WHEN LEGAL TELEWORKING HAS TIME TO END: SYMBOLIC MECHANISMS FOR (DIS)CONNECTION IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE

Fábio Lucas de Albuquerque Lima 1

ABSTRACT

Objective: This article analyzes the routine of (dis)connection from work performed at home by 13 federal public attorneys engaged in compulsory teleworking in Brasília, Federal District, from March 2020 to March 2022, in 4 legal units of the Attorney General of the Union.

Method: The research used the qualitative methodology, with the technique of in-depth interviews and content analysis, according to Bardin.

Result and conclusion: The findings indicate that work demands may disrupt the family environment. Some study participants adopted behaviors linked to the concept of dress code and the delimitation of spaces to signify moments of work and non-work.

Research implications: In the family environment, there is a need to establish a clear separation between work and leisure spaces and times. This raises concerns regarding the right to disconnection for teleworkers. The realization of this right to disconnection has yet to have an explicit standardization in routines and practices to be officially adopted.

Originality/value: The research about mandatory legal telework to identify the use of symbolics and non-verbal mechanisms to connect and disconnect from work moments is essential to telework understanding. No research has been found related to dress code for teleworking in the public legal sector.

Keywords: Telework, Public Attorney, Dress Code, Disconnection, Covid-19.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Neste artigo, analisa-se a rotina de (des)conexão do trabalho executado em casa por 13 advogados públicos federais no teletrabalho compulsório em Brasília, Distrito Federal, de março de 2020 a março de 2022, em 4 unidades jurídicas da Advocacia-Geral da União.

Método: A pesquisa utilizou a metodologia qualitativa, com técnica de realização de entrevistas em profundidade. As entrevistas foram realizadas de outubro a dezembro 2022. Analisou-se o conteúdo de acordo com o método de análise de conteúdo segundo Bardin. Foi feita a codificação temática com auxílio do Atlas ti, versão 22, e depois a categorização em nível superior para enfim produzir a interpretação dos dados.

Resultados e conclusão: Os resultados apontam que as demandas laborais podem interferir no ambiente familiar e alguns participantes da pesquisa eliciaram comportamentos ligados ao conceito de dress code e da delimitação de espaços para sinalizar momentos de trabalho e momentos de não-trabalho.

Implicações da pesquisa: No ambiente familiar, há a necessidade de impor uma separação dos espaços-tempos de trabalho- descanso. Disso decorre a preocupação com o direito à desconexão do teletrabalhador. A concretização desse direito à desconexão não tem uma normatização explícita em rotinas e práticas a serem oficialmente adotadas.

1 Centro de Estudos Jurídicos Celso Barroso Leite, Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil. E-mail: fabiolucas74@gmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2881-3853
Originalidade/valor: A pesquisa sobre o assessoramento jurídico em teletrabalho compulsório no sentido de identificar a utilização de mecanismos simbólicos e não verbais de sinalização da conexão com o trabalho e a desconexão é de valor social importante para a compreensão do teletrabalho. No sentido da originalidade, não foi encontrada pesquisa sobre dress code e delimitação de espaços para o teletrabalho no setor da advocacia pública.


RGSA adota a Licença de Atribuição CC BY do Creative Commons (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1 INTRODUÇÃO

Legal teleworking was used to the extreme during the lockdown decreed in March 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the Federal Attorney General's Office was able to provide legal advice and consultancy during the health crisis.

The scenario from March 2020 until immunization with the vaccine had a panorama of fears and uncertainties facing an invisibly dangerous future, which, paradoxically, due to noble feelings of appreciation, caused friends and family to distance themselves from each other due to feelings nobles of love and affection, to avoid danger in relation to the contamination of your loved ones.

Understanding aspects of the individual's adaptation to isolation, the more subtle control of their working day, their ability to (dis)connect, the balance between the professional and the home environment are aspects increasingly addressed in the study of teleworking (PANTOJA, Andrade & Oliveira, 2020).

teleworker productivity (Wang, Liu, Qian & Parker, 2021). To balance these interferences, the separation of specific physical spaces and the placement of formal work clothes can be essential for the good performance of the jurist when performing his duties at home.

Furthermore, there are external factors such as physical spaces (in the case of the federal legal body, the headquarters of public bodies) that promote important meanings for individuals and for the motivation of teams (Cabral & Alperstedt, 2021), which can be decisive for the quality of work at home.

According to Tietze (2002), the boundaries between family and work for teleworkers become blurred, causing problems arising from opposing discourses. The paradigm of work discourse is instrumental, focused on results, in a rationality that aims at ends, in a strategic way. While the discourse inherent to family involves the love component. These discourses are not easy to reconcile in the same environment, generating work-family tension, a challenge known in the telework literature (Tietze, 2002, 2005; Wang et al., 2021).

The use of formal clothing can have a positive psychological effect on teleworking performance, being reported in the literature as a non-verbal signaling mechanism for work called dress code (Tietze, 2005; Barros & Silva, 2010).

According to Libretti, Amorim and Moreira (2018): “The dress code can be literally translated to dress code, which includes to the clothes, you accessories, The makeup, O perfume. It is O behavior that the individual has in a given place” (Libretti et al., 2018, p. 3).

