# REFLECTIONS ON MANDATORY TELEWORKING: INDIVIDUAL'S CHALLENGES

# REFLEXÕES SOBRE O TELETRABALHO COMPULSÓRIO: DESAFIOS DO PONTO DE VISTA DO INDIVÍDUO

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**Abstract:** In March 2020, the world of labor relations stopped in the face of a global health crisis. Suddenly, work would only be possible for many people using digital tools. What was a choice in the past become mandatory for most professions. In this study, we discuss the characteristics and challenges of mandatory teleworking from individual perspective during he COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology used is qualitative, with a literature review and document analysis. The general objective of the paper is to present the literature on teleworking. The specific objectives are to conceptualize teleworking, to approach it from the individual's point of view, and to reflect on the increased use of teleworking in our society. Thus, the main characteristic of teleworking is autonomy, which presupposes a disciplined worker. During social isolation, the challenge of confinement put both disciplined and not disciplined individuals in the same position. Different ways must approach autonomy. The control and supervision of workers would be done without face-to-face interaction, and electronic supervision was a unique control. The challenges point to care with isolation and the need for social support.

**Keywords:** Telework ; Home office ; Covid-19.

**Resumo:** Em março de 2020, o mundo das relações de trabalho parou diante do caos de uma crise sanitária mundial. De repente, o trabalho somente seria possível para muitas pessoas com a utilização de ferramentas digitais. O que era uma escolha, passou a ser mandatório para a maioria das profissões. No presente artigo, buscou-se discutir as características e os desafios do teletrabalho compulsório do ponto de vista do indivíduo durante o isolamento da pandemia do Covid-19. A metodologia utilizada é de natureza qualitativa, com revisão bibliográfica e análise documental. O objetivo geral do artigo é apresentar a literatura sobre o teletrabalho, sendo objetivos específicos a conceituação, a abordagem do teletrabalho do ponto de vista do indivíduo e trazer reflexões acerca da maior utilização do teletrabalho em nossa sociedade. Assim, a característica principal do teletrabalho é a autonomia, que pressupõe um indivíduo disciplinado. Durante o *lockdown*, o desafio do isolamento colocou na mesma posição disciplinados e não disciplinados para o teletrabalho. Então a autonomia precisou ser trabalhada de maneira diferente do que vinha sido abordada. O controle e a supervisão das equipes deixaram de serem executados em interação presencial para utilizar apenas meios eletrônicos. Finaliza-se o estudo enaltecendo a importância do suporte de grupo para mitigar a solidão dos trabalhadores e para ajudar a manutenção da produtividade.

**Palavras-chave:** Teletrabalho; *Home office;* Covid-19.

## INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization recognized the global Covid-19 pandemic resulting from the spread of Sars-Cov-2. This provision resulted in the emptying of

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the streets, the widespread closure of educational units, restrictions, and the closure of commerce and public offices, with only essential services being maintained. With the closure of corporate headquarters and public offices, teleworking became the primary way of working (CONTRERAS *et al.,* 2020).

Although defining teleworking somewhat affects the problem of tautology in that it involves working far from the organization's headquarters or central organization, everyone after the pandemic has a specific idea when someone says, 'I am working from home' or 'I am teleworking.' The most used expressions in academia are telework, remote work, telework, teleworking, and telecommunicating (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018).

Teleworking is used in many situations and is now known in practice by many professionals. This new way of working has its characteristics and faces challenges, overcoming which is fundamental for organizations and for the quality of life of teleworkers (BATTISTI *et al.,* 2022).

One of the characteristics of teleworking, the autonomic characteristic, is more pronounced in the literature. With the pandemic, its contours may have changed, as the traditionally disciplined profile of the teleworker, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis, is no longer the primary attribute for the home office. The disciplined individual adapts to flexible schedules, setting aside space and time for work without letting work interfere unduly with their personal and family life. Not everyone has this skill fixed. However, with the lockdown, everyone began compulsory teleworking regardless of having a self-discipline profile (BRAESEMANN et al., 2022).

Studies indicate that self-disciplined individuals may feel lonely due to isolation (CONTRERAS *et al.,* 2020). For Wang *et al.* (2021), those who are not disciplined, on the other hand, may have their ability to produce reduced, which can cause stress. In both cases, the organization's social support can mitigate these problems.

Communication, knowledge management, worker supervision, how to lead teams, and several areas of people management design needed to undergo redesign with the "new normal" that the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on organizations (BATTISTI *et al.,* 2022).

Hence, the relevance of knowing and discussing the characteristics of teleworking, which challenge institutions, such as the difficulty of balancing the use of electronic forms of supervision and productivity levels, as well as the individual's well-being, encouraging virtual interactions, taking care of workplace ergonomics and balancing work-family challenges.

