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The feasibility of implementing flexibility practices on a company daily basis: The practical case of teleworking at CTT

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Master in, Management

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ABSTRACT

The years 2020 and 2021 were marked by the COVID-19 pandemic that brought irreversible shifts to the world of work, reinforcing the need for companies to adapt their workforce to new ways of working. During this period, teleworking has become the only solution for companies to continue with their activity.

With the aim of answering fundamental questions about the future of telework at CTT, this project aims to answer the following objectives: 1) Explore the general experience of CTT employees regarding the teleworking adoption during the pandemic, 2) Identify the perceived benefits and challenges that CTT employees recognize in carrying out this way of work, 3) Identify the success factors that CTT employees classify as essential to perform teleworking. Additionally, this project intends to provide some recommendations regarding the teleworking adoption in the future through an implementation proposal.

To achieve the established objectives, 10 interviews were carried out with employees from different CTT departments, and it was found that in an initial phase the adaptation to teleworking was difficult due to the surprise factor caused by the pandemic and many were the benefits and challenges identified by these employees as well as success factors that they consider essential to implement telework.

The results also showed that, CTT should adopt teleworking practices for their future, in a hybrid system of two to three days in telework and the remaining days at the headquarters, this decision should also consider the study of the situation of each employee.

Keywords: Telework; Covid-19 pandemic; Benefits and Challenges; Success factors; Future of telework; Case study

JEL Classification System: J80 – General; M54 – Labor Management

RESUMO

Os anos de 2020 e 2021 foram marcados pela pandemia COVID-19 que trouxe mudanças irreversíveis ao mundo do trabalho, reforçando a necessidade para as empresas de se adaptarem a novas formas de trabalhar. Durante este período, o teletrabalho passou a ser a única solução para as empresas continuarem com o seu normal funcionamento.

Com o objetivo de responder a questões fundamentais para o futuro do teletrabalho nos CTT, este projeto visa dar resposta aos seguintes objetivos: 1) Explorar a experiência dos teletrabalhadores dos CTT relativamente ao teletrabalho no período pandémico; 2) Identificar os benefícios e desafios que os trabalhadores dos CTT percecionaram com esta nova forma de trabalho e aqueles que poderão surgir futuramente; 3) Identificar os fatores de sucesso essenciais para os colaboradores dos CTT para a implementação do teletrabalho. Adicionalmente, este projeto pretende dar pistas de intervenção à empresa através de uma proposta de implementação.

Para a concretização dos objetivos recorreu-se à realização de 10 entrevistas a colaboradores de diferentes departamentos dos CTT, tendo se verificado que a adaptação inicialmente ao teletrabalho foi difícil devido essencialmente ao fator surpresa causado pela pandemia. Adicionalmente, muitos foram os benefícios e desafios identificados bem como os fatores críticos para o sucesso da implementação do teletrabalho.

Os resultados mostraram ainda que, os CTT devem adotar práticas de teletrabalho para o seu futuro, num sistema híbrido de dois a três dias em teletrabalho e os restantes dias na sede, baseando a sua decisão no estudo da situação de cada colaborador.

Palavras-chave: Teletrabalho; Pandemia Covid-19; Benefícios e Desafios; Fatores de sucesso; Futuro do Teletrabalho; Estudo de caso

JEL Classification System: J80 – General; M54 – Labor Management

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1. INTRODUCTION

Telework can be defined as a way of work that makes use of information and communication technologies, such as laptops and smartphones, that permit work to be performed outside of the employer's premises (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). The implementation of teleworking policies must cover several aspects, as is the case of the number of remotely working hours, the communication tools that must be provided to workers, how the work will be supervised and the communication flow within the teams and the company (OIT, 2020). Teleworking policies have revealed themselves to be an essential method for people and companies to maintain their business activity, particularly in the case of an unexpected event as is the case of a pandemic, war or terrorism, allowing workers to continue their work in other places without harming themselves or the company (OIT, 2020).

The practice of teleworking has existed for several decades. since the 1970s, but despite the predictions that pointed out the expansion of its implementation, teleworking remained without much representativeness in Portugal, until March of 2020, when this scenario drastically changed. By this time, the world was raptured with the declaration of a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO), caused by the arrival of the coronavirus, generally known as COVID-19, placing telework as the only solution for many companies to continue their activity. This international pandemic, originated in Wuhan, China, in December of 2019, led governments around the world to quickly direct all efforts towards an effective response to this overwhelming crisis (Who Health Organization, 2020).

On 18th of March 2020, the Portuguese government was forced to declare the state of emergency, adopting a mandatory lockdown for the entire Portuguese population. This first lockdown, which was extended until the fourth of May of 2020, entailed a face-to-face suspension of all levels of education to a home-based school system. At the same time, from the 2nd of March of that same year, according to *Diário da República* (Decree-Law No. 2836-A/2020), telework was to be practiced whenever possible (Direção Geral de Saúde, 2020).

As in 2020, the year of 2021 was also especially marked by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and a second lockdown was imposed by the Portuguese government. This lockdown began on the 15th of January 2021 and ended on the 5th of April of 2021 and during this period, the schoolwork was suspended once again. At the same time, teleworking remained mandatory, further emphasizing teleworking as an important solution to ensure job security and to continue with the functioning of the economy.

The pandemic situation forced many companies to adapt their activities, to make it possible for their employees to work from home. This transition to a teleworking model completely transformed

the traditional work model, known as being stable and predictable (Leighton, 2016). Broadly speaking, the pandemic has accelerated employers' adoption of telework, because without it, most of the companies would likely not have implemented teleworking practices so quickly and massively. Consequently, several uncertainties emerged regarding the benefits and challenges of telework, since companies were forced to migrate their workers to a teleworking scenario without an end in sight.

Previous research suggests that teleworking is regularly performed from an alternative workplace, such as at home or somewhere remote (as coffee shops or co-working spaces), making use of information technology but also maintaining the traditional office (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). When teleworking is performed at home, within the family environment, it is important to guarantee fundamental requirements, like physical, psychological and ergonomic aspects that will help the employee to maintain their performance levels (Tavares et al., 2020). With the implementation of teleworking some benefits and challenges are identified, at the individual, organizational and society levels (Leite et al., 2019). It is believed that this new way of work allows the collaborator to better manage their work schedule and work-life balance (Felippe, 2018). Additionally, teleworking can reduce the time and costs spent on commuting to the office and decrease the emissions of pollutants, which are important benefits (Tavares et al., 2020). Concerning the challenges of teleworking, the separation between the professional and personal life was pointed as one of the main challenges, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, since schools were closed, and children were forced to stay at home with their parents (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Additional challenges were identified by the practitioners of telework during the last years, including the lack of coaching, the decrease in employee relations, the loss of corporate culture and the fear of stagnation in the professional career (Felippe, 2018).

According to the Eurofound (2020), it is too early to evaluate the impacts of this massive pandemic, but it is evident that the need to live in social isolation, in a context characterized by uncertainty, has led the world to rethink the way it works and leads. Thus, this moment may prove to be an opportunity for teleworking to gain strength in the near future, since a new meaning of telework may have emerged.

Bearing in mind, the novelty of this way of working for the majority of organizations, the pandemic scenario and predictions that teleworking could be a new way of working, this project intends to contribute to the identification of good practices in the implementation of teleworking regimes for companies to be able to keep their employees with the desired performance, in a healthy and balanced way through the study of a particular company, CTT - Correios de Portugal, a company of the postal sector.

In particular, this project aims to explore the general experience of employees during the pandemic period regarding the teleworking adoption at CTT. During this period the company

experienced a co-existed working model, maintaining its main services activity as usual and adapting the workforce of central services to a teleworking at home regime.

More specifically, the project objectives are to: 1) Explore the general experience of CTT employees regarding the teleworking adoption during the pandemic, 2) Identify the perceived benefits and challenges that CTT employees recognize in carrying out this way of work, 3) Identify the success factors that CTT employees classify as essential to perform teleworking.

Based on that, this project attempts to provide some recommendations regarding teleworking adoption in the future for CTT, to guarantee that the company keeps its growth objective for the following years. Additionally, the outcomes of this project can be an important starting point, not only for CTT, but also for other companies that seek for guidance and guidelines based on evidence for the implementation of telework.

This project is organized in six distinct parts. In Chapter 2, a contextualization of the topics to be addressed is introduced, as well as a literature review that provides a theoretical support for the execution of this project covering the main concepts and perspectives regarding teleworking. Chapter 3 explains the methodology applied to the project, describing the research methodology as well as the main procedure for data collection and analysis. In Chapter 4 the case-study is presented, with a brief overview of the company and a contextualization of the different timeframes of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic at the company. In Chapter 5 the collected data is presented and analyzed, making it possible to accomplish the main objectives set for this project. In Chapter 6, an implementation proposal is conducted, from which it is possible to draw several recommendations for the company. Finally, in Chapter 7 the main conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research are presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter has as main objective to provide a theoretical contextualization of teleworking. In a first phase, the definition and evolution of the concept of teleworking are introduced, as well as the benefits and challenges of this way of work. A wide range of success factors are also provided at the employee, managerial and organizational level for the implementation of teleworking as well as a contextualization of teleworking in the Portuguese and European labor market and a final subchapter dedicated to the future of teleworking.

2.1. Teleworking

Over the past decades, people's interest in teleworking has been increasing. Teleworking was firstly documented in the U.S. in 1970s, in response to the oil crisis, and it is believed that the term was created in 1973 by Jack Nilles, an engineer of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). At the same time, the private sector also joined this new way of working, as is the case of the IBM, a well-known company, that took the first steps of work-at-home arrangements (Caldow, 2009) with the purpose of reducing traffic problems and reduce the energy consumption. It is estimated that in 1997, 10,000 federal government employees worked at home or in other remote locations (Avery & Zabel, 2001).

The linkage between the advances in teleworking and the technology and economic changes are inseparable, the possibility of teleworking increased along with the abilities of home computing. The introduction of personal computers in the 1980s, laptops and mobile phones in the 1990s, and the advances in these technologies since then, led to an increase in the number of workers able to work outside the office.

The term teleworking has been used for decades, but researchers have brought different terminologies and conceptualizations as is the case of telecommute, remote work, distributed work, virtual work, flexible work, flexplace, and distance work (Allen et al., 2015), all the different terminologies of teleworking have similar meanings and can be used interchangeably.

Defining teleworking is not easy due to the vast variety of definitions printed, according to Allan et al. (2015) teleworking can be define as a working practice that allows the members of a company or organization to replace a part of their working hours, which can range from a few hours a week to full-time, to work outside of the company's workplace, normally from home, making use of technology to contact with others and also to perform work tasks (Allen et al., 2015).

Teleworking comprises numerous important topics and distinctions. Specifically, individuals who telecommute (Allen et al., 2015):

- Can replace the time they usually spend in the office with time spent working in another place;
- Can have differences in the number of hours working remotely within the same organization;
- Work is mainly home-based, but it can be also performed in other places (e.g., co-working spaces, coffee shops);
- Make use of information or communication technology to make interactions with other employees and external people of the organization during teleworking periods.

Working outside of the office as a telecommuter is an increasing trend for countless employees around the world and efforts have been made to comprehend the implications of teleworking and what the main benefits and challenges are associated to this term (Allen et al., 2015).

2.1.1. Benefits and challenges

Teleworking is a phenomenon that has experienced significant research in the last years. However, it is important to bear in mind that this new way of working affects several aspects of daily life.

Rocha and Amador (2018), state that benefits and challenges go hand in hand. Although there are advantages for workers, organizations and society concerning teleworking, there are also challenges implicated in performing work out of the office (Rocha & Amador, 2018).

As Rocha and Amador (2018), Leite (2019) also concluded that the impacts of remote work can be bundled in three different groups: individual, organization and society. Considering the individual level, the positive effects can be not having to commute to the workplace, increased work-life balance, increased productivity and increased performance and engagement (Apgar, 1998, Brownson, 2004, Tergesen, 1998 as cited in Leite et al., 2019). Teleworking can also provide flexibility in the working hours for the employees who may need it, and an increase of autonomy once the employee can manage better their working schedule (Felippe, 2018).