The resignification of time-space is dissected by authors such as Cabral and Alperstedt (2021) and Pereira, Barbosa and Saraiva (2021). A critical stance on the characteristics and challenges of teleworking can help in understanding this type of service provision outside the traditional environment (Rosenfield & Alves, 2011; Rocha & Amador, 2018).
This article aims to analyze the perception of 13 federal public lawyers about their routine at home when carrying out compulsory legal teleworking, from March 2020 to March 2022, in Brasília, Federal District, in 04 legal units of the Law Firm - General of the Union, with the presentation of results focusing on the interference of work in the family environment and the use of space delimitations and dress resources code, to carry out legal tasks at home, thus contributing to the understanding of teleworking in the public sector.

To this end, the theoretical framework discusses conceptual issues about teleworking, with regard to work-home interference, describing the main characteristic of teleworking, which is autonomy, and then immediately brings studies on the use of mechanisms non-verbals to signal connection and disconnection with work.

The methodological strategy is described below, with a choice of qualitative research techniques, with the application of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participants were chosen using the intentional technique. However, the snowballing technique was also used. The analysis units were chosen preferentially due to the size of the unit and importance to the AGU. The analysis used, inductively, thematic coding, generating more general categories for generating inferences, according to Bardin’s method. In the results and analyses, the article presents the findings and discusses the results of the research, seeking a dialogue with authors of theoretical-empirical works in order to point out convergences, divergences and gaps in the literature.

In the end, the conclusions of this study close the article.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The Singularity of Working from Home

The study of teleworking is not new, as there have been articles published on the subject since the 1970s (Rocha & Amador, 2018). The advancement of communication and information technologies (ICTs) and the compulsory social isolation decreed at the beginning of 2020, accelerated the use of teleworking as a modality of providing services and producing goods and values that are essential for humanity (Brandão & Ramos, 2023).

Initially the creator of remote work, the American Jack Nilles devised a strategy of deterritorialization of corporate departments, leaving large centers and migrating to neighborhoods closer to workers, avoiding travel (Lima & Mendes, 2023). From this perspective, the term telecommuting was born (Kugelmass, 1996).

In Brazil, teleworking is commonly called home office, but in addition to these terms in the literature there are references to it such as remote work, telework, teleworking, flexible work, distance work (Rocha & Amador, 2018). These concepts involve a series of factors that are related to the flexibility of work space and time, associated with the use of ICTs (Rosenfield & Alves, 2011).

In the context of the 3rd and 4th Industrial Revolution, in which work processes reach massive levels of technology use (Tolentino, Oliveira & Castro, 2023), the Taylor-Fordist social division of labor, based on the specialty of task execution and local supervision of teams, undergoes a drastic change in its paradigm (Ferreira, 2000).

At the beginning of the 21st century, there is an accelerated flexibilization of work relations, which takes the individual to a scenario of returning to a state of nomadism in relation to the spaces and moments of their working day, which makes the meaning of time and family space for teleworkers is a topic of scientific relevance (Tieze, 2002).

If, on the one hand, work using ICT tools promotes horizontalization in the old hierarchical chain of command, on the other hand there is a strong risk of fragmentation and...
weakening of work relationships (Rosenfield & Alves, 2011, 2011), this should not be avoided, necessarily reflecting this flexibility in quality of life for the teleworker (Leite & Lemos, 2020).

As the 4th Industrial Revolution advances so that tasks can be carried out by machines, with the use of artificial intelligence, and the intelligence of things (IoT), raising ethical questions of the highest importance, the specialization and qualification of workers can accentuate the character autonomy of professional activities.

And in this scenario, the use of remote means of providing services and production of goods is enhanced (Costa, 2013), with the challenging side, a very likely reduction in jobs, despite, in the public sector, the civil servant public enjoys relative stability.

Thus, given the advancement of artificial intelligence, the evaluation of the benefits and challenges of adopting teleworking from the point of view of the organization and from the point of view of individuals, traditionally, the positive and negative aspects are highlighted and require analysis (Rocha & Amador, 2018). Although these aspects also manifest themselves in legal teleworking, there is no doubt that the autonomy of the legal profession facilitates the adoption of teleworking to provide legal advice to federal public managers. Federal public lawyers and lawyers are the legal advisors to federal bodies in Brazil. This activity provides legal certainty and gives legitimacy and compliance to public tenders and contracts.

In this article, legal teleworking is referred to as teleworking provided for legal advice. Federal public lawyers participate in advisory meetings and prepare opinions to provide compliance and legal security to the various federal bodies advised by the Attorney General's Office (AGU). This remote advice was very intense during the Covid-19 pandemic, given that all bidding processes require several legal opinions according to national legislation (Lima, 2023).

The increase in production of legal telework may be related to the greater time available for work, with the suppression of commuting in traffic (Vilarinho, Paschoal & Demo, 2021; Filardi, Castro & Zanini, 2020).

