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Adapting to the New Normal: The Evolution of Work From Home Practices Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**BUSINESS
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Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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*Dedicated to my family and to my girlfriend Inês,
for their unwavering supports.*

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Resumo

A pandemia da COVID-19 afetou significativamente a forma como as empresas operam, tendo resultado na adoção excepcional de práticas de trabalho remoto a partir de casa (*work from home* ou WFH) na sequência de confinamentos obrigatórios. Esta dissertação investiga como o panorama do trabalho remoto evoluiu com a pandemia e identifica três áreas de interesse: a produtividade dos trabalhadores, o seu empenho (*commitment*) para com a empresa e a sua retenção. Um estudo quantitativo sob a forma de um questionário a trabalhadores com experiência em WFH revela que os inquiridos, em geral, encararam o WFH favoravelmente, com uma preferência em prol do trabalho híbrido (casa e escritório). As vantagens e os benefícios do WFH identificados ao longo da literatura foram mais frequentemente experienciados pelos inquiridos do que as desvantagens. Foram identificadas correlações entre maior produtividade, satisfação a trabalhar a partir de casa, a presença das vantagens do WFH e a frequência do WFH; inversamente, menor produtividade coocorre com a presença das desvantagens. Não foi encontrada significância estatística entre a frequência do WFH e o *commitment* dos inquiridos. Com base nos resultados e nas rápidas mudanças do mercado laboral, estas conclusões poderão interessar organizações e *managers* que ponderam adotar o trabalho a partir de casa para ganhar uma vantagem competitiva ou para satisfazer os desejos dos seus trabalhadores.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19, trabalho remoto, trabalho flexível, trabalho a partir de casa, produtividade, empenho

Classificação JEL: J24 – Capital Humano; Produtividade do Trabalho

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected how businesses operate, having been followed by an exceptional adoption of work from home (WFH) practices in the wake of state-mandated lockdowns. This dissertation investigates how the remote work landscape shifted with the pandemic and identifies three areas of interest: employees' productivity, commitment and retention. A quantitative study in the form of a questionnaire to employees with WFH experience reveals that overall WFH experiences were looked upon favorably, with a preference towards a hybrid (home & office) work arrangement. The advantages and benefits identified throughout the literature were experienced more often than the disadvantages. Correlations were identified between higher productivity, satisfaction while working from home, the presence of WFH advantages, and higher WFH frequency; conversely, lower productivity co-occurred with WFH disadvantages. No statistical significance between WFH frequency and commitment was found. Based on the results and the ever-changing work landscape, these findings may be of interest to organizations and managers who are considering WFH practices, whether to gain a competitive edge or to accommodate workers' wishes.

Keywords: COVID-19, remote work, flexible work, work from home, productivity, commitment

JEL Classification: J24 – Human Capital; Labor Productivity

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Index

Acknowledgements	i
Resumo	iii
Abstract	v
Chapter 1. Introduction	9
Chapter 2. Literature review	13
2.1 Telework, remote work and work from home	13
2.2 Remote work and COVID-19	15
2.2.1 Consequences at a societal level	16
2.2.2 Consequences at an organizational level	16
2.2.3 Consequences at an individual level	17
2.3 Remote work and employee's productivity	18
2.4 Remote work and employee's retention	19
2.5 Goals of the study and hypotheses	20
Chapter 3. Empirical study	23
3.1. Method	23
3.2 Sample	23
3.3 Instrument	26
3.4 Procedure	28
3.4 Results and Analysis	29
3.4.1 Productivity while working from home	29
3.4.2 Employee commitment and retention	33
3.5 Discussion and limitations	38
Chapter 4. Conclusion	41
References	43
Annex I - Questionnaire	49
Annex II – Questionnaire Results	56

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic took the world by storm in the first trimester of 2020 and left its mark on several aspects of daily life, namely on financial markets and the world economy, leaving many companies ill-equipped to adapt (O Connor et al., 2021). Some governments' responses to the pandemic included the implementation of lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus (De Klerk et al., 2021). Almost as a necessity then, businesses had to adapt to the “new normal” (Bonacini et al., 2020), and work from home (WFH) arrangements and remote work were hastily adopted by companies worldwide to comply with authorities and hopefully alleviate the spread of the virus (Kong et al., 2022).

Despite being a topic with decades of research, a renewed interest in the topic due to the circumstances has led to new research detailing how lockdowns and homeworking have impacted employees and companies, with “direct consequences for the leadership and management of human resources” (Kaiser et al, 2022). The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work via information technologies; however, this type of arrangement has brewed over the decades as communications technology and the internet in particular allowed for workers to perform their tasks using a computer, with *telecommuting* being a term coined by Nilles in 1975 to describe “working outside the conventional workplace and communicating with it by way of telecommunications or computer-based technology” (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). However, one should not forget that the phenomenon of working at home predates the Information Age by centuries. As Baruch noted, “large numbers of people worked mainly at or close to home” in the pre-industrial era, mainly on crafts, land and personal workshops. The industrial revolution then moved work and workers to factories and offices, and the information age has contributed to a trend reversal whereas work shifted back home “via electronic linkages” (Baruch, 2000).

Due to diminishing costs of computing and telecom technology that accompanied the rise of the internet, the early 2000s marked a decisive step towards “the most revolutionary transformation in the nature of work and family since the industrial revolution,” as described by Hill et al. (2003). One of the challenges noted by Baruch in measuring the adoption of

telework or remote work is the abundance of different definitions, and as such survey data varies considerably even for the same country (Baruch, 2000, Qvortrup, 1998). Hill et al. (2003) wrote that data from the US Department of Commerce found that “24 of the 65 million employed [American] adults who use a computer to perform their job, do some of their work from home.” Meanwhile, data from 2011-2018 suggested that around 15% of working hours were conducted at home in the US (Barrero et al., 2021). Research presented by Nakrošienė et al. (2019) based on an annual Gallup *Work and Education* poll showed that 37% of US teleworkers worked from home with a computer in 2015, up from 9% in 1995. In the EU, the average number of teleworkers working from home was around 17% in 2015, with variations based on each member state. However, in 2020, nearly 50% of the EU workforce was working remotely according to consulting firm Global Workplace Analytics (GWA). Furthermore, 69% of U.S. employees worked remotely during the peak of the pandemic, and “regular telecommuting” grew 216% from the span of 2005-2019 (GWA, 2020). More recently, work practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have led businesses to plan for more remote work in the future, with 16% of companies worldwide being 100% remote in 2022 and 40% of companies operating under a hybrid model of office and remote work, whilst another 44% of companies did not allow for remote work at all (Square Talk, 2023).

Interestingly enough, before the pandemic and despite the technological capability of working remotely full-time, there had been a “slower than expected” adoption trend due to several organizational factors that discourage businesses and managers from adopting this work arrangement, with some reservations held by workers themselves (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). The main obstacles and drawbacks identified include difficulties in accessing the internet and a company’s intranet due to geographical limitations and limitations on information available through devices rather than personal communication (Bayrak, 2012, Leite et al., 2019), lack of trust perceived by managers and less oversight over workers (Harrington and Ruppel, 1999), interruptions while working from home and working longer hours (Bailey and Kurland, 2002), fear of reduced career prospects due to lesser visibility (Madsen, 2003), fears of social isolation (Madsen, 2003), lack of adaptability for tasks that may prove difficult to perform remotely (Bailey and Kurland, 2002), greater stress levels due to low quality of communication and trust (Staples, 2001), the erosion of the boundaries

between work and personal life leading to family-work conflict (Grant et al, 2013), distracting work environments (Galanti et al., 2021) and increased pressure to keep working outside the normal work schedule due to easy access to technology, making disengagement from work harder (Kossek, 2016).

