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Young People's Perceptions of Teleworking During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Promotive and Restrictive Forces and Contributions

A Percepção dos Jovens sobre o Teletrabalho durante a Pandemia da Covid-19: Forças Propulsoras, Restritivas e Contribuições

La Percepción de los Jóvenes Sobre el Teletrabajo durante la Pandemia del Covid-19: Fuerzas Motrices y Restrictivas y Contribuciones

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KEYWORDS

COVID-19 pandemic.
Teleworking. Worker
perception. Subjectivity
of work.

Abstract: The pandemic declaration made in March 2020 forced businesses to utilize teleworking as a strategy to be active and competitive in the face of the new socioeconomic environment. Despite the numerous studies that examine the advantages and difficulties of this mode of work for enterprises, the goal of this work was To know what the qualitative and subjective perception of young workers is when using telework in a comprehensive way during the COVID-19 pandemic, in light of the conceptual model of Mello (2011). The sample, which used a qualitative methodology, included 13 people, 9 women and 4 males, all between the ages of 22 and 30. Three of the interviewees worked for businesses that had no telecommuting policies, compared to 10 who were a part of enterprises that had adopted the modality. The results of the content analysis showed that the driving forces include the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the absence of displacement, which provided flexibility of schedule and work location. On the other hand, the restraining forces involve the scarcity of infrastructure, such as lack of organizational support for electricity and internet costs, in

addition to technological barriers and increased interpersonal conflicts due to the burden of family interactions. The participants' overall interest in implementing a hybrid work paradigm in the future shows that changes to human resources policies and procedures are required to address concerns with organizational, emotional, and physical infrastructure.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Pandemia de covid-19.
Teletrabalho.
Percepção do
trabalhador.
Subjetividade do
trabalho.

Resumo: No Brasil e no mundo, a pandemia decretada em março de 2020, compeliram as organizações a adotarem a modalidade Teleworking ou teletrabalho, como maneira de se manterem ativas e competitivas frente ao novo cenário socioeconômico. Apesar dos inúmeros estudos que discutem os benefícios e desafios dessa modalidade de trabalho para organizações, este trabalho teve como objetivo conhecer qual é a percepção qualitativa e subjetiva de jovens trabalhadores ao utilizar do teletrabalho de maneira integral durante a pandemia da covid-19, à luz do modelo conceitual de Mello (2011). Com uma abordagem qualitativa, a amostra consistiu em 13 participantes, com idades entre 22 e 30 anos, sendo 9 mulheres e 4 homens. Dos entrevistados, 3 trabalhavam em empresas sem política de teletrabalho, enquanto 10 faziam parte de organizações que já adotavam essa modalidade. A análise de conteúdo revelou que as forças propulsoras incluem o uso de tecnologia da informação e comunicação (TIC) e a ausência de deslocamento, o que proporcionou flexibilidade de agenda e local de trabalho. Por outro lado, as forças restritivas envolvem a escassez de infraestrutura, como falta de suporte organizacional para custos de luz e internet, além das barreiras tecnológicas e o aumento de conflitos interpessoais devido à sobrecarga das interações familiares. No geral, os participantes demonstraram interesse em adotar um modelo híbrido de trabalho no futuro, o que sugere a necessidade de ajustes nas políticas e práticas de Recursos Humanos para lidar com questões de infraestrutura, bem-estar emocional e organizacional.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Pandemia Covid-19.
Teletrabajo. Percepción
del trabajador.
Subjetividad laboral.

Resumen: En Brasil y en el mundo, la pandemia decretada en marzo de 2020 obligó a las organizaciones a adoptar la modalidad de Teletrabajo, como forma de mantenerse activas y competitivas ante el nuevo escenario socioeconómico. A pesar de los numerosos estudios que discuten los beneficios y desafíos de esta modalidad de trabajo para las organizaciones, este trabajo tuvo como objetivo Conocer cuál es la percepción cualitativa y subjetiva de los jóvenes trabajadores al utilizar el teletrabajo de forma integral durante la pandemia de la Covid-19, a la luz del modelo conceptual de Mello (2011). Con un enfoque cualitativo, la muestra estuvo constituida por 13 participantes, con edades comprendidas entre 22 y 30 años, 9 mujeres y 4 hombres. De los entrevistados, 3 trabajaban en empresas sin política de teletrabajo, mientras que 10 formaban parte de organizaciones que ya habían adoptado la modalidad. El análisis de contenido reveló que las fuerzas impulsoras incluyen el uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) y la ausencia de desplazamiento, lo que proporcionaba flexibilidad de horario y lugar de trabajo. Por otro lado, las fuerzas restrictivas implican la escasez de infraestructuras, como la falta de apoyo organizativo para la electricidad y los costes de Internet, además de las barreras tecnológicas y el aumento de los conflictos interpersonales debido a la carga de las interacciones familiares. En general, los participantes mostraron interés en adoptar un modelo híbrido de trabajo en el futuro, lo que sugiere la necesidad de realizar ajustes en las políticas y prácticas de Recursos Humanos para abordar cuestiones de infraestructura y bienestar emocional y organizativo.

Introduction

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 epidemic has spread to various nations, and its impacts are still being felt. One of those repercussions was the abrupt shift to the digital world, which affected all aspects of human life, including work and education. The amendments to health and safety regulations required numerous events, training sessions, classes, methods of producing goods and services, and in-person corporate meetings to be modified (Constancio, 2020). As a result, corporations decided to employ telework as a means of carrying on business despite the disease's progression.