Regarding the organization level, the benefits are for instance, improving the selection, recruitment process and retention of talent, increased productivity and reductions of costs related to real estate (Leite et al., 2019).

Concerning the society scope, the reduction in the use of print paper and the decrease in the emission of pollutants are the two of the benefits mentioned (Leite et al., 2019). The implementation of teleworking as a practice of flexibility can be seen as an alternative policy to current problems as is the case of traffic, the pollution caused by daily commuting to the workplace (Felippe, 2018).

Furthermore, several studies reported that the link between productivity and teleworking is extremely positive, since employees can spend more hours working effectively without spending time in traffic. Also, in jobs that entail more levels of concentration, it has been verified that working from home can lead to a better performance (Beauregard et al., 2019).

Regarding what should be the balance between the number of days per week working at home and at the office, Beauregard, Basile and Canónico (2019) argue that a remote work practice should be adopted to a maximum of two to three days per week. The best flexibilization practices at work have as main features the existence of a culture of trust and openness with employees, support related to technologies that allow the work to be performed without difficulty, a recognition system based on the achievement of the individual objectives established for each collaborator, and the provision of adapted structures that enable employees to interact with each other when they are in the office (Beauregard et al., 2019).

However, on the opposite side, scholars have been noticing consequences for individuals, as is the case of social isolation, the stagnation of professional careers and the increase of family conflicts (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997; Leite et al., 2019).

Rocha and Amador (2018) affirm that although most authors try to emphasize the fact that there are several positive effects of adopting this practice, the challenges for the individuals, organization and society need to be identified too. Namely, these authors refer that some workers experience difficulties in separating what is personal life and the space and time for working, mainly due to the digital and mobile connectivity that exists today (Leite et al., 2019; Rocha & Amador, 2018). In addition, the authors also concluded that the trend towards the individualization of work (the fragmentation of work within the teams because of the physical distance) is increasing for telecommuters, which can lead to severe consequences for their professional, social and political development. They also found that the isolation that teleworking causes can make people more vulnerable, causing a decrease in teamwork and an increase in the levels of individualization in society (Leite et al., 2019; Rocha & Amador, 2018).

Felippe (2018) states that there are other disadvantages of teleworking, such as the lack of coaching, the decrease in employee relations, the loss of corporate culture and the fear of stagnation in the professional career, because the employees are not in contact with colleagues and are out of the business environment. Another important aspect that should be considered when adopting teleworking is the possibility that this practice doesn't permit workers to totally disconnect from work, working more hours than they would normally work in the office, since during the leisure and rest time workers can be contacted at any time by continuing online (Felippe, 2018). The author also concludes that it is important for companies to motivate and support its employees to have more productive workers. In order for employees to feel motivated and supported by the company, it will be necessary

to develop a teleworking culture, which contemplates specific conditions and precautions (Felippe, 2018).

Other possible disadvantages pointed out in the literature about teleworking is the lack of a proper and isolated place for the workers to carry out their work and the possible difficulty that some workers may experience when working with the sophisticated communication technology that exists today (Tavares, 2017). Thulin, Vilhelmson and Johansson (2019) perceive that the stress and pressure factors that are experienced by some telecommuters are linked with social factors. In fact, women and workers that have children in their care feel greater time pressure in their daily lives, regardless of the practice of teleworking. These authors also state that the combination of flexible work and mobile information and communication technologies puts more pressure on people, interfering in people's time off, which may negatively impact the work-life balance (Thulin et al., 2019).

Considering the former, it is important to notice that work-life balance and social isolation could be considered both as a benefit and a challenge in the long term. For this reason, these two factors will be detailed below.

2.1.1.1. Social isolation

One of the most important aspects for the success of work, is the social interaction between workers and managers, that promotes mutual learning, to receive and give feedback and social support (Eurofound, 2020). This dimension should be valued more by companies, once it can contribute to the failure of teleworking experiences (Fiolhais, 2007)

Due to the nature of telework, working from home, alone and without social interactions, can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, that in turn can lead to lower levels of individual and team performance (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). In fact, social isolation is a disadvantage pointed out by several authors and recent studies regarding teleworking have also highlighted this disadvantage (Golden et al., 2008). Working with colleagues in the same space, where there is physical proximity, helps not only the individual but also the team development as well as a positive interpersonal contact (Monge et al., 1985). The reduction of face-to-face interactions in teleworking decreases the frequency of formal and informal communication, weakening interpersonal contact that can lead to a higher conflict of processes and relationships among collaborators (Golden, 2006).

On the other hand, teleworking encourages and rewards individualism, due to the fact that when employees have less social interaction, it can translate to an advantage to the productivity of workers (Windeler et al., 2017).

2.1.1.2. Work-life balance

The pandemic forced individuals to adapt to a new way of working, and for that to happen it was necessary to manage the conflict between their work and their family life (Eurofound, 2020).

One of the main drivers for the success of teleworking is work-life balance. This concept was defined by Greenhaus and Allen (2013) as a global assessment, in which the effectiveness and satisfaction of individuals with work and family roles are consistent with their values and life goals at a given time. However, teleworking can be a source of imbalance between employees' professional and personal lives, since teleworking can involve working from home, potentially enhancing the conflict between work and family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Golden, 2021).

The work-family and family-work conflict is defined as a way of conflict in that the pressures between the work and family roles are mutually incompatible in some aspects (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) namely, when the work interferes with family responsibilities (Golden, 2006).

According to some reports, some studies defend that telework can be an advantage in the balance of the two spheres of family and work, but other argues that at the same it can be translated into a work-family conflict and vice versa, being pointed out as a challenge.

On the one hand, teleworking from home can have a positive impact on employees' lives, as it offers flexibility and the possibility of a better management with respect to their schedules and workspaces, reconciling family responsibilities and lifestyle (Fiolhais, 2007). It also allows employees to perform some domestic tasks, strengthen family connections, and save energy and time by avoiding daily commuting to the workplace, which can be redirected to leisure activities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

On the other hand, other studies indicate that teleworking from home can increase family-work and work-family conflict, since employees tend to spend more hours working from home than in the office, family members tend to interrupt the collaborator because of their physical presence at home, the domestic and family tasks can create tension and distraction harmful to the individual's work (Golden, 2021) and there may be a difficulty in disconnecting from work, bringing health problems to the employee, such as stress and depression (Hartig et al., 2007).

2.2. The implementation of teleworking and critical factors for success

Despite all the challenges and obstacles that this new way of working entails, the adoption of teleworking programs by countless organizations has increased exponentially, and it seems very likely that in the near future more and more companies will adopt it (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

Teleworking is no longer seen as just an option, but often as a requirement for companies to remain competitive in the market, through the recruitment of the best workers for their organization (Kowalski & Swanson, 2005).

Implementing a teleworking program with success does not only include giving a computer to the workers to do their daily job and have access to the internet. This new way of working requires a high planning (Ye, 2012), which must accommodate several specific procedures as is the case of (OIT, 2020): the establishment of a proper organizational culture, top management assistance, supply of adequate technology devices and tools, elimination of paper-based work processes, provide skills and training resources to support teams based in home, create health and safety guidelines for teleworking and data security concerns and privacy issues (OIT, 2020).

Kowalski and Swason (2005) developed a framework that considers critical factors for the success of a teleworking program implementation, at the employee, organization and management levels. This framework entails three distinct categories - support, communication and trust. Although the three categories are distinct from each other, the link between them is inevitable. A good communication in the workplace implies a culture and a high climate of trust within the organization. Greiner and Metes (1995) also concluded that communication leads to trust and this in turn leads to a greater communication.

The connection between communication and support is also evident; for example, the provision of technologies through business support allows telecommuters to be connected at anytime and anywhere and to communicate with anyone. In addition to the link between communication and support, trust and support are also inseparable, for example, as employees feel that their supervisors fully support teleworking practices, and the measure of performance is fair and equitable instead of being measured by the number of hours that employees spend in the physical office, confidence will increase proportionately (Kowalski & Swanson, 2005).

Broadly, for teleworking to be effective, it is necessary that the performance of the organization is reached through an effective balance of affordable costs, while enabling the supervision of work. In fact, it is necessary that countless factors are aligned for the implementation of this measure to be a success. It is essential organizational support, active supervision as well as the availability of technologies and individual training for all the challenges that this policy requires (Babu et al., 2020).

To understand more deeply the implications for the employee, managerial and organizational level, within the three categories mentioned above, a detailed explanation will be given in the next subsections.

2.2.1. Success factors with implications at the employee level

Different authors, as is the case of Hill et. al (1998), have proved that teleworking can sometimes be a problem to the work/family relation and in some cases, it has revealed to be an obstacle in the work-life balance. Igbaria and Guimaraes (1999), argue that the interruption during the day of work at home by the family can occur with frequency, and it is therefore one of the main barriers that telecommuters need to surpass. It is important for remote workers, to establish clear boundaries between family and work, and the family's understanding of the importance of this separation constitutes one of the critical factors for the success of this flexibility measure.

The respect and support by the family, in what concerns the space and the number of hours of work that telecommuters need, is one of the great challenges. Studies indicate that family support is positively related with different variables, as is the case of the quality and job satisfaction and a better relationship between the organization and telecommuters (Haines et al., 2002).

Strategies can be developed, in order to create boundaries between work and family such as, having a place at home just dedicated to teleworking, keeping the same morning routines as going to the office, making family and friends understand that they should not interrupt the telecommuter work during the working schedule (Kowalski & Swanson, 2005).

Employee training as a support measure is another important feature for the success of remote work. Several studies were conducted around this topic and revealed that some workers that experienced teleworking programs stated some degree of unhappiness with the amount of training offered by the companies, they said that training concerning work time management, technologies and communication systems are highly necessary (Tremblay, 2002). In addition, to train telecommuters it is also essential to provide a detailed explanation on the use of the equipment's and technologies, how to create limits between work and family and prepare workers for the social and psychological changes that they may feel (Haines et al., 2002).

Communication at the employee level is discussed as one of the most important factors for the success of teleworking as a multi directional flow, not only from managers to workers, but also from workers to managers. Investigators have proved that communication is especially important because of the lack of social interaction that this flexible way of work entails, and therefore the lead to social isolation (Cascio, 2000). Indeed, several authors state that this lack of interaction between workers appears to be one of the biggest disadvantages of this measure (Mann et al., 2000). IBM, the well-known company, developed strategies to combat this isolation and to foster communication like dinners and outdoor activities (Bresnahan, 1998).

Employee trust is another important factor to take into consideration. Trust is important at all levels of the organization, employee need to trust that their managers will treat them fairly (Kowalski & Swanson, 2005). Cascio (2000) defends that if there is some lack of trust, teleworking will never be

successfully implemented. Trust is a critical factor, and in situations of working from home, it has proven to be responsible for an outstanding performance and job satisfaction.

2.2.2. Success factors with implications at the managerial level

In the managerial level, as well as in the employee level, a critical factor for teleworking success, is support. Management support is positively related to remote work satisfaction, high levels of quality in work-life balance, higher job performance and an improved relationship with the company (Haines et al., 2002).

As mentioned above, training is a way of support that must be sustained by the top managers of the firms and must be provided, not only for telecommuters, but also for their supervisors. The level of the firms that most resist to the application of teleworking is undoubtedly, the top and middle managers (Potter, 2003). The training the managers have with respect to the advantages of adopting teleworking, constitutes one of the factors for this measure to be a success (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). The IBM company case showed that one of the biggest obstacles to overcome implementing teleworking was the fear on the part of the managers. This resistance to change to a new way of working was overcome, by involving all the stakeholders in the process and offering training about different issues, namely in the basic tools and time management (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999).

For managers to be able to telecommute, improve communication skills is essential, not only the formal ones to inform teleworkers work issues, but also informal, so that telecommuters improve relationships and feel part of the company (Cascio, 2000). It is necessary for managers to do whatever they can, in order to moderate social isolation and develop relationships within the teams. Mann et al. (2000) recommends regular online meetings, intranet platforms and events for socializing. Managers also need to make usage of the technologies available in detriment to the face-to-face interactions, like conference calls and meeting through online platforms (Potter, 2003). The implementation of this communication strategies results in a greater job satisfaction, productivity and loyalty (Ilozor et al., 2001).

