

## Evaluation of the level of sense of belonging in a clinical analysis laboratory company in the City of Durango

### Evaluación del nivel de sentido de pertenencia en una empresa de laboratorio de análisis clínicos en la Ciudad de Durango

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#### Abstract

Goodenow & Grady (1993), established the belonging sense as an indispensable aspect for the workers where they share organizational goals, principles and values, feeling accepted and valued. The objective of this work is to evaluate the level of sense of belonging at a laboratory of clinical analysis company of Durango city. The research was quantitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive. Forty employees were evaluated by the SOBI (Sense of Belonging Instrument), developed by Hagerty & Patusky (1995), which measures the sense of belonging in three dimensions: participation, capacities and interaction. The study shows that 34.16% of total responses indicate a medium level and 9.43% a low level of sense of belonging. The "Participation" dimension shows lower levels compared to the others. Also, a lower level was shown in the antiquity of 3 to 6 years and in the "nurse" position. The results give rise to investigate with greater depth variables such as position and antiquity, and their relationship with the sense of belonging.

**Evaluation, Sense of Belonging, Organizational Psychology**

#### Resumen

Goodenow & Grady (1993), establecieron al sentido de pertenencia parte indispensable del trabajador, donde comparte metas, principios y valores organizacionales, sintiéndose aceptado y valorado. El objetivo del presente trabajo es evaluar el nivel de sentido de pertenencia en una empresa de laboratorio de análisis clínicos en la Ciudad de Durango. La investigación fue cuantitativa, transversal y descriptiva. Participaron 40 empleados evaluados por la Escala SOBI (Sense of Belonging Instrument), elaborado por Hagerty & Patusky (1995), que mide el sentido de pertenencia en tres dimensiones: participación, capacidades e interacción. Se encontró el 34.16% de las respuestas con un nivel medio y 9.43% con un nivel bajo de sentido de pertenencia. La dimensión "Participación" muestra niveles más bajos en comparación al resto. Se identificó menor nivel de sentido de pertenencia en antigüedad de 3-6 años y en el puesto "Enfermera". Los resultados dan pie a investigar a mayor profundidad variables como "función laboral" y "antigüedad", y su relación con el sentido de pertenencia.

**Evaluación, Sentido de Pertenencia, Psicología Organizacional**

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## Introduction

Belonging is an affective feeling, in psychology it is described as the sense where a person appreciates being valued and important to an external referent; in sociology belonging implies incorporation into groups or procedures. In this definition, belonging can be observed and described through behavioral referents such as affiliation to groups and social networks. (Hagerty et al., 1992).

According to the school of humanistic psychology, Maslow contemplates belonging in the second step of the pyramid of human needs, marks it as a basic psychological need that preserves health, likewise, establishes that when psychological and security needs are met, the need for love, affection and belonging emerges. (Elizalde et. al., 2006).

According to Hagerty & Patusky (1995) the sense of belonging has three dimensions: participation, capabilities and interaction.

Participation is the way subjects engage in responsibility, commitment, collaboration, and decision-making for the achievement of common goals. (Chavez 2003, cited in Hernández, 2013).

Capability is the ability to do things that are valuable to a particular individual or group, events that a person is capable of being or doing. (Sen, 1993, cited in Indavera, 2017).

Interaction is defined as the mutual task of behaviors between individuals when interacting, taking into account the context in which they do so. (Galindo et al. 2009, cited by González, 2017).

Goodenow & Grady (1993), established that an indispensable component in the profile of the worker is the sense of belonging, where the employee shares the goals, principles and organizational values, feeling accepted, included, important, valued by the company and the labor collective. As mentioned, according to Chiavenato (2009), the sense of belonging is the security that the person obtains when he feels that he occupies a place within a group, in this case a company, so it will lead him to look for behaviors to identify with it and feel it as his own, also allows him to observe that with his daily activities he works for the company and themselves.

The moment a person perceives a real need as satisfied, they feel motivated, identified and committed, convinced that a link has been created with the organization, modifying their behavior in favor of the same. (Huerta, 2018).

Research on the sense of belonging has focused mainly on pedagogical and community areas, so, as mentioned by Dávila & Jiménez (2014), the approach to this issue in the workplace is relatively novel, however, some studies carried out around the sense of belonging in organizations in both the international and national contexts can be mentioned.