Notwithstanding the above, several positive outcomes have also been related to remote work and WFH practices, some paradoxical to the apparent drawbacks. These include, among others, higher perceived job productivity by workers (Grant et al., 2013, Baker et al., 2007, Baruch, 2000), reduced absenteeism, the ability to work uninterrupted and with less distractions (Bailey and Kurland, 2002), increased work-life balance (Bailey and Kurland, 2002), savings in time spent commuting to and from the office (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003), a successful self-management of work and non-work demands that materialize in reduced stress levels (Hartig et al., 2007), and a reduction in costs to the company (Lavelle, 2020).

The disadvantages and advantages of remote work will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter. For now, one may briefly state that remote work using a computer and/or other electronic equipment (telework) has slowly increased over the decades as the cost of computing decreased and technology improved, and a significant spike in remote work occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the lockdowns (Ma, 2021). Furthermore, according to Ma (2021), “[t]he more international the organization, the more receptive and adaptable it is to telecommute”, with tech giants like Google and Facebook on the forefront of the adoption trend. Polls conducted by GWA (2020) indicate that 76% of workers “wished to work from home at least 1 day per week after the lifting of lockdown,” while 16% did not wish to return to the office at all. As for what lies ahead, according to Felstead and Reuschke (2020) the increase in remote work and in particular working from home during the pandemic is likely to be a permanent feature of the post-pandemic world, with employees desiring to continue working from home, even if only partially (De Klerk et al., 2021).

This dissertation therefore focus on the evolution of work from home practices and how COVID-19 altered its course. Special attention is given to WFH and workers’ self-perceived productivity, commitment and retention in the form of an empirical study containing both quantitative and qualitative data. The objective is to understand workers’

experiences with homeworking, while investigating if the key findings of the literature pertaining to the multiple advantages or disadvantages of WFH correlate with productivity, commitment and retention in particular.

Literature review

2.1 Telework, remote work and work from home

As explained above, COVID-19 contributed to an increase in remote work done globally. However, there has been ample research on the topic even before the 2020 pandemic. The following literature review approaches some of the most relevant developments, studies and findings on remote work, first from a holistic perspective and finally homing in on two specific topics: workers' self-perceived productivity and workers' retention and commitment.

The first noteworthy aspect of research on remote work is that definitions and terms are often unclear, muddy or used interchangeably (Felstead, 1996, Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Wontorczyk & Roznowski (2022) wrote that the term remote work dates back to the 1970s, meaning “working remotely with the use of IT devices and office equipment.” As mentioned, Nilles (1975, 1998) similarly coined the concept as telework: “any form of substitution of information technologies (such as telecommunications and computers) for work-related travel; moving the work to the workers instead of moving the workers to work.” Wontorczyk and Roznowski (2022) said that, today, the term coined by Nilles has been replaced with remote work. As reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the terms remote work, teleworking and working from home are intertwined with the concepts of “working from a distance” and “working at home” (ILO, 2020), which creates a “lack of statistical standards” that hinders standardized research on the subject. The ILO suggested the following definitions to alleviate this obstacle:

Table 1: Definitions proposed by the International Labour Organization

Term	Definition
<i>Remote work</i>	“...situations where the work is fully or partly carried out on an alternative worksite other than the default place of work.”

<i>Telework</i>	“...a subcategory of the broader concept of remote work. It includes workers who use information and communications technology (ICT) or landline telephones to carry out the work remotely. Similar to remote work, telework can be carried out in different locations outside the default place of work.”
<i>Work at home</i>	“...work that takes place fully or partly within the worker’s own residence. The physical location where all or some of the work is carried out is thus the worker’s own home.”
<i>Home-based work</i>	“...home-based workers are those who usually carry out their work at home, regardless of whether the own home could be considered as the default place of work. Home-based work is thus a subcategory of the category of work at home.”

Source: elaborated by the author based on work by the International Labour Organization (2020)

As one may notice, these four concepts are interrelated and appear to overlap. For instance, teleworking is said to be a subcategory of remote work based on workers using information technology (i.e. computers and laptops) to perform their tasks, with work at home and home-based work being possible subcategories of remote work.

Leite et al. (2019) compiled the different concepts of telework that have been suggested by various authors, which also illustrate the overlap in meaning:

Table 2: Definitions proposed for the concept of *telework*

Authors / Year	Concept of <i>telework</i>
Nilles (1988)	Telework is a term coined by the author in 1973 to refer to the partial or total substitution of the daily commute to work by the usage of telecommunications and computers.
Van Sell and Jacobs (1994)	Characterized by utilizing computers and telecom equipment to work at home or remotely, one or more days per week.
Illegems and Verbeke (2004)	We define telework as paid work from home, from a satellite office, from a telework center or from any other workstation outside the main office by at least one day.

Rosenfield and de Alves (2011)	In a strict sense, telework may be defined as distance work performed using information and communication technologies.
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Source: Reproduced from Leite et al. (2019)

Despite these variations, throughout the literature one forms the conclusion that the general idea about telework, or remote work is that a) *it requires some form of IT equipment for the worker to exercise his job functions* and b) *the worker is physically separated from a traditional office space or company-owned premise whilst carrying out said work* (Rosenfield & de Alves, 2011).

Regarding where said telework is done, we may break it down into the following categories: *homeworking*, where most telework is done at the worker's home (Aguilera et. al, 2016); *satellite offices* acting as extensions of the main company office (Rosenfield and de Alves, 2011), *telecentres* offering workspaces to one or more companies near a worker's residence (Rosenfield and de Alves, 2011); *mobile work* carried out away from the main workplace and worker residence, such as during business trips or client visits (Rosenfield and de Alves, 2011) or public spaces such as cafés (Wojcak et al., 2016) and *informal* or *mixed* telework, where the worker arranges with his employer to work a few hours outside the company (Rosenfield and de Alves, 2011).

2.2 Remote work and COVID-19

Since the primordial days of studies on remote work in the 1970s by Nilles there has been an abundance of research delving into the reported benefits, drawbacks and overall consequences of remote work (and working from home), with some seemingly paradoxical results (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). With the COVID-19 pandemic, a deluge of new research on the topic has been published, insofar as lockdowns created countless situations and environments in which to study the phenomenon across the world (Kong et al., 2022). Indeed, as noted by Anne et. al (2019), there had been little chance to study workers' experience with involuntary remote work. According to Baruch (2000), it is possible to categorize the different outcomes and consequences of remote work on an individual, organizational and societal level.

2.2.1 Consequences at a societal level

Bailey and Kurland (2002) have argued that remote work benefits the environment by reducing the amount of air pollution due to less traffic from commuters, which also implies an overall reduction in road traffic and also, therefore, less road accidents (Baruch, 2000). This insight actually harkens back to why remote work, then of course referred to as *telework*, became subject of study. The oil crisis in the 1970s, motivated by increasing fuel prices, “gave rise to concerns over gasoline consumption, long work commutes, and traffic congestion in major metropolitan areas” (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Since 2020 onward however, environmentalist arguments stepped aside as the COVID-19 pandemic shifted remote work to all but an inevitability.

As Ameen et. al (2023) noted, the global pandemic “disrupted all aspects of human life and challenged our way of thinking” about remote work. As governments embraced lockdowns “to reduce commuter density in larger cities and thus contribute to physical distancing,” millions of people had to accommodate to the new normal and began working remotely until restrictions were lifted.