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In this article, the characteristics and challenges of compulsory teleworking will be discussed from the individual's point of view in isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology used is qualitative, with a literature review and document analysis. The general objective of the paper is to present the literature on teleworking. The specific objectives are to conceptualize teleworking, to approach it from the individual's point of view, and to reflect on the increased use of teleworking in our society.

To this end, in the first section, the concepts of teleworking in the literature will be presented, with a discussion on the problems of the static definition of the concept. In the second section, different perspectives on teleworking will be addressed, relating them to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Next, characteristics and challenges will be discussed, addressing teleworking in terms of the challenges imposed on the individual. Finally, the author will make final considerations on the theoretical discussion developed as a review of the literature.

## TELEWORKING: THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION

Teleworking is usually known in Brazil as home office. However, this new way of working covers situations in which the work is carried out not only in the home environment, and its definition is complex (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018).

Remote work with intense use of information and communication technologies has been referenced since the 1970s (NILLES, 1975). Nilles' studies, since 1973, have warned of the prospects for massive use of teleworking in the future as a decentralization mechanism, made possible by the growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Nilles (1975) coined the term telecommuting when he reported in an article: "An investigation of the technologies required for telecommuting'," using the term since 1973 (NILLES, 1975, p. 1143). As a result, in the United States of America, the use of the term telecommuting was consolidated as a definition that starts from the notion of decentralization and the provision of work in other locations, far from the center of the corporation, making commuting in large urban centers more flexible (NILLES, 1975).

Another term, telework, predominantly adopted on the European continent, focuses on how the work is carried out through information and communication technology mechanisms (SAKUDA; VASCONCELOS, 2005).

Regardless of the framework that the conceptualization promotes, tying the object to be defined, due to the complexity and fluidity with which e-work evolves in economic-social relations, is an attempt doomed to failure. The dynamicity of the phenomenon breaks the membrane that circumscribes it to acquire a new extension or a different colour. In this sense, remote work, within the social organization of work, signals the modern trend that some work activities are now carried out using telematic means without the need for the worker to travel to the headquarters of the establishment that hires him (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018).

Thus, current literature is expected to define teleworking as that practiced predominantly using ICTs, not necessarily in a defined and static location, with or without subordinate employment, allowing for different temporal modalities (ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011), as well as subdivisions of synchronous or asynchronous teleworking.

For all these reasons, to contextualize the reader, some definitions present in the literature are listed.

TABLE 1- CONCEPT OF TELEWORKING IN CONTEMPORARY THEORISTS

| AUTHORS | CONCEPT |
|---|---|
| Leite and Lemos (2020) | "*Teleworking* can be defined as paid work from home, or any other workstation outside the organization's workplace for at least one day (ILLEGEMS; VERBEKE, 2004). Then, the characteristics of teleworking can be detailed concerning the place of work and the frequency of teleworking (full or partial). Regarding the different possibilities for locating work, home office or home-based work stands out: which can be defined as a workplace in the professional's home (AGUILERA et al., 2016)". (p. 3) |
| Filardi, Castro and Zanini (2018) | "In this study, we define teleworking as all work carried out remotely, that is, outside the workplace, using ICT, with computers, landlines, and cell phones and any technology that allows working anywhere, receiving and transmitting information, files, images or sound related to work activity (SOBRATT, 2016)." (p. 29) |
| Vilarinho, Paschoal and Demo (2021) | "Teleworking can be defined as a form of work organization through which activities can be carried out partially or completely outside the company's conventional workplace, with the help of telecommunication tools and services (Konradt; Schmook; Malecke, 2000)." (p. 138) |
| Pereira, Barbosa and Saraiva (2021) | "In a more restricted sense, teleworking can be conceptualized as working remotely using ICTs. This assumption is highlighted by several authors, such as Costa (2007), Felstead et al. (2003), Nohara et al. (2010), and Rosenfield and Alves (2011). A broader conception of teleworking is suggested by the International Labor Organization, which is based on the following variables: location/workspace (home, shared offices); working hours/time (full or part-time); type of work (salaried or independent) and required skills (job content)." (p. 117) |
| Rocha and Amador (2018) | "The definition of teleworking is not univocal: in the literature, both national and international, the use of different terms to refer to the same thing and the same term to allude to different specificities (SAKUDA, 2001). In the USA, the term telecommuting is more frequently used, while in Europe, telework stands out. The first term emphasizes the movement between the center requiring the work and the place where it is carried out, being replaced by the use of telematic tools. The second focuses on activities carried out by such technological means." |