Managerial trust is another challenge for managers to surpass and is a critical factor of success for remote work. The global connectivity that we experience nowadays, is linked to the evolution in technologies and digital tools and is responsible for the arise of these new ways of working, which can lead to some lack of trust, once managers cannot be overseeing their collaborators face-to-face. Cascio (2000) found out that the absence of trust can lead managers to not appreciate remote work.

Trust is the base for everything, and in teleworking it is no exception, since managers need to trust their workers, and trust is built with the empowerment of employees, by encouraging employees to ask for explanations, by providing feedback and encouragement.

2.2.3. Success factors with implications at the organizational level

Support, even at different levels, is essential in the organizations, and most of all it is important that support starts at the top. Ford and McLaughlin (1995) carried out a study, where it was possible to discover that one of the most critical issues for the success of a teleworking program is the support provided from the top managers.

Indeed, a teleworking program should never be adopted without such support. Furthermore, the support by the top managers should be accompanied with technological and instruments support, once to constitute a teleworking program these two factors are also crucial.

Organizations should supply adequate tools for workers in order to perform teleworking with success, such as, office equipment (computers, phones) and the adequate instruments to simulate the office environment (Ward & Shabha, 2001).

The availability of suitable technological support allows telecommuters to view their teleworking experience as positive. In addition, the provision of the necessary equipment leads to lower turnover levels (Haines et al., 2002). In a survey conducted by Mann et al. (2000), revealed that one of the main causes for the failure of this measure was the lack of support at all levels.

Not only support is a critical factor for the organization level, but also communication is a challenge to surpass. Cascio (2000) defends that the increment of new communication arrangements is mandatory to fulfil the lack of face-to-face interactions and for workers to feel that they are still part of the company.

In the organizational level, a formal communication policy is fundamental. It is compulsory to have a formal teleworking agreement, where the employee has access to the rules of this way of working. In the research held by Mann et al. (2000), it was possible to understand which aspects need to be considered in the teleworking agreement, namely the number of hours of work, how to proceed in case of illness, how remote management works and what are the costs that must be subsidized by the company. Additionally, Manochehri and Pinkerton (2003) reported in another study, that other aspects should be addressed in the agreement, such as privacy, issues related to health and safety at work and the use of equipment.

Moreover, the organizational culture should be based on trust, mainly trust between managers and telecommuters. Cascio (2000), defends that trust is one of the most important factors and without trust, even if everything else is considered, a teleworking program will never be a success.

As mentioned above, the culture of an organization must be based on trust. It involves a reformulation of the values and rewards of work. A result based performance could be a value component for a culture of trust. Rather than the number of hours spending at office, productivity should be measured in terms of effective work and projects (Grensing-Pophal, 1998). Trust can be enhanced through the sharing of a common purpose, by constructing commitment and aligning the

values of the company with workers (Coleman, 1996). It is expected from leaders, to support this climate of trust and be responsible for the punishment of workers that violates the ethical principles and by this way earn trust by employees.

2.3. Teleworking in the European Portuguese labor market

In the European level, it is possible to observe a gradual increase in the number of professionals that do teleworking. However, in Portugal, the percentage of professionals in this condition seems to be still residual, as the numbers confirm (Eurofound and the international labour office, 2017).

According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, in 2017 there were only 11% of the Portuguese business professionals who performed remote work. Of these 11%, only 2% did it on a permanent basis (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017)

In the southernmost countries of Europe, there is a trend towards relatively low percentages of the proliferation of telework when compared to the northernmost. Standing out in 2015, Italy had only 6% of professionals in telework, Czech Republic 10% and Greece 9%. At the same time, the northernmost countries, presented percentages of 37%, 33% and 30% for the countries of Denmark, Sweden and Netherlands, respectively (Eurofound and the international labour office, 2017).

The teleworking trend differs considerably when comparing different continents. In 2015, in Europe there was a percentage of teleworking of 14.5% and in the United States of 37% (Picu & Dinu, 2016).

In accordance with the International Labor Organization (2020) and given the above mentioned, the use of telework is interconnected with the stage of economic development that each country presents. When comparing the possibility of working remotely in countries with different levels of economic development, it appears that economic factors together with the internet access and the probability of each person owning a computer, among others, are decisive factors for teleworking policies (OIT, 2020).

Countries where most jobs are in sectors, such as information management, finance and insurance, as well as public administration, have the possibility of having more labor working remotely, whether from home or from another location outside of the company. In contrast to these countries with a strong dependence on sectors, such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction and tourism, are less likely to do so (OIT, 2020).

When comparing Portugal with other countries such as the United Kingdom, where the percentage of teleworkers was 26% in 2015 (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017) there is a high delay in the penetration of telecommute, mainly due to digital and culture barriers. Companies in the Portuguese enterprise pool recognize that it is necessary to balance the impacts that

technology can have to meet the organization needs. The fact is, in Portugal there is still a very corporate culture, and there is a lack of skills and training in workers about the tools that need to be used in telework, causing a low adherence to this new way of working.

2.4. The new future of teleworking

As previously emphasized in the introduction section, the year 2020 and 2021 was characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic that changed the paradigm of the labor market.

In March of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) determined the new coronavirus as an international pandemic, leading the majority of the governments around the world to implement several severe measures to combat the first wave of public health emergency (World Health Organization, 2020).

According to Heng et. al (2012), events such as a global epidemic, natural disaster, climate change, highlight the importance of designing a backup plan that allows the continuity of activities (Heng et al., 2012).

As referred previously, due to the contingency of the measures adopted to combat the pandemic, teleworking began to be used massively. Thus, all organizations, that were already familiar with telework, and even those that had not tried it, were forced to send their employees home (OIT, 2020). In addition to the telework policy, with the successive periods of lockdown, many families faced the problem of closed schools that affected their normal working schedule, since they had to spend more time helping their children (Order No. 3427-B/2020 of March 18 of the Internal Administration – Minister’s Office, 2020)

Consequently, companies were forced to create essential conditions for the most intense teleworking experience in history, because even though the vast majority of professionals only needed a computer to work, they were not used to working remotely (OIT, 2020).

Despite all the consequences caused by the pandemic, it is possible to point out important conclusions, such as the reduction of pollution emissions in the big cities and the decrease in greenhouse effects (Tavares et al., 2020). According to Myllyvirta and Thieriot (2020), Portugal appears at the top, as one of the European countries that experienced a huge reduction in pollution, with a decrease of the values of nitrogen dioxide and toxic particles above 50%.

Tavares, Santos, Diogo and Ratten (2020) developed a study for Portuguese workers that for the first-time experienced teleworking (during the pandemic) and concluded that most part of the individuals adapted easily and quickly to this new way of working. The main difficulties that arose with the implementation of this policy was the lack of interaction between co-workers, the difficulty to access some resources as was the case of a good internet connection and printers, and the ability to balance family life and to comply with the work schedule (Tavares et al., 2020).

Besides all the difficulties that workers felt, it is expected that in the post-pandemic period, several companies will adopt a partial or total teleworking practices, enabling workers to reduce the commuting to the workplace and the pollution emissions. The implementation of this flexible work arrangement can also allow firms to maximize resources and costs and increase the productivity levels of their employees (Tavares et al., 2020).

Therefore, and for everything mentioned above throughout the literature review, this research aims to contribute to the implementation of teleworking practices in the near future, at CTT – Correios de Portugal in a post-pandemic scenario, taking into account all the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time, it is intended to identify the benefits and challenges as well as the success factors for teleworking.

3. METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this chapter is to describe the methodology adopted for this project in detail. With the aim to accomplish the objectives of this project, in this chapter, the chosen methodology will be described along with the method selected, the participants and the procedure of the data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Investigation methodology

The chosen methodology for this investigation was the case study. According to Yin (2018), a case study is “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.” (Yin, 2018, p.50). This research strategy provides a high level of detail and a deep understanding of a certain topic, being, for that reason, the most suitable methodology for this particular project, since it has as the main focus to explore the lessons learned of the collaborators of CTT during the pandemic and study what are their future preferences regarding teleworking, by identifying the benefits, challenges and success factors of telework.

For this project, the method selected was the qualitative method once it allows a deeper collection of data. According to Sparrow (2000), a qualitative method can be more sensitive than the quantitative method, in the sense that it can capture more realistically the perceptions of individuals. The qualitative method also offers the possibility to have an interpretation of events in-person and, at the same time, allows a greater detail of the data that is shared (Bryman, 2001). Additionally, for the analysis of the interviews and for the characterization of the company, mentioned in the next chapter, a series of secondary documents was considered and assessed.

3.2. Instrument

According to the method previous presented, the instrument selected was the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews permit a flexible interaction between the interviewer and the interviewed (Saunders et al., 2009). As mentioned before, this kind of interview allows to explore the themes in research, leveraging the possibility to receive more structured responses, as there is no stiffness in the order of approach of each question included in the interview guide. In an interview the most important factor is the interviewee's point of view and, therefore, it is possible to adjust the order of the questions, included in the interview guide, according to the direction of the conversation (Bryman, 2001).

The set-up of this interview guide required a review of the literature on the subject, which resulted in a compilation of questions, suited to this specific situation, and aligned to the CTT's case. Regarding this project, the main objective of these interviews was to explore the experiences of CTT employees

regarding telework and their future preferences regarding teleworking models' adoption. The interview began with a brief presentation of the study and its scope, and the concrete objective of the interviews. After the introduction, the informed consent was presented to the participants, which referred the voluntary and confidential nature of the interview, as well as the authorization for its audio recording, being used exclusively for data analysis. After the initial part, and the approval of the participants, the interview began with collection of sociodemographic data. Then the interview was structured in two distinct parts (Annex A):

- 1) The first part with a total of six questions related to the experience of teleworking in the pandemic, namely on the adaptation of the employees to this sudden change. The objective of this part was to understand how they managed to work efficiently and what were the associated factors to ensure that, and also what was the impact on their work-life balance, by understanding the benefits and challenges that employees surpassed during this phase. A final question intended to perceive how the company fulfilled to the challenge of teleworking in the pandemic period.
- 2) In the second part, with a total of three questions, concerning the potential implementation of teleworking in a post-pandemic future. The aim here was to understand the interest of collaborators in teleworking and the preferred model that should be adopted in the future. The employees also had to point out the uncertainties and challenges faced during this period, to prevent them from reappearing in the long term.

3.3. Participants

The interview sample consisted of 10 participants (table 1), 50% male and 50% female. The ages of the participants were between 24 and 62, with an average age of 40.3. As for the length of service in the company, the range was between 2 and 40 years, with an average of 10.8 years. Regarding the academic degree, 50% of the participants had a master's degree, 30% a postgraduate degree and 20% a bachelor's degree. In terms of household, only three participants did not have any children in their care.

Table 3.1– List of interviewees and their respective gender, age group, marital status, household, academic degree, company department and length of service

Interview reference	Gender	Age group	Marital Status	Household	Academical degree	Company Department	Length of service
E1	Male	20-24	Single	1	Master	Product Management	2 years
E2	Female	25-29	Single	1	Master	Planning and Control	4 years
E3	Female	30-35	Married	3 (1 child)	Master	Product Management	6 years
E4	Male	36-40	Married	5 (3 children)	Postgraduate	People Management	1 year
E5	Female	36-40	Co-habiting	3 (1 child)	Postgraduate	Digital and Transformation	7 years
E6	Male	41-45	Married	4 (2 children)	Bachelor	Physical resources	2 years
E7	Male	41-45	Married	4 (2 children)	Master	Regulation and Competition	11 years
E8	Female	46-50	Divorced	2 (1 child)	Postgraduate	Human Resources	15 years
E9	Male	51-55	Married	3 (1 child)	Master	E-Commerce	20 years
E10	Female	61-65	Divorced	2	Bachelor	Investor Relations	40 years

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. Data collection

The semi-structured interviews were conducted during the months of September and October 2021 in an online format via Teams platform, due to the pandemic situation. The participants' list for the interviews was selected based on the support provided by the human resources department of CTT, that enabled access to a database with information of all employees (name, age, education, department, length of service, etc.). To schedule each interview, an email was sent to the selected employees explaining the objectives of the interview and a link for the interview, in the attached invitation.