With the rapid advancement in information and communications technology (ICT), this work modality—described by Nohara et al. (2010) as "organizational innovation that dissolves space and time"—has been gaining traction. Telework is interpreted as "the rendering, preponderantly outside the employer's premises and with the use of ICT, of services that by their nature do not constitute external work" in Article 75-B of Law 13,467, of July 13, 2017 (Brazil, 2017).

Numerous studies demonstrate the advantages of teleworking for businesses, including improved quality of service (Banjo et al., 2020), reduced operating costs and increased employee satisfaction (Bloom et al., 2015), and increased productivity (Giglio & Galegale, 2016). For employees, the benefits include lower personal costs (Oliveira Junior, 2013) and time saved from sitting in traffic (Barros & Silva, 2010).

Through a mixed-methods study conducted in four call center organizations with the participation of 7 managers and 64 teleworkers who worked from their homes, the Brazilian author Mello (2011) was one of the pioneers to develop a conceptual model that analyzes the driving forces, restrictive forces, and recognized contributions of telework for both companies and teleworkers. The author claims that the factors that facilitate and encourage the use of telework in businesses, such as economic, managerial, legal, and behavioral issues, are the driving forces. The restrictive forces, on the other hand, are the barriers and challenges that prohibit or impede the adoption of telework and include aspects related to the economy, politics, society, law, technology, behavior, and culture. The contributions in turn are connected to the impact on young workers'

approval of the usage of telework.

The drive for cost reduction, productivity enhancement, and customer service quality were noted as the main motivations behind teleworking in Mello's (2011) research. On the other hand, the restrictive factors include issues with data security, a lack of skilled labor, and a lack of specialized labor laws to regulate telework. Among the contributions, it is important to note that teleworkers are more productive than traditional workers, improving the company's reputation by working in a responsible manner and lowering employee turnover.

Later, another Brazilian author, Abreu (2016), thought of quantitatively examining Mello's (2011) approach. The author considered that people born in the internet age had a propensity and the familiarity to use technological tools and could also be more receptive to changing work models or places, using a sample of 141 young workers born in or after 1990. The study's findings demonstrated that young people are highly accepting of teleworking, citing increased quality of life, time flexibility, autonomy, and independence as driving factors. On the other hand, restrictive forces of teleworking identified were time management issues and a potential lack of communication and cooperation with coworkers. Reduced commute time and the potential inclusion of people with physical disabilities are two of the known contributions of telework in Abreu's research.

Important to note is that all these telework investigations were conducted before the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic. Therefore, while the control of contamination constitutes a potential driving force during the current pandemic, this has yet to be examined, along with the restrictive forces and contributions.

Thus, the goal of this study is to understand young workers' qualitative and subjective perceptions of full-time telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, considering Mello's (2011) conceptual model. The reason for this is mainly because the pandemic is accompanied by social distancing, which is an unprecedented phenomenon.

The paper is organized as follows: in the first section, we discuss the research topic and place special emphasis on the investigation's goals. The second section explains the theoretical foundation of the study. We describe the technique and the framework for the analysis in the third part. We

present the findings in the fourth part. Finally, we draw a conclusion and suggest future study directions.

Theoretical Background

The COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is responsible for COVID-19, is the third global coronavirus outbreak—after SARS in 2012 and MERS in 2012—and can induce anything from mild to severe pneumonia depending on the host's comorbidities (Malay, 2020).

As of July 24, 2020, 188 countries had reported the new coronavirus' presence, totaling more than 15 million cases of the illness globally, according to the dashboard provided by the Center for Science and Engineering Systems at Johns Hopkins University (Figure 1). Brazil and the United States of America, which represent the two main epicenters, are visible in the dashboard.

Figure 1
COVID-19's Dashboard Worldwide



Source: Johns Hopkins University (2020).

Researchers claim that the Sars-CoV-2 virus is particularly challenging to contain because of how quickly it spreads (Malay, 2020). As a result, it overburdens the health services in the afflicted areas (Areosa & Gaedke, 2020), which in turn necessitates the implementation of public health measures to slow down the disease's rapid transmission from person to person. According to Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020), the major tools are isolation, quarantine, social distancing, and community containment, each of which has a unique definition, purpose, setting, and set of difficulties.

According to Zerbini & Zerbini (2020), isolation refers to the separation of contagious disease patients from healthy individuals and

includes medical interventions to prevent transmission. The primary difficulties are early disease detection and the possibility of asymptomatic individuals. The authors define quarantine as the period of confinement imposed on those who are thought to have been exposed to a contagious disease, even if they do not show any symptoms of illness. This is due to the possibility that they are still in the incubation period or that they have not yet been infected. By limiting the speed at which viruses spread through human contact and tracing contacts quickly, quarantine can help to attenuate the contagion curve (Bergman et al., 2020). This gives authorities more control over the spread (Zerbini & Zerbini, 2020). Either voluntary or mandatory quarantine is possible. Nevertheless, to prevent infractions, those who are in quarantine will require mental health care, as well as food, water, household goods, and medical supplies (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020).

According to Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020), social distancing actions include closing non-essential shops, businesses, schools, and public parks to limit population mobility and prevent crowding in enclosed spaces. As for community containment actions (also called lockdowns), they aim to keep a community within its boundaries. According to Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020), a lockdown is the most extreme procedure and is only used when all other options are deemed inadequate. Due to the conflicting demands of individual human rights and the public health imperative, such approaches also pose ethical difficulties (Borges et al., 2020; Martins, 2020).