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| | (p. 153) |
| Sakuda and Vasconcelos (2005) | "The word telecommuting, which originated the word teleworking in Portuguese, was coined by the North American Jack Nilles in The Telecommunications- Transportation Trade-Off in 1976. Commuting is a word that designates the round trip between home and the location of work." (p. 40) |
| Rosenfield and Alves (2011) | "In this way, teleworking cannot be conceptualized simply as distance work but as an element of strategic organizational changes that point to new forms of flexible work supported by ICTs. Flexibility can be indicated by several elements: time, place, contract, subordination, and functional organization." (p. 217) |
| Pantoja, Andrade and Oliveira (2020) | "Taking these main dimensions as a reference, it is possible to define compulsory teleworking as a type of flexible work carried out outside the workplace, using information and communication technologies, adopted immediately and contingently as an alternative to guarantee social isolation and productivity, in crisis contexts such as energy crisis, natural disasters, economic recession, public calamity, and pandemics." (p. 83) |
| Leite, Lemos and Schneider (2019) | "lack of knowledge of the concept of teleworking" (p. 2) |

**Source:** Prepared by the author (2023).

In Table 1, the authors work on the conceptual approach from a more theoretical point of view, from the perspective of the evolution of work relationships and technological advances that distance work involves. The vast majority conceptualize teleworking as predominantly outside the organization's headquarters using ICTs, with Pantoja, Andrade, and Oliveira (2020) moving towards a conceptualization contextualized in critical environments such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

While at its inception, the founder of the term telecommuting, Nilles (1975), coined the term based on the elimination of travel, in the sense of decentralization of company activities, the evolution of the practice of teleworking in Rosenfield and Alves (2011) leads to giving the term a flexibility of relativization that even does not allow it to be circumscribed within a static framework. Although Nilles' (1975) concept predominantly involves the issue of non-displacement and the European concept of the process (use of ICT resources), the process of how the working relationship is configured has remained altered. The traditional division of labour, with task specializations and permanent visual supervision of teams, has undergone substantive changes with the evolution of technologies (FERREIRA, 2000).

Thus, Ferreira (2000) points to the crisis of Taylorism-Fordism with the advancement of technologies in work arrangements in the 21st Century, which corroborates the flexibility that the concept needs to incorporate.

What comes into the discussion of this work is the advancement of teleworking. It occurs as a social fact, as a process, and as a social action, making space-time dimensions more flexible (ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011). Therefore, conceptualizing teleworking is a

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challenging task. Rosenfield and Alves (2011) state that it is not feasible to formulate an exact concept for expression but only seek to understand it within the dynamics of its interactions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, even when greater mobility was made possible with the start of vaccination, it cannot be ruled out that, especially when work meetings took place with many participants in the organization's physical space, meeting participants could have interacted through the use of ICTs, so as not to have crowds in a closed meeting room, which makes us consider the fluid nature of the definition of a social fact that is in continuous evolution. It is corroborated by the very special conceptualization launched in Pantoja, Andrade, and Oliveira's (2020) work, which is contained in Table 1 above.

To conclude this section, it can be said that teleworking is the work activity that takes place in spaces and times different from those traditionally carried out for the production of goods and provision of services, being subject to a continuous adaptive process that does not allow for a closed and static concept (ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011).

## PERSPECTIVES ON TELEWORKING IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Before addressing the challenges inherent to the individual, it is necessary to contextualize the different ways authors scientifically discuss teleworking.

Scientific approaches to remote work take into account, according to Rocha and Amador (2018), three streams: the first line focuses mainly on functionality, highlighting growth in productivity, efficiency, cost reduction, and management control; the second approach consists of studies centered on an analysis of the new production process as a continuity of worker domination, a reification of labour, called by some authors the "pessimistic" line; and, finally, the third line refers to mixed currents, whose approaches mediate between the functionalist and pessimist poles, with a critical stance discussing the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking, including discussing improvements to the environment (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018).

Some authors analyze the phenomenon by addressing stability or instability in the working relationship, the fragmentary nature of teleworking, and the precariousness of work and employment relationships (COSTA, 2007, 2013; ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011). Other theorists analyze teleworking from the perspective of the social division of labour (ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011; ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018), considering a substantial change in the traditional division of labour, as the worker's knowledge is strengthened and the most

concentrated tasks, diluting the parameter of segmented and serial production (FERREIRA, 2000). For this reason, some authors mention the emergence of the crisis of Taylorism due to the incompatibility of some of its techniques with the transformation of work relations operated by mass computing (FERREIRA, 2000).