However, despite the beneficial effects of teleworking, in the residential environment, there may be several factors that divert the worker's attention from professional tasks, such as personal tasks, care for children's education, flexible working hours that allow for entertainment with the use of the internet, among other distractions. Here then arises the problem of the negative influence of distractions in the domestic environment that interfere with productivity (Brandão & Ramos, 2023; Tolentino, Oliveira & Castro, 2023), so it is necessary to mitigate these variables.

The autonomy of legal teleworking needs to observe (like any other profession) the appropriate prescriptions for working at home, such as the separation of spaces and adequate and ergonomic structure (Brandão & Ramos, 2023). The autonomy conferred by the flexibility of teleworking deserves observation, as there are characteristics of individuals beyond the mere description of the activity to be performed remotely from supervision (Costa, 2013).

Therefore, the flexibility of working hours, inherent to the autonomy of remote work, can create greater well-being and quality of life, with increased motivation and a consequent increase in productivity. However, this same characteristic attracts challenges to be observed.

### 2.2 The Autonomic Characteristics of Legal Teleworking

The activity of the federal public lawyer has a different autonomy from other activities that are no less important, but which are linked and subordinate activities. Therefore, unlike most activities subject to a subordination relationship, the activity of a public lawyer has a statutory nature and a constitutional basis (Lima, 2023).

Without a doubt, one of the most exalted characteristics of teleworking is autonomy (Filardi et al., 2020; Vilarinho et al., 2021), this characteristic, in turn, was already an attribute
present in public law, even before the pandemic, which may have been a factor in greater ease of adaptation (Lima, 2023).

What does this autonomic nature of teleworking consist of? In a didactic way, as the service provision is carried out at a distance from the supervisory teams, the work itself is endowed with relatively pronounced independence, and, in the same way, the individual has flexibility in general, in asynchronous activities, to establish the best time to act (Aderaldo et al., 2017). This characteristic emerges in the research by Filardi et al. (2020) and in the research by Brandão and Ramos (2023).

Obviously, in synchronous activities, virtual presence at the time of the meeting or interaction for decision-making is necessary and indispensable. However, most tasks are performed autonomously. In activities that require more physical effort and in general services, for example, conversely to the above, teleworking tends to be more difficult to implement, given the less autonomy of these activities.

In the context of the public service, the autonomic characteristic inherent to teleworking requires the ability of the person performing the tasks to use electronic systems proficiently. Something somewhat common nowadays, which does not mean that older employees do not have difficulties in virtual interaction. As Rosenfield and Alves (2011) emphasize: “[...] professional activities that involve creation and innovation can be considered more free and autonomous, as the content and work procedures are also controlled by the worker himself” (Rosenfield & Alves, 2011, 2011, p. 223). It was in this sense that, for example, since the beginning of this topic, it was suggested that the probable adaptation to compulsory teleworking of lawyers and public lawyers was due to this activity bringing aspects of technical autonomy that are notable as it is one of the essential functions of Justice in the words of the Constitution of the Republic of 1988 (Brazil, 1988).

This autonomy and independence, typical of a professional who claims to be ‘self-assured’, are interpreted as subordinated to a discourse of power instrumentalized in the search for employee domination with more subtle forms of control, such as controls via electronic systems (Costa, 2013).

Autonomy, which to a certain extent accentuates individualism, can contribute to the issue of feelings of loneliness and isolation. Conversely, in the Covid-19 pandemic, isolation may have accentuated individualism, typical of activities with greater autonomy (Filardi et al., 2020; Vilarinho et al., 2021).

The lack of contact with colleagues, which before the pandemic helped discussions and the construction of legal understanding to be launched in the opinion, may have hampered work at home (Costa, 2013; Rocha & Amador, 2018).

Interactions normally did not have a fixed time and did not necessarily involve the ritual of putting on formal clothes to travel to the legal institution. This was the way in which workplaces gave meaning (Cabral & Alperstedt, 2021).

Autonomy faces challenges in the scenario of compulsory teleworking such as isolation and loneliness (Rocha & Amador, 2018). During the pandemic, teleworking was compulsory for all individuals. In this population there are more disciplined individuals and others who are less disciplined (Wang et al., 2021).

In this context, the rite of getting dressed and going to work was something useful for the discipline of all individuals in their daily routine before the pandemic. In compulsory teleworking, there were no clear and demarcated boundaries as to where or when work would begin. Thus, those who are less disciplined may have felt the stress more acutely to maintain high productivity while teleworking.

The challenge of procrastination for less disciplined workers is addressed by Wang et al. (2021) as a fact that requires group support through virtual meetings for motivation. This requires leadership capacity, according to Contreras, Baykal and Abid (2020): electronic
leadership, which, during the pandemic, was not previously trained to work in full teleworking. And as the assumption of autonomy can generate distrust from poorly prepared supervisors, the control variable can be a factor that generates stress and reduced productivity (Costa, 2013). This excessive concern with control appears as a result in the research by Filardi et al. (2020) and has already been warned as sensitive by Kugelmass (1996).

For the more disciplined, who were already suited to work outside AGU buildings, compulsory legal teleworking may have generated the desired effect of loneliness and perception of isolation (Leite & Lemos, 2020). Wang et al. (2021) found that, during the pandemic, the autonomic characteristic may be directly related to loneliness (Wang et al., 2021, p. 49). This undesirable challenge can also be mitigated, according to Wang et al. (2021) with social interactions in a telematic way, corroborating previous research with that of Contreras et al. (2020).