Continuing with Dávila & Jiménez, who conducted a research study in 2014, they found that the sense of belonging was a predictor of well-being and corroborated that a strong link with the organization could help workers adhere to organizational norms and that would lead them to manage the problems associated with their positions more efficiently.

In a self-service business in Coahuila, Mexico, it was identified that 80% of the employees surveyed do not feel motivation and do not have a sense of belonging, because they report not being taken into account by their superiors and in some cases they were asked to do activities outside their functions, creating that their activities were carried out for a purely economic need (Macías, et.al. 2016).

In 2016, he conducted the study "Engagement and the Global Workplace", it was found that in Mexico, only 59% of employees think that their employers are interested in their well-being, 73% consider that there is a good relationship with their colleagues, 58% support the strategies and management of their company, 64% feel optimistic about their future within the company, and finally, only 44% of workers have achieved a sense of belonging to the company in which they work. (Steelcase Global Report, 2016).

The lack of personal identification towards the different organizations is a problem in the field of organizational psychology, because the lack of sense of belonging can cause difficulties of human nature origin, which leads to demotivation, rotation, resignation, low performance and dismissal of personnel, causing lower productivity and lower income for the organization (Flores et. al., 2015).

Fonseca (2017) comments that it is essential that organizations work daily on the commitment and sense of belonging of their employees with the business and for this it is necessary to listen to them, train them and provide them with opportunities for growth, generating in them feelings of gratitude and achieving that each one of the members of the corporation contribute and show their best willingness to do their job.

The current Official Mexican Standard NOM-035 aims to establish the elements to identify, analyze and prevent psychosocial risk factors, as well as promote a favorable organizational environment in the workplace, and promote the sense of belonging of the company's workers (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2018).

The above shows the relevance of the evaluation of the sense of belonging for the organizational field, the elements that intervene on it and the search for strategies that guarantee this "sense" within the current work centers.

In addition to this, highlighting that according to the literature, the sense of belonging is an important factor in the well-being of employees and the productivity of the company, the objective of this work is to evaluate the level of sense of belonging in a clinical analysis laboratory company in the City of Durango, aiming to obtain data that contributes to the area of organizational psychology and overtime can help design strategies to achieve a high level of sense of belonging, favoring a favorable aspect of the work environment.

### **Materials and methods**

A quantitative, cross-sectional and descriptive research was carried out. The participants of the study were the entire staff of a clinical analysis laboratory company with 14 years of experience in the City of Durango, that is, 40 workers, of which 20 are Pharmacobiologist Chemists, 11 Administrative, 3 of the Maintenance Area and 6 Nurses. Those mentioned agreed to collaborate in the study, with prior signature of informed consent. Data collection took place from June 01, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

In this research, the adaptation to Spanish of the SOBI scale (Sense of Belonging Instrument), elaborated by Hagerty & Patusky (1995) was applied, which has 18 items that evaluate the sense of belonging. This instrument is self-applied and has a response scale ranging from 1 (Totally agree) to 4 (Totally disagree), allowing to assess the 3 dimensions of the sense of belonging: participation, capability and interaction. According to the parameters of the instrument, the answers scored with 4 indicate a high sense of belonging and those scored with 1 indicate a low sense of belonging.

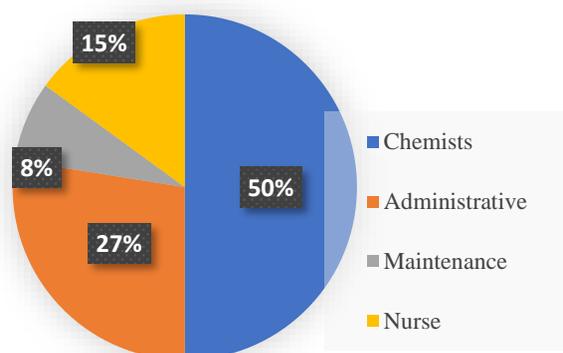
The aforementioned scale considers the dimension of "Participation" as the feeling of occupying a place within the organization by the desire to make significant contributions, which will cause a level of comfort or discomfort. It is scored with items 1,2,4,6,8, and 10.