Lima and Mendes (2023), in turn, approach teleworking from the point of view of social interaction between individuals with a dialogue with Max Weber's theory of social action and Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. Functionalist approaches use a theoretical-methodological emphasis that privileges the collective perspective, in which the social fact as a posited phenomenon determines what takes place in the sphere of individuals' actions. Likewise, currents linked to historical materialism adopted the same perspective of the strength of the structure of economic relations determining what happens at the micro level. By bringing to the debate the approach of Weber's theory of social action and Habermas' communicative action, the authors value an analysis of social interaction between individuals.

In the area of labour law, issues such as the recognition of the employment relationship through the configuration of remote subordination are discussed, as well as issues relating to illnesses and accidents at work, mainly analyzing the right to disconnection (GUNTHER; VILLATORE; MARCUZZO, 2023).

In administration research, the right to disconnect can be correlated with excessive control (CONTRERAS et al., 2020). Scholars in the sociology of work have carried out research that demonstrates the efforts of teleworkers to establish delimitations of spaces at home and even a dress code to distinguish work moments in the family environment (BARROS; SILVA, 2010; CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021). Furthermore, other studies in administration research teleworking regarding the problems it can bring to the individual and the consequences of isolation on increased production and worker health (PEREIRA; BARBOSA; SARAIVA, 2021). Some areas that received attention during the pandemic period are studies of issues on organizational theory, mental health, distance learning, and impacts on the environment. In psychology and mental health, research work is advancing due to the greater possibility of isolation when working from home.

Studies on teleworking in the federal or subnational public service are little explored. According to Oliveira and Pantoja (2018), they represent only 5.5% of scientific works. Lima (2023) carried out qualitative research, with documentary analysis, of the panorama of teleworking legislation in the Federal Executive Branch, dissecting aspects of the regulation of

teleworking at the federal level using a content analysis technique. On the other hand, Kubiak and Langoski (2021) analyzed the evolution of teleworking in Brazilian labour legislation.

Another common way of approaching the topic is to analyze the phenomenon of teleworking, regardless of the author's theoretical perspective, from the perspective of the binomial: organization/individual. This binomial takes into account gains and challenges for the organization that adopts teleworking, as well as gains and challenges for the teleworker (SAKUDA; VASCONCELOS, 2005; BARROS; SILVA, 2010; ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018; FILARDI; CASTRO; ZANINI, 2020; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021).

In theoretical work, Cabral and Alperstedt (2021) bring an approach with reflections on the problem of resignifying space due to the new situation that teleworking poses for workers. Aderaldo, Aderaldo, and Lima (2017) carry out a robust literature review in their empirical research that brings results such as the risks of invisibility of teleworkers. In qualitative empirical research, Aguiar et al. (2022) address the effects of teleworking on female employees of the National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA).

As a recent phenomenon, with just a few decades of existence and whose occurrence increased significantly only after the expansion of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, approaches to this way of working remotely or at a distance receive notes from various research studies, main characteristics and challenges to be faced.

Among all the different types of approaches, there is a tendency to analyze a specific advantage for the organization and counteract a disadvantage or challenge, and likewise, from an individual point of view, which advantages are highlighted and which disadvantages are counterposed.

Therefore, a table of advantages and disadvantages enumerating these variables is standard, whether for the individual, the organization, or the company; segmenting the analysis into this categorical dichotomy can be a reductionist way of looking at a complex design of people management.

## COMPULSORY TELEWORKING: CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES FROM AN INDIVIDUAL POINT OF VIEW

Freely chosen teleworking had several characteristics, such as flexibility, quality of life, more significant contact with family, and its traditional challenges, such as knowing how to separate work from home and regular moments of disconnection. Compulsory teleworking

forced the remote work modality to its limits: adoption was forced and not chosen, and social isolation was not limited to the absence of interaction with co-workers but with family members and society in general. Without the vaccine, the collective imagination was one of uncertainty, fear, insecurity, and just faith that the vaccine would allow a return to normality.

Therefore, in the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking cannot even be described as advantageous; it was necessary, considering that everyone was forced to use the ICT resources available for their social relationships at a distance. Therefore, teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic was mandatory, with no reason to discuss advantages.

On the other hand, these characteristics of teleworking, in several studies, can lead to some personal disadvantages, such as: technostress (BATTISTI et al., 2022), additional costs with structure at home (CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021), excessive volume of work (AGUIAR et al., 2022), intensification of new forms of production control (CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021; PEREIRA; BARBOSA; SARAIVA, 2021), difficulties in mixing professional life with family life (LEITE; LEMOS, 2020).

Even outside the pandemic period, special care must be taken in the dichotomous use of advantages and disadvantages since even what can be seen as an advantage generally brings a challenge, indicating here the preference to adopt. In this work, the term characteristics and challenges is adopted from Wang *et al.* (2021).

