










Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in two micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (msmes) in Chihuahua, Mexico




Responsabilidad social empresarial (RSE) en dos micro, pequeñas y medianas empresas (mipymes) de Chihuahua, México

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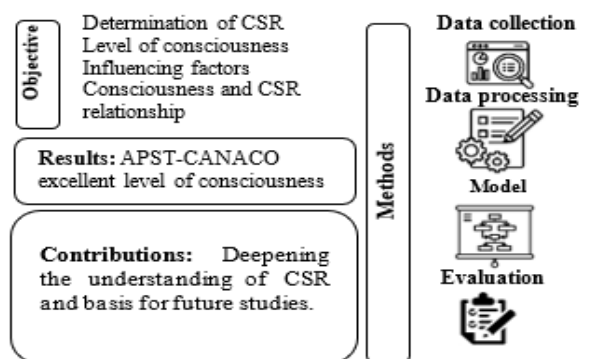


Abstract

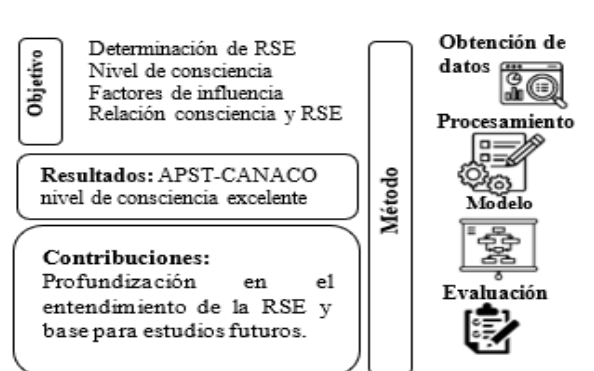
Social responsibility (SR) is not only a guide for the correct actions of companies, but also a way of directing an organization and linking with society. The central objective was to determine the level of awareness about the application of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in two organizations (MiPyME) established in Chihuahua, Mexico. In the organizations, a total of 45 companies (N=45) were identified and a total of 40 companies (n=40) were selected through non-probabilistic sampling. The data and information were obtained through the application of a questionnaire, interviews and observation. The results show that entrepreneurs from both associations have high awareness, particularly in the legal and economic areas. The businessmen from Rosales obtained a higher percentage of answers with excellent awareness compared to the businessmen from Meoqui and it was notable that the businessmen from both municipalities obtained 100% in the questions that talk about "promoting that employees consider a company fair" and "prevent corrupt practices by a company to institutions." It is concluded that the factor of ignorance is not the only thing that influences the level of awareness regarding participation in CSR, given that businessmen obtained excellent weights in the environmental, economic, legal and social areas.

Resumen

La responsabilidad social (RS) no es sólo una guía para la correcta actuación de las empresas, sino también una forma de dirigir una organización y vincularse con la sociedad. El objetivo principal era determinar el nivel de concienciación sobre la aplicación de la responsabilidad social de las empresas (RSE) en dos organizaciones (MIPYMES) establecidas en Chihuahua, México. Un total de 45 empresas (N=45) fueron identificadas en las organizaciones y un total de 40 empresas (n=40) fueron seleccionadas a través de un muestreo no probabilístico. Los datos y la información se obtuvieron con la aplicación de un cuestionario, entrevistas y observación. Los resultados muestran que los empresarios de ambas asociaciones tienen un alto grado de concienciación, sobre todo en los ámbitos jurídico y económico. Los empresarios de Rosales obtuvieron un mayor porcentaje de respuestas con excelente comparados con los empresarios de Meoqui y fue notorio que los empresarios de ambos municipios obtuvieron el 100% en las preguntas que hablan sobre "promover que los empleados consideren una empresa justa". Se concluye que el factor de desconocimiento no es lo único que influye en el nivel de concienciación respecto a la participación en RSE, ya que los empresarios obtuvieron excelentes ponderaciones en las áreas medioambiental, económica, jurídica y social áreas.



