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CATÓLICA
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Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Working
Parents

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to
obtain a Master's Degree in Psychology in Business and
Economics

By

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Faculty of Human Sciences

September 2025



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Abstract

The research examined how remote work and teleworking affect parents' work-life balance through their daily experiences and their assessment of its impact on their relationship with their children. The COVID-19 pandemic led to extensive telework adoption which merged work and family domains thus creating uncertainty about their lasting effects on personal well-being and social equality and family relationships. The research used qualitative methods to study 11 parents with children under 18 who lived across different Portuguese regions. *NVivo* software (ed. 15) was used to analyze data from semi-structured interviews which were conducted with participants. The research findings showed that teleworking creates conflicting outcomes because it provides employees with flexible scheduling, time efficiency and parental involvement opportunities yet it creates unclear work-life separation and excessive work-related stress and continuous availability expectations. The study showed that mothers experienced more work-family conflict than fathers because gender-based inequalities persist in the workplace. The study demonstrated that parents' work-life balance directly affects their children's social-emotional development because parental stress and unavailability creates distance in their emotional bond. Study participants demonstrated different approaches to work management through their establishment of routines and boundary creation and their creation of personal work areas and practice of self-care activities. The research highlights how hybrid and remote work models transform family dynamics which requires organizations and public institutions to create sustainable work-life balance policies for parents.

Keywords: Teleworking; Remote Work; Work-life Balance; Parental Figures; Family Dynamics

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo explorar de que forma o teletrabalho e o trabalho remoto influenciam o equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal de figuras parentais, centrando-se nas suas experiências quotidianas e no impacto percecionado na qualidade da relação entre pais e filhos. Após a generalização do teletrabalho durante a COVID-19, os domínios do trabalho e da família tornaram-se cada vez mais sobrepostos, levantando questões sobre os seus efeitos a longo prazo no bem-estar, na igualdade de género e nas dinâmicas familiares. Para investigar este fenómeno, realizou-se um estudo qualitativo com 11 mães e pais de crianças menores de 18 anos residentes em diferentes regiões de Portugal. Foram conduzidas entrevistas semiestruturadas e analisadas de acordo com o tema através do software *NVivo* (ed. 15). Os resultados revelaram a natureza paradoxal do teletrabalho: embora tenha possibilitado maior flexibilidade, poupança de tempo e oportunidades de envolvimento parental, também esbateu fronteiras, aumentou a sobrecarga emocional e reforçou a sensação de disponibilidade constante. As mães relataram níveis mais elevados de conflito trabalho-família do que os pais, o que refletiu desigualdades de género persistentes. Verificou-se ainda que está diretamente ligado ao bem-estar socioemocional das crianças, uma vez que o stress e a indisponibilidade emocional podem fragilizar a proximidade afetiva. Os participantes descreveram ainda várias estratégias de gestão, como estabelecer rotinas, definir limites, criar espaços de trabalho próprios e praticar autocuidado. Globalmente, o estudo convida-nos a refletir em como os modelos híbridos e remotos estão a reconfigurar a vida familiar, sublinhando a necessidade de políticas organizacionais e públicas que promovam um WLB sustentável para figuras parentais.

Palavras-chave: Teletrabalho; Trabalho Remoto; Equilíbrio Entre Vida Profissional e Pessoal; Figuras Parentais; Dinâmicas Familiares

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This research is divided into five chapters which follow a specific order. The first chapter introduces the research context, explaining the theme and its significance. The second chapter builds the theoretical framework by examining essential concepts and experimental findings about telework and remote work and work-life balance and parenting. The research objectives together with guiding questions for empirical analysis appear at the end of this chapter. The research methodology section in Chapter III explains the study design and participant details and data collection methods and analysis techniques. Chapter IV connects participants' experiences with literature. It also highlights topics that stood out both for their similarity to the results of the analyzed literature as for their differences and some concrete applications. Conclusions and limitations can also be found in Chapter V which also presents research findings and future research directions.

1.1 Contextualization

The concept of *Work-life balance* (WLB) constitutes a significant topic in management studies, organizational psychology, and social policy, as contemporary society requires complex tasks from its citizens (Kumar & Premalatha, 2018). Technological advancements, economic transformations, and cultural shifts eliminated the conventional distinctions between work and home life (Nail Ahk Awamleh, 2012). The current workplace presents new approaches for combining work and life, while creating new conflicts that highlight the significance of WLB for both individual and collective achievement (Wattenberg et al., 2023). WLB is perceived as the way to achieve balance in work, family, leisure, and personal care needs. For WLB to succeed, employees need to have the right amount of time, autonomy, connections, a positive mental state, and support from their organization (Kumar & Premalatha, 2018). The drive for work-life balance offers dual benefits that enhance both individual employees and their organizations. The advantages of this concept involve personal fulfillment, decreased stress, improvement in individual health (Tariq, Aslam, Siddique, & Tanveer, 2012), and organizational benefits including greater efficiency and organizational benefits, such as increased productivity, reduced absences, and improved employee retention (de Klerk et al., 2021). These changes happened due to improvements in digital technology that made remote

management, virtual monitoring, and online collaboration normal ways of working (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). The digital revolution introduced two contradictory risks: the weakening of work-life boundaries, constant availability, and constant professional connection (Bondanini et al., 2025).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a fundamental change in the world. The rapid shift to telework by millions of workers worldwide exposed both the advantages and disadvantages of this work arrangement. The practice allowed for business continuity, employee self-management and saved time according to Hopkins and Bardoel (2023). The shift to remote work made work demands grow while it created social isolation and increased family conflicts (Alfano et al., 2024).