The choice for advantages can acquire a certain reductionism, given that the advantageous characteristic always, as a rule, generates a new challenge in a dialectical process. For example, staying with family as a rule is cited as an advantage. This increased time with family, at a time of social isolation, deprived workers of socializing with office colleagues, which is a challenge to be faced with more significant support from the group.

Workday flexibility is seen as an advantageous feature. Working hours can lead to disruptions in the family environment, creating the challenge of balancing problems related to work interference with family.

Leite, Lemos, and Schneider (2019), in a literature review, bring findings of approaches to challenges from the point of view of the individual, organization, and society (LEITE; LEMOS; SCHNEIDER, 2019, p.7). Within the scope of this work, only challenges in the individual sphere will be discussed.

The theoretical or empirical scientific articles analyzed in this study point to characteristics and challenges of the home office from the individual's point of view:

TABLE 2 - CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES INHERENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL ASPECT

| CHARACTERISTICS | CHALLENGES |
|---|---|
| Flexibility, well-being (AGUIAR et al., 2022; BARROS; SILVA, 2010; BATTISTI et al., 2022; OLIVEIRA; PANTOJA, 2018; ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018) <br> More time with family (AGUIAR et al., 2022) <br> Avoids commuting (AGUIAR et al., 2022; LEITE; LEMOS; SCHNEIDER, 2019) <br> Flexible schedules and reduced stress (LEITE; LEMOS; SCHNEIDER, 2019) | Technostress and additional structural costs (BATTISTI et al., 2022) <br> Excessive work (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018) <br> Control of subjects (PEREIRA; BARBOSA; SARAIVA, 2021). <br> New forms of control (CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021) <br> Virtual control (WANG et al., 2021) <br> Lack of structure at home (CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021) <br> Psychological problems (LEITE; LEMOS, 2020) <br> Procrastination (WANG et al., 2021) |
| Autonomy (ADERALDO; ADERALDO; LIMA, 2017; BARROS; SILVA, 2010; BATTISTI et al., 2022; ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011; ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018). | Control exhaustion (BATTISTI et al., 2022) <br> Need for greater discipline (ROSENFIELD; ALVES, 2011) <br> Self-discipline (WANG et al., 2021) <br> Individualism (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018) <br> Low visibility, distance from leaders (ADERALDO; ADERALDO; LIMA, 2017; OLIVEIRA; PANTOJA, 2018) <br> Lower visibility (BARROS; SILVA, 2010) <br> Social isolation (ADERALDO; ADERALDO; LIMA, 2017; COSTA, 2013; FILARDI, CASTRO, ZANINI, 2020; LEITE; LEMOS, 2020; OLIVEIRA; PANTOJA, 2018) <br> Little interaction between colleagues (LEITE; LEMOS, 2020; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021) <br> Loneliness (WANG et al., 2021) |
| Greater quality of life (ADERALDO; ADERALDO; LIMA, 2017; BARROS; SILVA, 2010; FILARDI, CASTRO, ZANINI, 2020; LEITE; LEMOS; SCHNEIDER, 2019; LEITE; LEMOS, 2020; OLIVEIRA; PANTOJA, 2018; SANTOS; REIS , 2021) | Difficulties in balancing professional versus family (BARROS; SILVA, 2010; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021) <br> Distractions (BARROS; SILVA, 2010; LEITE; LEMOS, 2020) <br> Distancing from the organization, psychological problems, social isolation and loss of communication (FILARDI, CASTRO, ZANINI, 2020) <br> Ineffective communication (WANG et al., 2021) <br> Lack of communication regulation (LIMA, 2023) <br> Delimitation of spaces (BARROS; SILVA, 2010; CABRAL; ALPERSTEDT, 2021) <br> Overload of responsibilities for women (AGUIAR et al., 2022; VIERA DE VELASCO, PANTOJA, MESQUITA OLIVEIRA, 2023) |
| Better professional performance and higher well-being at work (LEITE; LEMOS; SCHNEIDER, 2019; OLIVEIRA; PANTOJA, 2018; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021) | Distrust of managers, limited communication and loss of interaction with colleagues (VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021) <br> Lack of ergonomics in structures (LEITE; LEMOS, 2020) |
| The flexibility of virtual meetings (KUGLER, 2022) <br> Bringing colleagues closer through virtual meetings (FAUVILLE et al., 2021) | Importance of electronic leadership (CONTRERAS et al., 2020) <br> Fatigue related to excessive virtual meetings (FAUVILLE et al., 2021) |

**Source**: Prepared by the author (2023).

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In an adapted way, following the categorization adopted by Wang et al. (2021), we preferred to discuss the elements and attributes of teleworking as characteristics and challenges. The challenges of compulsory isolation have tested the ability of companies and public institutions to anticipate. The leaders faced this scenario of health and economic war (VIEIRA DE VELASCO; PANTOJA; MESQUITA OLIVEIRA, 2023), and most of them without preparation to be virtual leaders (VAN WART et al., 2019).