Since the first case of the coronavirus disease was reported in Brazil on February 26, 2020, most of these measures have been adopted by health authorities and governments; however, the particularities for adherence have been defined according to the region and the political and economic resources available (Bezerra et al., 2020).

To ensure that the repercussions of the crisis would not have a noticeable impact on organizational performance, organizations hastily adopted the teleworking model as a result of these security measures. However, the changes that the pandemic brought about go beyond the organizational sphere and reach the individual sphere. This is evident in the effects of the

pandemic on various worker groups' psychological and mental health, including the effects on teleworkers who were cut off from their friends, families, coworkers, and social networks (Areosa & Gaedke, 2020; Perez-Nebra, Carlotto, & Sticca, 2020).

Additionally, there is proof that social inequalities are growing (De Mendonça et al., 2020; Senhoras, 2020). This means that a portion of the population who were identified as being socially vulnerable were the most obviously impacted by restrictions on access to education, by subpar housing, a lack of basic sanitation services, internet, as well as due to the type of work they do (Santos et al., 2020). Consequently, this population group, which is primarily made up of Black people, has a lower distancing rate than other portions of the population with higher income. This is because commuting to work is still required regardless of the precautions implemented since most of them work in essential services that must continue even during the pandemic. The more "privileged" population, in contrast, either had their activities put on hold or were given the possibility to telework (Bezerra et al., 2020).

Teleworking

As production methods changed over time, so did work activities. Activities that were formerly carried out solely, autonomously, and manually at home now take place in an industrial setting (International Labour Office and Eurofound, 2020).

The development of information and communications technologies (ICT), increased traffic, and population growth over time had an impact on labor relations and the production of goods and services (Nilles, 1998).

Nilles (1998) defined telework (also known as telecommuting or home-based telecommuting) as a modality in which a professional does work outside of an office setting. Mello (1999) described it as "a modern alternative of business management, under the focus of flexible work alternatives to make companies more competitive and dynamic." For Rosenfield and Alves (2011, p.216), "in a limited sense, telework can be defined as work at a distance with the use of ICT."

ICTs have helped the model become more robust and thus more applicable (Costa, 2007; Oliveira Junior, 2013). Since the 1990s, its

massification and sophistication have dismantled the limitations of space and time, allowing professionals to work outside of the traditional office setting and at times other than those required by the traditional working day (Costa, 2007).

According to Oliveira Junior (2013), telework can be divided into many modalities that fit into three categories: location, time, and socio-professional context. The author says that there are two types of work environments: mobile work and work at home. The first situation occurs when a teleworker is situated at home but connected to a business's headquarters or central office; the second situation happens when activities are carried out neither at home nor in the organization, for example, from a hotel room while the employee is on the road, in a satellite office, resource center, or teleservice.

Full-time and part-time remote employment are both possible, with the latter requiring regular attendance at the office. Regarding the socio-professional context, there are two effects: the paid worker, or labor power exchanged for pay; and independent work, often known as freelancing, that is, workers who earn payment for work completed.

Telework benefits businesses by increasing productivity, lowering turnover rates, enhancing customer service and job quality, and lowering expenses for office space, utilities, and internet (Bloom et al., 2015; Oliveira Junior, 2013).

The authors Oliveira Junior (2013), Barros and Silva (2010), and Rabelo (2012) discuss the difficulties of teleworking and how they relate to managing employees and coordinating the tasks that need to be done. In addition to the requirement for investment in infrastructure, ergonomic equipment, and internet plans in order to enable telework, Rabelo (2012) notes the necessity to tighten information security to prevent the exposure of managerial information.

In the opinion of Oliveira Junior (2013), the primary benefit of working from home for a teleworker is not having to commute to the office, which is especially advantageous given the traffic in large cities. Linked to this is the reduction of costs with: clothing—since by staying at home the individual can dress more informally—, transportation, gasoline, and food.

The author also emphasizes that once improved time management is attained, there is an associated enhancement in the harmony between personal and professional life, i.e., the teleworker's

quality of life is also positively impacted, which is endorsed by Barros and Silva (2010). Additionally, productivity and creativity are increased with the option of working at different times, as well as, as mentioned by Oliveira Junior (2013), employment opportunities are expanded since the geographical barrier is broken down. These benefits are linked to the fact that the individual has more autonomy and enjoys greater flexibility.

Oliveira Junior (2013) offers a counterargument that addresses the lengthening of the workday, which might go beyond business hours in the absence of a physical presence. Family conflict is related to this since work begins to encroach on family time, which can even reduce a worker's productivity. Since the area designated for work at home might not be entirely appropriate in terms of comfort and furniture, there is also an ergonomic risk. Oliveira Junior (2013) also highlights the risk of a lack of social and professional engagement, which can have psychological repercussions, promote addictions like alcohol and cigarette use, and result in an inadequate diet, stress, and health issues.

According to Mello (1999), this work model necessitates a high level of personal organization and accountability to create a functioning balance. Barros and Silva (2010) also discuss how employees feel that businesses possess more control over them.

Telework during the COVID-19 pandemic

The virtual model of work has been adopted by a considerably bigger number of businesses worldwide since the coronavirus pandemic compared to before (Banjo et al., 2020).