2.2.2 Consequences at an organizational level

The rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic saw a great number of workers shifting work arrangements towards remote work with minimal preparation and training by their employers (Wang et al., 2021). This was contrasted by the existence of firms that had been already providing remote work arrangements for years in order to gain a competitive edge on the market (Crowder, 2012), mainly on the basis that remote work could be a family-friendly and work-life balance-oriented solution to benefit employees (Hyland et. al, 2005). Adopting remote work was also seen as a way for companies to better their image with the public and frame themselves as innovative employers with a high-trust culture (Morgan, 2004).

During lockdown period, the forced adoption of remote work contributed to the development and usage of new technologies, increasing the pace of digitalization (Feliciano-Cestero et al., 2023). This meant employees had to undertake training and spend their time learning how to handle the new technologies at their disposal to complete their work, while adapting to changing work procedures and juggling between family life and work life (Fogarty et al., 2021). The boom in remote work thus commanded a greater reliance on digital

communication technologies used in virtual meetings and team building activities, incentivizing companies to adapt their IT strategies. As Papagiannidis et. al (2020) argued, the pandemic affected companies' digitalization process differently depending on their existing IT strategies' maturity, i.e. the sophistication and implementation of its digital infrastructure. The problem was compounded by the overall short time span that authorities provided to comply with new restrictions (a few days sometimes), which resulted in companies operating as usual while scrambling to put their business continuity plans (BCPs) into action. The same authors argue that IT security became a top priority during this period, as companies became "prime target[s]" for social engineering schemes, and some became exposed to security risks when relaxing measures to combat personal device usage.

2.2.3 Consequences at an individual level

Remote work during COVID-19 has been associated with positive as well as negative outcomes for individuals (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). For instance, some workers found that remote work during the pandemic brought about greater accountability to others, higher job demands and more responsibilities, but that working from home had also been a positive experience, with a desire to keep working from home even when not necessary (George et al., 2022). Some of the desirable aspects of remote work identified by Shirmohammadi et. al (2022) were "flextime," i.e. greater flexibility in the schedule or timing of work, leading to an increased perception of autonomy and improving workers' work-life balance, and "flexspace," i.e. the flexibility in the location of work.

The sudden shift to remote work with lockdowns increased the care responsibilities of workers and their worry about the well-being of not only themselves, but also of those under their care (Fogarty et al., 2021). During the pandemic, a worker's access to an adequate workspace at home – in good physical condition and free of distractive noise – had been linked to their successful adjustment to the new normal of lockdowns (Carillo et al. 2021). As such, some workers struggled with space limitations, a lack of a dedicated office space and the increased burden of sharing the same space with family during work hours whilst making sure all adult household members could meet their work commitments and, if children were present, schoolwork could be completed (Carillo et al., 2021, Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

If flextime and flexspace could be seen as boosters to satisfaction and better work-life balance, poor adaptation to the intensive use of technology and communication tools would lead to the opposite outcome. Bin et al (2021) concluded that isolation and “technostress” posed a big challenge during the pandemic, as adaptation to complex information and communication technologies (ICTs) had negative psychological effects on remote workers. Using ICTs increased the time spent on work communication and led to greater stress levels, while the pressure to be always online increased stress levels and blurred the boundaries between work and personal life (Monica et al., 2020, Lonska et al., 2021, Toscano and Zappalà, 2020).

Furthermore, other negative aspects of remote work and work from home have been reported. Some remote workers longed for the commute during lockdown (Marks et al., 2020), while others experienced social isolation resulting in less satisfaction with work (Galanti et al., 2021).

2.3 Remote work and employees’ productivity

Productivity could be defined as “how well a system uses its resources to achieve its goals” (Pritchard 1992, p.455) and also described as a combination of both efficiency and effectiveness in one’s job (Battiston et al., 2017). As such, it is closely related to a worker’s ability to perform in accordance with what it expected of them and measures their output in terms of quality.

Valdez et al. (2023) studied the productivity level and job satisfaction of a dosimetrists—a type of medical professional—in response to changes in working conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority transitioned to a remote work arrangement and reported increased satisfaction with their perceived productivity.

Examining survey responses from individuals who transitioned to working from home during the pandemic, George et al. (2022) found that “employees perceive WFH as having a strong and positive impact on their productivity and creativity in work,” with supportive coworkers as a factor in their mental wellbeing. On top of that, workers found opportunities to be productive and innovative at work and WFH heightened awareness of deadlines, and most seemed to perceive less overall stress. Similarly, Deole et al. (2023) examined the relationship between WFH and performance during the pandemic and found

that “WFH frequency during the pandemic [were] associated with a rise in the hourly productivity”.

Empirical research on WFH practices since the pandemic has pointed to multiple factors for the increase in productivity (Dogra & Priyashantha, 2023). These include lower stress levels and better managerial support, more effective leadership and higher motivation. Another link to higher productivity is less interruptions during workhours when working from home compared to office work (Baudot & Kelly, 2020).

On the other hand, Beno & Hvorecky (2021) found that WFH could decrease productivity, pointing to factors such as workers having to juggle between work and household chores during workhours, not having an established WFH routine or simply having less tasks handed. The findings were echoed by Gibbs, Mengel & Siemroth (2021), who analyzed data from a 10.000 worker sample at a large IT company to conclude that “[a]verage output declined slightly and employee productivity fell 8-19%,” mainly due to higher communication costs — and despite working longer hours. These higher costs were reflected on the time spent “on coordination activities and meetings” as opposed to “uninterrupted work hours.” Similarly, Battiston et al. (2017) also found that productivity was improved in the office through physical proximity of workers leading to better face-to-face communication, something which is reduced when working from home.

2.4 Remote work and employees’ commitment and retention

Research has shown that workers intended to keep working from home even after the end of the pandemic due to its perceived benefits, creating an opportunity for companies to save on financial resources by implementing more flexibility in the place of work (George et al., 2022).

Similarly, Bloom et al. (2024) published a study arguing that hybrid working from home could improve retention without damaging performance. The study was a randomized controlled trial of 1.600 employees at Chinese travel giant Trip.com, where employees were randomly assigned to either a hybrid WFH group (allowed to WFH two days a week) or a control group (required to be in the office five days a week). Its main conclusions were a) that hybrid WFH improved employee retention, meaning the attrition rate (percentage of employees who quit) in the hybrid WFH group was one-third lower than in the control group;

b) that no significant difference in performance reviews or promotion rates occurred between the hybrid WFH group and the control group; and c) that hybrid WFH positively changed managers' perceptions. The researchers noted that "...the 395 managers in the experiment revised their surveyed views about the effect of hybrid working on productivity, from a perceived negative effect (-2.6% on average) before the experiment to a perceived positive one (+1.0%) after the experiment." (Bloom et al., 2024).

Kortsch et al. (2022) delved into the concept of *affective commitment*, which encompasses an employee's emotional attachment and identification with their organization, job, and team. The study specifically examined three facets of commitment: to the company (the employee's sense of belonging and loyalty to the overall organization), to the job (the employee's level of enjoyment and satisfaction with their specific job role and tasks) and to the team (the employee's sense of connection and closeness to their immediate colleagues and workgroup). The study indicated that remote workers exhibited significantly higher levels of affective commitment across all three dimensions compared to office-based employees. This heightened commitment is attributed to the increased autonomy and flexibility afforded by remote work arrangements. The ability to self-determine work location and hours empowers employees and fosters a sense of ownership over their work, resulting in a stronger emotional bond with their job, the team, and the organization as a whole. The results, then, challenge the notion that physical presence and face-to-face interactions are essential for building strong employee commitment. Instead, it suggests that remote work, when implemented effectively, can create a sense of empowerment and trust that fosters a deeper level of engagement and dedication among employees. The findings highlight the importance of considering flexible work arrangements as a means to cultivate a committed and motivated workforce in today's evolving workplace landscape.