Therefore, the discipline element, so characteristic of teleworking arrangements for the precise purpose of increasing productivity and efficiency, was also put to the test in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, in the same way, would impact the activity of lawyers and men. federal public lawyers belonging to the staff of the Attorney General's Office.

This adaptation during the pandemic led to the adoption of procedures for indicating working hours and in the sacred space dedicated to the family, but which needed to be the attorney's office. For this purpose of signaling for work, the importance of redefining the space may have been fundamental in the process of adapting to compulsory teleworking (Cabral & Alperstedt, 2021).

Therefore, the use of improvisation resources to mark work spaces and moments in contrast to moments of distractions and family rest was a way that workers found to maintain motivation and productivity during social isolation during the Covid pandemic. 19.

2.3 Symbolic and Non-Verbal Mechanisms of (Dis)connection

The use of symbolic resources at home to signal the beginning of work (moment) and the places in the home reserved for professional tasks (space) are elicited in empirical research (Tietze, 2002, 2005). Starting legal work requires concentration. There is a ritual of reading and taking notes to prepare the opinion. When completing the legal response to the problem presented, the public lawyer disconnects from that process and moves on to another process. If working hours are over, the disconnection process begins (Lima, 2023).

In the domestic environment, without the ritual of going to the public office, there is a risk of not being able to concentrate on work, as well as not disconnecting from work.

As Leite and Lemos (2020) point out, “The organization of working from home (schedules, family, other activities) is an important factor and should not be neglected” (Leite & Lemos, 2020, p. 18).

The level of care with these arrangements depends on the individual's capacity for self-discipline. As there are individuals who have more difficulty establishing this pattern of organizing time and space management for work, social support can help them reduce the impact of distractions on productivity (Wang et al., 2021).

In pandemic isolation, as electronic leadership was not always prepared, the need to continue work provided the improvisation of non-verbal mechanisms to signal that it was time to work, and, by undoing that symbolic scenario, signaling that it could the teleworker disconnects from functional demands.

The use of dress codes, the dress code, such as the act of putting on a suit and tie, for men, and putting on high heels or jewelry (Tietze, 2005) in the case of lawyers, are psychological resources that helped legal teleworking in order to establish discipline in personal
care for execution of daily tasks. In the literature, dress is mentioned code in the work of Barros e Silva (2010) and Tietze (2005), among other studies in which participants elicit this construct.

Likewise, the physical structure at home for teleworking is reported to be fundamental for productivity (Brandão & Ramos, 2023). Attorneys who already had offices in their homes have a simpler adaptation process. But in Brasília, Federal District, not everyone had space reserved at home to set up an office.

Even when there was no separate physical space as an office for the public lawyer, he sought to use symbolic delimitations of spaces reserved for work as mentioned in the literature by Barros and Silva (2010). The importance and significance of spaces, so relativized in teleworking, can interfere with the quality of life when teleworking (Cabral & Alperstedt, 2021).

Connecting with work implies meeting the need to concentrate on work. However, the confusion between work and family, between work and rest, within the same physical space, creates the danger of inability to disconnect from professional tasks to enjoy moments of rest (Tremblay, 2002).

Perceptions of free time and working time run the risk of not being clearly distinguished. And in this sense, they receive criticism from Pereira et al. (2021): “In the context of teleworking, as free time and working time become confused, the teleworker ends up being required to reproduce the productivist logic in their free time” (Pereira et al., 2021, p. 122).

In this sense, the search for mechanisms that delimit workplaces versus places of distraction and rest in the home environment, as well as establishing signs of connection and disconnection with work at home, becomes an element that can provide (although they are not the only ones or those that result from the application of proven techniques) a balance in professional interference with the tranquility of the family. All this effort corroborates Costa's (2013) observation of the existence of a discourse that lies behind the autonomy and flexibility of teleworking.

Tietze (2002), in turn, assumes that the discourse centered on the idea of “home” and the discourse centered on “work” differ diametrically: one involves the home and is related to affection, love, without functional rationality, while the discourse that surrounds the work environment is linked to strategic rationality (Tietze, 2002, p. 307).

Thus, to signal to the psychological structure moments of work within a space in which substantive rationality has always predominated, teleworkers can use a series of ‘artefacts’ as ‘borders’ between what is work and what is home (Tietze, 2002, p. 308).

This tension between ‘the discourses’ that surround the categories ‘work’ and ‘home’ require symbolic mechanisms of distancing both circumstances within a place that traditionally constitutes a space for family coexistence and rest. Therefore, as Tietze (2002) points out, an instrumental rationality inherent to the productive system (residential Taylorism) can unduly invade the teleworker’s home (Tietze, 2002, p. 394).

The narratives of federal public lawyers elicit in the interviews the use of these symbolic and non-verbal arrangements to try to reconcile compulsory legal teleworking during the health crisis and the social isolation that the Covid-19 pandemic imposed on almost all workers.