In a recent interview published by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), Bloom (2020) explains that work from home in the coronavirus pandemic crisis has distinctive consequences compared to the time without a pandemic crisis and cites four reasons for this:

- Children: Due to the closing of schools and daycare facilities as well as the shift to online learning, parents must support and care for their children's academic endeavors while working.
- Space: Bedrooms or common areas have been used as temporary workspaces.
- Privacy: Since distancing rules now apply to every household member, noise from

spouses, relatives, roommates, and kids during the workday is unavoidable.

- Personal choice: A factor which is absent from the existing scenario but is a key component in the success of work-at-home policies.

Bloom (2020) adds that this scenario creates problems related to mental health and which affect productivity and innovation, leading to fewer new products in the market and hampering sustainable growth.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that mental illnesses were an international issue even prior to the epidemic. Brazilians rank fifth among the 322 million individuals around the globe who suffer from depression. According to the WHO, 5.8% (11.5 million) and 9.3% of the Brazilian population (18.6 million) experience anxiety and depression respectively, and these numbers have gotten worse since the pandemic (Goularte et al., 2021).

Pfefferbaum and North (2020) note that this aggravation, both in Brazil and globally, is the result of several factors, including a lack of testing and treatment, a decrease in the number of healthcare providers, the imposition of unproven public health measures that violate personal freedom, financial losses, and conflicting messages from authorities.

According to Goularte et al. (2021), the mental distress brought about by the Sars-CoV-2 virus does not cease with the pandemic but rather will last for a considerable amount of time. Additionally, Campos (2020) observes that not being able to leave the house causes a lot of difficulty for young workers, the majority of whom are still living with their parents, as leaving the house and socializing used to be a method to unwind. Also, work is now entirely done inside of the employees' homes instead of in an external physical space. However, there is no corresponding allowance to cover expenses like paying the electricity bill, which inevitably rises, making the lack of support from the company a new source of stress.

As it turns out, according to Campos (2020), 73% of workers from a sample of 2000 participants said they would prefer not to continue working remotely full-time after the pandemic is over. This poll is also consistent with Cramer and Zaveri (2020), who propose a "new normal" that is determined by a more equitable distribution of in-

person and remote employment.

As a side effect, we are dealing with a redefinition of parameters on the part of businesses for a hybrid model of work, which necessitates an investment in digital platforms and novel workday solutions (Cee-Fiocruz, 2020).

In a period of social isolation and a pandemic, remote employment still has an emotional benefit: it forces us to be "a more honest version of ourselves" (Cramer & Zaveri, 2020). People become more understanding of others when, for example, a child interrupts a meeting because every employee is going through the same thing. This creates an opportunity for them to be more aware of themselves and others.

Methodological elements of the research

To describe and decode components of a complex system of meanings and to close the gap between context and action, the current study adopted a qualitative method, which is made up of a variety of approaches and interpretation (Neves, 1996). The understanding that people are "both creators and products of the situations in which they live" is aided by qualitative research, according to Monteiro (1991).

The goal of this research, to understand how people perceive a certain phenomenon, can be categorized as exploratory. Aaker, Kumar, and Day (2004) claim that this subcategory of study enables a deeper comprehension of the issue from a more subjective and experiential standpoint.

For data collection, semi-structured interviews were carried out which allowed the standardization of key questions, but with total freedom to change the order of questions or even disregard any of them (Gil et al. 2008). The interviews were conducted virtually, between June 1 and 10, 2020, with the participation of 13 young people who migrated to full-time teleworking during social distancing.

The script contained 17 questions (Table 1) and all participants signed an informed consent form.

To get to know the interviewees and their context, the opening questions (1-4) were asked. The questions that followed (5-6) were more specific with the aim of determining who had already experienced teleworking before, why, and when. To determine how the participants dealt with telework in the current environment (pandemic

and how it related to other aspects of life, the remaining questions (7-17) were asked.

Table 1
Semi-structured interview script

Questions
1. Full name:
2. Age:
3. Company you work for:
4. How long have you been working there?
5. Did your company have a telework policy? How did it work?
6. Did you like teleworking? Why did you like it?
7. Since when have you been in quarantine? What is your situation during the quarantine (responsibilities, tasks, worries, family)?
8. How has teleworking been for you? What are the challenges and/or difficulties versus benefits and/or facilities?
9. How do you manage time between work and other activities? Do you feel you are working more/less/the same?
10. How is your performance teleworking? Why?
11. Do you have an adequate place and resources to work from home?
12. Has your company said anything about a return to the office?
13. Do you think the telework policy will change after the pandemic? How would you like it to be?
14. What do you miss the most because of social isolation?
15. Have you used tools like Zoom, houseparty, Skype, to feel closer to people?
16. How have you been feeling?
17. What did you think about your values survey result? How do your values relate to your views about telework and social isolation?

Source: Research data (Authors, 2021)

In a process akin to the snowball method, the sample was originally created from a network of personal contacts and then quickly increased through recommendations from the respondents themselves (Vinuto, 2014). When no new information arrived and as the deadline grew closer, the interviews came to an end.

Content analysis was applied to the interview-derived data. This method, in accordance with Miles and Huberman (1984), enables the determination of meaning from the frequency of particular phrases. The responses were divided into three categories based on the literature of Mello (2011) after comprehensive reading and analysis of the participants' perceptions of their experiences with teleworking, namely:

- Driving forces: factors that encourage the use of telework;

- Restrictive forces: barriers and difficulties that hinder adoption;
- Contributions: the elements that influence the acceptance of telework among young workers.