The participant selection was carried out based in four criteria: i) different departments of the company, ii) gender, iii) diversity in the seniority of service and iv) diversity in the number of dependents, to contribute for the principle of diversity and, consequently, increase the sample's representativeness. This principle mentions that interviews should consider the heterogeneity of the participants and the phenomenon under study (Guerra, 2006).

The average duration of interviews was approximately 30 minutes. Before starting each interview, the participants were reminded about the anonymity and voluntary nature of the interviews. The

informed consent was also presented, comprising information about the confidential nature of the interview, as well as the consent for the audio recording, uniquely obtained for data treatment.

The number of interviews carried out was based on the theoretical saturation principle. This principle states that a theoretical saturation is achieved when additional data does not lead to an emergency of new themes for a specific study. Based on that, it is possible for an investigator to perceive when no new perspectives or information's are added, thus ending the data collection (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4.2. Data analysis

After collecting data from the 10 interviews performed, an individual and rigorous analysis with respect to the content of each one was done, using the MAXQDA software. Since each interview was recorded, a transcription process was initiated, being applied, after this procedure, a thematic analysis, that has as an objective to understand the meaning of the context where the studied items appeared and quantify the qualitative content obtained in the interviews. The work basis showed by Braun and Clark (2006) worked as model for this process, since the purpose is to "identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6) . The thematic analysis uses the template procedure proposed by Brooks et al. (2015) which encodes the qualitative data and organizes it following a hierarchical structure, allowing the most relevant themes to be identified. The first step for the content analysis is underpinned with the creation of a template including the different themes. The procedure for performing a template analysis combines the creation of *priori* themes, themes that are found in the literature review and the creation of *a posteriori* themes, through the emergence of new information from the content analysis. (Brooks et al., 2015). After the formulation of the initial template, the encoding process began, including all the new categories that emerged from the content analysis of the interviews, which can be observed in italic, in the tables of results that will be presented in Chapter 5.

To ensure the quality of the analysis developed for this project, some recommendations suggested by the author of Bauer (2002) were followed. The transparency in the presentation of results and the guidelines secured in the information specified in the methodology, contributed for a greater understanding, imposed by the clarity and degree of detail assumed.

It is important to note that in Chapter 5 (Findings and Discussion) the themes and sub-themes that were mentioned the most by the interviewees will be identified. Additionally, in the tables that summarize the main dimensions, themes and sub-themes, the number of occurrences presented correspond to the number of interviewees that mentioned each theme and sub-theme.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE CASE COMPANY – CTT

CTT- Correios de Portugal is the company which is responsible for providing the universal postal service in Portugal and market leader in the services of Mail and Express and Parcels (Relatório Integrado CTT, 2021). “Celebrating 500 years of postal activity in Portugal, CTT has a unique history of dedication, commitment and professionalism that has brought the Portuguese and the world closer together for centuries.”¹

The origins of this important company for the Portuguese society date back to 1520, the year in which King D. Manuel I created the first public postal service in Portugal. The evolution and transformation process of CTT is anchored on profound changes in society.

CTT was the first institution in which the main function was to send written messages, which enabled the exchange of messages between people, contributing to bringing citizens closer without the need of physical presence to communicate. Between the establishment of the public postal service in 1520 and today, through the establishment of regular mail transport known by Mala-Posta carriages in 1798, the creation of the first railway ambulances in 1863, the implementation of the 4-digit postal code in 1978, the Portuguese post is no longer a simple postal company, it became a communication group, whose service goes far beyond the delivery of mail.

CTT is currently a modern and dynamic postal operator with a diversified portfolio of Mail, Business Solutions, Banco CTT and Financial Services and Retail. The mission of the CTT Group is to offer communications and logistics solutions as well as financial products of proximity and excellence, and to establish relationships of trust and innovation either through CTT company or its subsidiaries, anchored in: “The ability to connect people and companies through physical and electronic communications; offer integrated solutions to answer the customer’s needs; trust as a value asset and outcome; and Innovation as an allied to achieve the mission not only today but also in the future”.²

The vision of CTT Group is based on “being recognised as a multi-service postal and financial operator and a worldwide reference in quality, efficiency and value creation”.³

As of June 2021, the group has 566 stores and 1,808 post offices spread across the country, making it the network with the largest capillarity in Portugal (Relatório Integrado CTT, 2021)

4.1. Human capital

CTT has a well-defined strategy, and its management of human resources is steered by the following priorities: definition and implementation of policies for the development of human capital, award

¹ https://www.ctt.pt/grupo-ctt/a-empresa/quem-somos/marca-ctt?language_id=1

² <https://www.ctt.pt/grupo-ctt/a-empresa/quem-somos/missao-visao-e-valores>

³ <https://www.ctt.pt/grupo-ctt/a-empresa/quem-somos/missao-visao-e-valores>

performance and stir agility within the organization; conservation of a good social environment; continuous investment in training and qualification; optimization of the staff, considering the need to respond to the evolution of the market changes.

CTT is one of the largest employers in Portugal with 12,261 employees, with 11,607 employees in Portugal and 654 in other geographies, divided by the areas of operations and distribution network, as of 30 June 2021. Together, the areas of operations and distribution within the basic network have 5,835 employees, of whom 4,247 are delivery postmen and women; and the retail network has 2,428 employees, which represents circa 76% of CTT's permanent staff (Relatório Integrado CTT, 2021).

As for the company's facilities, the headquarters of the group CTT is in Avenida D. João II, Lisbon. This unit has a total workforce of 1355, of which 1123 belong to the main company (CTT) and the remaining 232 belong to the other subsidiaries of the group (Banco CTT, CTT Expresso and Payshop) that does not account for this study. In the headquarters 42 departments are centralized, divided according to the structure of reporting to the CFO, CEO, COO and members of the executive committee, as can be seen in the diagram below (Relatório Integrado CTT, 2021).

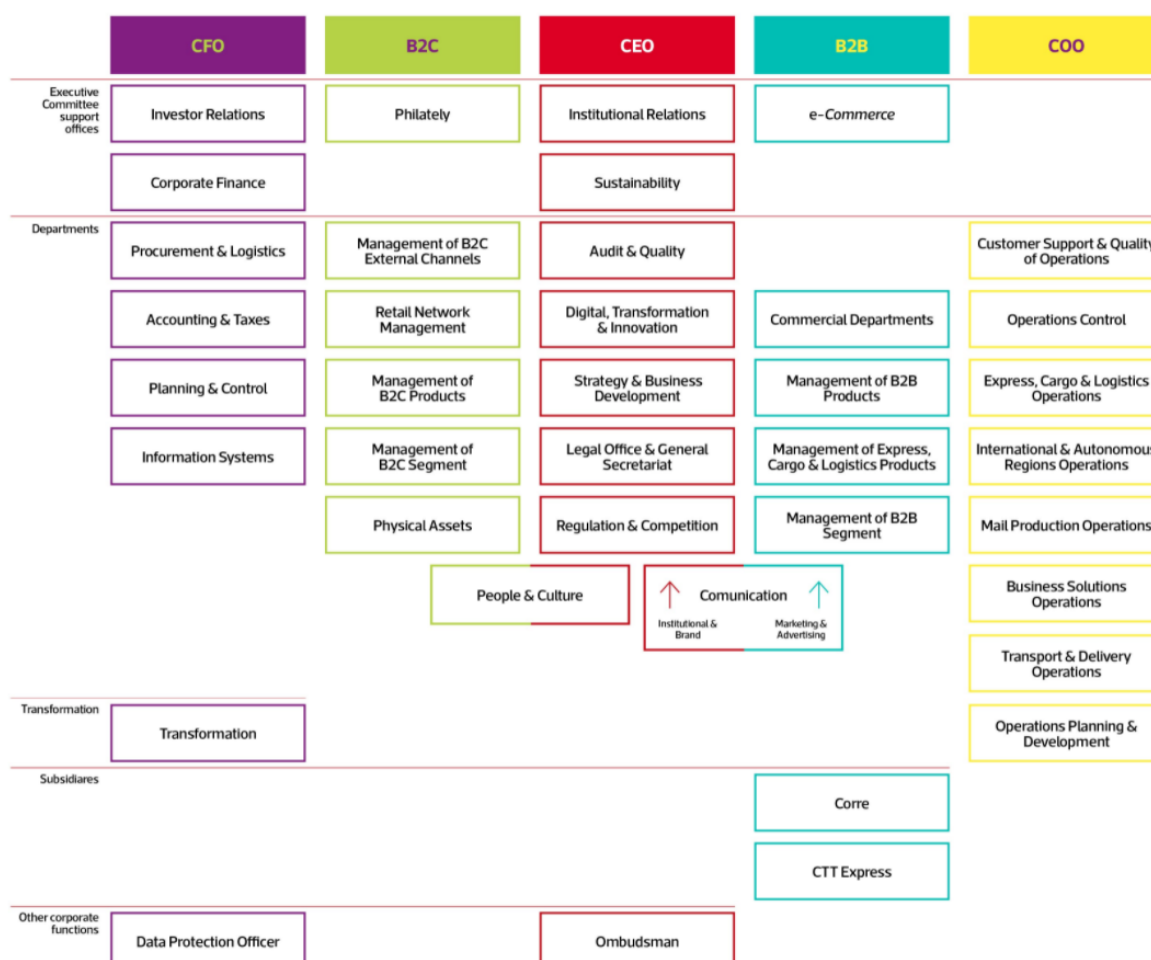


Figure 4.1 – Organizational structure

4.1.1. COVID-19 pandemic

In the context of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, CTT as well as several companies in Portugal adopted the telework scheme in accordance with the legislation in force. From March to May 2020, a general lockdown was established, forcing some of CTT's employees, namely those in the central and support services, to adopt a completely remote work regime, since considering the company's core business, these were the only type of employees that functions made it possible. From June to August 2020, teleworking was no longer mandatory by law, so CTT adopted a biweekly rotating model between teleworking and working in the office. From September to October 2020, CTT adopted a different model according to the functions of each employee: the directors and second-line managers resumed their functions by working 100% in the office, employees with external functions resumed to work in the field at the several locations and the remaining employees continued with the biweekly rotating model between telework and work at the office. From November 2020 to January 2021, with the new measures declared with the state of public disaster, employees with external functions continued to perform on-site work and the other employees returned to the permanent telework scheme, having established the same rules for the new general lockdown declared from January to April 2021. With the reopening of the economy and the end of the full lockdown, from May to August 2021, CTT chose to continue with the same model and only in September 2021, CTT decided to start a new scheme: directors and second-line managers are working in a permanent basis at the office, employees with external functions are also working in the field and the remaining employees on a weekly rotation basis between remote work at home and work in the office.