3 METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

The research adopted the qualitative methodology, with an exploratory purpose, of compulsory legal teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic. The technique used was semi-structured interviews with federal public lawyers working in Brasilia, Federal District, from March 2020 to March 2022, in 04 legal units of the Attorney General's Office. The criteria for choosing were the units with large number of public lawyers who held management positions.
When Legal Teleworking has Time to End: Symbolic Mechanisms for (Dis)Connection in the Attorney General’s Office

10 lawyers and 03 lawyers were interviewed, from October 17, 2022 to December 7, 2022. All held positions or functions on a commission. The interviews lasted an average of 32 minutes, with the shortest being 21 minutes and the longest being 57 minutes. The interviewees were anonymized, as well as the legal units in which they worked.

Limitations of the research include the reflexivity of the researcher, who is also a public lawyer and compulsorily teleworked, as well as a smaller number of female interviewees. Also, not being interviewed, although the invitation was made, was a public lawyer over 60 years old.

The interviews were transcribed, reviewed and inserted into a project using the Atlas ti software, version 22, for content analysis purposes according to the Bardin technique. The data in the research carried out were coded into 51 thematic codes, which were grouped into 6 more general categories: efficiency, control, communication, social interaction, routine and flexibility. In this article, the results analyzed will be presented with an emphasis on the routine category of female lawyers and federal public lawyers in compulsory teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the inferences of the analysis, the guidelines of Yin (2016) were used, checking statements between statements to obtain results in the research. However, isolated findings were presented in this condition and observed as negative or exclusionary cases (Yin, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2021). In one statement, ambivalence was identified (Flick, 2013) and with this perception the data found in it was analyzed.

In the analysis, the thematic codes on the routine of public lawyers at home were grouped according to their routines: a) separating spaces in the house for virtual meetings or writing opinions; b) use of clothing to indicate the start of work at home; c) the different ways in which the interference of professional demands on the domestic environment were reported. Therefore, the consolidated data will be presented in this article. They will be discussed comparing the occurrences with their convergences, divergences and gaps in the literature.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Whether the participants reported greater concentration and self-discipline, or the participants who reported difficulty maintaining their work routine at home, as a rule, they reported an increase in production and efficiency. The truth is that, whether in favor or against their personal choice regarding teleworking, all participants have the perception that teleworking provides the organization with flexibility, and it is foolhardy not to closely monitor this type of work.

This positive perception for the worker results from lower fuel expenses, less exposure to violence, improved environment and less time and money spent on clothing formally inherent to the role of the legal body. From the organization's point of view, the general increase in productivity and savings in operational costs reinforce the use of teleworking (Rocha & Amador, 2018). In this sense, the results converge with the literature on teleworking in the public sector (Vilarinho et al., 2021; Filardi et al., 2020).

However, the interference of work demands at home can reduce productivity and cause stress resulting from an inadequacy between the ability to concentrate to produce and at the same time reserve enough time for personal rest, as reported by some participants in this research (Tietze, 2002). And with this, the need to place symbolic barriers to signal moments of work are used as strategies to overcome the challenges of working from home.
4.1 Social Isolation and Work-at-Home Interferences

If, on the one hand, not interrupting work due to interactions with colleagues in the office is indicated as a factor for increasing production, this same lack of social interaction can be harmful to the psychosocial well-being of teleworkers (Aderaldo et al., 2017).

During the pandemic, the impossibility of sharing work moments with colleagues was widely highlighted as a negative feeling about the experience of social isolation:

I think this way, because I think this interaction between colleagues makes a difference, especially in the long term. (E4)

So, I know that this varies from person to person, I know that some people adapt more, others adapt less, so from the middle to the end of this period of isolation I felt tired of the model, and a need to interact, to come to work[...] (E5)

[...] but I think there are also other issues that have a negative impact, I think even on mental health, like being exposed to a screen all the time or not having physical contact with people, even in physical spirit, like, I don't know... (E11)

The separation was worsened by social isolation as a whole, including the impossibility of visiting elderly relatives and attending usual social environments. Interaction through virtual means can somewhat alleviate this feeling of isolation.

This feeling of isolation is mentioned in the most diverse research (Rocha & Amador, 2018). Leite and Lemos (2020), for example, mention 127 of the research participants expressing that they had noticed social isolation, reporting the fact as a difficulty that affected their work (Leite & Lemos, 2020, p.17).

Filardi et al. (2020) also identified isolation as one of the problems with teleworking. Concerns about isolation are in Tolentino, Oliveira and Castro (2023).

With regard to women, both this research and that of Velasco, Pantoja and Oliveira (2023), as well as the study conducted at Anvisa by researchers Aguiar et al. (2022), corroborate the fact that teleworkers have been overworked, although the literature points to women's preference for teleworking.

In studies by Tremblay (2002), the problem of the negative impacts of teleworking depending on the categories of workers and the burden on women indicate that this peculiarity must be investigated (Tremblay, 2002).

As raised by research and theoretical studies previously brought to the debate, the challenges of working remotely, without social interaction, can bring undesirable consequences such as, for example, stress resulting from interference between personal and professional routines and the danger of invisibility of the public servant (Aderaldo et al., 2017).