2.5 Goals of the study and hypotheses

The goals of the empirical study conducted for this dissertation are as follows: first, to describe and understand workers' overall experience with homeworking; and second, to understand how the key points identified throughout the literature pertaining to WFH advantages and disadvantages related to workers' self-perceived productivity, commitment and retention.

Four hypotheses about work from home productivity emerged when formulating the empirical study:

H1: Productivity while working from home is positively correlated with work from home satisfaction.

H2: The frequency of experiencing the advantages of working from home is positively correlated with productivity.

H3: The frequency of experiencing the disadvantages of working from home is negatively correlated with productivity.

H4: The frequency of working from home is positively correlated with higher productivity.

In regard to WFH and workers' retention and commitment, the study sought to test five hypotheses:

H5: Satisfaction with work from home is positively correlated with employee commitment.

H6: The frequency of experiencing the advantages of working from home is positively correlated with employee commitment.

H7: The frequency of experiencing the disadvantages of working from home is negatively correlated with employee commitment.

H8: Work from home frequency is positively correlated with employee commitment.

H9: Employee retention was positively correlated with employee satisfaction while working from home.

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CHAPTER 3

Empirical study

3.1 Method

The empirical study consisted of a descriptive analysis of a questionnaire with both qualitative and quantitative information. The questionnaire was made available in both Portuguese and English and shared online through various social media platforms.

3.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 306 responses. 51.3% of respondents were male against 48.7% female. 60% of respondents were aged 34 or younger, and 49.7% had a bachelor's degree as their highest complete degree of education, while those with masters' degrees made up a third of the sample. In work experience, the sample skewed towards seasoned workers, as 40% of respondents had more than 10 years of experience, and 31.4% had between 4 to 9 years of experience. The most represented industries were Communication/Media (22.2%) followed by Information Technology (20.9%). To note that 9.8% of the sample chose Other as industry of work, followed by Marketing/Advertising (8.8%) and Finance/Banking (8.4%). 74.2% of respondents had no prior experience with work from home before the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 or earlier), and over 62% said they worked from home between 3 to 5 days a week (36.9% always and 25.8% between 3 and 4 days).

Furthermore, 72.5% of the sample mentioned their ideal working arrangement would consist of a hybrid/flexible split between office work and homeworking, while 24.5% would favor a fully-remote arrangement and only 2.9% would favor a total office-based arrangement. A significant majority of respondents said that they were either extremely satisfied (49.3%) or satisfied (37.3%) with working from home, while 7.2% were indifferent, 5.2% were dissatisfied and only 1% were extremely dissatisfied. Finally, 82.7% of respondents were still working for the organization that their responses were based on.

Table 3 below offers a breakdown of how respondents answered each question (titles shortened for brevity), apart from questions 8 and 9, whose breakdown can be found in section 3.4. The output of each question as produced by SPSS can be found in Annex II.

Table 3: Questionnaire results. (N = 306)

<i>Question</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>What is your gender? (Q1)</i>	Male	157	51.3
	Female	149	48.7
<i>What is your age? (Q2)</i>	18-24	62	20.3
	25-34	123	40.2
	35-44	71	23.2
	45-54	30	9.8
	55-64	20	6.5
<i>What is your highest complete degree of education? (Q3)</i>	Less than high-school	3	1.0
	High-school degree	31	10.1
	Bachelor's degree	152	49.7
	Master's degree	103	33.7
	Doctorate/PhD	8	2.6
	Technical/Vocational	9	2.9
<i>How many years of overall work experience do you have? (Q4)</i>	0-1	15	4.9
	1-3	70	22.9
	4-9	96	31.4
	>10	125	40.8
<i>What is/was your industry of work when working from home? (Q5)</i>	Communication/Media	68	22.2
	IT	64	20.9
	Other	30	9.8
	Marketing/Advertising	27	8.8
	Finance/Banking	26	8.5
	Manufacturing/Engineering	14	4.6

	Government	13	4.2
	Legal/Consulting	12	3.9
	Energy and Utilities	9	2.9
	Education	8	2.6
	Healthcare/Medicine	8	2.6
	Retail/Consumer Goods	8	2.6
	Transportation/Logistics	8	2.6
	Real Estate/Construction	4	1.3
	Arts/Entertainment	3	1.0
	Hospitality/Tourism	2	0.7
	Nonprofit/Social Services	2	0.7
<i>Did you ever work from home before the COVID-19 pandemic? (Q6)</i>	Yes	79	25.8
	No	227	74.2
<i>How often do/did you work from home in a typical week? (Q7)</i>	Always (5 days/week)	113	36.9
	Often (3-4 days/week)	79	25.8
	Sometimes (2 days/week)	61	19.9
	Occasionally	53	17.3
<i>Overall, how has WFH impacted your productivity? (Q10)</i>	Significantly improved	73	23.9
	Improved	110	35.9
	Neutral	81	26.5
	Decreased	36	11.8
	Significantly decreased	6	2.0
<i>How satisfied with quality of support and communication received when WFH? (Q11)</i>	Extremely satisfied	100	32.7
	Satisfied	50	16.3
	Neither	102	33.3
	Dissatisfied	49	16.0

<i>How has WFH impacted your commitment to your employer (Q12)</i>	Extremely dissatisfied	5	1.6
	Greatly increased	38	12.4
	Increased	89	29.1
	No significant impact	162	52.9
	Decreased	16	5.2
	Greatly decreased	1	0.3
<i>Considering your overall WFH experience, how would your ideal work arrangement be? (Q13)</i>	Fully remote	75	24.5
	Hybrid/flexible	222	72.5
	Fully office-based	9	2.9
<i>Overall, how satisfied are you working from home? (Q14)</i>	Extremely satisfied	151	49.3
	Satisfied	114	37.3
	Neither	22	7.2
	Dissatisfied	16	5.2
	Extremely dissatisfied	3	1.0
<i>Still working for the same organization? (Q15)</i>	Yes	248	81
	Yes, but considering changing work arrangement	2	0.7
	Yes, and considering leaving due to challenges with work from home	3	1.0
	No, but WFH had minimal/no impact on decision	43	14.1
	No, and experience with WFH was a major point in decision	10	3.3

3.2 Instrument

The questionnaire was built from scratch for the purpose of this study by using Qualtrics XM, an experience management software. Qualtrics XM contains a function called ExpertReview, whose goal is to find errors or suggest ways to strengthen the quality of the questionnaire,

and this function was utilized from the beginning to ensure issues pertaining to the categories “survey error” or “methodology” were minimized or nonexistent. In the end, ExpertReview identified the following:

- 0 severe issues
- 1 moderate issue: questions 8 and 9 were not optimized for mobile users
- 1 minor issue: questions 8 and 9 with poor accessibility for users with cognitive or learning disabilities
- No bots detected
- No speeders detected
- No straightlining detected
- Good total completion rate
- 10 “passed” criteria: valid display logic, valid piped text, end of survey scoring set up, complete translations (Portuguese and English), timing/metadata questions accompanied by other questions, avoided to end the survey with a descriptive question, minimal use of matrix tables, question text is clear and concise, predicted short duration and minimal use of text entry boxes.