Results Presentation and Discussion

Characterization of the sample

The sample consisted of 13 people who fit the

following profile: Their ages ranged from 22 to 30 years old, with an average age of 26. There were 9 women and 4 men among the participants. Ten interviewees were a member of organizations that had already accepted telework, but only 7 of them utilized it and even then only rarely, while the other 3 were used to working remotely once a week. Three interviewees worked for companies that had no telework policy.

Table 2 below shows the sample data together with information on the history and possibilities for using telework prior to the pandemic.

Table 2

Interviewee data, history and reasons for adoption of telework before the pandemic.

Interviewees	Names of participants*	Sex	Age	Company's line of work	Company previously allowed telecommuting?	Were you in the habit of working from home at least once a week?	Why or when did you do it?
E1	Gabriel	Male	30	Consumer Goods	Yes	Yes	When it was necessary to focus on a specific task
E2	Samuel	Male	30	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	When it was necessary to focus on a specific task
E3	Lucas	Male	22	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	Lack of telecommuting-friendly infrastructure at home
E4	Débora	Female	24	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	When it was necessary to focus on a specific task
E5	Lia	Female	22	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	Distance between home and work
E6	Sara	Female	25	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	Distance between home and work
E7	Maria	Female	29	Consumer Goods	Yes	Yes	Distance between home and work
E8	Davi	Male	29	Banking	No	N/A	N/A
E9	Ada	Female	26	Technology	No	N/A	N/A
E10	Dina	Female	30	Real Estate	No	N/A	N/A
E11	Adrielle	Female	22	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	When it was necessary to focus on a specific task
E12	Abigail	Female	22	Consumer Goods	Yes	Rarely	When it was necessary to focus on a specific task
E13	João	Male	29	Consumer Goods	Yes	Yes	Always used to telework, regardless of tasks or distance

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Gonçalves (2021).

*Fictitious names were used in place of real names to protect participants' confidentiality.

Young workers' perceptions about teleworking

Following the completion of the 13 interviews and a thorough review of the transcribed material, it was possible to pinpoint many components that appeared to indicate different directions. As a result, we chose to group the statements into different categories depending on how interviewees described what it was like for workers in the city of São Paulo throughout the pandemic and its impacts.

The participants' responses demonstrate that telework is interfering not only with work-related activities but also with personal, social, and family spheres.

According to Bloom (2020), there was at first evidence that family engagement, which is now more intense, was interfering with the respondents' private lives. Because they were not accustomed to staying at home with their families in the time leading up to the pandemic crisis, the participants said that the biggest difficulties are conflicts resulting from excessive time together. *"Even though it is really good to be with my parents (because of the pandemic), it is also quite complicated (since I live with my friends in São Paulo). We absolutely forgot what spending so much time together was like"* (João, who had used teleworking before the pandemic). The difficulty is increased for individuals who have a different type of employment than the other group members: *"Here at home, I am the only one with formal employment, so they (my family) are unfamiliar with this kind of work. For example, sometimes they don't realize that I'm in a meeting"* (Maria, who had used teleworking before the pandemic).

According to the authors Barros and Silva (2010) and Oliveira Júnior (2013), family conflicts arise when work begins to encroach on personal time with family members who are unaware of the appropriate boundaries. This can even reduce a worker's productivity.

However, this new dynamic is not always full of hiccups; in fact, for some people, it helps to lessen the loneliness brought on by social distancing, as they can work from their parents, friends, and family members' homes, as demonstrated by Davi, who had not used teleworking before the pandemic: *"The ability to work from my place of residence, my parents'*

home, or from my girlfriend's home is incredibly pleasant. This is the first time I've worked in a home office model. It allows me to have a different routine and become much more involved in their lives."

Since there is no longer a commute from home to work, most teleworkers found this to be advantageous. Since they no longer have to rely on transportation after work and sit in traffic for hours, people can use this time for activities that are important to them, adding to the sense of higher quality of life. Sara, who had worked from home prior to the pandemic, stated: *"I always left work really late and then I had to go to the gym. Sometimes I felt lazy because I was already tired. Now that my laptop is turned off, there seems to be no excuse for not working out."*

Abigail, who had used teleworking before the pandemic, stated that the additional hours had a greater impact on her academic performance. *"Working from home is quite helpful for me because I am nearing completion of my final college project and I don't have to go home, get my belongings, and begin writing when I finish my work. I can simply close my inbox and open Word."*

The participants also mentioned the prospect of getting a few extra hours of sleep before starting the day's work as a benefit. *"I definitely appreciate having an extra 20 minutes to get ready for my morning meeting. It's great not to have to worry about squeezing into a crowded subway car and having an hour to arrive at work"* (Débora, who had used teleworking before the pandemic). Others also mentioned how they make use of the extra time they have after work: *"I also continue to enjoy the time after work because my parents live in Atibaia, and I live with friends in a São Paulo apartment. There's a lot more space (at his parents' house), and I'm enjoying my day a lot more"* (João, who had used teleworking before the pandemic).

Dina, who had not used teleworking before the pandemic, said nutrition was the area that was most positively impacted by the longer hours: *"I love to cook! It's wonderful to have time to prepare several foods for lunch and dinner while also being able to cook in peace. Prior to this, I had to prepare the same lunch for three days, but now I can change it up."* According to the interviewees, the result is less physical and mental exhaustion,

which increases their willingness to engage in other activities, even basic ones. The participants show, as seen by Barros and Silva (2010), a resulting improvement in the balance between personal and professional life, i.e., in people's quality of life, by avoiding heavy traffic and using the extra hours to eat better, sleep better, engage in physical activity, and study.