The dimension of "Capabilities" refers to feeling able to make decisions based on their knowledge, both about the organization and professional decisions. Behavior that positively motivates and promotes communication, while negatively generates fears, anxieties and conflicts. Included in items 3,9,13,14,16, and 18.

Finally, the dimension of "Interaction" covers the relationships between two or more people through an analysis of shared characteristics. The negative effect contains hatred, emotional distance and resentment. Studied by items 5,7,11,12,15, and 17.

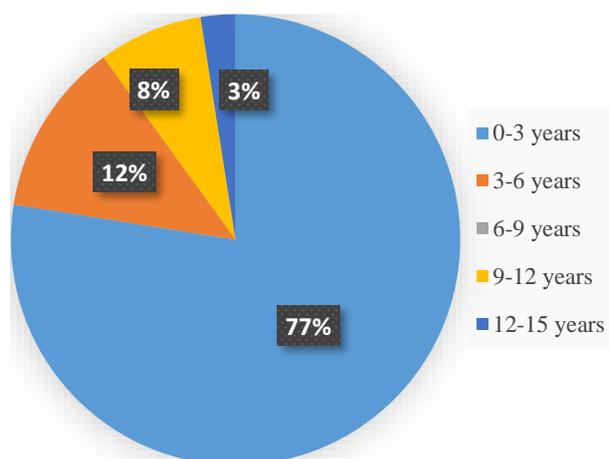
### **Results**

The population studied was integrated by 40 workers, of which 28 were women (70%) and 12 men (30%). The positions held in the company were distributed as follows: 20 Pharmacobiologists Chemists (50%), 11 Administrative (27.5%), 3 from the Maintenance Area (7.5%) and 6 Nurses (15%). See graphic 1.



**Graphic 1** Distribution of employees by job position  
Source: Own elaboration

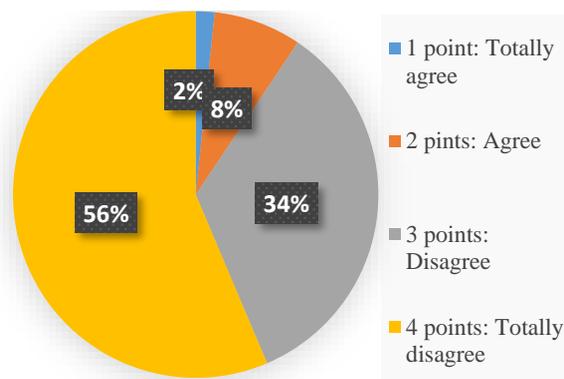
The age of the participants varies from 18 to 60 years, with a mode of 26 years, an average of 29.5 years and a median of 28. The work seniority was compiled through five categories, obtaining that, 31 workers have a seniority of 0-3 years (77.5%), 5 workers with 3-6 years (12.5%), 0 with 6-9 years (0%), 3 workers with 9-12 years (7.5%) and 1 worker with 12-15 years (2.5%). See graphic 2.



**Graphic 2** Distribution of employees by seniority  
Source: Own elaboration

### Implementation results of the SOBI Instrument

The reliability of Cronbach's Alpha in the applied instrument (SOBI) was 0.925. The results obtained show a mean of 3.45, a median of 4, a mode of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.70. Taking into account that the instrument has 18 items and was applied to 40 participants, the frequency distribution was as follows: 12 answers with 1 point (1.66%), 56 answers with 2 points (7.77%), 246 answers with 3 points (34.16%) and 406 answers with 4 points (56.38%). See graphic 3.



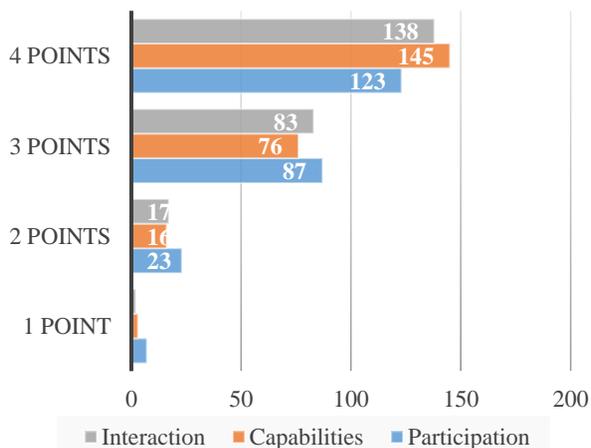
**Graphic 3** Total responses obtained in SOBI  
Source: Own elaboration