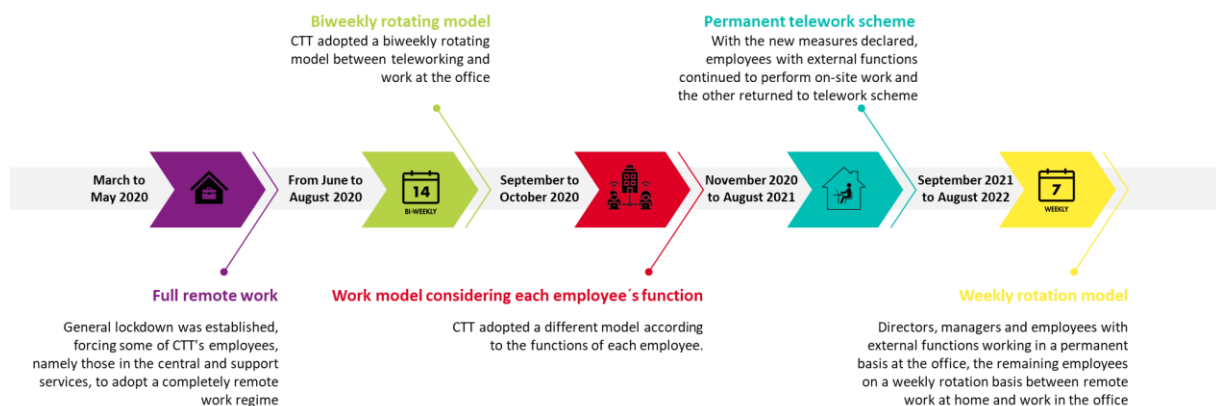


Figure 4.2 – Telework regimes timeline from March 2020 until August 2022 (own elaboration)

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the empirical data. In a first stage the aim is to analyze the results concerning the work experience of CTT employees in coronavirus times, by summarizing the benefits and challenges felt by the employees interviewed. In a second stage, the objective is to analyze the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the potential implementation of teleworking at CTT in a post-pandemic scenario, as well as the success factors for implementing this policy.

From the content analysis of the interviews to the 10 employees of CTT, a system of themes with 47 codes and 230 registration units emerged. It is noteworthy, that all the themes in *italic* mentioned below, suggest new themes found through the analysis of the interviews.

Based on the information from the interviews, five main dimensions were identified: I) Perceptions of teleworking; II) Benefits of teleworking; III) Challenges of teleworking; IV) Future preferences; and V) Critical success factors for teleworking (see table 2).

Concerning the perceptions of teleworking dimension, this one has only one theme: adaptation to teleworking. Regarding the benefits dimension, this one was divided in three themes: I) Benefits at the individual level (e.g. Increased efficiency); II) Benefits at the organizational level (e.g. Selection and recruitment process); and III) Benefits at the society level (e.g. Less emission of pollutants). Concerning the challenges dimension, it was possible to identify three themes; I) Challenges at the individual level (e.g. Increase family conflicts); II) Challenges at the organizational level (e.g. Loss of corporate relations); and III) Challenges at the society level (e.g. Individualization). In respect to, the Future preferences dimension, this one is composed by one theme: Work models. Lastly, regarding the critical success factors dimension, this one it is also split into three themes: I) Success factors at the employee level (e.g. Social interaction); II) Success factors at the managerial level (e.g. Formal and informal communication policy); and III) Success factors at the organizational level (e.g. Technology and Tools).

Table 5.1 illustrates the dimensions and themes of the study, as well as the occurrences of each one of them, making it possible, therefore, to verify the themes that were most mentioned by the interviewees.

Table 5.1 - Global results of main themes of the dimensions: perceptions of teleworking, benefits of teleworking, challenges of teleworking, future preferences and critical success factors for implementing teleworking

Dimension	Theme	Total of occurrences
1. Perceptions of teleworking	1.1 Adaptation to teleworking	10
2. Benefits of teleworking	2.1 Individual benefits	10
	2.2 Organizational benefits	5
	2.3 Society benefits	1
3. Challenges of teleworking	3.1 Individual challenges	10
	3.2 Organizational challenges	9
	3.3 Society challenges	2
4. Future preferences	4.1 Work models	10
5. Critical success factors for implementing teleworking	5.1 Employee success factors	7
	5.2 Managerial success factors	5
	5.3 Organizational success factors	8

Analyzing globally the results obtained, it is possible to affirm that, regarding the first theme, seven out of ten respondents said that the adaptation to teleworking was difficult, especially in the initial phase of the pandemic, due to the lack of schedules, by having children at home and due to the social isolation.

Regarding the benefits of teleworking, it is possible to affirm that the theme that had greater emphasis was the benefits at the individual level, since this theme was referred by all the interviewees (N=10). For example, some respondents highlighted that they managed to work more efficiently from home during the pandemic, mainly because they were in a more relaxed environment. It should be noted that the category that had less focus was the society benefits (e.g. less emission of pollutants).

In what concerns the challenges of teleworking, from all the themes mentioned, the one that was most highlighted by the interviewees was the individual challenges one, for example, the increase of family conflicts was one of the most mentioned subthemes, once this challenge was further exacerbated with the closing of schools during the lockdown period.

In terms of the work models theme, all the interviewed believe that in the future teleworking should be an option for collaborators, being the hybrid model the most highlighted sub-theme.

Concerning the critical success factors, the theme with the high number of occurrences is the organizational success factors. For example, the collaborator E4 emphasis the need for all collaborators to have access to technology and tools that are essential to perform work remotely.

In the following subsections, the results obtained will be analyzed in depth, taking into account all the themes and subthemes presented.

5.1. Perceptions of teleworking

In this dimension the general perception of the collaborators is described relatively to teleworking, namely the adaptation to this way of work in the period marked by the pandemic.

5.1.1. Adaptation to teleworking

Three out of the ten interviewees stated that the adaptation to this way of working was easy and relatively quick, mainly due to the flexibility that teleworking allows, which is consistent with the work developed by Tavares et. al (2020), as interviewed E6 and E2 refer:

“I have adapted well, despite not being in favor to work 100% at home” (E6)

“Having the possibility to be at home, allows a person to manage their schedule and activities in a much more freely way, being present at more meetings and do all the tasks without having to be sitting in the office all the time and in the same workplace” (E2)

On the other hand, seven out of the ten respondents referred that the adaptation to this way of working was difficult, as interviewee E4 states:

“It was really a big challenge, and it changed a lot the work dynamics, the team dynamics and how the team is managed (...) the contact with people, projects, and work priorities” (E4)

Notwithstanding, that this difficulty was felt mainly in the initial period of the lockdown, due to several factors, as is the case of the nonexistence of schedules and the loss of the normal office routine:

“The meetings even multiplied because there were the ones that already existed, plus the ones that emerged (...) my day no longer has 8 hours of work” (E3)

The adaptation to teleworking, in a time marked by a pandemic, was further exacerbated by the challenge of social isolation:

“At the beginning, it was very difficult to accept these circumstances, mainly because people were not used to not having physical contact, so the interactions that occur in teleworking are very different, they are much shorter and less circumstantial” (E1)

Additionally, another of the factors mentioned by the interviewed E8 was the technological factor:

“I would almost say I was caught by surprise with these new technologies” (E8)

During the interviews most part of the interviewees referred that they felt difficulty in adapting to telework, raising various reasons for that, mainly the suddenly and forced change caused by the pandemic being these reasons consistent with the findings of Tavares et al. (2020), Golden et. Al (2006) and Hartig et al. (2007). Portuguese workers were forced to change their routines and had to, even in a short time and with few conditions, to create a workplace in their homes (Tavares et al., 2020). Another difficulty that impacted the adaptation, was the struggle of separating the two spheres, professional and personal, impacted by the distractions that happened at home, from cohabiting with other people - people that were also in teleworking or by having children at home at the same time

(Golden et al., 2006). Additionally, the collaborators felt difficulty in disconnecting from work, since employees were always in the same environment, the place of leisure and work become the same (Hartig et al., 2007).

5.2. Benefits of implementing teleworking

In this dimension the benefits pointed out by the employees are highlighted. In general, the collaborators of CTT highlighted the most part of the benefits and challenges mentioned by the authors in the literature review, not only the benefits and challenges that they felt with this experience but also others that they expected could be experienced in the long term. Following Leite (2019), the benefits and challenges of telework were bundled in three different groups: employee, organization and society.

In the following table, the themes and subthemes of the dimension of benefits are summarized.

Table 5.2 – Number of occurrences of the themes and sub-themes of the dimension of benefits of teleworking

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of occurrences
2.1 Individual benefits	2.1.1 Increased concentration	5
	2.1.2 Flexibility	7
	2.1.3 Higher productivity	7
	2.1.4 Better work-life balance	7
	2.1.5 Increased efficiency	9
	2.1.6 Less time in commuting	6
2.2 Organizational benefits	2.2.1 Connectivity	3
	2.2.2 Reduction in infrastructure costs	2
	2.2.3 Improving the selection and recruitment process	3
2.3 Society benefits	2.3.1 Less emission of pollutants	1

5.2.1. Individual benefits

As we can see in Table 2, the sub-theme with higher occurrence was the *increased efficiency*. The respondents (N=9) report that the fact that they were at home, in a more relaxed place, contributed to reaching higher levels of efficiency.

“At home, people are slightly more relaxed, which promotes and helps to achieve more efficiency” (E1)

“I think it's much more efficient for me, and I think that this increase in efficiency was due to being in my environment, being in a more relaxed environment. Being in your environment makes you also more productive” (E5)

Other sub-themes with high occurrence were the higher productivity and better work-life balance, with a total of 7 occurrences each, employees perceived that they were more productive at home.

"The increase in productivity, at least I speak for myself, I can produce much more when I'm teleworking than in the office because there are fewer distractions" (E6)

"The particular features of teleworking also end up helping people to be more productive" (E3)

With teleworking collaborators managed to increase productivity, since the number of the distractions that happen in the office can be reduced with this way of work, as is the case of the conversation that occurs between colleagues or going to drink a coffee during the working day (Sánchez et al., 2007). This could also be the reason why the employees were able to manage time better, be more concentrated and efficient when teleworking.

The respondents (N=7) state that being in teleworking allowed them to better balance the personal and professional sphere (better work-life balance sub-theme) and consequently have more quality of life.

"The quality of life and the consequent balance between personal and professional life, I think it is one of the main advantages" (E5)

"I think my personal life benefited from being in teleworking, because it allowed me to work in other places that I wouldn't work, for example, in the summer I moved to my holiday home and avoided staying in Lisbon, so it allowed me to be closer to my family and friends and at the same time working, and not being a detrimental factor to my work because I could balance the two things well." (E2)

Other benefits highlighted were the flexibility and less time in commuting, the collaborators realize that being in teleworking allowed them to have more flexibility (N=7) not only in terms of space but also in terms of schedules, allowing them to have a better management of their own lives.

"You can have a completely different and more autonomous management of your life, we have more flexibility than when working in the office" (E7)

"Telework provides better and greater day-to-day management" (E6)

"I think that flexibility is the biggest advantage, in terms of time and space" (E1)

Less time in commuting (N=6) was also perceived by workers as an important advantage, as it meant no time spent in traffic, permitting the use of this time for their own benefit and saving on travel-related costs.

"Another benefit is the fact that you don't waste time commuting to work and, as a result you also have no travel-related costs, whether it's car or public transportation." (E9)

"We save time on commuting, and we can use this time for personal matters" (E3)

The individual benefit with the fewest occurrences was the benefit of increased concentration, with a total of five occurrences. Respondents reported that teleworking positively impacts concentration and focus, since the noise levels are lower at home than in the office.

“Work organization has improved because concentration at home is higher than when we work in an open space, because in open space we are very dependent on what other people's work is, if the work of the colleague next to us requires them to be on the phone a lot, then it impacts our concentration, something that does not happen at home, at least at my house I managed to be more focused” (E9)

The positive aspects associated with a better work-life balance are consistent with Fiolhais (2007) and Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), once telework can offer flexibility to the employee, organization and time management in the way that best suits family needs and easiness in reconciling family and work responsibilities. These benefits make it possible for the collaborators to carry out more household tasks, strengthen family ties and direct time to leisure activities with the family (Fiolhais, 2007; J. H. Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Also, some of the authors previously referred in the literature review stated that this way of working positively impacts the time in commuting in the day-to-day life (Apgar, 1998; Brownson, 2004; Leite et al., 2019; Tergesen, 1998). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the higher productivity and efficiency, sometimes arises because of the increase in the number of working hours, namely through the use of time resulted from the elimination of travels between home and the office (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997) and through the dilution of the barriers between the personal and professional life spheres (Golden, 2021).

5.2.2. Organizational benefits

Regarding the organizational benefits theme, three sub-themes were mentioned: *connectivity*, reduction of infrastructure costs and improving the selection and recruitment process, with a total of three occurrences.

