et al., 2003).

To develop strategies that lead to a sustainable development of the enterprise and that allows the fulfillment of its objectives and goals, goes through the need to strengthen its organizational culture, generate a sense of identity, guide the behavior of managers and workers towards institutional goals, which will strengthen the possibilities of adaptation of the enterprise to the environment and the generation of learning patterns that allow to consolidate in the market, face the competition and achieve the commitment of customers.

Organizational culture is a key factor in the implementation of the enterprise's sustainability strategy. Conveying identity, facilitating the commitment and understanding of the members, in addition to offering commonly accepted premises and assumptions, make culture an asset of particular importance to function as an integrating mechanism within the organization (Camacho Castro & Cereceres Gutiérrez, 2016).

The literature reviewed reveals that there is insufficient information, from scientific evidence, that relates organizational culture to the concept of enterprise sustainability, which reveals the need for research to explore those cultural dimensions that are most relevant to guide the enterprise towards sustainable development.

The whole enterprise must work towards an integration in its cultural projection, so that there is a direct relationship between personal interests and the values and interests of

the organization. It is necessary to align the whole system of beliefs and shared values; this will make workers to deploy a sense of identity and to build changes that reflect an advance to achieve sustainable development.

The study of enterprise sustainability, according to Carro, Sarmiento and Rosano (2017), integrates four fundamental dimensions: environmental, social, economic and institutional. From their perspective, the institutional dimension proposes the creation of a culture in which sustainability is its fundamental principle and that, with this, a corporate mission and vision is forged that favors the creation and establishment of norms and values that people practice inside and outside the organization.

This perspective places the human being, his/her growth and development, as the core for the improvement of organizations, and also includes the organizational culture as a central element for the formation of the enterprise's identity and an advantage for its sustainable development. Enhancing this synergy is an increasingly growing imperative to achieve more efficient, effective and sustainable organizations in their management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present work is framed within the mixed research design. This approach allows to achieve a more precise knowledge of the phenomenon studied, as it allows to obtain a greater variety of perspectives of the problem: frequency, breadth and magnitude (quantitative), as well as depth and complexity (qualitative), generalization (quantitative) and understanding (qualitative). The quantitative stage, applied to the diagnostic phase, corresponded to a descriptive transectional non-experimental model, while the qualitative stage was based on a participatory action research design.

The instruments used in the diagnosis were the following:

- Organizational norms and values questionnaire: The objective of this instrument is for each subject to select the 10 characteristics that, according to their criteria, are currently expressed in their organization and, secondly, to choose the 10 that they would like to be present in their work center. From here, an analysis is made of the dispersion between the actual and desired standards

- Dynamic Profile of Organizational Culture: The questionnaire consists of 15 "principles" of statements that describe some aspect of organizational functioning and design. After each of the principles, there are four possible "endings". Combining each sentence principle with each of the four endings will form a complete sentence. The questionnaire is administered twice, the first time to analyze the profile of the existing organizational culture and the second time to find out the preferred organizational culture

- Appreciative Interview: This instrument reveals the best of people and organizations, hence its main feature is that it invites people to tell stories and participate in that truly human level, an essential aspect for the narrative analysis, as it allows access to the beliefs and values that define the meanings that guide and determine a particular way of feeling, thinking and acting of the members of the organization

The sample to be studied for the diagnostic phase of the organizational culture was composed of 32 workers of the enterprise under study. The sociodemographic characteristics that defined the sample are described below:

- 14 men and 18 women, all with more than five years of work in the enterprise
- There are 22 professionals, 7 mid-level technicians and 3 with pre-university level
- 10 are in managerial positions, 14 are substitute managers and 8 are not in managerial positions
- Ten areas of the organization are represented out of a possible 12

On the other hand, the sample that was part of the training program was 17 workers. The following criteria were selected, taking into consideration:

- That as many top-level decision-makers and heads of department as possible could be present. A total of 8 people fulfilled this condition
- Key players in the organization, due to their position within the organizational chart (reserves of managers) and their capacity to influence and transform the groups where they work

- That key areas of the enterprise were represented, which were: Management (2), Economics (3), Management (3), Protection, security and cadres (1), Production (1), Human Resources (4), Development (2) and Commercial (1)

Finally, the sample of experts that validated the training program was selected taking into consideration that they had experience in the use of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, as well as in the field of Organizational Psychology, with emphasis on the study of Organizational Culture.