### Results by dimension of the SOBI

However, according to the dimensions of the sense of belonging assessed by the SOBI Instrument, in the items corresponding to the area of participation, a mean of 3.35, a median of 3.5, a mode of 3 and a standard deviation of 0.77 were obtained. Taking into account the responses of the total number of participants in the 6 questions corresponding to the dimension of "participation", the frequency distribution was as follows: 7 answers with 1 point (2.91%), 23 answers with 2 points (9.58%), 87 answers with 3 points (36.25%) and 123 answers with 4 points (51.25%). See graphic 4.

As for the area of "capabilities", a mean of 3.51, a median of 4, a mode of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.67 were found. According to the responses of the 6 items belonging to the dimension of "capabilities", the data were distributed as follows: 3 answers with 1 point (1.25%), 16 answers with 2 points (6.66%), 76 answers with 3 points (31.66%), 145 answers with 4 points (60.41%). See graph 4.

The dimension of "Interaction" presents a mean of 3.48, a median of 4, a mode of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.66. The frequency distribution of the analyzed data corresponding to the 6 questions in this area showed 2 answers with 1 point (0.83%), 17 answers with 2 points (7.08%), 83 answers with 3 points (34.58%) and 138 answers with 4 points (57.5%). See graph 4.



**Graphic 4** Frequency distribution by dimension of the sense of belonging

Source: Own elaboration

However, an analysis of the different dimensions of the sense of belonging was carried out, filtering the data by: gender, seniority and position.

**Gender and sense of belonging**

In the dimension of "participation" the lowest scores were obtained in both women and men, that is, an average of 3.35 and 3.37 respectively; the dimension with the highest scores in both genders, although with a minimum margin was that of "abilities", with an average of 3.50 and 3.52. See table 1.

Participation				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Women	3.35	4	4	0.77
Men	3.37	4	4	0.76
Capabilities				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Deviation from
Women	3.50	4	4	0.68
Men	3.52	4	4	0.66
Interaction				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Women	3.47	4	4	0.66
Men	3.49	4	4	0.66

**Table 1** Measures of central tendency of the dimensions of the sense of belonging according to gender

Source: Own elaboration

**Seniority and sense of belonging**

It was observed that the lowest scores, (slightly) in the three dimensions of the sense of belonging (participation, abilities and interaction) was in employees with seniority of 3-6 years, with an average of 3.34, 3.49 and 3.46 respectively in each dimension, while the highest scores were in the seniority of 12-15 years, with a mean 3.66, 3.83 and 3.83, however, only one worker is in that category. See table 2.

Participation				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
0-3 years	3.36	4	4	0.77
3-6 years	3.34	3	4	0.76
6-9 years	0	0	0	0
9-12 years	3.36	4	4	0.75
12-15 years	3.66	4	4	0.81
Capabilities				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
0-3 years	3.51	4	4	0.67
3-6 years	3.49	4	4	0.67
6-9 years	0	0	0	0
9-12 years	3.51	4	4	0.63
12-15 years	3.83	4	4	0.40
Interaction				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
0-3 years	3.48	4	4	0.67
3-6 years	3.46	4	4	0.67
6-9 years	0	0	0	0
9-12 years	3.47	4	4	0.66
12-15 years	3.83	4	4	0.40

**Table 2** Measures of central tendency of the dimensions of the sense of belonging according to work seniority

Source: Own elaboration

### Position and sense of belonging

It was found that in all three dimensions Pharmacobiologists Chemists are those with a slightly higher score with a mode of 3.38, 3.52 and 3.49 (participation, abilities and interaction) and Nurses show lower scores with a mode of 3.27, 3.42 and 3.35 in the respective dimensions. See table 3.

