The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment trends

As implicações da pandemia de COVID-19 nas tendências do emprego

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ABSTRACT
The worldwide crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic forced companies providing non-essential services to adapt to the WHO’s recommended social isolation measures. Consequently, there was a need to develop the ability to reorganize work away from traditional company locations, leading to the widespread adoption of practices such as freelancing, remote work, "single office," or "home office." This article investigates the impact of this evolving trend on the quality of life for employees in comparison to the conventional work model. To gather data, the research employed survey-type questionnaires constructed with statements grounded in relevant literature. Managers overseeing remote teams from various sectors were objectively queried about their agreement levels regarding themes related to the effects of home office on employee quality of life during the pandemic. The findings were then discussed using a SWOT analysis, focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with this new work context. The article concludes by outlining a post-pandemic scenario for companies and employees, particularly in the continued adoption of home office practices.

Keywords: home office, quality of life at work, Covid-19, new job trends.

RESUMO
A crise mundial desencadeada pela pandemia de COVID-19 forçou as empresas que prestavam serviços não essenciais a adaptarem-se às medidas de isolamento social recomendadas pela OMS. Consequentemente, havia uma necessidade de desenvolver a capacidade de reorganizar o trabalho fora dos locais tradicionais da empresa, levando à adoção generalizada de práticas como freelancing, trabalho remoto, "single office" ou "home office". Este artigo analisa o impacto desta tendência evolutiva na qualidade de vida dos trabalhadores em comparação com o modelo de trabalho convencional. Para coletar dados, a pesquisa empregou questionários do tipo pesquisa construídos com declarações baseadas na literatura relevante. Os gerentes que supervisionavam equipes remotas de vários setores foram questionados objetivamente sobre seus níveis de concordância em relação aos temas relacionados aos efeitos do home office na qualidade de vida dos funcionários durante a pandemia. Os resultados foram então discutidos usando uma análise SWOT, com foco nos pontos fortes, fracos, oportunidades e ameaças associadas a este novo contexto de trabalho. O artigo termina delineando um cenário pós-pandemia para empresas e funcionários, particularmente na adoção contínua de práticas de home office. 

Palavras-chave: home office, qualidade de vida no trabalho, Covid-19, tendências de novos empregos.

1 INTRODUCTION
The COVID-19 pandemic compelled companies worldwide to explore new alternatives for non-essential work, with home offices gaining prominence (BURCHELL
et al., 2020). Lufkin (2020) emphasizes that the shift to remote work is becoming the new normal for an indefinite period. Even with vaccines, restrictive measures persisted until the beginning of 2022 in most countries, aiming to prevent the wider spread of the epidemic and combat new variants (MATISÂNE et al., 2021). This new normal is facilitated by companies’ technologies and dynamism. According to Charles-Pauvers, Saives, and Schieb-Bienfait (2020), organizations had already recognized the need to promote innovation within their structures, fostering interest in differentiated work practices that stimulate creativity and contribute to the Quality of Life at Work (QLW).

Clifton, Füzi, and Loudon (2019) stress that the number of independent and remote workers had been increasing globally even before the pandemic. Thulin, Vilhelmsen, and Johansson (2019) note that the permissibility conditions for home offices were evolving in industries, offices, and residences. Vilhelmsen & Thulin (2016) studied increased activities outside the technology sector, where there was a growing willingness to allow work outside the traditional premises and shared control. In European countries and the United States, an average of 56% of the workforce had already partially adopted remote work (Lister, 2020). Donnelly and Johns (2021) mention that despite the need to quickly provide tools and work instruments for adapting to social isolation, technological advances have facilitated the possibility of working outside traditional office spaces.

For Kim et al. (2017), the characteristics of the work environment are crucial factors in achieving beneficial results. In this context, the interrelationship between the home office and the QWL approach gains significance. QWL is viewed within organizations as a multidimensional concept involving various areas and is understood as the interaction of personal needs and the fulfillment of professional aspirations (MITTAL et al., 2020; TALMAGE & FREDERICK, 2019).