A total of 9 experts were consulted and took into account the conformation of specialists, both nationally and internationally. The persons consulted show a wide and fruitful professional trajectory in the above mentioned fields of study, with more than 10 years of accumulated experience in practice, supported by research results and publications in high impact journals. 100% hold the scientific category of PhD.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Social-Psychological Diagnosis of the Organizational Culture

From the triangulation of the instruments used, it was possible to determine those cultural patterns that are negatively affecting human resources management. This required a systemic and integrative view of the processes at the organizational level. Transforming culture is the starting point to generate strengthened and sustainable organizations in management.

The existing organizational culture establishes an integration between the culture of function and that of power, characterized by a management and a way of relating with a tendency to enhance bureaucratic elements and where power is established as a fundamental principle from its formal position in the organization.

From the point of view of motivation, extrinsic motivators are the main source of inspiration for the subjects, as well as external working conditions. However, there is a tendency to be committed to the work they perform, especially those who have been in the organization for a longer period of time. This is integrated with the expression of a culture of power, which tends to be centralizing.

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On the other hand, there is a clear aspiration to move towards a desired culture in which performance and support elements are integrated. The need to promote collaborative and flexible structures as an alternative to the processes of change and transformation that the enterprise is undergoing is a recurring demand from the subjects. To this, the need for a set of actions that promote collaboration for the success of the tasks and the possibility of innovation as a premise for adaptability during the processes of change are integrated.

Finally, the results of the socio-psychological diagnosis of the organizational culture show that communication, interpersonal relationships and management are the cultural patterns that have a dysfunctional expression at the organizational level. For this reason, the fundamental emphasis of the training program lies in strengthening these patterns, as well as mobilizing in the workers the critical capacity on the organizational reality of which they are part, from the interpretation of the ways they have of subjectivating this reality in relation to the cultural patterns of communication, interpersonal relations and management.

Design of the training program

The methodological reference from which this training program is based is participatory action research, through which people become aware of their role in the context of the work organization, they become protagonists of the process of change or transformation and their behavior is influenced, in an important way, by the work environment in which they find themselves.

Specifically, it is worked from the methodological device of appreciative inquiry, which suggests that the organization and change are relational inquiry processes based on affirmation and appreciation, where questions and dialogue about the strengths, successes, values and aspirations of its members, promote in itself the transformation of the subjects (Reyes Hernández, 2018).

It is also developed from the application of participatory and interactive dynamics, taken from Popular Education, which contribute to generate a horizontal relationship in the process of collective construction and offers the possibility that everyone can contribute,

from their knowledge, experiences and experiences, to the achievement of the proposed objectives.

It is structured on the basis of the following phases:

- *Phase 1. Reformulation of cultural patterns from an appreciative perspective.* The stage is conceived for two sessions, in which a presentation of the training program will be made, an overview of the appreciative inquiry process is given, the results of the diagnosis are returned, the patterns of the organizational culture are positively reformulated and the topics to be studied are selected
- *Phase 2. Potentialities of the group.* It will be worked in three sessions to unveil the group's success experiences in relation to the studied affirmative topic, which is part of the selected organizational culture pattern. In the first one, communication is approached, then interpersonal relationships and in the last session, management styles
- *Phase 3. Expectations of the workers.* Here the group's expectations about the future of the organization are revealed in relation to the organizational culture patterns studied
- *Phase 4. Design elements of the aspirational organization.* For this stage, a working session has been proposed. The elements required to achieve the proposed expectations are taken into account, who would be the people involved in this process and the affirmative statements about the design of the aspired organization are defined, based on the patterns of the selected organizational culture
- *Phase 5. Strategic action plan.* In this stage, the actions to be carried out designed in the previous phase are specified and the commitments assumed by the workers are established
- *Phase 6. Program evaluation.* In this session, the subjects make an evaluation of the process, taking into account the following categories of analysis: program design, methodology used, feasibility, experiences and learning as a result of the process

The training program was developed during three months, with a weekly frequency. In total, there were 9 sessions, with a duration time that ranged between 1 and 2 hours

per session and was structured following the consecutive logic of each of the phases outlined above.