In the teleworking routine during the pandemic, one of the factors that affect the quality of work and the individual's quality of life is the interference of professional demands on the family (Brandão & Ramos, 2023).

In the case where two teleworkers were sharing the same environment, the stress factor for one of the spouses reflected negatively on the entire family. At this point, the present research points to a divergence in relation to the results of the research by Filardi et al. (2020) in which most employees say they do not suffer from distractions at home. This result is also recognized as divergent by the researchers themselves (Filardi et al., 2020, p. 39).

The interference of tasks, demands and meetings in the home environment is a frequent occurrence in the data collected:

So at work, you look great, a friend arrives, you argue, but then there's a noise, a bad energy there, you get upset, something that bothered you at work, isn't it, but somehow
in person you leave it there, no, in the domestic environment, I felt this a lot here at home, at the height of the pandemic when the whole family was there, right, sometimes it was my wife who was working next to me, we made a big bench, she was on a computer at the side and I on the other, sometimes she would argue with a colleague, a bad job or me, and sometimes she would contaminate. So, I say again, apart from this negative aspect, at home, this mix of domestic and work, it's not, in pure teleworking it's more complicated, in relation to us, as public lawyers [...] (E1)

Yes, we separated... Yes, because there are meetings, so while one is talking the other is trying to concentrate on writing... There had to be a division of spaces. (E11)

I had to share the table with my wife, [wife's name suppressed], understand? The privacy of conversations is different, so I tried to maintain the routine, especially when it comes to schedules [...] (E13)

As reported above, when a couple, who were teleworking during the pandemic's compulsory isolation, narrates the difficulty of dividing spaces at home as an important challenge for the family's well-being, this fact converges with the literature (Tietze, 2002).

If there are minor children, the task is challenging, made worse when the mother is alone in caring for the minor and his education, having to, at the same time, be responsible for providing the best legal advice to managers (Tremblay, 2002). And at this point the results differ from Brandão and Ramos (2023). So lawyers may have been overworked during compulsory legal teleworking, as in E8's statement:

There's another problem that women also face, we couldn't have anyone from outside the house to help with domestic work, because there was that problem, because the virus was circulating and everything, so I stayed there taking care of the house, taking care of the processes and watching class with my boy, the little one, you know, he was five, six years old. So that part was difficult. Then when the situation came back, and so, I worked in the living room because my apartment didn't have an office, so I had to adapt the table in the living room to work, I was here and the boy was here watching class. (E8)

The greater weight of the pandemic's isolation corroborates the work of Tremblay (2002) regarding the greater difficulties that teleworking imposes depending on the gender of the teleworker, with an indication of overload in relation to women. And this overload also converges with research on teleworking during the pandemic at ANVISA (Aguiar et al., 2022). At this point, the results of the research by Brandão and Ramos (2023) differ from the literature, which did not detect a difference in terms of gender.

Therefore, the interference of work on the peace of mind at home can, over time, become something that can harm the well-being of the teleworker. The delimitation of spaces and the organization of time in the home environment of teleworkers are paths that are sought and followed in the daily routine of remote work (Tietze, 2002).

During the course of the pandemic, there was an excess of virtual meetings as an alternative to the impossibility of face-to-face interaction. The ease that telematic means provided also meant that whenever necessary, the teleworker was called to a meeting (Fauville et al., 2021). The disorganized way in which these meetings were sometimes scheduled made the pace of work difficult, as E3 reports:

[...and... even a friend says that right from the beginning, until today, there was a lack of a code of etiquette for these virtual meetings, sometimes you were called regardless of the time, it's ten o'clock at night: 'ah, you can join a meeting now?'. You without any preparation, without meeting materials, regardless of time. You, at home, had to be available. (E3)
This greater worker availability, due to being at home, without having to travel to work, corroborates the criticism by Pereira et al. (2021) on the false impression of workers' 'free time'. When not, some of these meetings had the purpose of supervision, which is extremely harmful to the productivity and motivation of teams.

These 'good morning' meetings can harm the psychological effort that the teleworker already expends to separate work from home (Tietze, 2002), damaging the delicate arrangement of working at home. This corroborates research that reports problems of confusion between the professional and the family environment, with a mixture of the sacred and the profane, being one of the main issues challenging the home office (Wang et al., 2021).

As this reality was imposed during the lockdown, some workers used non-verbal resources to reduce the stress resulting from working at home.

### 4.2 (Dis)connection with Work Through Non-Verbal Mechanisms

It is clear that some individuals cope better with teleworking. These individuals are able to more easily balance their flexible working hours, establish productive routines and use the demarcation of spaces to work at home. Meanwhile, others face a greater challenge of overcoming the transformation of space-time meanings that remote work produces (Wang et al., 2021).