Martins et al. (2021) emphasized the potential of remote work in Brazil but identified challenges such as limited access to a computer with internet connectivity and intermittent electricity, resulting in reduced productivity and increased stress. These challenges hinder the strengthening of the interrelation between the home office and the quality of life. The pandemic has underscored that the home office cannot merely be a small desk in a corner of the house. The present and future home office must be equipped
with adequate technology, natural lighting, ventilation, and healthy indoor air quality, ensuring not only the quality of work but also QWL (ALHUSBAN et al., 2022).

Studies conducted throughout 2020, 2021, and early 2022 have analyzed changes to the home office. Dingel and Neiman (2020) studied the feasibility of working from home during the pandemic for various occupations and highlighted that 37% of jobs in the United States can be performed entirely from home. Bartsch et al. (2020) analyzed leadership efficiency related to employee performance in virtual environments during the pandemic. Toscano & Zappalà (2020) explored the relationships between social isolation, stress, control, productivity, satisfaction, and concern about the coronavirus. Tavares et al. (2020) analyzed the home office in Portuguese communities in the COVID-19 context, examining individuals' adaptation processes and the difficulties they faced. Pfeifer (2021) examined companies' digital readiness through employees' perceptions, work styles, and mental health during lockdown and non-lockdown phases. Kawaguchi & Motegi (2021) examined the areas and activities most developed in the home office. Oksanen et al. (2021) investigated the potential effects of technological stress generated by the home office during the pandemic. Cuerdo-Vilches et al. (2021) evaluated the suitability of home office spaces, the availability of digital resources, and internet connectivity.

Although these studies contribute to the state of the art and highlight the relationship between the home office and the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper adds to these analyses by exploring the interrelationship between the home office and quality of life during the pandemic. It also aims to identify the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats using the SWOT matrix. This research not only contributes to the understanding of this new type of work during the pandemic but also considers its potential as a new reality for employees and companies. Thus, the research question for this work is: Did the home office affect QWL during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how?

To address this question, the article's objective was to identify, in the literature, sentences that positively and negatively impact Quality of Work Life (QWL) for employees working from home. Subsequently, a questionnaire was developed and administered to company managers in Brazil. The findings were analyzed from the perspective of managers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying the primary contributions applicable in both the pandemic and future scenarios. The article is
structured into seven sections. Section 1 covers the introduction, problem, and research objective. Section 2 presents the theoretical concepts. Section 3 describes the research method. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 covers the discussions. Section 6 systematizes the contributions through a SWOT analysis, and finally, Section 7 presents the concluding remarks.

2 HOME OFFICE AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH QUALITY-OF-LIFE AT WORK

According to Guthey, Whiteman, and Elmes (2014), organizations traditionally solidified their presence through the construction of buildings and offices, serving as local and spatial references for employees to visually familiarize themselves with the structures. However, some studies indicate negative impacts on this model, potentially affecting employees' quality of life. Legrain, Eluru, and El-Geneidy (2015) observed that commuting induced stress, resulting in an unpleasant experience upon reaching the workplace. The experience of being stuck in traffic or waiting for a late train, according to Legrain, Eluru, and El-Geneidy (2015), is a common difficulty leading to dissatisfaction and reduced productivity at work.

Presenting a disruptive proposal to the traditional work model in 1980, Alvin Toffler introduced the concept of the Electronic House. The main idea was that people, especially those dedicated to knowledge work, could be less tied to a specific workplace, as advancing technology would enable work in different locations, breaking geographical boundaries (Toffler, 1980). In the same vein, Fried and Hansson (2013) emphasized that although the traditional model from the Industrial Revolution still prevails, there is a declining trend. Technology is gaining strength, creating virtual workspaces that enable employees to be productive without physical presence. Felstead and Henseke (2017) consider the home office a contemporary work model trend. Consequently, Dittes et al. (2019) suggest that managers should focus on how and what work is performed rather than where and when it is done.

A study by Felstead and Henseke (2017) revealed that, up to 2014, the home office expanded in the UK, representing 15% of the total formal workforce. Donnelly and Johns (2021) note an increasing number of employees operating outside companies, supported
by digital technologies. Burgio et al. (2020) stress the importance of normalizing remote interactions and cultivating digital spaces, promoting efficient communication plans, including the use of video conferences and other technological tools. Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, Isaac, and Kalika (2014) agree that the use of mobile information systems minimizes traditional "organizational control."