Objective, Awareness, Authentic corporate, Leadership



Objetivo, Concienciación, Auténtica empresa, Liderazgo

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Introduction

The term corporate social responsibility (CSR), also known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), was born in the mid-twentieth century and, over time, underwent various transformations. Some scholars have perfected this concept, but care has always been taken to encompass and point out the commitment that a given company has with society. More specifically, [Correa \(2007\)](#) mentioned three phases through which this term has passed throughout history. This author specified an initial phase that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century when companies were already carrying out certain philanthropic activities. Then, a second phase occurred in the mid-twentieth century where organizations accepted and assumed a more critical role in their business actions and, finally, a third stage where a solid interrelationship between the State and the company was already noticeable, without forgetting or leaving aside the role and role of society. However, some critics (i.e. Milton Friedman) argued that the company should exist only to generate wealth and not assume a leading role in society and its environment ([Carson, 1993](#)).

[Scholars Lichtenstein et al. \(2004\)](#) explained that CSR moved from a theoretical level to a more realistic level, because organizations clearly established their roles in society and applied social and ethical standards to their businesses. It is clear that, over time, some organizations adhered to and were channeled towards the application of the CSR concept ([Pinkston & Carroll, 1994](#)), although it was also evident that others had problems in their attempts ([Lindgreen et al., 2009](#)). It is important to mention that it is notorious, in the literature, that some research evolved, in a first attempt, to carry out a discussion and analysis at a macro-social level and then move to an organizational level ([Lindgreen & Swaen, 2009](#)). Recently, the impact of cultural factors on CSR has been explored. By

For example, [Mao, Sun, He, Chen, and Guo \(2024\)](#) studied how tea culture can influence business behavior, effectively limiting bad corporate behavior and promoting CSR. This type of research provides a new perspective on how specific cultural factors can shape and improve corporate social responsibility practices.

In addition, recent studies have highlighted the importance of long-term orientation (LTO) in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and its relationship with CSR. [Rosecká et al. \(2024\)](#) found that an SME's CSR is influenced by its LTO, both directly and indirectly, through the mode of deliberate strategy formation. These findings suggest that SMEs with a focus on the future and perseverance in their traditions and values are more willing to invest in CSR practices because of their long-term benefits term. [Belas et al. \(2024\)](#) concluded that the sustainability factors of SMEs, including Human Resource Management (HRM), CSR, and financial management, significantly influence their sustainability in the market. The research showed that the implementation of CSR in business management and the positive perception of human capital are key determinants for the sustainability of SMEs. These results underline the importance of CSR not only as a business promotion tool, but as an integral component for the sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness of SMEs.

In the particular case of Mexico, it can be seen that, to date, there is a considerable delay in the full development of CSR if compared to the knowledge acquired in other nations. This despite the fact that, in Mexico, philanthropic actions had been taking place since pre-Hispanic times. For example, [Lozano et al. \(2005\)](#) mentioned the presence of *calpullis*, which were groups that represented the social, commercial, economic, political, cultural, and religious sectors in Aztec society. Therefore, the concept of CSR is not a new topic since CSR has been contemplated for several years. This notorious delay in Mexico does not come exclusively from the lack of interest of all actors in this matter, but there are synergies with other factors and sociocultural conditions, which prevent the familiarization, assimilation and promotion of social responsibility. However, in terms of environmental and sustainability, recent studies by [Ontiveros et al. \(2023\)](#), show an example of sustainable practices applied in local agriculture, using mixed fertilization that in addition to improving the productivity and profitability of peanuts, also promotes a form of sustainable production, this type of practices is integrated within the framework of CSR, which demonstrates how companies can balance economic profitability with respect for the environment and social welfare.

Thus, the objective of this work was to determine the level of awareness about the application of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in two organizations established in Chihuahua, Mexico. A second objective was to identify the factors that influence the level of CSR awareness of merchants and service providers of these companies and their relationship with their personal experience. The results of this study will be relevant because they can be the triggers for the adoption of a culture of social responsibility (SR) of companies established in the south-central region of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. In addition, it will serve as a model for other chambers of commerce and associations of service providers throughout the State and the country that wish to improve their standards in terms of SR of their affiliates.

Materials and methods

This research was carried out in the period from October 2019 to March 2021. Service providers and merchants who were affiliated with the National Chamber of Commerce (CANACO) Servytur, based in the municipal seat in Meoqui, in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, participated. The association of service providers Tapacolmes (APST) established in the municipal seat in Rosales, Chihuahua, Mexico, also participated. The CANACO-Meoqui and the APST-Rosales are located in neighboring municipalities, which share both aquatic ecosystems and primary, secondary and tertiary activities. Therefore, the study of CSR awareness in these associations is very promising, since they share legal, economic, social and environmental issues.