The questionnaire contained a mix of nominal questions, including descriptors of the sample, and ordinal, Likert-style questions. The data was analyzed in IBM’s SPSS Statistics 26 software to perform the relevant descriptive and statistical analyses. Pre-testing was conducted utilizing the first 30 responses by analyzing the internal consistency of the Likert-type questions. For the first 30 responses, the internal consistency of the items in question 8 (the advantages of working from home) was validated by obtaining a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.61. The same was true of items in question 9 (the disadvantages of working from home) whose Cronbach’s alpha was 0.64. Furthermore, when considering the initial 30 responses, the Cronbach’s alpha measured between the items of questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 was 0.67, indicating a high level of internal consistency between the questions. As such, no further adjustments were made to the questionnaire before obtaining the full sample, other than the initial effort to satisfy the survey quality criteria suggested by ExpertReview.

The first 7 questions characterized the sample in terms of sex, age, education, work experience, industry of work, whether the pandemic was the first time working from home and how often respondents worked from home in a typical week. Question 8 presented six advantages of working from home found throughout the literature and respondents had to answer how often they experienced them from *Always* to *Never*. The Cronbach's alpha for the items in question 8 across the 306 responses was 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Question 9 presented six disadvantages of working from home so respondents could answer how often they experienced them. Between the items in question 9, Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 when considering all 306 responses, also indicating a high level of internal consistency. Question 10 asked respondents how they thought their productivity had been affected by working from home, while question 11 asked how satisfied they were with the quality of communication and support from received from management while working from home. Question 12 asked how working from home affected respondents' commitment towards their employer, and question 13 asked how the respondents' ideal work arrangement would be (i.e. fully remote, mixed or fully office-based). Finally, question 14 asked how satisfied the respondents were overall with work from home, and question 15 asked if respondents were still working for the organization the previous responses were based on. When accounting for the 306 responses, the Cronbach's alpha measured between the items of questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 was 0.71, indicating a high level of internal consistency between the items in each question.

The full questionnaire as shown to respondents can be found in Annex I.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was made available online and shared through various social media channels to obtain the sample. The link could also be shared by anyone. The first page explained that it was intended for workers with past or present experience with homeworking under a third party. Respondents were asked to base their answers on either their current or most relevant past experience with homeworking. The sampling method could therefore be

categorized as convenience sampling, since anyone was free to answer so long as they fit the aforementioned criteria.

3.4 Results and Analysis

3.4.1 Productivity while working from home

A cumulative 59.8% of respondents answered that working from home had a positive effect on their productivity (described as “ability to dutifully complete your daily tasks in a timely manner”): 23.8% said their productivity had significantly improved, while 35.9% said it had improved. Fewer answered that their productivity either remained about the same (26.5%), decreased (11.8%) or significantly decreased (2.0%). Table 4 below offers a complete breakdown of answers to question 10.

Table 4
Work from home impact on self-perceived productivity

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
5	Significantly improved	73	23.8
4	Improved	110	35.9
3	Neutral	81	26.5
2	Decreased	36	11.8
1	Significantly decreased	6	2.0

$N = 306$ | $Mean = 3.68$ | $SD = 1.025$

Correlation analysis between productivity when working from home (question 10) and overall satisfaction with working from home (question 14) revealed a positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.568$, $p < 0.01$), as Table 5 below indicates.

Table 5
Correlation between WFH productivity and WFH satisfaction

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Overall, how satisfied are your working from home?</i>
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<i>Overall, how has working from home impacted your productivity?</i>	r	0.568
	Covariance	0.515

$N = 306 \mid p < 0.01$

Reported productivity tended to be higher when satisfaction with work from home was also higher, supporting hypothesis **H1** stating that productivity while working from home was positively correlated with work from home satisfaction.

The correlation between the presence of work from home advantages (question 8) as evidenced throughout the literature and productivity (question 10) also yielded interesting results. Table 6 offers a breakdown of the means and standard deviations of each variable in question 8 and how they correlated with productivity.

Table 6
Correlation between WFH advantages and productivity

<i>Advantages of WFH</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>Improved work-life balance</i>	4.17	0.961	0.343
<i>Reduction in commuting time and other expenses</i>	4.64	0.757	0.205
<i>Comfort in working from a familiar environment</i>	4.09	0.997	0.458
<i>Increased autonomy in managing tasks</i>	4.00	1.065	0.420
<i>Enhanced focus and concentration</i>	3.67	1.079	0.610
<i>Increased time for personal hobbies and interests</i>	4.00	1.118	0.365

$N = 306 \mid p < 0.01 \mid Q8: 5 \text{ (Always)}, 4 \text{ (Most of the times)}, 3 \text{ (Sometimes)}, 2 \text{ (Rarely)}, 1 \text{ (Never)}$

There was a statistical significance between the variables ($p < 0.01$) with different degrees of correlation between each variable and respondents' assessment of their productivity. The strongest co-occurrence between a work from home advantage and higher productivity was when respondents experienced *enhanced focus and concentration* ($r = 0.610$), followed by experiencing *comfort in working from a familiar environment* ($r = 0.458$). There was also a positive correlation between *increased autonomy in managing tasks*

and higher productivity ($r = 0.420$). The remaining variables all presented positive correlations to a lesser degree: *increased time for personal hobbies and interests* ($r = 0.365$), *improved work-life balance* ($r = 0.343$) and *reduction in commuting and other expenses* ($r = 0.205$), the latter being the weakest correlation between an advantage and increased productivity. Nevertheless, results from the correlation analysis supported hypothesis **H2** stating that the frequency of experiencing the advantages of working from home was positively correlated with productivity. Furthermore, the relatively high mean value for each of the items in question 8 indicates that respondents experienced each of the advantages more often than not, with *reduction in commuting time and other expenses* being the most experienced (mean = 4.64) and *enhanced focus and concentration* being the least experienced (mean = 3.67).

The reported occurrences of disadvantages of working from home (question 9) was likewise correlated with productivity, as Table 7 below shows, alongside the mean and standard deviation for each variable of question 9.

Table 7
Correlation between WFH disadvantages and productivity

<i>Disadvantages of WFH</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>Difficulty in establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life</i>	2.82	1.054	-0.311
<i>Feelings of social isolation and missing out on office interactions</i>	2.77	1.092	-0.393
<i>Communication barriers with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings</i>	2.27	0.938	-0.267
<i>Challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination</i>	2.68	1.134	-0.584
<i>Reduced visibility to management and potential impact on career growth</i>	2.43	1.115	-0.321

<i>Technical issues or lack of necessary equipment</i>	1.93	0.959	-0.284
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N = 306 | p < 0.01 | Q9: 5 (Always), 4 (Most of the times), 3 (Sometimes), 2 (Rarely), 1 (Never)

From the outset one may say that respondents experienced the disadvantages of working from home less frequently than the advantages presented in question 8, as indicated by the overall lower mean values for each variable of question 9. Likewise, all of the variables showed a statistically significant relation with productivity ($p < 0.01$) and the variable whose change correlated most strongly with productivity was *challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination* ($r = -0.584$), indicating that having trouble with motivation was strongly coupled with lower productivity. All other variables had smaller yet still negative correlations with productivity. Hypothesis **H3**, stating that the frequency of experiencing the disadvantages of working from home was negatively correlated with productivity, could thus be accepted.

Finally, correlation analysis between productivity (question 10) and work from home frequency (question 7) revealed a positive correlation between the frequency of working from home and productivity ($r = 0.186$, $p < 0.01$). When respondents answered that they worked from home more often they also tended to say that their productivity was higher (Table 8).

Table 8
Correlation between WFH frequency and productivity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Overall, how has working from home impacted your productivity?</i>	
<i>How often do you work from home in a typical week?</i>	<i>r</i>	0.568
	<i>Covariance</i>	0.212

N = 306 | p < 0.01

Thus, support was found for hypothesis **H4** stating that the frequency of working from home was positively correlated with higher productivity.