In Brazil, Rafalski and De Andrade (2015) highlight benefits such as time optimization, schedule flexibility, independence, professional maturity development, decreased personal costs, increased productivity, and reduced travel time. Mellner et al. (2016) emphasize that the home office allows employees versatility in organizing their work, both in terms of time and space, transcending traditional boundaries.

Soerjoatmodko et al. (2015) reinforce that individuals with flexible schedules, especially those close to or within their homes, experience a better quality of life. Recognizing this new work trend, Muskat and Reitsamer (2021) mention that quality of life and work were first linked by Nadler and Lawler (1983). Since then, Quality of Work Life (QWL) has been marked by ensuring task security, fair pay, career development opportunities, openness to opinions, and the appreciation of work, health, and well-being. Hemapriya and Ramchandran (2019) emphasize that QWL is of great importance for employees’ lives and must be continually improved by organizations seeking to retain productive and talented employees.

The combination of home office and QWL can impact personal and professional employee satisfaction, reflecting commitment levels and overall well-being, which, in turn, affect performance (Talmage & Frederick, 2019). Kim et al. (2017) reinforce that the characteristics of the work environment are crucial for achieving positive results. The extended workplace, defined as a network of spaces enabling work in different ways and contexts, can be a quality place where employees can enjoy amenities and produce with excellence (J. Martins, 2015). Home office can be considered a catalyst for quality of life, providing advantages and benefits for both organizations and employees (Rafalski & De Andrade, 2015).

The home office has the potential to contribute to the balance between work and family relationships, allowing moments of family integration and professional activities in the same environment. However, challenges should not be overlooked. The most
common disadvantage is the lack of socialization with the team. In a recent study, Tavares et al. (2020) highlighted that the main difficulties encountered by individuals were the lack of professional interaction, communication with co-workers, the lack of resources and technological infrastructure, reconciling the home office with family life, carrying out domestic activities, dedicating time to children (especially for women), and managing time and scheduling to harmonize both conditions. Nolan et al. (2021) point out that universalizing the home office model could lead to breaks in teams, isolation, integration difficulties, and communication gaps, resulting in employee dissatisfaction. Therefore, Cheng, Nielsen, and Cutler (2019) reinforce that work-family variables can become drivers of business strategies to improve the balance between professional and personal life. Table 1 compiles contributions from the literature that interrelate the home office and QWL.

Table 1. References Supporting Sentence Logic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Benefits highlighted by employees working from home include time</td>
<td>Fried &amp; Hansson, 2013; IPSOS, 2020; Rafalski &amp; De Andrade, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>optimization, gaining independence, flexibility, professional maturity,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>reducing personal costs, increasing productivity, and minimizing commute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 – The number of independent and remote workers has been steadily</td>
<td>Clifton et al., 2019; Donnelly &amp; Johns, 2021; Felstead &amp; Henseke, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increasing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Transportation is a crucial factor in people's lives, contributing to</td>
<td>Corazza et al. 2016; Jones 2014; Redondo et al. 2019; Toscano &amp; Zappalà, 2020; WHO 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues such as traffic accidents, air and noise pollution, stress, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infrastructure problems. However, implementing differentiated work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies and sustainable transportation methods, such as walking and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cycling, can help minimize these negative impacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Managers should focus on how and what work is performed by employees,</td>
<td>Ashkenas et al., 2015; Cheng, Nielsen, and Cutler 2019; Dittes et al., 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather than where and when it is done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Planning, communication, and creativity, combined with technological</td>
<td>Burgio et al., 2020; Leclercq-Vandemanotte et al., 2014; Mellner et al., 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advances (video conferencing, laptops, smartphones, and tablets), enable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>employees to connect, communicate, and collaborate from anywhere and at</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>any time.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – The feeling of uncertainty is reinforced by individualization and the</td>
<td>Alberti et al., 2018; Arendt, 2017; Fleming, 2017; Tavares et al. 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear of being isolated. This is an inevitable counterpart, leading to a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of a sense of belonging, recognition, and security.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 – Organizational and managerial control is compromised when employees are ‘out of sight,’ as the lack of visibility poses a challenge for management. Employees may take advantage of the lack of supervision by reducing their workload. Mazmanian et al., 2013; O’Neill et al., 2014; Sewell & Taskin, 2015