Autonomy, like flexibility, is a characteristic of teleworking that is like a coin: it has two sides: it applies to the worker and to the design thought up by the organization to carry out the work. Thus, autonomy, which is characteristic of and for teleworking, has been identified as advantageous within the flexibility that remote working provides for the individual.

The works of Rosenfield and Alves (2011) analyze the aspect of autonomy as a cornerstone of teleworking, explaining its impacts on the traditional division of labour. According to the authors ' point of view, their conclusions point to the need for greater discipline on the part of teleworkers and new forms of control, which could be one of the causes of precarious work relationships.

Costa's research (2013) analyzes the profile of the teleworker as disciplined, technically prepared, and responsible, as if naively subjugated by a discourse of "self-entrepreneurship." It turns out that, with the Covid-19 pandemic, in contrast to the selection of specific talents for teleworking, all people were compelled to work remotely outside their usual location, that is, the corporation or institution, and, for reasons of sanitary isolation, this location became predominantly the residence (WANG et al., 2021).

Aderaldo, Aderaldo, and Lima (2017); Barros and Silva (2010); Battisti et al. (2022); Costa (2013); Leite and Lemos (2020); Rocha and Amador (2018) similarly analyze the phenomenon under the principle of autonomy. Their conclusions admit that flexible work activity, with its autonomic characteristics, when studied from the point of view of unwanted effects, can lead to control exhaustion (BATTISTI et al., 2022), individualism (ROCHA; AMADOR, 2018), isolation, low visibility, distance from leaders (ADERALDO; ADERALDO; LIMA, 2017), lower visibility in the organization (BARROS; SILVA, 2010) and social isolation (COSTA, 2013; LEITE; LEMOS, 2020).

With the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the use of teleworking occurred massively, the traditional design of teleworking changed to accommodate the most diverse nuances. Workers not dedicated to the home office need monitoring and support from

leadership (CONTRERAS et al., 2020). This social support was measured by Wang et al. (2021), which corroborated the need to use this resource.

The self-disciplined person may suffer from an excess of electronic controls, which are unnecessary (VAN WART et al., 2019), and may also suffer more from isolation (WANG et al., 2021). So, in social isolation, even the most suited profile for remote work had new challenges to overcome.

## REFLECTIONS ON COMPULSORY TELEWORKING IN THE PANDEMIC

Providing social support for workers is essential to mitigate psychological problems and preserving the well-being and productivity of workers (CONTRERAS et al., 2020; FILARDI; CASTRO, ZANINI, 2020; LEITE; LEMOS, 2020; WANG et al., 2021); on the other hand, the challenge is that leaders were not prepared to welcome teams virtually.

As even the disciplined worker, in the social isolation of lockdown, needs constant virtual collective interaction, the autonomic characteristic of teleworking during the pandemic suffered a setback. Therefore, it can no longer be said, after the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, that autonomy in itself is a factor in enhancing productivity, given that workers who have greater discipline capacity for teleworking can be are more likely to suffer from psychological problems, mainly if they are excessively controlled and do not receive social support (WANG et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the flexibility of working from home is highlighted as one of the positive points for those who fit into this work modality, with some professionals reporting well-being (VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021; BATTISTI et al., 2022), higher quality of life (AGUIAR et al., 2022; BARROS; SILVA, 2010; FILARDI; CASTRO; ZANINI, 2020) and better professional performance (AGUIAR et al., 2022; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021). In the research by Aguiar et al. (2022), the research participants expressed greater satisfaction with the remote work regime even when there was mention of overload due to excessive tasks at home. Although the availability of "free" time is mentioned (PEREIRA, BARBOSA; SARAIVA, 2021), the critical view of these authors argues that this feeling of freedom of travel is in the context of capitalist domination.

Thus, even though the perception of quality of life in teleworking seems dominant, at the very least, this quality of life is not uniform for all individuals (PANTOJA; ANDRADE;

OLIVEIRA, 2020; AGUIAR et al., 2022). Moreover, if this were an absolute truth, it would be necessary to investigate why so many workers prefer the hybrid system to full teleworking.