According to three of the interviewees, *connectivity* is a business advantage, as the employees no matter where they are, can be working. Additionally, the development of the technologies allows for greater connectivity between employees, allowing people to work collaboratively from a distance and permits that in meetings it is possible to meet with a higher number of people than in person.

" An advantage at the organizational level, is the possibility that, regardless of where you are, you can be working " (E2)

“Work collaboratively in Teams sharing presentations and writing in the same document at the same time” (E8)

The benefit of reducing infrastructure costs was mentioned by two of the employees. Teleworking can allow companies to reduce the infrastructure costs related to the real estate (Leite et al., 2019), by freeing up space and by reducing the maintenance and day-to-day (e.g. printing paper, electricity, utilities) costs.

"One of the gains is the savings on day-to-day costs" (E7)

"The possibility to change for smaller buildings, companies can take the advantage of reuse existing spaces, because people are now able to connect via teams anywhere as if they were present " (E2)

Concerning the improvement of the selection and recruitment process sub-theme, three out of the ten employees affirmed that having the ability to telecommute allows the company to recruit different profiles, as is the case of recruiting people from other cities or to recruit employees that for them only makes sense to be working in a company that allows to do remote work.

"Allow the company to be able to have for some functions, collaborators that are not based in Lisbon" (E8)

"Even if we also want to recruit new employees for CTT, nowadays I can say that I think there are people who reject jobs because there is no chance of teleworking" (E5)

According to Kowalski & Swanson (2005), in order for companies to continue to be competitive in the recruitment process, they need to adapt the policy of work. Nowadays, it is essential for workers to have the flexibility that telework encompasses, being a requirement for some of them to take a job.

5.2.3. Society benefits

Teleworking can be an important help for current problems that our society is facing as is the case of traffic and the emission of pollutants, helping to reduce these two problems (Felippe, 2018). In accordance with the study conducted by Tavares et al. (2020), although the pandemic has caused various severe consequences, it is noteworthy that the lockdowns permitted the reduction of pollution emissions in the big cities and the decrease in greenhouse effects. The society benefits theme was the theme with less occurrence and with only one sub-theme: less emission of pollutants. This sub-theme was referred only by the interviewed E7:

"If we think about the environment, we end up polluting less, which is undoubtedly a social benefit" (E7)

5.3. Challenges of implementing teleworking

As mentioned above, telework brings, according to Fiolhais (2007), Leite et. al (2019) and Rocha & Amador (2018) several advantages, but others highlight the challenges that teleworking can entail. In this dimension, the employees were asked what were the biggest challenges they identified in carrying out this way of working during the pandemic period as well as the ones that they highlighted for the long term. This dimension is divided in three themes: individual, organizational and society challenges. In the table below, the themes and subthemes of this dimension are displayed.

Table 5.3 - Number of occurrences of the themes and sub-themes of the dimension of challenges of teleworking

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of occurrences
3.1 Individual challenges	3.1.1 Social isolation	8
	3.1.2 More working hours	9
	3.1.3 Increase family conflicts	9
	3.1.4 Difficulties in the onboarding process	4
	3.1.5 Less motivation	6
	3.1.6 Resistance to work in person	1
3.2 Organizational challenges	3.2.1 Lack of a proper and isolated place	3
	3.2.2 Decrease in labour relations	8
	3.2.3 Decrease in teamwork performance	6
	3.2.4 Decrease in performance control	3
	3.2.5 People management	1
3.3 Society challenges	3.3.1 Individualization	2
	3.3.2 Less consumption	1

5.3.1. Individual challenges

Starting with the individual challenges theme, the sub-themes with higher occurrence were the increase of family conflicts and more working hours, with an occurrence of nine each.

The increase of family conflicts was highlighted by nine employees, since for them the conciliation between the two spheres, work and family, was difficult. This conflict was intensified by the pandemic challenge as the workplace and family space became the same. It should also be noted that this challenge was felt only by employees with children, as they had to balance their work with their children having classes at home, an issue that was mitigated with the reopening of the schools after the lockdowns (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997; Leite et al., 2019).

“Relatively to the balance of work with my children, it was very complicated, the youngest one required a lot of attention (...) while my other kids had classes and had their work (...) it was very difficult and exhausting, very demanding” (E4)

"It was more difficult to establish the limits between the context of work and the context of home/family (...) and, therefore, it was not helpful in terms of articulating family life and work."
(E9)

In terms of working hours, nine employees stated that they worked more hours because of the difficulty in disconnecting from work and setting limits on working hours. According to Hartig et al., (2007), the difficulty of "disconnecting" from work and the fact that the employees tend to work longer hours, since they are already at home and there is an economy of travel time (Golden, 2021), may be the main causes of working hours being longer than usual. Employees end up working intense and overtime hours and consequently have less time to rest and to spend with their family (Hartig et al., 2007), as refer the individuals E1 and E3:

"The fact that we are in a pandemic and we can't leave the house makes us more tempted to finish work at eleven pm" (E1)

"Any time is fine for work and then it's hard to finish, you don't know what the limit is anymore, the fact of having to leave the office because you have to pick up your son from school (...)"
(E3)

Eight employees perceived that the physical distance that leads to lack of social contact and, consequently, to social isolation as one of the biggest challenges of telework being this consistent with the literature. Indeed, social isolation is pointed out by many authors as one of the biggest disadvantages of teleworking, causing distance in teams (Monge et al., 1985) and reducing interaction and communication between colleagues (Golden, 2006).

"Above all, the loneliness for not having physical contact with people " (E1)

Another sub-theme mentioned by the collaborators was the decrease in motivation (less motivation sub-theme), with an occurrence of six. The employees consider that when teleworking is adopted in the long run the levels of motivation with work may decrease (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

"However, we reach a point where people really need physical contact and I think this has a big impact on people's own motivation" (E3)

Based on the interviews carried out, four collaborators mentioned *the difficulties in the onboarding process* as a challenge. The onboarding process is a very important step in the integration of employees in a new corporate environment. Sometimes the lack or inefficient use of these can influence negatively, not only the integration of the employee, but also their future performance once that when employees are at home the communication is more difficult in an initial phase of integration.

"Also, the entrance and integration of new employees into teams, it is very difficult to do when in teleworking" (E10)

The sub-theme with less occurrence mentioned was the *resistance to work in person*, with just one employee to emphasize this challenge, for him, in the long term the employee can perceive this benefit as a right and not wanting to go back to a face-to-face regime.

"We can foster some resistance to work in the office instead of home" (E6)

5.3.2. Organizational challenges

In what concerns the challenges at the organizational level, the sub-theme with higher occurrence was the decrease in the labour relations. Eight of the ten respondents felt that with telework the relations between employees and the company was not the same as in the office, since it is more difficult for them to feel engage with the teams and the company, to maintain the organizational culture and the cohesion in teams (Leite et al., 2019; Rocha & Amador, 2018).

"People are more disconnected from the company and the organizational culture are lost" (E6)

Another disadvantage pointed out by the employees was the decrease in teamwork performance, with an occurrence of six. The interviewees felt that during this experience, the teamwork performance was negatively impacted mainly to the physical distance, the barriers in the communication to discuss about ideas and the group dynamics (Leite et al., 2019; Rocha & Amador, 2018).

"In the case that you have to conceive an idea or structure a document, which the team needs, the fact of being away from the team, being not able to discuss some ideas, affects the team's performance because it ends up being a more time-consuming process via online platforms" (E8)

"Group dynamics, I think they work better in face-to-face" (E5)

The lack of a proper and isolated place was another issue reported by three of the respondents, being this challenge consistent with one of the findings of the study conducted by Tavares (2017). These employees stated that they felt it difficult to guarantee the same work conditions at home as in the office as is the case of having a proper chair and desk.

"It is important to have a specific place with all the conditions to be able to work, like a comfortable chair and a home office" (E7)

"At my home, I had to make a new office, an improvised one, with a super uncomfortable chair (...) your own space has to allow you to have the minimum to be comfortable" (E5)

Another challenge pointed out was the decrease in performance control, two of the respondents experienced that in telework it is more difficult to manage and coordinate people, since people are not physically together, which makes greater control of performance unfeasible for managers and directors (Felippe, 2018).

"In terms of control over the work that is being developed, you have more difficulty in coordinating, you cannot understand exactly how people are doing their job, if they are working, if they are not working and, in other words, in terms of controlling the human resources it is more complex" (E7)

Finally, the challenge of *People management* was mentioned by one employee. For this employee, this long-term challenge is related to the fact that the company needs to be aware and have a correct people management about which telework model is most comfortable and best suits each person.

"In people management, it is very important to understand what suits better to each person in terms of teleworking models" (E1)

5.3.3. Society challenges

Regarding the society challenges, the employees highlighted two sub-themes: the individualization and the less consumption.

The challenge of individualization is an indirect challenge highlighted by two employees. For them, this challenge translates into the fact that certain employees end up isolating themselves from society, since their place of work becomes their home and they stop going to the office to connect with co-workers, causing fragmentation in their relationships and leading that situations of stress and burnout that are often not anticipated. This sub-theme is in accordance with the findings of Thulin et. al (2019), these authors perceive the stress and pressure factors as consequences of teleworking, which may negatively impact the work-life balance and increase the levels of individualization in society, being this an indirect social challenge.

"In teleworking you can have the risk of losing the human side and the challenge of not notice how people really are, for example if the person is stressed at work or in a burnout, if you are at home, it is much less noticeable. These collaborators normally end up closed up in their homes, individualized from the society" (E4)

The *less consumption* challenge was only referred by one employee, the fact that people are doing homeworking can lead to a reduction of the daily consumption and can negatively impact the economy of the country.

“If we have half of the country at home and half of the country that doesn't consume, that doesn't go to the restaurant, and in that aspect, it worries me a bit that this philosophy of teleworking at home is adopted” (E9)

5.4. Future preferences

Concerning the future preferences dimension, the employees were questioned about the possibility of continuing telework in a post-pandemic future and what would be their preferences regarding the model of teleworking, as we can see in the table below.

Table 5.4 - Number of occurrences of the themes and sub-themes of the dimension of future preferences

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of occurrences
4.1 Work models	4.1.1 Hybrid model	5
	4.1.2 Flexible model	4
	4.1.3 Full remote model	1

Regarding the preferences of the employees about the future of work, it is possible to conclude that all the employees would like to have the possibility of continuing doing telework in the future.

It is important to highlight that for these respondents, the model of teleworking varies depending on the typology to be adopted.

5.4.1. Work models

The hybrid model was the most mentioned sub-theme by five out of the ten employees. For these collaborators the preferred model was the hybrid model, which suggested two to three days of face-to-face work at the head office. This sub-theme is consistent with Beauregard et. al (2019), for these authors the balance between the days in a week spent in the office and working from home, should be two or three days working remotely.

“I prefer a model of three days at work, for example, and two days at home doing telework” (E9)

“In my opinion, the best model would be two or three days at home and the other days at the office” (E3)

Regarding the *flexible model* sub-theme, four out of ten employees would like a model of teleworking that is not regular, for them what makes sense is a model that allows them to go to the office when the volume of meetings and work is higher. For these employees more than a hybrid model, the ideal model is a model connected with the flow of work.

“I think that the future model should be a flexible model, eventually staying at home part of the days and at the peak seasons, where there needs to be more communication between team

members be in the office. So, the model should be more in line with the flow of work rather than the 2-3 days a week, rather than being a fixed model being a flexible model." (E10)

Only one employee mentioned that he would like a total regime in telework, since this model is suitable for the functions that she performs. This collaborator also mentioned that despite preferring a full remote model, it is important to continue to have face-to-face team meetings and interactions.