8 – Quality of Work Life (QWL) is evaluated by employees based on safety in task execution, fair pay, career development opportunities, openness to opinions, and appreciation for their work. Muskat & Reitsamer, 2020; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2013

9 – QWL generates satisfaction for employees, influencing their commitment and well-being, which directly reflects on performance. Gupta et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2017; Toscano & Zappalà 2020

10 – The characteristics of the work environment are important factors for achieving good results. Meiliyandrie et al., 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012; Tavares et al. 2020

11 – QWL directly interferes with the emotional conditions of employees and their commitment to the company. Talmage & Frederick, 2019; Mittal et al., 2020; Meiliyandrie et al., 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012

12 – QWL can be understood as the way in which the company meets the needs of employees and promotes their participation in decision-making that affects their workplace lives. Dutra et al., 2017; Robbins & Judge, 2013; Martins, 2015

13 – QWL is reflected in a higher level of employee satisfaction. Cheng, Nielsen, and Cutler 2019; Gupta et al., 2019; Khera, 2015

**Source:** Own elaboration, 2022.

### 3 RESEARCH METHOD

The article's uses a "combined" approach, where both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilized. This approach, as highlighted by Creswell and Clark (2006), compensates for gaps in each method, offering a broader scope for data analysis. The target audience comprises team managers in various areas, aged 18 and above, who transitioned from face-to-face work to home offices in the State of São Paulo, Brazil, amid the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data collection method employed survey-type questionnaires, featuring 21 statements derived from the literature (Supplementary Data 1). Participants were objectively asked to express their level of agreement using a Likert scale with five points. Additionally, two open-ended questions were included to elucidate the primary strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities associated with home offices during the pandemic (Miguel, 2012). Google Forms served as the data collection platform, a tool previously utilized in academic research and further consolidated during the pandemic (Lobe et al.,
2020). Socio-demographic information, encompassing age, gender, education, sector of activity, and workplace, was also solicited to complement the analysis (Clifton et al., 2019).

Affirmative sentences are presented based on the level of agreement, sequentially punctuated from -2 to +2, denoting: (1) I totally disagree, (2) I disagree, (3) Indifferent, (4) Agree, and (5) Totally agree. The model employed and adapted aligns with the one proposed by Sanches, Meireles, and Sordi (2011). The degree of agreement was individually calculated per sentence, with the calculations represented by equations (1), (2), and (3).

\[
D_s = DT + D + \frac{I}{2} \quad \text{Equation 1}
\]
\[
C_s = C + CT + \frac{I}{2} \quad \text{Equation 2}
\]
\[
GC_s = 100 - \left( \frac{100}{D_s + C_s} \right) \quad \text{Equation 3}
\]

Which:

\(D_s\): Disagree with the sentence;
\(C_s\): Agree with the sentence;
\(GC_s\): Degree of agreement of the sentence;

A pilot test was conducted with professionals whose profiles were defined by the research. The objective of this test was to refine the questionnaire, ensuring its capability to measure the proposed aspects and evaluating the participants' understanding of the questions and the method of completion. Figure 1 illustrates the steps of the research method.
4 RESULTS

The results are explored in this section.

4.1 RESEARCH VALIDATION

The response rate for the questionnaires was 82%, meaning that out of the 50 questionnaires sent, 41 were answered. The questionnaire was structured in a way that required responses to all questions and sentences. Consequently, all the completed questionnaires were considered valid for the analyses.

To validate the sample size achieved with the number of responses, the Equation 4 calculation of Equation 4 was performed, following Agranonik & Hirakata (2011):

\[
n = \frac{N \cdot p (1 - p)}{(Z\alpha)^2} + \frac{p \cdot (1 - p) \cdot (Z\alpha)^2}{(N - 1) \cdot E^2}
\]

Where:

n = sample size.
p = population proportion of individuals belonging to the analyzed category.
Z = value for a given confidence level.
N = population size.
E = size of confidence interval (margin of error).