Away from the headquarters of legal bodies, cell phones, email inboxes, text messages, virtual meeting calls through programs such as Meet, Zoom and MS Teams, just to name a few, made the server's day was filled and more in demand than when it was at his desk in the office. This can be seen from E10’s statement:

> And, on the other hand, what I see sometimes is that people are not present and they think that people work according to their work rhythm, but not with the rhythm that in a way was a routine that was very much theirs. In a certain way, agreed opening hours for federal public authorities and ministerial structures in general. So, for example, lunch time no longer exists, as it has for a long time... People call, talk about work things, and the official use in some units of Whatsapp as a communication mechanism for those units has also enhanced that much. So, I think this will really be an advantage, but I think it has very harmful elements. You leave the service, but the service never leaves you, not one day. I think this is really something that needs to be rethought (E10)

This excessive demand on the workforce can generate stress if a balance is not found between work spaces and moments, well separated from family spaces and moments (Tietze, 2002; Wang et al., 2021). As reported in the research by E10: “[...] I think it has very harmful elements. You leave the service, but the service never leaves you, not one day”, which highlights and points to the need for disconnection.

As a way to control the problem of disconnection, some research participants reported the need to delimit spaces for work at home, to mitigate interference and distractions and achieve a good result of their work:

> [...] these are environments that I think were not prepared, there, so much so that I, I even held meetings in every room of the house, which I think is not correct, you shouldn't do it, you have an office, you do meetings in your office, even so you can delimit: “that is my work space, here is work, here is not leisure, I came into the office to work” and not do it, for example, from the living room, the living room table, the kitchen table and everything, right, or in your own room, it's not healthy [...] (E3)

> [...] I used it in the living room... and I went out and bought an office table so I could be there, I was worried about trying to separate the environment. I said: 'no, I'm not going to use the same room'. I lived alone, I wasn't married, I said: 'I'm going to set
up an office. I’m not going to use the table in the living room’. I bought a chair, I remember it was in a supermarket like that, I bought it like that, all of a sudden, and I improvised. And then, I sort of solved my problem, but all at the last minute. (E4)

As narrated by E3, despite recognizing that it is inappropriate to hold meetings in the room, he understands that entering a room like an office signals the beginning of work. Thus, the delimited space may be able to offer a balance between connection and disconnection with work. The right to disconnect for mental health is a fundamental right (Brandão & Ramos, 2023). Given the risk that working from home can cause, monitoring how remote work is being carried out may require the attention of electronic leaders (Contreras et al., 2020), with the operational aspect of team training being fundamental (Brandão & Ramos, 2023).

The danger of not achieving disconnection was reported in several statements, such as when the lawyer remains at the disposal of the advised bodies for longer:

Because you have a more flexible schedule, you are working for more periods throughout the day, let’s put it that way, it is more difficult for you [to say]: - ‘I closed the computer here and I don’t respond to anyone outside of these hours’. It’s more difficult, understand? (E4)

So, it ends up that no matter how much the person organizes himself to work six hours a day, eight hours a day, when he closes the computer he is still in the same work environment and he will unconsciously keep thinking about the problems, and often end up mixing these problems with personal problems, combining these emotional problems, personal problems with professional problems. When I worked at home, what did I do? I closed the office so I wouldn’t have to look at the computer, because otherwise we wouldn’t be able to disconnect even on weekends. (E9)

Again, a symbolic resource was used as a way of signaling the end of work and the exercise of the right to disconnect, for example, when E9 states that he “closed the office door so as not to look at the computer” (E9), showing convergence with literature (Tietze, 2002, 2005). Thus, the importance of clearly separating the boundaries of work and places of disconnection emphasize the importance of the physical structure for teleworking (Brandão & Ramos, 2023).

In the same sense, E10 reports how his work routine signaled to his family that he was focused on work:

So, leave signs, or establish some codes, although not written, for example, closing certain doors, leaving some barrier, a chair in a position to signal that you were working at that time [...] (E10)

These reports corroborate Tietze’s (2002, 2005) case studies on the importance of the worker being able to separate the instrumental rationality, the ‘Taylorism’ that teleworking brings to the home, where family relationships are not shared at most times. results strategy and achievement of objectives, typical of work in the public sector.

In addition to the space delimitation feature, the use of dress code can be a strategy for overcoming the distractions of working at home (Tietze, 2005).

It is interesting to note the reference to the issue of clothing, as a psychological preparation for work, even though the statement cited below refers to in-person work in the AGU legal unit:

[...] you are often there at the computer, dealing with the process, at home, isn’t it, but the fact that you at least one day a week, two days, in short, somehow create a routine that you go to work, that you wake up, that you put on your suit, put on a tie, you tie your tie, the gesture of tying a tie, I already think, I unconsciously say: 'look, you are
going to work’, exercising your role as a lawyer, it's not, I'm not trying to say here that we are, it's... promoting the fashion of wearing ties, no, the fact is that as a lawyer, it's not you Well you know, we have our own visual identification, visual identification, you putting on a tie, that’s it... the fact that you're going to work... so it's the reference.(E1)

This reference to the tie corroborates the findings of Tietze’s (2005) research. As emphasized in E1’s speech, it is not enough to wear a tie. There is a ritual of tying the knot, the gesture of passing the accessory around the neck, signifying a psychological and often unconscious resource to prepare for the workday.