The population of interest for this study were the companies that were in the database provided by CANACO-Meoqui and APST-Rosales. The inclusion criterion in the study was that the companies were located in the urban area, both in the city of Meoqui and in the city of Rosales, and that they were engaged in tourism, commerce and service provision activities.

A total of 45 companies (N=45) were identified and a total of 40 companies (n=40) were selected through non-probabilistic judging sampling (Rubio-Arias et al., 2024). The collection and access of information was through the application of a questionnaire, interviews and observation.

The questionnaire was designed with three sections. The first details the instructions and objective of the questionnaire, the second has the purpose of obtaining the general data of the respondent, while the third is broken down into four sections that address the economic, social, environmental and legal areas. Each section contains four questions where you have three answer options, which are written in the affirmative.

It is equivalent to a type of consciousness (intransitive/low, transitive/regular and critical/excellent) through which it is intended to determine the level of CSR awareness that the respondent has. Therefore, the study variable was SR and was weighted according to the classification of the levels of the social responsibility guide. In addition, a table of equivalization of consciousness was considered, in which an analogy between the levels of human consciousness and that of CSR was reflected.

Due to the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, on occasions, the state health traffic light established restrictive measures that prevented the application of the questionnaire in person. Under this circumstance, the questionnaire was applied virtually through a link via WhatsApp®. Once the traffic light was changed to yellow, the possibility of applying the remaining surveys in person became viable. Consequently, 18 virtual and 22 face-to-face surveys were applied, giving a total of 40 respondents; that is, n=40.

The perspectives and levels of awareness of entrepreneurs in the municipalities of Meoqui and Rosales in relation to CSR were examined. Four key areas were analyzed: environmental, social, legal, and economic.

In addition, the factors that influence the level of awareness of merchants and service providers were identified, as well as the relationship between awareness and the implementation of CSR.

The SPSS statistical package was used for the coding of the information, and descriptive statistics were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Results

Table 1 presents general data on the entrepreneurs affiliated to CANACO-Servytur Meoqui and APSP.

It can be seen that 45.46% of the men are originally from the municipality of Rosales, while 54.54% are from Meoqui. Regarding women, 61.11% come from Rosales and 38.89% from Meoqui. The ages of the entrepreneurs range from 18 to 80 years old, providing a wide range of experiences for research.

Box 1

Table 1

General data of the municipalities of Meoqui and Rosales

Variables	Municipio de Rosales						Municipio de Meoqui					
	Hombres			Mujeres			Hombres			Mujeres		
	Comercio	Servicios	Turismo	Comercio	Servicios	Turismo	Comercio	Servicios	Turismo	Comercio	Servicios	Turismo
Edad	Entre 18 y 35	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	2	1
	Entre 36 y 50	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	2	1
	Entre 51 y 65	0	0	3	3	3	0	4	1	0	0	0
	Entre 66 y 80	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Básico	1	0	1	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Nivel de estudios	Preparatoria	0	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	0
	Licenciatura	1	2	0	1	2	0	4	1	0	3	1
	Posgrado	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
No. de hijos	Mujeres	1	5	7	1	1	11	12	2	0	3	19
	Hombres	3	55	9	1	3	8	16	4	0	2	15
Antigüedad del negocio	Menos de 1 año	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
	Entre 2 a 4 años	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
	Entre 5 a 7 años	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	1	0	2	2
	Más de 8 años	2	1	3	1	0	2	5	2	0	0	0
Total	10	69	31	17	16	25	55	15	0	17	40	

Source: own elaboration

As for the educational level by municipality, 25% of entrepreneurs in Meoqui have a bachelor's degree, while 10% have high school, 7.5% basic education and 5% postgraduate. In Rosales, both undergraduate and high school have 15%, 12.5% have basic education and 10% have postgraduate education. As for the business line, 32.5% of entrepreneurs in Meoqui are dedicated to commerce, 12.5% to the service sector and 2.5% to tourism. In Rosales, commerce, services and tourism represent 17.5% respectively. The relationship between age and age of the business shows that, in Meoqui, the highest percentage of entrepreneurs between 18 and 35 years old have businesses that are less than one year old, while in the 51 to 65 age group, the highest percentage belongs to businesses that are more than 8 years old.