Population size was determined by the number of managers interviewed (N = 50), the population proportion calculated based on the number of questionnaires sent (1.0), a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, we then have an n equals 31.76. In other words, 32 completed questionnaires were needed to reach the expected objective, a number lower than the 41 obtained.

4.2 GRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

41 responses were collected from managers with teams in home offices (Supplementary Data 2) in the state of São Paulo, the most populous in Brazil, with an estimated population of 12,396,372 inhabitants (IBGE, 2021). Respondents have an average age of 30 years, with 61% being male and 39% female. Ahrendt et al. (2020) highlight that during the pandemic, an existing imbalance between men and women was noticeable. This imbalance is not only reflected in the higher representation of men in management positions but also in the greater difficulty experienced by women in balancing the home office and personal life relationship. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between gender and age group of participants.
Respondents also indicated their level of education. They were categorized into four activity areas: Industry, Education, Provision of Services, and Others. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of managers based on their areas of expertise and academic levels. It's noteworthy that 58.53% have at least a specialization. The socioeconomic profile of managers indicates a high level of education.
Physical presence in the work environment is often characterized by presenteeism—a false sense of efficiency at work, where salary is linked to hours spent in the office rather than performance or productivity (Daniels et al., 2021). Presenteeism during the pandemic contributes to the spread of the virus and compromises the health and well-being of employees (Van Ballegooijen et al., 2021). Figure 4 illustrates that more than half of the managers, specifically 58.53%, rejected the statement that working from home increased the lack of control and supervision. This indicates a flexible approach to subordination guidelines.

Figure 4. Supervision during the home office.

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

From the managers interviewed, 66.4% expressed a high-level agreement on the productivity factor, with emphasis on the industrial area, which 83.3% corroborate that the productivity of business employees at home office increased during the pandemic. Figure 5 details the degree of agreement of managers.

Figure 5. Productivity during the home office.

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

For more than half of the managers (59.43%), QWL has increased, however, more than 40% still disagree with this statement, which reinforces that the home-office is only beneficial for employees if the conditions working from home are favorable, otherwise it
can become a threat (Pfeifer, 2021; Rieth & Hagemann, 2021). Figure 6 describes the manager’s position.

![Figure 6. Relationship between home office and QWL.](image)

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

The survey showed that, on average, 86.9% managers recognize that the home office has provided to the employees, time optimization, flexibility, personal independence, and professional maturity. Figure 7, list the main positive factors of the home office.

![Figure 7. Positive factors of the home office.](image)

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

Figure 8 addressed the impacts of traffic and commuting on the employees’ lives, both indicated that the adoption of the home office not only brings the advantages of reducing personal costs, but also reduces the time in transit.
Walking or cycling was also related as a factor of QWL and beneficial for the employees’ health since it reduces the spread of the virus. Figure 9 analyzes the impact of means of transport on QWL.

Figure 10 specifies QWL drivers. Flexible work contributes to employee autonomy and well-being. The conditions of the work environment, boost the work developed at home, so adequate lighting, ventilation, use of plants, comfort, are characteristics that make the environment productive and pleasant (Ajzen & Taskin, 2021; Alhusban et al., 2022; Papinutto et al., 2021).
Figure 10. QWL drivers.

- Totally Disagree
- Disagree
- Indifferent
- Agree
- Totally Agree

Security while performing tasks
Space to give opinions
Work done Appreciation
Work Environment Features

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

Figure 11 shows the degree of managers agreement in relation to employee satisfaction, commitment, and well-being.

Managers in the industrial area (12 respondents) agree (77.6%) that the home office model is beneficial for QWL. In the education area (10 respondents), despite agreeing with the new trend of work, the percentage is less representative, 72.38%, due to the challenges in the adaptation process, especially with the availability of technological resources. The service provision area (12 respondents) indicated the highest percentage of adaptability with the new routine, with an average of 81.15% of the affirmative sentences being corroborated by the participants, while the other areas (others) with 7 respondents indicated agreement degree of 78.91%.

The results indicate that both areas (77.5%) on average, agree with the literature, where they highlighted benefits and opportunities generated during the period of home office in the pandemic, including the expression of interest in continuing the practice after...
the period in quarantine. However, there are still difficulties and challenges pointed out by managers that need to be overcome so that this new trend of work can solidify and maintain itself over the next few years.