"In my specific case, I would like to stay in telework 100% but it is important to guarantee meetings with my team every 15 days, and make some face-to-face meetings but always privileging telework" (E5)

5.5. Critical success factors for implementing teleworking

In this last dimension, employees were asked what are the critical success factors to ensure a telework policy at CTT after the pandemic, if telework is implemented. In order for the working conditions to be adequate, the teleworker must have access to conditions that allow him to perform his function as it was in the office, namely, must have a physical space that meets all the health, ergonomics and safety standards (Tavares et al., 2020). Collaborators must also be able to communicate easily with colleagues, managers and directors having at their disposal all the technology and necessary tools (Beauregard et al., 2019). The employee must have access to physical working conditions, where all elements of the workspace that influence their activity meet the needs. In particular, factors such as those that can be observed in the table below:

Table 5.5 - Number of occurrences of the themes and sub-themes of the dimension of critical success factors for implementing teleworking

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of occurrences
5.1 Employee success factors	5.1.1 Social interaction	5
	5.1.2 Flexibility in working hours	2
5.2 Managerial success factors	5.2.1 Formal and informal communication policy	5
5.3 Organizational success factors	5.3.1 Technology and tools	7
	5.3.2 Results based performance	2
	5.3.3 Teleworking best practices guide	2
	5.3.4 Foster corporate culture	4

5.5.1. Employee success factors

The sub-themes that emerged in the employee's success factors theme were the social interaction and the *flexibility in the working hours*.

Five out of ten employees mentioned the sub-theme of social interaction, since for them it is important to ensure that the team spirit is maintained in telework and the interactive and fun moments keep active in their work routine, as is the case of teambuilding's. According to the Eurofound (2020), one of the crucial factors for telework to be implemented as a policy of success is

to guarantee the social interaction between the collaborators, allowing that mutual learning exists and that the feedback is a constant between the workers and the management.

"There have to be more have fun moments without a doubt, I think there has to be something that brings people together as is the case with teambuilding's" (E4)

Two of the ten employees interviewed mentioned that *flexibility in working hours* is another important success factor to be ensured. For these employees, even in teleworking flexibility should be granted to motivate and bring out the best performance of workforce's company. As one of them said,

"Everyone has a different work routine, and it is important to find a balance within a team and this has to prevail in all ways of working." (E2)

5.5.2. Managerial success factors

Regarding the managerial theme, only one sub-theme emerged with an occurrence of five, the formal and informal communication policy sub-theme. For these employees it is essential to have a communication policy established in the company as is the case of weekly meetings within the same department, daily meetings in the teams and an internal formal communication for employees to feel attached and engaged with the company, this strategy is consistent with Cascio (2000), the enhancement of the communication skills is important in teleworking, namely the formal and also informal so that the feelings of loneliness and isolation are mitigated. Mann et al. (2000) recommends regular online meetings, intranet platforms and events for socializing being these recommendations consistent with the opinion of the interviewed. The implementation of communication strategies assures a greater job satisfaction and productivity (Ilozor et al., 2001).

"I understand that when everyone is at home and teams is the platform of communication, sometimes it becomes much more difficult to have an agenda to talk to people, it is necessary to create the habit that on that day and at that time, 2 or 3 times a week we talk about Project X, Project Y or with the team A or with the team B this has to be practice, I believe it is a good practice and I think that's the only way it can be efficient" (E4)

5.5.3. Organizational success factors

Organizational success factors were the theme that reported a higher volume of occurrences. For the employees interviewed, the company must ensure the same conditions at home as in the office, by providing the necessary technology and tools, result based performance system, a *teleworking best practice guide* and *foster corporate culture*.

The technology and tools sub-theme had an occurrence of seven. For these collaborators it is essential that the work conditions at home are equal to the ones offered in company's offices. The availability of suitable technological support allows the teleworking experience as being positive. Additionally, a company providing the necessary equipment leads to lower turnover levels (Haines et al., 2002). In a study carried out by Mann et al. (2000), it was concluded that one of the main reasons for the collapse of this policy is the lack of support at different levels.

For all, a laptop/computer is a mandatory tool that should be granted by the company, since it is through it that most of the work is done. However, to bring out the full capacity of each collaborator and to connect teams, all company software's need to be accessible, so a simple and good VPN is a must have (Ward & Shabha, 2001).

For most of them, a cell phone should be provided too, allowing to split up work contacts from the personal ones.

Besides the technological equipment, the company must guarantee proper ergonomic conditions. To strive this situation, and in these employees' opinion, the company has to have an active role, asking their employees which office materials are necessary, such as office chairs and desks.

"A laptop and access to all required software's must be provided by the company, so it is necessary to ensure that everyone is working easily with the VPN. Besides that, I also think the company should take into consideration if the employee has the minimum comfort at home, helping with office materials if necessary." (E8)

The *foster corporate culture* had four occurrences. Teleworking could disconnect the employee from company's culture, affecting his perception of how the company is organized and which business units exists and how they are related. An organizational culture education should be ensured by the company by promoting periodical formations and forums.

"In my opinion the company must verify if each employee is aware of the company's culture because each person must understand and have in mind the culture, mission and values of the company he works for. Organization needs to have an active role, promoting discussions and formations about these topics." (E5)

The result based performance system registered two occurrences. Collaborators mentioned that it is important for the company to ensure a good performance from their employees, based on the definition of specific milestones and objectives, mainly in a teleworking environment, being this factor in accordance with Grensing-Pophal (1998), rather than the number of hours spent at the office, productivity should be measured in terms of effective work.

It is essential that each team focuses on the definition of a well-structured scheme, allowing employees to understand which tasks are urgent and important, contributing to an outstanding performance of the individual and his team. This way of organizing work should be closely followed in an office environment, but especially in a teleworking scenario, where most of the times the employee is doing his job without a physical supervision.

“The manager or director of the team must pass the logic that is present, helping his colleagues to define milestones and objectives to contribute to the success of the team. Define deliverables and deadlines are also essential to optimize the teamwork and motivate the collaborator” (E7)

For the *teleworking best practice guide*, employees (N=2) stated that the company should develop a guide that agglomerates all “Do’s and Don’ts” when working outside the office. This guide will contribute to a better adoption of this way of working, allowing a uniformity of employee’s habits.

“Know which practices are important to follow when you are outside the office is very difficult, so the company should be present mainly to help the employee in the adoption of teleworking, providing a guide with the best practices.” (E6)

6. IMPLEMENTATION PROPOSAL

This chapter aims to suggest some proposals for the implementation of telework at CTT- Correios de Portugal.

Concerning the general perspective of employees about the possibility of continuing telework in a post-pandemic future, it is known that many would like to remain in this regime and according to the interviews carried out, it was verified that the entire sample would like to remain in a regime between telework and work in the office. Therefore, CTT must think about how to implement. This implementation proposal seeks to provide guidance regarding the aspects to take into account for telework to be successfully implemented, merging two perspectives: on one hand, the perspective of the collaborators, considering their preferences and desires regarding teleworking and, on the other hand, the previous studies that are indicated in the literature review and in the secondary documentation that was considered for this project. Additionally, CTT Human Resources team must, together with the directors of each department, analyze each person and function in order to understand what regime most suits for each particular case.

In implementing any type of organizational change, teleworking included, it is important to point out that motivated and healthy employees reflect more productivity and consequently a better performance at work, which turns out to be an important asset for the company. Therefore, managers of organizations, namely top management, should remember that the human factor is constant in any decision they make for the company.

In terms of the implementation of teleworking at CTT, the recommendations resulting from the current study can be divided into the following categories: 1) Employee level, 2) Managerial level and 3) Organizational level.

The first suggestion of intervention falls on recommendations at the employee level and focuses on social interaction and flexibility in working hours. Regarding to social interaction, the proposals focus mainly on the moments of socialization that existed at the headquarters before the pandemic, as is the case of coffee breaks or the moments of get-together, that do not happen at home in the same way, as was commented by the collaborators in the interviews and referred in the study conducted by Cascio (2000). These proposals have as main objective to ensure the same levels of performance and productivity as working in the office.

Given that teleworking is characterized by social distance, CTT can organize online events that promote moments of disconnection and socialization for collaborators, as refer the study of the International Labor Organization (2020). These could be online events such as yoga or pilates classes, teambuilding events (e.g. escape rooms), diversified workshops (e.g. culinary) or other initiatives that allow social contact between workers beyond professional matters.

Regarding flexibility in working hours, this suggestion of intervention spotlights the changes in the work schedule. Most of the employees interviewed emphasized the fact that, during the teleworking period in the pandemic phase, they ended up working longer hours, making this way of work more challenging, mainly due to the growing number of video-call meetings. If CTT opts for the path of implementing a telework policy in the post-pandemic future, it would be important that all collaborators had a time exemption, without a mandatory 9am to 6pm work schedule, for employees to better manage their schedules and have more flexibility.

The second suggestion of intervention concerns recommendations at the managerial level, namely a formal and informal communication policy. For the interviewed, it is essential to have a communication policy established in the company, which will be an important asset in the long term as is possible to confirm by the success factor mentioned in the managerial success factor sub-theme. This recommendation is also in accordance with the authors Mann et al. (2000) and Pooter (2003) that recommend regular online meetings, like conference calls and an implementation of an online platform for communication.

Concerning the informal communication policy, CTT can set up some rules and indications that guide the managers and collaborators in their jobs: a) implement morning meetings - meetings with short duration (e.g. where the employees can say what they have planned for the day or clarify some doubts); b) use a meeting “profitability strategy”, i.e., previously define a clear plan of topics that will be addressed in meetings and establish a maximum time limit for them (e.g. 30 minutes, 1 hour); c) preferably always use Microsoft Teams for meetings as employees are already used to this program. The aim of these meetings is to create follow-up appointments with the work teams, so that directors and managers are aware of what their employees will be doing during that day. Since the weight of meetings was one of the most mentioned points by the employees interviewed, morning meetings can be implemented every two days.

Regarding the formal policy, the employees interviewed think that it could be a good idea for the company to create a new flow for internal communication. As a suggestion it would be valuable for CTT to launch a monthly newsletter, where collaborators could obtain information about the new hires, the main projects that are taking place in the areas, as well as new partnerships, for example.

The third suggestion of intervention concerns recommendations at the organizational level, namely proposals for supply of the adequate technology and tools, a result based performance, a teleworking best practice guide and initiatives that foster corporate culture.

If teleworking is considered to be implemented in the future, CTT must ensure that all employees have the technologies and tools available to perform work at home as if they were in the office, being this statement in accordance with the work of Ward and Shabha (2001). Some employees mentioned that at home they did not have the necessary conditions to perform their work as is the case of a

proper chair and desk. In the future, CTT must provide adequate resources to employees so that they can accomplish their work in the best way, and it is important to ensure that: a) all employees have a suitable table and chair at home to work. For example, working at the living room table can be a good temporary solution, but it will not be the most suitable for 8 hours of work; b) CTT must ensure that everyone has the technological and hardware resources, such as having good access to the internet and the company's VPN (Virtual Private Network), keyboard, mouse, screen, ergonomic computer support, headphones, among other necessary resources. If employees do not have access to these conditions, CTT may offer a voucher for employees to buy what is needed or lend employees the resources they have at disposal in the office.

In addition, respondents mentioned that having a teleworking best practices guide would be an important asset; that is, making employees aware of the physical, ergonomic and lighting conditions they should have at home as if they were in their working place. This guide could be online and available to all employees, where experts in the field would explain and help employees how to adapt their home conditions to make a suitable work environment.

Regarding a result based performance, this issue was referred by some of the employees and also in the literature by Grensing-Pophal (1998), bringing out the theme of leadership, and online leadership entails the challenge of physical distance, which can bias the perception that management has about the rhythm and performance of the employees' work. That is why it is important that work is recognized through previously established objectives, agreed on with management. The recognition of the work should be for the deliverables and not for the number of hours worked. An intervention path can be the holding of brief quarterly meetings between the manager and the employee, where an evaluation is done to see how teleworking is running, in order to act or adjust important aspects when necessary and to define the specific objectives for each collaborator.

Another very important factor to consider is how to foster the corporate culture. In telework it is important for the employee to feel that the organization trusts employees and that there is room for collaborators to be autonomous in the development of work, as referred Cascio (2000). Some suggestions for the employee to feel connected with the company even at a distance and feel the company culture, can be through monthly events in which teams meet in the office and all go to lunch together, through dynamics of teambuilding or even through webinars with the board of the company to present the main initiatives that are happening in the company.