The services sector employs 55.32% of the workers, followed by commerce with 23.40% and tourism with 21.28%. Although tourism has the fewest employees, it has the same number of employed men and women.

There is a difference in the percentage of male and female employees under the position of businesswomen (5.4%) and businessmen (52.64%).

Levels of awareness in CSR

The results indicate that, in general, entrepreneurs from both municipalities show a high awareness in all the areas examined, particularly in the legal and economic areas. However, some significant differences are observed between municipalities in certain areas.

Box 2

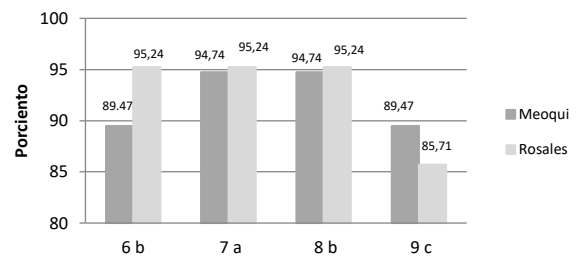


Figure 1

Answers with excellent awareness from the Environmental Section

Source: own elaboration

Figure 1 shows that entrepreneurs from Rosales obtained a higher percentage of responses with excellent awareness compared to entrepreneurs from Meoqui in questions 6, 7 and 8 with 95.24% respectively; however, Meoqui stands out in 9th with 89.47%. In general, it can be observed that in the 7th and 8th there is not much difference between the two, but in the 6th and 9th there is, even though both municipalities exceed 85%, in Meoqui there is a deficiency in the perspective of "reducing water consumption" and in Rosales about "promoting ecological alternatives".

Box 3

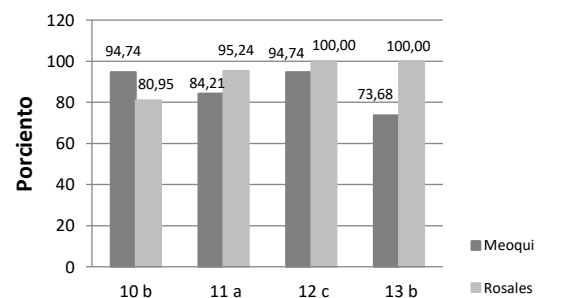


Figure 2

Responses with excellent conscience from the Social Section

Source: own elaboration

Figure 2 shows that the entrepreneurs of Rosales obtained a higher percentage of answers with excellent awareness compared to the entrepreneurs of Meoqui in question 11 with 95.24%, in 12 and 13 where both obtained 100%, however, Meoqui leads in question 10 with 94.74%. In the case of Rosales, it had a greater deficiency in "preventing issues of discrimination" and in the case of Meoqui "showing itself as a company to the community"

Box 4

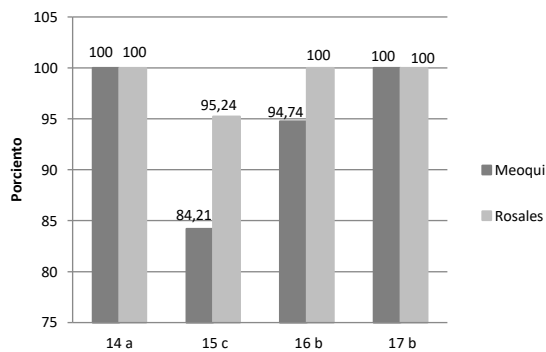


Figure 3

Answers with excellent awareness from the Legal Section

Source: own elaboration

Figure 3 shows that businessmen from both municipalities obtained 100% in questions 14 and 17, which talk about "promoting that employees consider a company fair" and "preventing corruption practices by a company to institutions". In question 16, which talks about "compliance of the company with its obligations to the state or municipality", Rosales achieved 100% and Meoqui 94.74%. In the case of question 15, Rosales achieved 95.24%, which, although it is the lowest of the 4 questions, still exceeds the percentage of Meoqui with 84.21%, denoting the deficiency of the item.