5 DISCUSSIONS

The discussions proposed in this section.

5.1 SUPERVISION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE HOME OFFICE

One of the focal points in the home office agenda is employees' ability to remain productive at home and the challenge of controlling and supervising their work. Ashkenas et al. (2015) emphasize the need to move away from command-and-control styles, break down hierarchies, and create space for the virtualization of the work environment. They also advocate for fostering teamwork, promoting flexibility, and ensuring quality in work.

Tapasco-Alzate and Giraldo-García (2020) conducted interviews with Colombian managers to assess the barriers to implementing home office practices. The findings indicated that investment costs and the availability of technologies are not the primary obstacles to adopting this model. Instead, the major challenges lie in managers' distrust of non-traditional organizational models, reluctance to change established work practices, and hesitation to use new digital tools for interaction and communication.

According to Bloom et al. (2013), employees of a travel agency were monitored for nine months while working from home, resulting in increased productivity (13%), fewer breaks and days of absence, and a 4% increase in calls per minute, attributed to a quieter work environment. Bhuiyan et al. (2020) further highlight that maintaining a balance between professional and family life contributes to enhanced employee productivity.

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5.2 FACTORS THAT AFFECT QWL

Hosseini et al. (2020) assert that companies should prioritize the well-being and development of their employees to achieve positive results. Docherty, Kira, and Shani (2008) reinforce that having work experiences that contribute to personal and professional development is a fundamental human right.

Raišienė et al. (2020) support the idea that the home office presents an opportunity to reduce costs. Hehn, Leonard, and Thao (2021), in their study of three large companies, explored the motivations, organization, and consequences of home office practices. They observed that commuting time and the quality of the work environment are crucial factors directly affecting health and the desire for a home office. Similarly, Abdullah and Ismail (2012) surveyed 91 Malaysian employees regarding Quality of Work Life (QWL) and the balance between personal and professional life during home office. The study revealed that QWL and job satisfaction increased as a result of working from home. Choi (2020), in an article on flexible work and turnover, highlighted that aside from increasing job satisfaction, the home office helps to reduce employee turnover.

However, it is essential for companies to be mindful of potential challenges associated with working from home, such as issues related to lack of collaboration and social interactions among team members (Liu et al., 2017; Merschbrock et al., 2018).
5.3 HOME OFFICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Business models are increasingly focused on sustainability, requiring companies to seek solutions, maintain trust, and respect the diverse priorities, demands, and ideas of employees (Hosseini et al., 2020; Zink, 2014). Consequently, as mentioned by Hosseini et al. (2020), organizations need to prioritize generating positive results for society and the environment.

Raišienė et al. (2020) emphasize that the home office contributes to reducing CO₂ emissions generated by transportation. Walking or cycling, beneficial not only during the pandemic but also as a quality of life factor, encourages physical activity, promoting the health of employees (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). A survey conducted by IPSOS (2020) indicates that in many countries, people have gained new perspectives during the pandemic, such as appreciating clean air, stress-free roads, the return of birdsong, and contemplating whether the pre-pandemic normalcy was sufficient or if the pandemic offers an opportunity to rebuild life for the better. Therefore, sustainable development presents an opportunity for companies and managers to shape the future model.

6 SWOT ANALYSIS

Figure 12 demonstrates the main factors identified for the reconfiguration process of the work environment and maintenance of quality of life.
There are still difficulties and challenges pointed out by managers that need to be overcome so that this new trend of work can be solidified and maintained over the next few years. The SWOT analysis was developed with the purpose of synthesizing the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by managers. There are already several studies on corporate development strategies that are developed from the SWOT analysis perspective (Abdel-Basset et al., 2018; Feng et al., 2020).
The shift to home office during the pandemic has brought forth positive trends, including increased productivity, potential cost savings, a focus on employee well-being, and a growing emphasis on sustainable business practices. These developments indicate a transformative shift in how companies approach work, reflecting a more efficient, flexible, and socially responsible work model.