Participation				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Chemist	3.38	4	4	0.76
Administrative	3.35	4	4	0.77
Maintenance	3.35	3	4	0.73
Nurse	3.27	3	3	0.76
Capabilities				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Chemist	3.52	4	4	0.66
Administrative	3.51	4	4	0.67
Maintenance	3.49	4	4	0.65
Nurse	3.42	4	4	0.69
Interaction				
	Stocking	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Chemist	3.49	4	4	0.67
Administrative	3.48	4	4	0.66
Maintenance	3.47	4	4	0.68
Nurse	3.35	3	4	0.69

**Table 3** Measures of central tendency of the dimensions of the sense of belonging according to the position  
Source: Own elaboration

### Discussion

As reflected in the results section, more than half of the answers obtained (56.38%) indicate the highest level of sense of belonging, this according to the qualification parameters set by the SOBI instrument, however, the rest of the workers according to their answers are at medium (34.16%) and low (9.43%) levels.

It can be seen that, in the three dimensions of the sense of belonging, about a third of the responses (34%) of the participants are positioned in an average level of sense of belonging.

It was observed that in the dimension of "Participation" there is a higher percentage of responses that are positioned at a low level (12.49%), compared to the rest of the other dimensions. According to Haggerty & Patusky (1995), a low score in this dimension can indicate that employees do not feel that they occupy a place within the organization, they may even present "discomfort" of being in it.

In addition to this, it should be noted that the sixth item was the one that obtained the lowest score (average of 2.9), which belongs to the aforementioned dimension, where specifically the worker refers that he would like to be taken into account for the implementing changes in the company but feels that his opinion is not valued. Returning to Chiavenato (2009), when there is a high sense of belonging, the worker seeks that his daily tasks work in favor of the company and its members, so the results obtained in this specific item indicate that although the general results show a "good" level of sense of belonging in the company, there are aspects that its members consider could be improved, and it is not being done, or it is likely that their daily activities are not being carried out with enough effort.

In addition, it is observed that the dimension with the highest values is that of "Capabilities" (60.41%), that is, most workers feel qualified to make decisions based on their knowledge, evidencing that they consider themselves professionally prepared to carry out their work activities and that their roles in the company are properly established. According to the results by gender, it was found that, in both women and men, the highest scores were located in the dimension of "Capabilities" and the lowest scores in the dimension of "Participation".

According to the reported seniority, it is observed that workers with permanence of 3-6 years show a lower level in the three dimensions of the sense of belonging. It should be noted that the majority of the workforce (77%) is made up of workers with a seniority of 0-3 years, an aspect that draws attention to being a company with 14 years of experience.

According to what was established by Flores (2015), the lack of identification towards the company can cause demotivation, rotation, resignation, low performance and dismissal of personnel, comparing this with the results obtained, the aforementioned can be a situation that might present in the company studied, since there is rotation of important personnel and the level of sense of belonging decreases slightly in employees who have remained more than 3 years in the organization compared with those who have a seniority of 0-3 years (although in the category of 12-15 years there is an increase in the level of sense of belonging, only one worker is found in that section, so it is not a significant result).

Finally, according to the task performed by the employees, the information obtained indicates that the highest levels in the three dimensions of the sense of belonging correspond to the position of "Pharmacobiologist Chemist" and the lowest to the position of "Nurse", that is, 15% of the workforce, the above may be related to the turn of the company, however, the ideal would be that the sense of belonging be homogeneous in the workers and thus comply with one of the indispensable components in the profile of the worker, being reflected in each of the activities they perform, as indicated by Goodenow & Grady (1993).

### Conclusions

The findings of this study showed that in general there is a high level of sense of belonging in workers, however, the results indicate the variables to which attention should be paid in the future, since, although the differences were minimal, it was observed that it is necessary to analyze in detail the factors involved in the dimension of participation, because it was the one that showed lower scores.

A lower level of sense of belonging was identified in participants with seniority of 3 to 6 years, as well as in the position of "Nurse", so it would be necessary to analyze the role and working conditions of these employees to distinguish if there is any specific issue that causes it.

It is important to continue investigating the issue of the sense of belonging, because it is currently a fundamental part of the NOM-035 and the area of organizational psychology, for future research it would be ideal to expand the study population taking into account different business turns. This study contributes as a precedent in the companies of the City of Durango, since there is currently little scientific information around this aspect, it also leads to raise awareness among employers about the negative impact of not having specific strategies to promote this "sense", or in contrast, the benefits that comes with having a plan where the well-being of the worker is sought.

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