From the implementation of the training program, it was possible to verify that, once the work sessions were finished, a break with the approaches to the analysis of the cause-effect relationship of the problems that are circumscribed to the scope of the organization was propitiated to place the emphasis on a process that privileges the collective construction from the greatest and most effective contributions that each individual and group can make to it. An attempt was made to move away from the linear vision to concentrate on the social construction that the subjects make of the organization, fostering the emergence of interaction patterns that were enriched, modified and transformed through appreciative and generative dialogue.

Through communication, the integration between person, relationship and situation was achieved, which mobilized people's competences and learning, guiding actions in the present for a future that is visualized as innovative and creator of highly effective possibilities for the success of the enterprise.

The participants' perception of the organization as an open, living system, in a permanent process of exchange with the environment, fostered the coordination, creation and joint action of its members, from a viewpoint that recreated peak experiences and placed at the center of the analysis the possibility of contribution from a shared vision and an active and anticipatory understanding of new possibilities for action.

People were connected through the synergy caused by the fact that they were highly recognized in the links established and not in the role they occupy within the enterprise, the managers assumed an active role in the process of collective construction, communication channels were opened that allowed each person to be heard from their modest and productive contributions, a favorable environment was generated in which everyone felt part of, as they were able to choose how to contribute to the success of the task, and the expectations and aspirations of the direct beneficiaries of the program were taken into consideration.

Finally the evaluation, eight months after the training program was implemented, the individual interview and the norms and values questionnaire were applied; the latter with the purpose of making a comparative analysis, before and after the program was applied, between the group that was part of the sample of the training program and the one that did not participate.

For the analysis, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used, for independent samples, for a significance level of 20%. The objective is to determine whether there are significant differences in the perception of cultural patterns between the group that received the training program and the group that did not receive the training program. The following table shows the summary of the hypothesis testing for the Organizational Norms and Values Questionnaire.

Table 1 - Summary of hypothesis testing for the total questionnaire

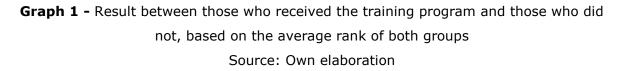|	Null hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of CATEGORIES is the same among the PASARONPROG categories.	Mann-Whitney U-test for independent samples	.132[1]	Retain the null hypothesis
The asymptotic significances are shown. Significance level is .05				
[1] Exact significance is shown for this test.				

Source: Own elaboration based on the SPSS v.26 program

An analysis was made independently for each pattern, from the indicators contained in each one, being more significant the differences in the following categories: Values (p=0.20), Social Relations (p=0.114) and Achievement (p=0.114). On the other hand, the categories Task Support (p=0.343), Work Perspective (p=0.486) and External Work Conditions (p=0.886) did not show any significant difference.

The following graph shows the results between the people who went through the training program (17 subjects) and those who did not (15 subjects), based on the average rank of both groups. The most significant is shown in the improvement of interpersonal relationships, which influence the values shared by the members of the organization to

influence their behavior and guide their decisions towards the achievement of efficiency parameters for the performance of tasks.

Graph 1 - Result between those who received the training program and those who did not, based on the average rank of both groups

Source: Own elaboration

In summary, the results obtained from the evaluation of the training program, after a period of 8 months of its implementation, are positive for the strengthening of the cultural patterns studied. Some indicators support this affirmation:

- There is a greater commitment of the subjects to the development of the enterprise's mission, which speaks in favor of a high achievement motivation
- The values that are part of the organizational culture are mobilized from a group perspective rather than an individual one. The management of human resources begins to be sustained from values that bet on a performance culture, in which teamwork and the establishment of collaborative structures for management are key factors for the success and sustainability of the enterprise

- Interpersonal relationships are aligned for the achievement of generative processes that increase work performance and the coincidence of visions, objectives and goals, typical elements of a supportive culture
- In relation to communication, a positive modulation begins to be experienced in discursive practices, appreciating a much more appreciative and appreciative discourse, valuing and recognizing a positive individuality and groupness that contributes to organizational development
- The training program has a positive impact on the models of exercising power. Managers focus on building processes from the involvement of their workers. The discourse of managers tends to be more appreciative and attempts to achieve a more participatory model for decision making are recognized, however, a centralized management style is still perceived, where the power granted by the formal position within the organization chart is exercised in a unidirectional way
- The mental schemas of the vast majority of the subjects participating in the training program achieve a modulation towards models connected with a new vision of the organization and its members, which is in itself an element of favourable change for the enterprise. Here the main learning for a more sustainable human resources management in the enterprise lies. In this respect Peter Senge (1992) states:

> Working with mental models begins with turning the mirror inward: learning to exhume our internal images of the world to bring them to the surface and subject them to rigorous scrutiny. It also includes the ability to engage in open conversations that balance inquiry (inquisitiveness) with persuasion, where people bring their thoughts forward to expose them to the influence of others (p. 18).