In this sense, E11 highlights the perception of the importance of the *dress code* in their in-person work before the pandemic:

> [...] you put on clothes to leave the house, I think that your position as a lawyer also affects you, when you leave. I've always worked in court, so I've always had this thing of running there, running here, go, come, have a hearing, so I miss that too. (E11)

This same importance given to clothing is reported by E3’s statement:

> You have to have discipline when working remotely, because it's one thing to be in your work environment, where you get ready, leave the house, put on your clothes, the operator's right clothes are usually a suit, tie, so all of that is psychological preparation for the beginning of your work. When teleworking, you often do that 'Willian Bonner' work from home, right? You just put a jacket over your shirt, you know, you're in your pajamas and you start having meetings that way. So it is psychological work that the individual needs [...] (E3)

This tone of criticism regarding the failure to wear appropriate clothing for legal work can be attributed to the fact that E3 is not in favor of teleworking, but it does not lose the merit of eliciting the importance of the *dress code* during teleworking.

The need to re-signify the routine in the face of the social isolation of the pandemic is present in the research (Cabral & Alperstedt, 2021), which could mean, in the sense that Tietze (2002) attributes to it, the manifestation of discourses that are to some extent difficult to reconcile: the instrumentality of work and the affectivity of the family environment.

In an attempt to dissociate in the same space-time, alternating *dress code* can represent a non-verbal mechanism of (dis)connection in order to balance legal advice within the home. E4, for example, states that he included alternating between loungewear and formal work clothes in his routine:

> Leave your room, go, take a shower, get dressed... put on different clothes, not so formal, but put on some clothes, take off your pajamas, go to another room, get into that mood, it was more or less That's what I thought, see. Because at the beginning it was very boring. (E4)

These findings are corroborated by mentions of the use of *dress code* in the work of Barros e Silva (2010) and Tietze (2005), as a ritual that points to the use of non-verbal or symbolic mechanisms to maintain concentration at home.

Putting on clothes, even if they are not a suit and tie, as in the case reported here, can help in the process of connecting with work, in addition to this symbolic mechanism allowing, during the pandemic period, the reminiscence of times of normality in social life.

Tietze (2002) very well puts it, two discourses with very different perspectives: a) the instrumental rationality of work, focused on goals; and b) the sacred intimacy of family
relationships and the right to rest in the domestic environment, based on relationships of affection.

To try to mitigate these two antagonistic discourses, the use of symbolic and non-verbal mechanisms, such as signs delimiting spaces and the placement of more formal clothing are resources that deserve the attention of Organizational Theories.

5 CONCLUSION

In this article, the perception of 13 federal public lawyers belonging to the Federal Attorney General's Office was analyzed, in compulsory teleworking in 04 legal units, from March 2020 to March 2022, in Brasília, Federal District.

To this end, after the Introduction, Section 2 brought the theoretical framework that supports the analysis and discussion of the results, starting with the presentation of the challenge represented by the interference of work demands on the family, then discussing autonomy as a characteristic fundamental aspect of teleworking, then introducing issues relating to the use of symbolic resources to delimit the space-time for connection and disconnection of the teleworker.

Section 3 described the methodological path of the qualitative research, data collection and how it was analyzed.

Section 4 presented the results, describing how research participants elicited perceptions about the spatial significance of work carried out at home, in compulsory isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. In several passages of data, it was noted that symbolic mechanisms were used to delimit spaces in order to maintain concentration and separate work from family life. And, finally, the occurrences in the speeches of the use of the dress resource code to signal connection and disconnection with work. In the discussion, convergences and divergences in the literature were pointed out, and finally, the conclusions of the research carried out were presented.

The limitation of the research lies in the reflexivity of the researcher, who is a federal public lawyer and was on compulsory telework during the research period, as well as a smaller number of female participants in the research subjects.

As future developments, it can be investigated how the routine of returning to work in the post-Covid-19 period has been unfolding: it went to full face-to-face work, continued full teleworking or a hybrid and flexible working arrangement has been adopted in the Brazilian public sector.

This research made it possible to present the perception of lawyers and federal public lawyers that teleworking is a one-way process, that its flexible nature makes it an important management tool for the Attorney General's Office, in compliance with the principle of administrative efficiency. However, there are many challenges to be faced: the work overload on women, the need for physical and ergonomic structures for everyone and the importance of virtual social support meetings for the group.

The initial experience of uncertainty and fear, due to the pandemic, was alleviated by the stability of the interviewees, as public servants, who were aware that they would not lose their job stability during the health crisis.

In this compulsory isolation, teleworking led some research participants to use symbolic, non-verbal resources to signal moments of connection with work, such as artifacts that separate physical spaces within the residence and dress code to establish psychological boundaries that delimit time for work and time for rest.

The isolation that is one of the concerns about teleworking in the literature (COSTA, 2007), with the social isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, was significantly worsened during the period studied.
Thus, in the narratives of the interviewees, we could see an effort by all research participants to deliver the best of themselves in legal advice to the bodies being advised.

Despite social isolation, AGU demonstrated to society that the federal legal service managed to fulfill its constitutional role as an essential function of Justice. However, the effects of the impacts on the social and professional lives of female lawyers and federal public lawyers will merit continued investigations into this contemporary phenomenon within the scope of the sociology of work.

REFERENCES