3.4.2 Employee commitment and retention

Table 9 below breaks down the answers to how working from home impacted the respondents' commitment towards their employer (question 12).

Table 9
How WFH impacted respondents' commitment towards their employer

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
5	Greatly increased commitment	38	12.4
4	Increased commitment	89	29.1
3	No significant impact	162	52.9
2	Decreased commitment	16	5.2
1	Greatly decreased commitment	1	0.3

$N = 306$ | $Mean = 3.48$ | $SD = 0.790$

The majority of respondents (52.9%) answered that their experience with work from home had no significant impact on their commitment towards their employer. Apart from these, 29.1% answered that their commitment had increased and another 12.4% said it had greatly increased. The remaining answered that their commitment had decreased (5.2%) and only one respondent (0.3%) said their commitment had greatly decreased due to working from home.

In regard to employee retention (question 15), 81% of respondents said they were still working for the same organization. 14.1% had left but said their experience with working from home had minimal to no impact on their decision, and 3.3% left and said their experience with working from home was a major factor in the decision. 1% said they were still in the same organization but considering leaving due to challenges with working from home, and 0.7% said they were still in the same organization but thinking about changing their work arrangement. Table 10 below offers a more complete breakdown.

Table 10

Respondents' retention in the same company

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
5	Yes, I am currently employed by the same organization	248	81.0
4	Yes, but considering changing work arrangement due to work from home challenges	2	0.7
3	Yes, but considering leaving due to challenges with working from home	3	1.0
2	No, but working from home had minimal importance	43	14.1
1	No, and my experience with working from home was a major point in my decision	10	3.3

N = 306 | Mean = 4.4 | SD = 1.226

To test hypothesis **H5**, that satisfaction with working from home was positively correlated with employee commitment, a correlation analysis was carried out between variables in questions 12 and 14 (Table 11 below). A statistical significance was found between variables ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$) indicating a positive correlation between the variables, thus leading to accepting the hypothesis.

Table 11

Correlation between WFH satisfaction and commitment

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Overall, how satisfied are you working from home?</i>	
<i>How has working from home impacted your commitment to your employer?</i>	<i>r</i>	0.487
	<i>Covariance</i>	0.340

N = 306 | $p < 0.01$

To test hypothesis **H6**, that the frequency of experiencing the advantages of working from home was positively correlated with employee commitment, a correlation analysis between the variables of question 8 and question 12 was conducted. Table 12 below illustrates the results.

Table 12

Correlation between WFH advantages and commitment

<i>Advantages of WFH</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>Improved work-life balance</i>	< 0.01	0.266
<i>Reduction in commuting time and other expenses</i>	0.171	0.079
<i>Comfort in working from a familiar environment</i>	< 0.01	0.223
<i>Increased autonomy in managing tasks</i>	< 0.01	0.265
<i>Enhanced focus and concentration</i>	< 0.01	0.281
<i>Increased time for personal hobbies and interests</i>	< 0.01	0.217

N = 306

There was a statistical significance between the variables ($p < 0.01$) with different degrees of correlation between each variable and respondents' assessment of their commitment towards their employer. The strongest co-occurrence between a work from home advantage and more commitment was when respondents experienced *enhanced focus and concentration* ($r = 0.281$, $p < 0.01$), followed by experiencing *improved work-life balance* ($r = 0.266$, $p < 0.01$). A positive correlation was also found with the variables *increased autonomy in managing tasks* ($r = 0.265$, $p < 0.01$), *comfort in working from a familiar environment* ($r = 0.223$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, no statistically significant correlation was found between *reduction in commuting time and other expenses* and higher commitment ($r = 0.079$, $p = 0.171$). These results supported hypothesis **H6** stating that the frequency of experiencing advantages whilst working from home was positively correlated with employee commitment, for all but one of the variables.

As for whether or not the frequency of experiencing the disadvantages of working from home were negatively correlated with employee commitment, hypothesis **H7**, see Table 13 below for the correlation analysis.

Table 13
Correlation between WFH disadvantages and commitment
Disadvantages of WFH **r**

<i>Difficulty in establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life</i>	-0.278
<i>Feelings of social isolation and missing out on office interactions</i>	-0.298
<i>Communication barriers with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings</i>	-0.322
<i>Challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination</i>	-0.327
<i>Reduced visibility to management and potential impact on career growth</i>	-0.312
<i>Technical issues or lack of necessary equipment</i>	-0.158

$N = 306 \mid p < 0.01$

There was a statistical significance between the variables ($p < 0.01$) with different degrees of correlation between each variable and respondents' assessment of their commitment. The strongest co-occurrence between a work from home disadvantage and less commitment was when respondents experienced *challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination* ($r = -0.327$, $p < 0.01$), followed by experiencing *communication barriers with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings* ($r = -0.322$, $p < 0.01$). The same was true for variables *reduced visibility to management and potential impact on career growth* ($r = -0.312$, $p < 0.01$), *feelings of social isolation and missing out on office interactions* ($r = -0.298$, $p < 0.01$), *difficulty in establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life* ($r = -0.278$, $p < 0.01$) and finally *technical issues or lack of necessary equipment* ($r = -0.158$, $p < 0.01$). These results thus confirmed hypothesis **H7**.

Hypothesis **H8**, stating that work from home frequency was positively correlated with employee commitment, was not supported by the data after correlating the results of questions 7 and 12. Table 14 below details the correlation between the two variables.

Table 14

Correlation between WFH frequency and commitment

<i>Variable</i>	<i>How often do you work from home in a typical week?</i>	
<i>How has working from home impacted your commitment to your employer?</i>	p	0.00492
	r	0.160
	Covariance	0.141

N = 306

Although it could be argued that a statistical significance was found ($p < 0.00492$), the p value was very close to the cutoff value of 0.05 for statistical significance. Therefore, if there existed a positive correlation ($r = 0.160$) between commitment towards the employer and frequency of homeworking, it would be a very faint one. As such, hypothesis **H8** was discarded due to a lack of confidence in the statistical significance of the correlation analysis.

Finally, hypothesis **H9**, that employee retention was positively correlated with employee satisfaction while working from home, was supported by the correlation analysis of questions 14 and 15, as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Correlation between retention and WFH satisfaction

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Are you still working for the organization that you based your previous responses on?</i>	
<i>Overall, how satisfied are you working from home?</i>	r	0.248
	Covariance	0.269

N = 306 | $p < 0.05$

There was a statistical significance between the variables ($r = 0.248$, $p < 0.05$), indicating satisfaction about remote work tended to accompany still being employed by the same organization. Hypothesis **H9** could therefore be accepted. As mentioned previously, the majority of respondents were still working for the same organization, and only a minority said their work from home experience was a reason for leaving if they did so.

3.5 Discussion and limitations

Companies have sought to implement flexible work arrangements such as WFH during and after the pandemic, first to comply with authorities and then to accommodate workers' desire to continue with this work modality (De Klerk et al., 2021). Given that remote work and WFH adoption is expected to continue into the future (Square Talk, 2023), it is pertinent now more than ever to study how business- and worker-related factors such as productivity, commitment or retention, among others, evolve due to this new paradigm. The present empirical study was therefore undertaken to shed some light on homeworkers' experiences with homeworking, particularly regarding their self-perceived productivity, their commitment and retention, in the context of a post-COVID work landscape.