The results of the research highlight the need for further study of the socio-psychological aspects of labor organizations as essential elements for the transition towards enterprise sustainability.

Like this organization, many are engaged in production and consumption models that are more sustainable and that imply a permanent protection of the environment. It is not enough to establish this work philosophy from the very conception and organizational

structure, if it is not assumed within the organizations as a true cultural transformation. This implies mobilizing resources in order to achieve a change of mentality that, in turn, recognizes the necessary transition towards a change of paradigm, where the economy-society-environment triad is perceived from a total synergy and integration.
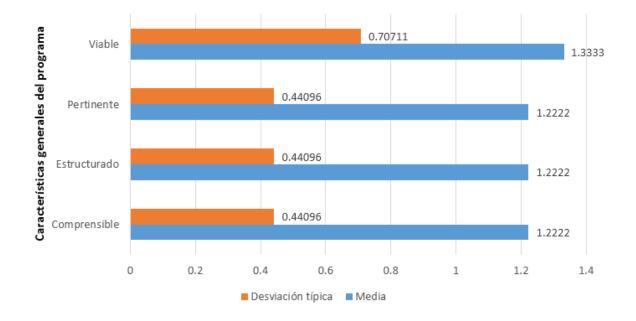
The research shows that the study of organizational culture, its transformation, and the possibility that this generates to influence the management of human resources reinforces the sense of identity and commitment of the members, acting as an integrating mechanism that dignifies and exalts the work.

It is a further contribution to the study of enterprise sustainability and constitutes a starting point for future research related to the subject to recognize the importance of organizational culture in the process of human resource management for the achievement of enterprise sustainability.

Validation of the training program

A questionnaire of three questions was applied to the experts who took part in the validation of the training program. For the analysis of the first two questions, a Likert scale of 5 anchors ranging from 1 (most favorable criterion) to 5 (most unfavorable criterion) was used and a reliability analysis was made through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, while the third question refers to recommendations that experts could make to the program.
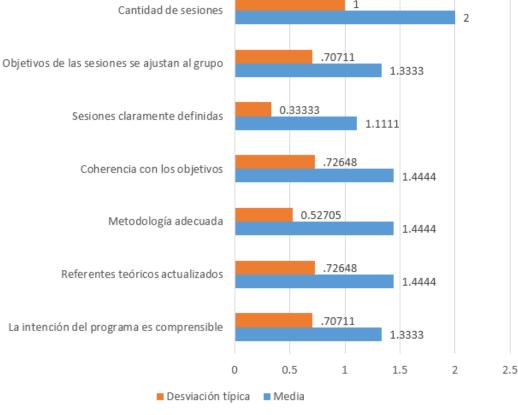
In relation to the first question, related to the general characteristics of the program, as shown in the following graph, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reached for this question was 0.97, which speaks in favor of a high level of consistency of the analyzed item.

Graph 2 - Overall evaluation of the results of the training program

Source: Own elaboration

For question two, related to the defining invariants, the mean values ranged from 1.11 to 2, reflecting very favourable criteria from the experts in relation to the programme design, whose responses ranged from Strongly Agree (1) to Agree (2). As shown in Figure 3, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient achieved was 0.93, which also reflects a high level of consistency for this question.

Graph 3 - Evaluation of training program invariants

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, the main recommendations presented by the experts in question three were focused on increasing the number of working sessions of the program, including more workers in the sample and giving them a greater role, as well as including measurement criteria and evaluation indicators before and after the application. All these recommendations are taken into consideration for future proposals.

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Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution:

Javier Reyes Hernández is the only author of the article and is responsible for the entire process of research design, implementation, data processing, analysis of the results and writing of the manuscript.