A new "work environment" can be created in the new work context, which was also deemed advantageous. Their work rhythm went more smoothly without the distractions of an office as no one would walk up to their desks or talk loudly in the nearby restrooms. **Gabriel**, who had used teleworking prior to the pandemic, says: *"In the office sometimes people made a lot of noise, which distracted us a lot, especially when we were on a call."* Others think they have improved in terms of performance and delivery: *"I don't like hearing others talking around me when I'm working. Working from home reduces distractions for me because I can shut the door to my bedroom and give my full attention to what I'm doing"* (**Maria**, who had used teleworking before the pandemic). **Ada**, who had not used teleworking prior to the pandemic, benefits from the lack of interruptions by the absence of physical contact with other coworkers: *"As I work in the finance department, it is very important for me to not have any distraction, like parallel conversations."* For Mello (1999), this is an example of people adapting to a new system that requires a high level of personal organization.

Many claim that they are working longer hours despite this conceivable improvement in the working environment. **Debora**, who had used teleworking prior to the pandemic, said: *"This moment demands that I work more. But without having to leave the office at a certain time, I have the feeling that I'm working much more, and I even use it to let off some steam."* However, **Dina**, who had not used teleworking before the pandemic, says: *"Sometimes it gives me the sensation that I never really leave work because if someone phones or contacts me, I will see what this someone needs."* To Oliveira Junior's (2013), the issue is the lengthening of the workday, which, in the absence of a physical site, might continue past regular business hours.

The fact that everything must now be resolved over the phone or through an electronic message—Skype, e-mail, WhatsApp, etc.—is also mentioned

as a drawback of teleworking, despite the fact that people report feeling less distracted by interruptions than in an office. Costa (2007) predicted that the removal of geographic barriers would lead to an increase in ICT use, but he did not specify how this relationship would play out. According to **Abigail**, who had used teleworking before the pandemic, *"as I am at the beginning of my career, I really miss having my team nearby and being able to consult with them without having to keep sending messages,"* adding that, to rapidly resolve any day-to-day issues, *"being able to go to someone's desk and talk about a specific doubt or pending issue is a way to do so."*

Regarding autonomy in the working day, which is here represented by flexibility of time to complete their respective tasks, some of the research participants noted that they preferred to work during specific periods, with some interviewees working during the morning and others working during the night. **Lia**, who had used teleworking before the pandemic, made this observation: *"I really like to work at night. Because of how the home office is set up, I have more freedom to do things like work at night and go slowly in the afternoon."* The ability to work outside of the typical working hours is closely tied to the independence and autonomy that characterize this work model, as is the employee's drive to complete it, which leads to an increase in productivity (Costa, 2007; Oliveira Jr, 2013).

The interviewees also mentioned the necessity for basic infrastructure, which includes the right furniture, a private area for meetings, seclusion, and an adequate internet plan. Before the epidemic, **Samuel** used to telecommute and claimed, *"I was not ready to have to work from home every day. I don't have a room in my house set aside for a home office."* Another interviewee who did not use to telework before the pandemic, **Lucas** stated that *"I did not even have an internet plan at home. Therefore, it was challenging to adjust not only to not being at the office but also to specifics like an internet connection."* Compared to the pandemic period, people used to telework only on occasion, leading to the classification of these elements as secondary. However, now that this mode is being adopted full-time, the availability of materials and resources has changed and now forms a necessary precondition for work, supporting Campos' (2020) research.

Discouragement was another theme that the

interviewees brought up. Many of them acknowledged that there are times when "energy is lower," possibly as a result of personal or occupational issues. *"I am a social person who enjoys spending time with others, therefore this has been the hardest for me during this time. Not being able to see, touch, or communicate in person"* (Sara, who had used teleworking before the pandemic). According to the participants, this emotion is brought on by stressful events, such as the need for quick adjustment to a new work structure mixed with the great distance, and results in worry (Bloom, 2020).

Others observed that they no longer felt connected to the organization because there is no longer any supervision. Lia, who had used teleworking prior to the pandemic, stated that *"sometimes it's very difficult to think that you have to work even though you know that no one is there watching you, seeing what you are doing."* David, who had not used teleworking before the pandemic, said, *"I think that, precisely because I am not used to doing home office, I found it very difficult in the beginning to work even without anyone watching me."* Before the pandemic, micromanagement was more prevalent, and it was used to exert control not only by the leadership but also by those around them. This control was viewed as beneficial and boosted employee motivation (Barros and Silva, 2010). It has been viewed as bad considering the current environment, which requires self-accountability (Mello, 1999).

It is essential to have a planned routine when working from home because there is neither the above-mentioned monitoring nor social pressure. To better distinguish between personal and professional lives, routine is also important. According to Bloom (2020), when working from home full-time, "home" no longer just refers to a place for personal life but also starts to include a place for work.