However, challenges such as the digital divide, social isolation, and resistance to change underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to ensure successful and sustainable implementation. Quality of life considerations, including the impact on work-life balance, have become crucial factors.

Based on all that has been mentioned, the following recommendations can be drawn:

- **Invest in Technological Infrastructure**: Prioritize investments in technology to bridge the digital divide. Providing employees with the necessary tools and ensuring reliable internet access can contribute to a more effective and equitable home office experience.

- **Promote Social Interaction**: Implement strategies to address social isolation challenges, such as virtual team-building activities and fostering a culture of open communication to maintain a sense of connection among team members.

- **Flexible Work Policies**: Adopt flexible work policies that allow employees to choose between remote and office work. This flexibility can accommodate individual preferences and contribute to a healthier work environment.

- **Sustainable Practices**: Integrate sustainable practices into home office models, encouraging activities like walking or cycling for better health and incorporating eco-friendly measures to contribute to environmental conservation.

- **Training and Change Management**: Invest in training programs and change management strategies to overcome resistance to change. Educating both employees and managers on the benefits and best practices of home office can facilitate a smoother transition.

- **Continuous Evaluation**: Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of home office policies and address emerging challenges promptly. Continuous feedback
from employees and managers can provide insights for adjustments and improvements.

- **Strategic Planning for Future Work Models:** Engage in strategic planning to shape future work models, exploring hybrid structures that balance in-office and remote work to cater to diverse employee needs.

In conclusion, embracing the positive aspects of home office, while proactively addressing challenges, is crucial for building a resilient and sustainable work model for the future. Companies that prioritize technology, employee well-being and sustainable practices will likely be better positioned to navigate the evolving landscape of work. These positive trends suggest that the adoption of home office has brought about positive outcomes for both companies and employees, indicating a shift in work dynamics that can contribute to a more efficient, flexible, and sustainable future.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this article was to identify affirmative and negative sentences in the literature that impact the Quality of Work Life (QWL) for employees working from home and analyze them from the perspective of managers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To date, there is a scarcity of articles, data, and extensive research in both academic and business domains, including in Brazil, regarding how the changes induced by the pandemic have influenced the quality of life for employees in various sectors, such as industry, education, service provision, and others. The sudden shift caused by the pandemic compelled organizations to adapt hastily, lacking sufficient time to organize and plan effective actions for the establishment of home offices, leading to uncertainties and challenges, especially for managers. The “new normal” dismantled the traditional in-person supervision model, distancing managers from employees and affecting the organization's and managers' ability to assess the benefits or drawbacks of home office on QWL.

Throughout the intense pandemic period, managers and organizations invested substantial efforts to ensure that employees could remain active, fostering a sense of belonging to work remotely, and demonstrating the possibility of reconciling personal and professional life. However, the education sector emerged as the most impacted due to a
lack of preparation for home office implementation. This sector experienced heightened activities and faced significant challenges, leading to practical difficulties even after the pandemic. The struggles in the education sector adversely affected the quality of life for employees, particularly professors who dealt with not only daily activities but also excessive stress from new digital tools, lack of contact, and an overload of activities, including extra working hours.

Nevertheless, the home office proved to be an effective work alternative for the industry, service delivery, and other sectors during the global health crisis. Despite the pandemic being an atypical moment for contemporary society, this article identified key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through a SWOT analysis, aligning managers' perspectives with existing literature. It underscores the benefits, challenges, and potential improvements for home office adoption, providing practical insights for organizations and academia. Lived experiences demonstrated to managers that this format not only enhances QWL but also dispels traditional notions of low productivity and the need for constant supervision.

This research asserts that home office is not merely a temporary measure. Thus, what is now perceived as a new workplace trend must become a lasting and structured model. Adopting increasingly hybrid models, with occasional visits to the workplace, will be crucial for managing peaks of this and other diseases.

The article emphasizes the need for further research on this topic with broader geographic and sampling coverage, examining the perspectives of various stakeholders in the chain. Additionally, quantitative research is recommended to measure and classify the primary factors. This work provides intriguing insights into new dynamics between managers, employees, and organizations. It also offers evidence from the corporate world, constantly evolving, illustrating the significance of incorporating specific practices in the work environment for forging new relationships.
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