Box 5

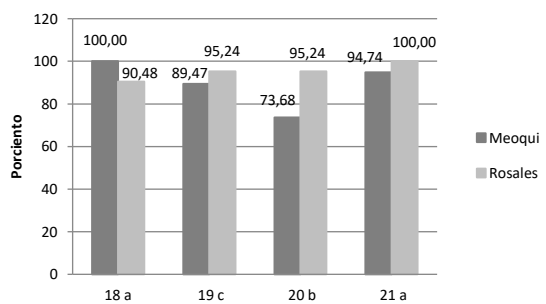


Figure 4

Answers with excellent awareness from the Economic Section

Source: own elaboration

Figure 4 shows that the municipality of Rosales obtained a percentage of more than 90% in all its questions, achieving only in question 21 that talks about "preventing sanctions by competent institutions". In the case of Meoqui he got 100% in question 18 which says about "promoting fair competition", in question 21 he got 94.73%, in 19 89.47% and in question 20 he obtained 73.68%, the lowest value in the series.

Box 6

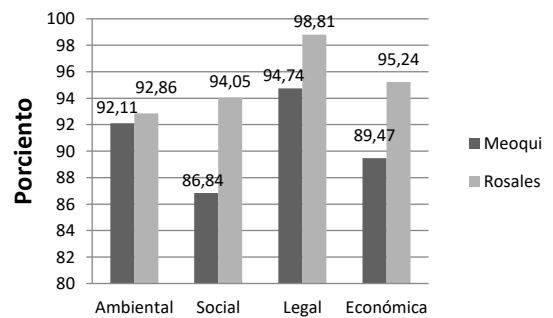


Figure 5

Concentrate of the average of the CSR sections

Source: own elaboration

Figure 5 shows the average of the different questions per section, which shows which areas have the greatest deficiency in each municipality. In the environmental section the difference is .75%, and in the case of Rosales it is the section with the lowest percentage of the 4. In the social area, Rosales increases while Meoqui decreases its percentage, even being the lowest of all areas. In the legal area, both municipalities have the highest scores, and the difference between them is only 4.07%. And in the economic area, Rosales remains at high levels with 95.24%, unlike Meoqui, which achieves the second lowest value in the table.

Box 7

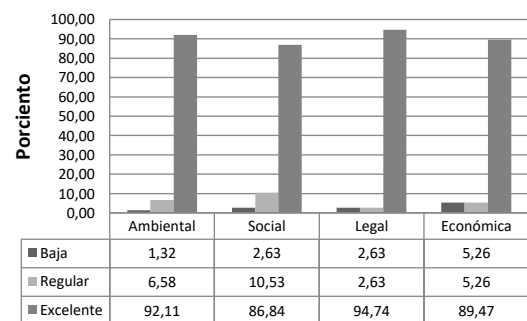


Figure 6

CSR awareness concentrate in the municipality of Meoqui

Source: own elaboration

Figure 6 shows the averages of the percentages of the responses corresponding to the types of CSR awareness of the entrepreneurs in the municipality of Meoqui. It can be observed that the consciousness that has the highest percentage is excellent in all areas, followed by regular consciousness and finally the lowest percentage belonging to low consciousness.

Box 8

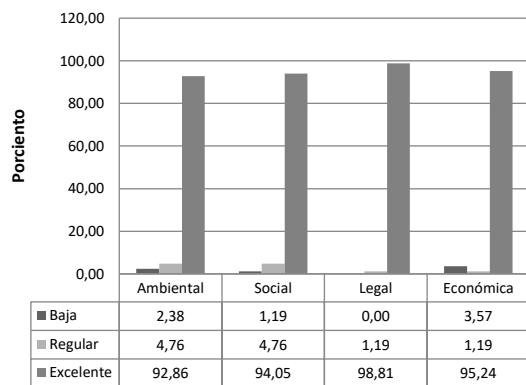


Figure 7
CSR awareness concentrate in the municipality of Rosales

Source: own elaboration

Figure 7 shows the averages of the percentages of the responses corresponding to the types of CSR awareness of the entrepreneurs in the municipality of Rosales. The consciousness with the highest percentage is the level of excellent consciousness in the 4 areas, followed by regular consciousness and low consciousness.