To finish, based on the opinions of the interviewed, it is necessary that the company keeps an active contact with its employees and creates a routine of feedback surveys, to maintain a proactive concern with its employees in a daily basis.

7. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to the world of work and to the economy (OIT, 2020). Two and half years into the pandemic, it may well be time for companies to rethink the future of work in their organizations, for instance through the implementation of a telework policy (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020).

The objectives of this project were to explore the general experience of CTT employees regarding the adoption of teleworking during the pandemic, identify the perceived benefits and challenges of carrying out this way of working and highlight the success factors that CTT employees classify as essential to perform teleworking. To do so, interviews were carried out with ten CTT employees, and an implementation proposal was drawn to provide some recommendation and guidelines based on evidence and the opinion of collaborators. It is important to remember that the adoption of a full remote model in a first phase of this experience was imposed by the pandemic context (OIT, 2020). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the respondents had never been in a telework regime.

The first goal of this project was to explore the general experience of CTT employees regarding the teleworking adoption during the pandemic. During the interviews, it became clear that most of the interviewees felt difficulty in adapting to telework, mainly due to the surprise factor caused by the pandemic, the struggle of separating the professional and personal spheres of their lives and the difficulty to disconnect from work.

Despite the difficulties felt, the employees of CTT highlighted those they consider to be the benefits and the challenges of carrying out this work methodology and those that may arise in the future. Even in an atypical telework scenario, the benefits and challenges identified, present significant similarities with the ones identified in telework literature before the pandemic.

Regarding the benefits of teleworking, the collaborators mentioned, at an individual level, increased efficiency, higher productivity, a better work-life balance, flexibility, less time commuting and increased concentration. Indeed, the workers in teleworking felt they had managed to increase their efficiency, productivity and time management since the flexibility that this measure entailed allowed them to balance better the personal and professional spheres of their lives. Additionally, on a daily basis, telework eliminated travel time to the office, which they were able to substitute for their own benefit.

Concerning the organizational benefits, the increase in connectivity was mentioned as a benefit, i.e., it does not matter where the employee is, she could be working or participating in a meeting via Teams or another similar platform. Moreover, in the long term, this way of working can allow office floors to be subleased and reduce the infrastructure costs (i.e.: electricity, water, etc.). Likewise, this

new way of working enhances the selection and recruitment of talent, since teleworking has become for some profiles, namely younger people, an almost mandatory requirement for accepting a job offer.

In terms of social benefits, the lower emission of pollutants was referred by one of the employees. It is well known that the exponential decrease in traffic resulting from the lockdowns caused a significant reduction in pollution and in the long term this can be an important advantage.

During the interviews, the collaborators were also asked about the challenges of telework. In the individual challenges, they identified the social isolation, the fact that they worked more hours, increased family conflicts, difficulties in the onboarding process, less motivation and resistance to working in person. Respondents reported that family conflicts were further exacerbated with the challenge of the lockdowns, and in some of the cases with the home schooling of the children that was experienced by some of the employees. In terms of working hours, some of the respondents experienced the difficulty of disconnecting from work, leading to an increase in the workload. Moreover, some employees outlined the social isolation they felt as one of the biggest challenges of this way of working, caused by the physical distance and the lack of socialization moments, that in the long term they felt could lead to a reduction in their own motivation. The difficulties in the onboarding process were also identified as a challenge, since this step is very important for the integration of new employees into the company, and doing it remotely is a major challenge, since they may not be fully connected with the company. Plus, the company can experience some resistance by the employees when working from the office, as they might start seeing the new way of working (from home) as a right.

At the organizational level, the challenges pointed out were the lack of a proper and isolated workplace, decrease in social life between colleagues, decrease in teamwork performance, decrease in performance control and people management. One of the biggest challenges identified in the interviews is related to the fact that the collaborators can feel disconnected from the organizational culture, causing a decrease in the relationships among them, which could translate into a decrease in team performance. Another issue mentioned is the lack of a proper and isolated place due to the difficulty that some collaborators felt in achieving the same work conditions at home as in the office. Furthermore, the decrease in performance control was also perceived as a challenge, because of the difficulty felt by managers and/or team leaders in managing and coordinating people remotely, as well as the challenge of people management in the long-term to have all the collaborators satisfied with the work methodology chosen.

At the society level, the challenges mentioned were the challenge of individualization related to the possible loss of relationships between collaborators and the fall in consumption caused by working from home, since employees reduced the number of times they left their homes.

The results show that it was unanimous among respondents that in the future telework should be implemented at CTT. In fact, the collaborators believe that for this to happen it is necessary that some factors are guaranteed. At the employee level, a fundamental feature is social interaction, to ensure a good team spirit and strengthen the motivation of employees, and flexibility in working hours, so that it is possible for the employees to have the freedom to balance their personal and professional lives in the best way. Additionally, the participants in the interviews mentioned that is essential to have a formal and informal communication policy established. In their opinion, a communication policy should be established by the company for employees to feel connected with the organization despite the physical distance, helping to mitigate the issues related to social isolation, through daily meetings within the different departments, an intranet platform and socialization events. At the organizational level, the collaborators referred that it is important for the company to provide the necessary technology and tools, not only the technological equipment itself, but also the necessary equipment to ensure the same comfort as in the office. Interviewees also referred the importance of a results-based performance system with rewards related to objectives established, a teleworking best practice guide and fostering corporate culture through periodical forums and training sessions.

In addition, with the aim of giving suggestions of intervention to the company as well as to other companies that think to follow this path, an intervention proposal was developed taking in consideration the literature review and the success factors and measures referred by the interviewed. This proposal includes recommendations of intervention at different levels: employee, managerial and organizational, namely measures that affect changes in terms of work-family balance, work organization and employees' well-being.

Teleworking, in the point of view of collaborators is the future of work and this has to be the major goal of this company, with the adoption of a hybrid model of two to three days of remote work per week and the rest of the week in the office.

Nowadays, the topic of teleworking is an important debate not only for CTT but for other organizations. The digital transformation and COVID-19 were and are strong drivers of this change, implying new perspectives for the future of work. For this reason, this project is an important starting point for CTT and companies, since there is still not much literature on this topic due to its novelty. It is important to continue to study new ways of implementing remote work to contribute to a better balance between work and personal life and at the same time to achieve a better performance.

In conclusion, CTT and other companies need to think forward, in order to motivate and reduce the employee turnover, ensuring a constant improvement of its employees' satisfaction and productivity. Nevertheless, the decision of the teleworking models should be done with the involvement of the directors of each department and human resources area. Certainly, organizations

and CTT must carefully consider the potential benefits and costs for the employees and the company with the adoption of a telework strategy.

7.1 Limitations and future research

As common in all research projects, in this study it is possible to find some limitations. In the future, it would be important to use a combined methodology, quantitative and qualitative, through an implementation of a questionnaire to obtain the perspective of more collaborators and achieve a broader understanding of the theme under research. It would also be important to conduct interviews with a larger number of collaborators, to draw more conclusions and have a more representative sample.

Finally, it is important to underline that the timescale of the interviews was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, a time characterized by profound changes in ways of working worldwide and uncertainty regarding the future. In the future, other important conclusions may appear, as some of the answers in the current study may have been unduly influenced by the context.

However, even though it was considered a small sample of respondents, it encompasses a diverse group of employees from different departments, which allowed to consider different perspectives and experiences during the interviews.

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9. ANNEXES

Annex A

Entrevista – Implementação de práticas de teletrabalho nos CTT

Introdução

Bom dia/ Boa tarde. O meu nome é Beatriz Ferraria e, antes de iniciar a seguinte entrevista, gostaria de agradecer a sua participação e disponibilidade. Caso, deseje **colocar alguma dúvida** ou partilhar uma opinião adicional, poderá contactar-me através do e-mail (beatriz_ferraria@iscte-iul.pt).

O presente estudo surge no âmbito do trabalho final do mestrado de gestão, a decorrer na **Iscte Business School**, e tem como principal objetivo compreender as perceções sobre a implementação de práticas de teletrabalho nos CTT sendo, por isso, importante a sua **opinião individual e sincera**. Importa ainda ressaltar, que **nenhuma resposta é considerada certa ou errada**.

Esta **entrevista** pretende aferir a sua **experiência relativa ao teletrabalho** durante o período de **pandemia** (COVID-19), bem como a sua opinião sobre a potencial **implementação destas práticas na sua empresa num futuro pós-pandémico**. Esta entrevista terá a duração de aproximadamente 45 minutos. Não existem riscos significativos na participação deste estudo. Embora possa não beneficiar diretamente com a participação no mesmo, as suas respostas irão contribuir para o enriquecimento deste tema atual para a comunidade científica.

A participação no estudo é **estritamente voluntária**: pode escolher livremente participar ou não participar. Se tiver escolhido **participar**, pode interromper a participação em qualquer momento, sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. Para além de voluntária, a **participação é também anónima e confidencial**. Os dados obtidos destinam-se apenas a ser tratados qualitativamente, para os fins deste estudo.

A **gravação do áudio** desta entrevista seria muito importante, uma vez que me permitiria realizar uma **análise mais detalhada e fidedigna** nas respostas que me conceder.

Face ao exposto, **consente em participar no estudo**:

☐ Aceito ☐ Não aceito

Por favor, **indique se aceita a gravação de voz durante a entrevista**:

☐ Aceito ☐ Não aceito

Nome: _____ Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Annex B

Período	Questão	Fator-chave	Autor
Parte I- Durante pandemia	O ano de 2020, foi assinalado pela pandemia COVID-19, tendo sido um ano repleto de desafios e de adaptação a uma nova forma de trabalhar. O que mudou na sua forma de trabalhar e como experienciou esta mudança?	Impacto repentino de uma nova forma de trabalhar-Teletrabalho. Adaptação do colaborador.	Spreizer et. Al, 2017
	De março de 2020 até agora, conseguiu trabalhar de forma eficiente? Se sim, quais os fatores que contribuíram para ser eficiente? Se não, em que medida sente que foi afetada a sua eficiência e o que fez para superar esta dificuldade?	Produtividade e eficiência	Beauregard, Basile e Canónico, 2019
	Como foi a sua experiência neste período (de março 2020 até agora) no que diz respeito à relação entre o trabalho e a sua vida pessoal? De que modo o teletrabalho teve impacto nesta relação?	Impacto no equilíbrio entre a vida pessoal e profissional	Igbaria e Guimaraes, 1999
	Tendo em conta a sua experiência de teletrabalho durante a pandemia, quais são os benefícios que destaca?	Compreender quais são os benefícios que os colaboradores destacam	ex: Rocha e Amador, 2018; Leite, 2019
	Quais foram os maiores desafios que sentiu ao realizar esta nova forma de trabalho, durante o período pandémico?	Compreender quais são os maiores desafios que os colaboradores destacam	De vries, Tummers e Bekkers, 2019; Thulin, Vilhelmson and Johansson, 2019
	Durante esta experiência, como descreve ter sido a resposta da empresa? • Proporcionou soluções, por ex, o acesso a todos os equipamentos necessários para realizar com sucesso o trabalho remoto?	Perceber quais foram as respostas da empresa ao desafio do teletrabalho (ex: disponibilização de portáteis, <i>phones</i> , <i>camara</i> ...)	Haines et. Al, 2002
Parte II- Futuro pós-	O que pensa da possibilidade de, num futuro pós-pandémico, continuar a realizar teletrabalho? Qual seria na sua opinião, o	Compreender o grau de interesse na realização do teletrabalho e o modelo	Beauregard, Basile e Canónico, 2019

pandémico	modelo preferencial de teletrabalho a adotar?	preferencial	
	Na sua opinião, o que seria o mais importante a sua empresa garantir, caso o teletrabalho seja implementado depois da pandemia?	Recomendações futuras para a possível realização do teletrabalho; quais os fatores mais importantes	Babu, Ramalho e Falcão, 2020
	Na sua opinião, quais os desafios que podem emergir no longo prazo, com esta nova forma de trabalho?	Perceber os receios e desafios que esta medida poderá ter no longo prazo	