The results of the questionnaire support the overall theme that homework and remote work is positively perceived by workers, as evidenced throughout the literature (Grant et al., 2013, Baker et al., 2007, Baruch, 2000). The presence of multiple advantages of remote work and work from home as discussed throughout the literature, such as higher productivity (Grant et al., 2013, Valdez et al., 2023), increased work-life balance (Bailey & Kurland, 2002), reduced commuting times (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003) or increased autonomy (Hartig et al., 2007) was experienced more often than not by the respondents of the study.

Simultaneously, respondents came into contact with the potential disadvantages of remote work and work from home identified throughout the literature, such as difficulties with motivation and procrastination, reduced work-life balance (Grant et al., 2013), social isolation (Madsen, 2003), technostress (Bin et al., 2021), lack of support (Staples, 2001) or fear of reduced career prospects and visibility (Madsen, 2003), albeit less often. Nonetheless, this skew towards experiencing the advantages of WFH more often than the disadvantages, coupled with the overall satisfaction with their homeworking experience (86.6% either extremely satisfied or satisfied) indicates that, for workers, the pros outweigh the cons. It also supports the notion that, although WFH is overall seen in a positive light, there are sometimes contradicting and seemingly paradoxical findings (Fonner & Roloff, 2010, Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

Regarding their self-perceived productivity, respondents said it to have improved, and higher productivity correlated with satisfaction while working from home and the presence of WFH advantages, most notably enhanced focus and concentration for tasks and

the comfort of working in a familiar environment (Baudot & Kelly, 2020). This insight is in accordance to the literature, which indicates that homeworking has positive effects on productivity (Grant et al., 2013, George et al., 2022, Deole et al. 2023, Valdez et al., 2023). Conversely, and in accordance to the literature, lower productivity was reported with the co-occurrence of WFH disadvantages, namely with challenges in motivation and avoidance of procrastination or feelings of social isolation (Battiston et al., 2017). Nonetheless, higher productivity correlated with a higher frequency of working from home.

As for commitment and retention, 81% of respondents were still working for the organization they based their responses on, and a positive correlation was found between WFH satisfaction and employee commitment, indicating that the two are generally accompanied by one another. These results sustain the findings by Bloom et al. (2024) that working from home could improve employee retention, although it is worth noting that 52.9% of respondents of the present study answered that working from home had no impact on their commitment. Nevertheless, 12.4% of respondents said their commitment had greatly increased, and another 29.1% said their commitment had increased due to working remotely. Since only 5.2% of respondents said their commitment had decreased since working from home, and only 1 respondent said it had greatly decreased, the idea that working from home positively impacted workers' commitment could be supported by the data. This finding was in line with the rest of the literature, which linked WFH and remote work to greater employee commitment (Kortsch et al., 2022).

Increased commitment also correlated positively with the presence of WFH advantages and negatively with the presence of disadvantages. Finally, the study found that the majority of respondents were still working for the same company they based their responses on, and very few had either left or thought about leaving due to their experience with homeworking. The last hypothesis of the study, if WFH satisfaction and still being employed by that same company were correlated, was also accepted.

Overall, it may be concluded that workers positively responded to homeworking, since a significant majority was either extremely satisfied (49.3%) or satisfied (37.3%) with WFH. Only 7.2% of respondents were indifferent, 5.2% dissatisfied and only 1% extremely dissatisfied; as such, the overall satisfaction with WFH found in the study is in line with the rest of the literature stating that WFH is a positive experience for the worker (George et al.,

2022). The study found that 72.5% of the sample said their ideal working arrangement would consist of a hybrid arrangement (home office plus traditional office), while 24.5% would favor going fully-remote. By comparison, only 2.9% would favor a total return to the office. Satisfaction with homeworking was also prevalent. Lastly, 81% of respondents were still working for the same organization that their responses were based on; out of the 53 respondents who had left the organization, 10 admitted their experience with homeworking was a major factor in their decision.

Limitations of the present study should not be overlooked, however. One of these was the relatively small sample size of 306 respondents, whose age, occupation, years of work experience and previous contact with work from home varied. These particular sociodemographic variables were useful for descriptive statistics and to characterize the sample but did not factor into the correlation analyses nor made part of the hypotheses. It could well be the case that expanding the sample size — or to include other variables (such as number of household dependents, level of income, job function and typical tasks, company size, tenure, etc. and take those into account when performing analyses) — could yield different results. A second limitation is that the questionnaire answers were based on respondents' self-perception at a single point in time, which could have led to biased answers. Finally, the study only permitted carrying out correlation analysis besides descriptive statistics, and as such no causal-deterministic conclusions could be made.

In light of these limitations, future studies could do well in incorporating wider and broader sample sizes — or to consider only specific occupations and companies/sectors—, incorporating into their analyses other sociodemographic factors and utilizing theoretical frameworks compatible with causal analyses in order to confirm or refute the hypotheses and findings of the present study.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented shift in WFH practices, accelerating the adoption of remote work on a global scale when compared to its previous course. The present study aimed to investigate how this shift evolved and how workers perceived their experiences with WFH, focusing on a few key areas: productivity, commitment and retention.

The majority of respondents had a positive experience with WFH, and most perceived their productivity to have increased to various degrees while working from home. This perception was positively correlated with experiencing WFH advantages, which most respondents encountered, such as enhanced focus and concentration, comfort in working from a familiar environment, increased work-life balance and more autonomy in managing tasks. The study also revealed a positive correlation between WFH satisfaction and employee commitment.

Finally, the study indicated that, while work from home does offer numerous advantages, respondents had also experienced certain challenges, something that is supported by the existing literature. The study identified potential disadvantages such as difficulties in maintaining work-life balance, feelings of social isolation, fear of missing out on promotions and reduced visibility, and communication barriers. Given that WFH is mainly seen in a positive light by workers and associated with positive outcomes, organizations could do well in considering this type of work model, not only to provide a competitive edge during the hiring process but also to boost retention levels and accommodate workers' wishes. Although generally seen in a positive light, the extent of WFH's success may lie in organizations' ability to monitor how, post implementation, these practices affect the worker and, subsequently, the business, while establishing measures to mitigate the identified pitfalls.

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Annex I – Questionnaire



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English ▾

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This short survey is directed to people who have had contact with homeworking.

Answers are anonymous, and will be collected and analyzed to complete my thesis for the Master's in Business Administration at ISCTE Business School.

If you have had multiple experiences working from home, please consider only the most relevant to you.

Thank you in advance for participating and helping me complete this project.

→

Q1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Q2. What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

>65

Q3. What is your highest complete degree of education?

Less than high-school

High-school degree (or equivalent)

Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)

Master's degree (or equivalent)

Doctorate/PhD (or equivalent)

Technical/Vocational degree or Certification

Q4. How many years of overall working experience do you have?

0-1

1-3

4-9

>10

Q5. What is/was your industry when working from home?

Q6. Did you ever work from home before the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 or earlier)?

Yes

No

Q7. How often do you work from home in a typical week?

Always (5 days per week)

Often (3-4 days per week)

Sometimes (2 days per week)

Occasionally (1 day per week)

Q8. How often do you experience the following advantages working from home?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the times	Always
Improved work-life balance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduction in commuting time and other expenses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comfort in working from a familiar environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased autonomy in managing tasks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enhanced focus and concentration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased time for personal hobbies and interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9. How often do you experience the following challenges working from home?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the times	Always
Difficulty in establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feelings of social isolation and missing out on office interactions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication barriers with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduced visibility to management and potential impact on career growth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technical issues or lack of necessary equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10. Overall, how has working from home impacted your productivity? Consider your ability to dutifully complete your daily tasks in a timely manner.

Significantly Improved: working remotely greatly enhanced my ability to complete tasks promptly and efficiently.