Interview results

Several representatives and former representatives of the municipalities of Rosales, Meoqui, Julimes, Saucillo, the Conciliation and Arbitration Board in Delicias and the offices of the State Human Rights Commission (CEDH) also in Delicias were interviewed, to find out the environmental, social, economic and legal situation that the south-central region of the state was going through. in a very general way.

The interviews sought to determine if the conditions of the municipalities of Meoqui and Rosales were different or similar to those of the remaining municipalities. It was found that they shared similar conditions, due to their proximity and main economic activities.

In addition to having common patterns in terms of their problems, such as: unjustified dismissals, termination of the employment relationship by the worker and termination of the employment relationship by the employer (legal area), the monopoly of some products and services, unfair competition, lack of employment, reduction of federal budgets, federal government decisions, informal businesses and the situation of the pandemic (economic area), the constant violation of human rights, despite the decrease in complaints due to the pandemic (social area), contamination of bodies of water (dams, rivers), destruction of flora and fauna, drought in the state (low water catchment) and release of water from dams by government decision (environmental area).

During the application of the questionnaire in person to the entrepreneurs, it was possible to find out through observation and personal talks other factors that could have influenced the responses. That is, factors such as knowledge or lack of knowledge about CSR, environmental, economic, legal and social aspects (since they asked to be explained what the question referred to and some terms). Some participants reported personal experiences (because they considered it necessary for them to understand and for the interviewer to be empathetic with their points of view), priorities of entrepreneurs (investing, saving, among others), type of culture of society (unfair practices "allowed" or that are done out of habit), economic conditions of the company (if there is solvency or financial problems) and of the current economy (inflation, pandemic), action and compliance of authorities (incorruptible or fraudulent authorities), regional economic competition (fair or unfair competition), values (terminal or instrumental) and beliefs.

Relationship that consciousness has with the implementation of CSR

Some respondents mentioned during the application of the questionnaire that they did not know about CSR issues. However, they would have no problem with training in the subject. Some participants were even enthusiastic about the idea of a socially responsible city; however, despite the interest in CSR, they emphasized the difficulties they could face and that the possibility of implementing it would depend on the conditions presented to them.

It would depend on whether the effort they applied or made was beneficial or with bad results, since a bad result would be the main demotivator to continue making efforts in favor of CSR. They mentioned that the effort should be made by citizens, businessmen and the various authorities to fulfill their part. Because, if one of the three did not participate with the same energy and enthusiasm, then it would be unfair for the others to make an effort. Thus, the relationship between consciousness and the implementation of CSR is based on the interdependence of the influencing factors and the results observed by entrepreneurs in society.

It is important to note that positive results can be observed in the community; However, if the level of consciousness is low or regular, then its implementation will be unlikely in the medium and long term. In addition, it is clear that it is possible to have an awareness of CSR; but, if the results do not convince the entrepreneur, consequently, it is very unlikely that they will be executed.

Conclusions and recommendations

Derived from the results of this study, it is concluded that the factor of ignorance is not the only thing that influences the level of awareness regarding participation in CSR actions, because entrepreneurs obtained excellent weightings corresponding to the environmental, economic, legal and social areas.

A second conclusion is that personal experience, although it is an important influencing factor to participate in CSR actions and projects, there are other elements such as the economic, social, legal and environmental conditions that the individual is going through that alter their perception of CSR.

It is advisable to continue with this type of project that offers relevant information on the factors that influence the adoption of CSR and, thus, implement actions in the medium and long term.

It is also advisable to initiate awareness and sensitization programs at all levels in order to standardize knowledge about CSR and the potential advantages of its implementation.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that would have appeared to influence the article reported in this article.

Authors' contribution

Ontiveros-Gómez, Samantha: I contribute to the idea of the project and the development of the research.

Ortega-Montes, Fabiola Iveth: I contribute to the development of research, data analysis, review and editing.

Sánchez-Bernal, Jorge Alberto: I contribute with revision and editing.

Rubio-Arias, Héctor Osbaldo: I contribute with the research method, data analysis

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Abbreviations

APST	Association of service providers
CANACO	Tapacolmes
LTO	National Chamber of Commerce
MSMEs	Long term
RS	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
CSR	Social Responsibility
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility

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Background

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