Therefore, it can be emphasized that flexibility from the individual's point of view will require a challenge in adapting the organization's flexibility to redesign the workforce in various models, including hybrid. This flexibility of working from home also generates challenges, such as the challenge of managing the control and quality of production remotely, which, in turn, generates the challenge of motivating the team, mainly to avoid procrastination without causing stress resulting from the excess or inadequacy of telework supervision (CONTRERAS et al., 2020).

In the research by Filardi, Castro, and Zanini (2020), the majority perception is that there are gains in the public civil server's quality of life with the flexibility that teleworking provides. This research is in the context of a case study at the Federal Data Processing Service (Serpro) and the Federal Revenue Service. Also, a case study within the scope of Serpro, Vilarinho, Paschoal, and Demo (2021) found a perception of an increase in the quality of life of teleworkers.

The research by Aguiar et al. (2022), who investigated the experience of teleworking with Anvisa employees, collected exciting results, such as the perception of an improvement in quality of life, accompanied by the challenge of taking care of family tasks for women. However, in this work, an unfair burden is placed on wives by not finding equitable help from men at home (AGUIAR et al., 2022). Despite the weight of the work, the study identified the motivation of teleworkers and the perception of increased productivity. The research by Viera de Velasco, Pantoja, and Mesquita Oliveira (2023) similarly indicates the overload of female public servants concerning male civil servants, which corroborates the findings of Aguiar et al. (2022).

In the dialectic adopted in this article, the quality of life that this same flexibility provides for the individual can generate the challenge of the teleworker's invisibility. Thus, Aderaldo, Aderaldo, and Lima (2017) analyzed the danger of invisibility, a challenge also found in the research of Filardi, Castro, and Zanini (2020). The same problem occurs with the danger of accentuating characteristics of individualism in workers due to the lack of interaction with colleagues (LEITE; LEMOS, 2020; FILARDI; CASTRO; ZANINI, 2020; VILARINHO; PASCHOAL; DEMO, 2021). This challenge can be faced by improving electronic leadership

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and developing skills such as improved communication, creativity, empathy, and participation (VAN WART et al., 2019).

During the pandemic, leaders' skills focused on the ability to manage teams entirely electronically. The ability to have social interactions with ICT tools is fundamental for good communication (VAN WART et al., 2019). It corroborates the findings of Wang et al. (2021) about the importance of social support through electronic means for productivity in organizations, as poor communication causes stress.

In this sense, given the differences between individuals, all in compulsory isolation, observing teleworking during the pandemic based on pre-pandemic studies deserves some consideration. The fact that all individuals began to carry out their activities from home, when, in the previous period, only some activities and some individual profiles adhered to teleworking (BRAESEMANN et al., 2022) may have different effects than those observed in previous research as the social causes on which previous research was based have changed.

Studies on teleworking need to seek new methodological and epistemological parameters to investigate the phenomenon, and now, after the declaration of the end of the pandemic, it is essential to observe how the return to work is progressing: in person or hybrid mode, or even if total teleworking continues in some organizations.

According to Wang et al. (2021), in the pre-pandemic period, there were a much smaller number of teleworkers teleworking. Teleworking was practically the exception. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it became the rule for most workers. With the need for compulsory teleworking for almost the entire world population, the authors designate teleworking as the "new normal" in production relations (BATTISTI et al., 2022).

Adopting the well-known premise that each person adapts differently to teleworking and that, before the Covid-19 pandemic, people chose or were selected to work from home due to their personal preference or capacity for self-discipline, Wang et al. (2021) consider that studies may be biased when they disregard the fact that the population in this regime has mainly become universal, encompassing a diversity of individualities.

These authors point out that the conclusions of research prior to the pandemic, when automatically transferred to studies on teleworking in the pandemic and post-pandemic period, may not be in line with reality.

This new reality was perceived by Viera de Velasco, Pantoja, and Mesquita Oliveira (2023); according to these authors, "Findings from recent research conducted in the context of

the COVID-19 pandemic pointed out that the individual dimension can influence the perception and outcome of the teleworking (VIEIRA DE VELASCO; PANTOJA; MESQUITA OLIVEIRA, 2023, p. 2178).

Therefore, Wang et al. (2021) emphasize that, at this time of the pandemic, the most essential approach to understanding post-2020 teleworking should focus on analyzing personal experience in teleworking during social isolation with intense use of qualitative methodologies.

The qualitative approach can provide greater chances of uncovering the "reasons" behind the most relevant issues to mitigate workers' psychosocial problems.

Using grounded theory methodology, Wang et al. (2021) point out how individual factors can influence the characteristics of teleworking, increasing the existing challenges for achieving the objectives of people management design: productivity and individual well-being.