Improved: working remotely generally improved my productivity and helps me complete my daily tasks.

Neutral: my productivity remained consistent whether I work remotely or in the office.

Decreased: there is a slight decrease in productivity when working remotely, but I can still complete tasks as needed.

Significantly Decreased: working remotely hindered my ability to complete tasks in a timely manner, often working overtime or leaving tasks for the following work day.

Q11. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the support and communication received from your manager(s) and company while working from home?

Extremely satisfied - communication is optimal and I have the full support needed

Satisfied - communication is better than in the office and I get more support

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - about the same as when in the office

Dissatisfied - communication and support could be better

Extremely dissatisfied - there is poor communication and I don't get the support needed

Q12. How has working from home impacted your commitment to your employer?

Greatly Increased Commitment

Increased Commitment

No Significant Impact

Decreased Commitment

Greatly Decreased Commitment

Q13. Considering your overall experience working from home, how would your ideal work arrangement look like?

Fully remote

Hybrid/flexible

Fully office-based

Q14. Overall, how satisfied are you working from home?

Extremely satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Extremely dissatisfied

Q15. Are you still working for the organization that you based your previous responses on?

Yes, I am currently employed by the same organization.

Yes, but considering changing my work arrangement due to remote work challenges.

Yes, but considering leaving due to challenges with remote work.

No, but remote working was not a factor/had minimal importance.

No, and my remote work experience was a major point in my decision.

Annex II – Questionnaire Results

Q1: What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	157	51,3	51,3	51,3
	Female	149	48,7	48,7	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q2: What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	62	20,3	20,3	20,3
	25-34	123	40,2	40,2	60,5
	35-44	71	23,2	23,2	83,7
	45-54	30	9,8	9,8	93,5
	55-64	20	6,5	6,5	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q3: What is your highest complete degree of education?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than high-school	3	1,0	1,0	1,0
	High-school degree (or equivalent)	31	10,1	10,1	11,1
	Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)	152	49,7	49,7	60,8
	Master's degree (or equivalent)	103	33,7	33,7	94,4
	Doctorate/PhD (or equivalent)	8	2,6	2,6	97,1
	Technical/Vocational degree or Certification	9	2,9	2,9	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q4: How many years of overall working experience do you have?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-1	15	4,9	4,9	4,9
	1-3	70	22,9	22,9	27,8
	4-9	96	31,4	31,4	59,2
	>10	125	40,8	40,8	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q5: What is/was your industry when working from home?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Arts and Entertainment	3	1,0	1,0	1,0
	Education	8	2,6	2,6	3,6
	Energy and Utilities	9	2,9	2,9	6,5
	Finance and Banking	26	8,5	8,5	15,0
	Government and Public Administration	13	4,2	4,2	19,3
	Healthcare and Medical	8	2,6	2,6	21,9
	Hospitality and Tourism	2	,7	,7	22,5
	Information Technology (IT)	64	20,9	20,9	43,5
	Manufacturing and Engineering	14	4,6	4,6	48,0
	Marketing and Advertising	27	8,8	8,8	56,9
	Nonprofit and Social Services	2	,7	,7	57,5
	Professional Services (Legal, Consulting, etc.)	12	3,9	3,9	61,4
	Real Estate and Construction	4	1,3	1,3	62,7
	Retail and Consumer Goods	8	2,6	2,6	65,4
	Transportation and Logistics	8	2,6	2,6	68,0
	(Other)	30	9,8	9,8	77,8
	Communication/Media	68	22,2	22,2	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

**Q6: Did you ever work from home before the COVID-19 pandemic
(2020 or earlier)?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	79	25,8	25,8	25,8

No	227	74,2	74,2	100,0
Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q7: How often do/did you work from home in a typical week?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always (5 days per week)	113	36,9	36,9	36,9
	Often (3-4 days per week)	79	25,8	25,8	62,7
	Sometimes (2 days per week)	61	19,9	19,9	82,7
	Occasionally (1 day per week)	53	17,3	17,3	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q8: How often do you experience the following advantages working from home?

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improved work-life balance	306	1	5	4,17	,961
Reduction in commuting time and other expenses	306	1	5	4,64	,757
Comfort in working from a familiar environment	306	1	5	4,09	,997
Increased autonomy in managing tasks	306	1	5	4,00	1,065
Enhanced focus and concentration	306	1	5	3,67	1,079
Increased time for personal hobbies and interests	306	1	5	4,00	1,118
Valid N (listwise)	306				

Scale: Always (5), Most of the times (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)

Q9: How often do you experience the following challenges working from home?

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Difficulty in establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life	306	1	5	2,82	1,054

Feelings of social isolation and missing out on office interactions	306	1	5	2,77	1,092
Communication barriers with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings	306	1	5	2,27	,938
Challenges in staying motivated and avoiding procrastination	306	1	5	2,68	1,134
Reduced visibility to management and potential impact on career growth	306	1	5	2,43	1,115
Technical issues or lack of necessary equipment	306	1	5	1,93	,959
Valid N (listwise)	306				
Scale: Always (5), Most of the times (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)					

Q10: Overall, how has working from home impacted your productivity? Consider your ability to dutifully complete your daily tasks in a timely manner.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Significantly Improved: working remotely greatly enhanced my ability to complete tasks promptly and efficiently.	73	23,9	23,9	23,9
	Improved: working remotely generally improved my productivity and helps me complete my daily tasks.	110	35,9	35,9	59,8
	Neutral: my productivity remained consistent whether I work remotely or in the office.	81	26,5	26,5	86,3
	Decreased: there is a slight decrease in productivity when working remotely, but I can still complete tasks as needed.	36	11,8	11,8	98,0

Significantly Decreased: working remotely hindered my ability to complete tasks in a timely manner, often working overtime or leaving tasks for the following work day.	6	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q11: Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the support and communication received from your manager(s) and company while working from home?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely satisfied - communication is optimal and I have the full support needed	100	32,7	32,7	32,7
	Satisfied - communication is better than in the office and I get more support	50	16,3	16,3	49,0
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - about the same as when in the office	102	33,3	33,3	82,4
	Dissatisfied - communication and support could be better	49	16,0	16,0	98,4
	Extremely dissatisfied - there is poor communication, and I don't get the support needed	5	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q12: How has working from home impacted your commitment to your employer?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Greatly Increased Commitment	38	12,4	12,4	12,4
	Increased Commitment	89	29,1	29,1	41,5
	No Significant Impact	162	52,9	52,9	94,4
	Decreased Commitment	16	5,2	5,2	99,7
	Greatly Decreased Commitment	1	,3	,3	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q13: Considering your overall experience working from home, how would your ideal work arrangement look like?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fully remote	75	24,5	24,5	24,5
	Hybrid/flexible	222	72,5	72,5	97,1
	Fully office-based	9	2,9	2,9	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q14: Overall, how satisfied are you working from home?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely satisfied	151	49,3	49,3	49,3
	Satisfied	114	37,3	37,3	86,6
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22	7,2	7,2	93,8
	Dissatisfied	16	5,2	5,2	99,0
	Extremely dissatisfied	3	1,0	1,0	100,0
	Total	306	100,0	100,0	

Q15: Are you still working for the organization that you based your previous responses on?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, I am currently employed by the same organization.	248	81,0	81,0	81,0
	Yes, but considering changing my work arrangement due to remote work challenges.	2	,7	,7	81,7
	Yes, but considering leaving due to challenges with remote work.	3	1,0	1,0	82,7
	No, but remote working was not a factor/had minimal importance.	43	14,1	14,1	96,7

No, and my remote work experience was a major point in my decision.	10	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	306	100,0	100,0	