All interviewees acknowledged a wish to work remotely a few times per week for various reasons, even though telecommuting—as it was experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic—and the imposition of protracted social distancing demand that workers have considerable ability to adapt. With respect to the face-to-face management style, Gabriel, who had used telecommuting before the pandemic, said: *"As a manager it was much simpler to have the physical*

proximity to be able to experience the development of my team. Even though I make an effort, I still don't feel like I'm paying enough attention." Interviewee Ada was unprepared and uncomfortable with improvisation because she had not used teleworking prior to the pandemic: *"I had never worked from home because the company I work for did not have this, therefore I never thought about establishing a space for this. I've been doing my work at the dining room table."* The adoption of a hybrid work model in a post-pandemic context tends to be one of the primary strategies to be taken by enterprises, as Cramer and Zaveri (2020) note in their research.

Driving forces, restrictive forces, and contributions to the acceptance of telework among young workers

Flexibility of place and time was highlighted as one of the driving forces of telework, corroborating Nilles (1998) and Mello (2011), who list these two factors as contributions of the telework modality. However, other factors evolved in the context of the pandemic, such as better balancing of personal and family life, more productive work environments, and the utilization of technical resources. In other words, because they had the option to move to the telework model (Bezerra et al., 2020), the participants who are members of the privileged class perceived an improvement to their quality of life (Barros & Silva, 2010).

Numerous parallels can be drawn between our study and the findings of Mello (2011) and Abreu (2016) regarding this new work setting. However, Bergman et al. (2020) note that despite the financial crisis, which had an influence on businesses through social distancing and community containment, "employing people with disabilities in their own home" did not become more prominent during the pandemic.

Our study demonstrated that the abrupt implementation of telework has had a negative impact on interpersonal relationships and job-related norms within business. The wellbeing of the employee suffered as a result—a conclusion also drawn by Oliveira Junior's (2013) research findings.

Regarding the recognized contributions of telework, it is generally agreed that Nilles' (1997) prediction that urban traffic and transportation

would be a primary driver of telework adoption has proven true. This is because the time saved can be applied to work itself, increasing production. The other topics covered by Mello (2011) and Abreu (2016)'s research, such as salaries and employment of people with disabilities, were left out because the coronavirus disease had a detrimental impact on the economy.

The same obstacles and benefits indicated in the theoretical framework were highlighted by the study participants, to a greater or lesser extent, when comparing the findings from the perspective of the worker with the theory about teleworking. Less interruptions during work, no traffic congestions, more leisure time, and workplace and time flexibility are among the advantages cited in the literature and found in the responses of interviewees. The following stand out when comparing the barriers described by the respondents to those found in the literature: the sense of having to work more, the need for adaptation, a lack of infrastructure, the intensity of family life, the difficulty in solving problems, the lack of motivation, and the intertwining of personal and professional spaces. An overview of the findings in contrast to the studies of Mello (2011) and Abreu (2016) is shown in Table 3.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered several changes, particularly in the social environment. Government authorities recommended social isolation as a means to slow the transmission of the virus, which sped up the use of telework by some businesses. In this context, our study set out to identify three groups of factors related to teleworking.

The first group, referred to as driving forces, is concerned with the tools required to do one's job. These include ICT and the lack of commuting. The latter allowed for greater schedule and workplace flexibility, favoring the creation of a new routine for the participants and their readiness to dedicate more time to their academics and, most importantly, other personal pursuits.

The second category, referred to as restrictive forces, contrasts the above by presenting the hindrances that the respondents felt most strongly about: a lack of infrastructure, ICT use, and transportation. Infrastructure, which has shown itself to be scarce or limited (such as the absence

of organizational assistance to pay the electricity and internet bills), is the only difference between the restrictive forces and the driving forces. In the case of ICT, using technological resources can become a barrier in some circumstances. It is as if the distance between locations lessened the urgency, giving the impression that some work-related difficulties take longer to resolve. However, the absence of commuting (home-work) has exacerbated interpersonal contact with family, leading to increased disagreements.

The primary contributions during the COVID-19 were the discoveries of increased productivity among teleworkers. Many professionals found that they could concentrate better on their work and produce more effective results when they had flexible schedules and worked in a more private and intimate setting. Additionally, teleworking has allowed for significant commute time savings. Workers were able to spend this extra time to engage in personal pursuits and rest as they were not required to commute to work.

The three categories proposed by Mello (2011) can be supported by reports on the experiences of young workers, as shown in Figure 2.

All the study participants acknowledged that their isolation and the compelled alterations to their routine were challenging, but they also acknowledged that they understood the public health situation they were in and that they were following all the rules that had been imposed. As a result, several respondents exhibit, to some extent, the negative consequences of extended social distancing, such as anxiety. However, for some people, the increase in quality of life was so considerable that the results were more favorable than unfavorable.

Additionally, there is a clash between the need for freedom and flexibility at work and the lack of preparation for this new setting. The demand for micromanagement and hyper-connectivity, as well as the satisfaction of having more time to sleep, engage in physical activity, or even cook, are examples of this.

Regarding the participants' desire to adopt a hybrid work model, this shows an evolution of this modality from when it was first used as a crisis response to the coronavirus, protecting workers' safety and maintaining business operations. If it is implemented in the future, it will be required to reevaluate it strategically and make changes to

human resources practices and regulations to address potential organizational, emotional, and infrastructure issues.

The findings provide support to understand the implications of telework throughout the social isolation period and add to the conversation concerning its advantages and difficulties from the viewpoint of teleworkers. This conversation can aid the creation of initiatives focused on enhancing both the teleworker's experience and organizational telework policy both during and after the pandemic. Future conversations concerning more flexible and professional employment arrangements will undoubtedly be influenced by the knowledge gained during this time.