Thus, according to Wang et al. (2021), the self-discipline variable in that research interferes to a greater or lesser extent with the four characteristics raised by Wang et al. (2021), such as autonomy and excess demands, for example, on the other hand, impacting variables such as procrastination and isolation, to then reflect positively or negatively on the outcomes of teleworking: productivity and well-being of the individual.

The studies by Wang et al. (2021) are in line with Contreras et al. (2020) in the sense that leadership exercised through thematic contacts, via ICT tools, during the Covid-19 pandemic can mitigate isolation. Collective support provided under the coordination of leaders can be a crucial element in maintaining motivation and productivity.

Contreras et al. (2020) point out that good electronic leadership balances ICT resources with face-to-face interactions. During the pandemic, interactions had to be compulsorily virtual. As mandatory isolation distanced teams from traditional collective contact in the organization, the well-being and quality of life that traditionally characterized teleworking and productivity may have been tested.

Work relationships have become more impersonal and objective through electronic means such as email processing systems and virtual meetings. For Viera de Velasco, Pantoja, and Mesquita Oliveira (2023): Remote and hybrid work configurations, adopted on a contingency basis in the advent of COVID-19, pointed to the need for new skill profiles and management practices, as well as related challenges quality of life and well-being in teleworking were highlighted [...] (2023, p. 2178).

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Therefore, in the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the role of the e-leader in managing the day-to-day operations of teams in organizations appears fundamental (VAN WART et al., 2019).

Depending on the characteristics of the individual and their life circumstances, problems such as loneliness, inefficient communication, lack of social support, demands for more excellent production, and diluted and covert forms of control deserve attention from studies, as Rosenfield and Alves (2011) have already pointed out as they are precisely related to stress and loss of motivation, and can even impact the competitiveness of companies.

It follows that it is necessary to investigate the importance of social support or collective interaction through virtual meetings, even though leaders were not previously prepared to face COVID-19 isolation during the pandemic.

Significant findings indicate the importance of contact between the corporation and the individual and social support, including increasing productivity (CONTRERAS et al., 2020; WANG et al., 2021).

In a situation of social isolation, virtual interaction can mitigate the distance between colleagues, mainly through online meetings. However, the excess of electronic work meetings has been studied by Fauville et al. (2020) as a factor of fatigue. It is once again a test of leadership skills (VAN WART et al., 2019) and a challenge for supporting individuals in teleworking situations (WANG et al., 2021).

Thus, while the flexibility and autonomy inherent to teleworking can provide the individual with a quality of life and more excellent family life, the challenge of transforming the office into a home requires an adaptation process so that distractions at home do not reduce productivity and that professional demands do not violate the sacred place of the family, dedicated to affectionate relationships and moments of rest for the teleworker.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This article discussed teleworking, analyzing the characteristics and challenges of teleworking from the individual's point of view in the chaos that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to humanity.

To this end, after the Introduction, comments were made on the conceptualization of teleworking and its main approaches in doctrine. Next, the main challenges that teleworking during the pandemic causes for individuals were discussed.

The article aimed to contribute theoretically to the topic, based on a literature review. Thus, the paper discusses issues such as paradigm shifts that the pandemic brought to research on teleworking and ways that the literature indicates to mitigate isolation problems.

The present work's limits remain in the scarcity of theoretical articles that discuss the theoretical-methodological changes imposed by the compulsory isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic on teleworking arrangements.

As future developments, studies on the right to disconnection, the right to telework as a fundamental right linked to the Human Rights system, women's perception of telework, and the challenges of the multiple agendas of the female gender, the Zoom Fatigue, the strategic knowledge management can be areas of study that are necessary for the future of remote working relationships, which tend to expand.

The challenge of isolation and possible health problems for teleworkers can be mitigated with the applicability of the results of studies on teleworking.

With the scientific improvement of teleworking, society, individuals, and institutions can count on a means of maintaining socio-economic relations even during the period in which isolation was mandatory, with situations of difficulty in coexistence and supervision through means without face-to-face interaction.

Maintaining individual productivity and well-being in the context of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge humanity overcame, whether well or poorly. Collective support, as seen, plays a crucial role in balancing both productivity and the worker's quality of life. Thus, virtual interactions can be a mechanism to mitigate the problems of isolation when working remotely.

Even after the Covid-19 pandemic, the usefulness of teleworking tends to be present. The humanitarian disaster of a pandemic that killed millions of human beings lost strength with the emergence of the vaccine. In the meantime, teleworking has allowed the continuity of many social and economic relationships. With the end of the pandemic, returning to normality will not produce precisely the same working arrangement; hence, this normality is called the "new normal," covering situations of hybrid, in-person work, and continued remote work. Thus, it is predicted that empirical research and theoretical discussions about the virtual way of working tend to persist.

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