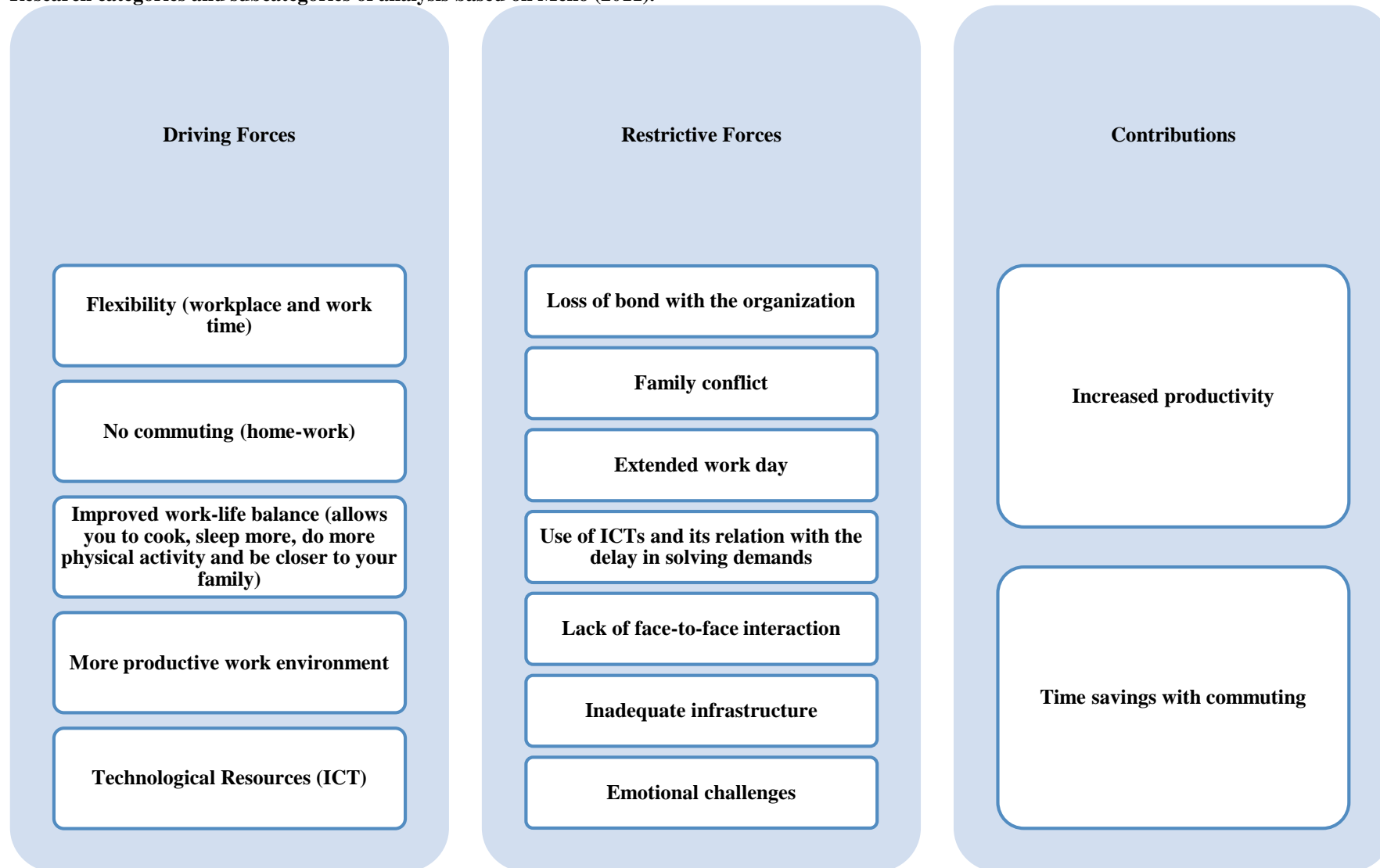
To better understand how the shift to the "new normal" is being experienced, it would be useful to conduct future studies with a larger sample size of teleworkers and compare the outcomes after the social isolation phase. Other options include examining how earlier generations view telework and talking about telework regulations from the standpoint of businesses that employ a hybrid strategy.

Table 3
Summary of research findings

Categories	Mello's Research Results (2011)	Abreu's Research Results (2016)	Present Research Results
Driving Forces	Possibility of employing people with disabilities in their own home	Improved quality of life	Enhanced quality of life
	Offer better quality of life for teleworkers		Better work environment
	Providing greater flexibility of time and location	More flexible schedule	Work-life balance improvement
Restrictive Forces	Worry that pay and perks won't match up with those of the staff who work at the company's headquarters	Productivity loss brought about by a lack of self-discipline and poor time management.	More productive work environment
	Fear of being marginalized and overlooked by management, which would impede professional advancement		Loss of commitment to the company
	Lacking direct supervisor support to address questions regarding how the work was done		Family strife
			Emotional difficulties
Recognized Contributions	Facilitate the inclusion of people with physical disabilities at work	Facilitate the inclusion of people with physical disabilities at work	A longer workday
	Allow better management of the employee's professional time and personal agenda using telework	Increased business productivity and reduced commute time	Lack of in-person communication
	Salary yields more for teleworkers (more money left over at the end of the month)		Inadequate infrastructure
			Increased productivity
			Time saved from commuting

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Mello (2011) and Abreu (2016).

Figure 2
Research categories and subcategories of analysis based on Mello (2011).



Source: Prepared by the authors from research data (2023)

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