The pandemic created continuous interruptions for parents while making their childcare duties more demanding and their home responsibilities more extensive, forcing them to handle multiple responsibilities within their shared living space (Um et al., 2024).

The way parents manage their work-life balance directly affects the care of their children. Research indicates that when mothers experience work-life imbalance they develop stress which leads to behavioral problems in their children (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021). Research indicates that when parents find their jobs fulfilling it leads to better development of prosocial skills and socio-emotional stability in their children (Gong et al., 2024). The research evidence shows that work-life balance affects multiple generations at once. The global workforce is adopting hybrid work models which combine office attendance with remote work as a new standard practice. Hopkins and Bardoel (2023) and Moller et al. (2024) argue that these work arrangements will only last if health standards remain improved, gender equality is emphasized, and family happiness is promoted as well.

The experience of parental teleworking shows that work-life balance is a complex phenomenon that integrates technological, social, and cultural aspects, impacting different generations. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in fast digital transformation characterized by significant remote work adoption, leading to establishing online collaboration as an usual practice (Wattenberg et al., 2023).

Remote work has made employee welfare more difficult by giving them greater flexibility at work but also more stress and problems in their family relationships, which demonstrates the social impacts (Bhat et al., 2023). Studies indicate that parental job satisfaction and WLB directly influence their children's socioemotional development, which proves that work-life balance affects multiple generations (Gong et al., 2024).

1.2 Relevance and timeliness of the study

This study is relevant due to the significant structural changes in the workplace, especially those brought up by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made teleworking a global and multidisciplinary reality instead of just a practice in some fields (Alfano et al., 2024).

WLB is seen as a vital subject which requires interdisciplinary examination. Research shows that work-life balance affects employee job satisfaction, psychological health and their work performance (Oakman et al., 2020). Work-life balance policies and practices at work create changes in family relationships because they determine how dual-earner parents handle their responsibilities to their children and employers (Kim, 2018). The connection between professional and family roles in parenting creates an intergenerational effect since it affects both adult well-being and child socio-emotional development (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021; Gong et al., 2024).

Organizations as well, use teleworking as their primary human resource strategy after it transitioned from being an employee benefit. Organizations need to develop flexible work systems which promote employee health and performance while accommodating the unique needs of parents according to Klerk et al. (2021). Research about telework experiences of parents needs to be conducted because it will help organizations create inclusive policies that support employee motivation and talent maintenance while decreasing work-related stress and eliminating discrimination (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023).

Teleworking creates as well social connections that affect gender-based inequalities which have existed for many years. Studies say that Women maintain their unequal responsibility for domestic work and care duties after adopting flexible work models even though they work from home (Lyzwinski, 2024). The study of work-life balance among parents

helps researchers create modern social equality and social justice frameworks for contemporary societies (Wattenberg et al.,2023).

From a political and international perspective, organizations such the International Labour Organization have highlighted the urgency of policies that promote WLB and family well-being as prerequisites for achieving sustainability and gender equality goals (International Labour Organization, 2022).

In conclusion, the relevance of this research lies in a combination of technological development, organizational adaptation, persistent social issues, and intergenerational impacts. A deeper understanding of parental WLB in teleworking environments is crucial. There is a need for information on organizational strategies, public policies, and cultural discussions for the future of work and family life that extends just academic interest.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual framework of WLB

WLB is a complex and developing concept that cannot be reduced to a just distribution of time between professional and personal fields. Instead, it includes the perception of compatibility, satisfaction, and effective performance across various life domains, including family, leisure, health, and self-care (Kumar & Premalatha, 2018). The idea of equilibrium goes beyond a fixed state because it is a process that happens all throughout time and depends on both individuals and the environment (Mohd et al., 2023).

The idea developed when significant changes were happening in social structures and workplaces. Studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s showed that women faced excessive work obligations upon entering the job market, as they also managed domestic responsibilities (Escudero-Guirado et al., 2024). This idea expanded to include many parts of life, such as community service, leisure activities, health, and personal growth, according to Kumar and Premalatha (2018).

Recent studies indicate that achieving balance requires more than a conflict resolution, as it involves maintaining positive performance and satisfaction across each area of life. The notion of WLB includes the positive and negative impacts that occur between work and personal life. In this context, WLB generates beneficial spillover effects allowing success in one area to enhance experiences in another domain (Garcia et al. 2024). Evidence indicates that parental work–family balance, or lack of it, directly impacts children's behavior and socio-emotional outcomes, highlighting the bidirectional and intergenerational characteristics of spillover (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021).

WLB is crucial for both physical and psychological health. Studies indicate that reduced balance is associated with a higher probability of experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression, which can lead to the deterioration of familial relationships (Friedrich, 2022).

On the other hand, a positive balance is linked to more happiness, stronger relationships, and better parenting habits. Parental equilibrium or disequilibrium in families with children affects child socioemotional development by shaping their behavioral responses and relational competencies (Gong et al., 2024; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021).

In addition, cultural and structural factors strongly shape how individuals develop their understanding of balance. Research findings show that WLB access depends on gender identity, social economic status and traditional cultural values. In particular, women struggle to achieve work-life balance because they handle most household and childcare responsibilities even though they work full-time or remotely (Yen et al.,2024). Research data indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified gender roles since women performed most of their time in household duties (Wattenberg et al.,2023). The research demonstrates that work-life balance exists as a social construct which develops through structural inequalities that affect different groups of people.

The conceptual framework of WLB shows its complex nature, evolving as multiple elements which transform based on time and particular situations. The concept extends past work-family balance to include how different social roles affect each other while showing how outside pressures and individual coping methods interact. WLB becomes essential in the

parental environment since its quality affects both caregiver well-being and family emotional health and child development.

2.2 Teleworking and flexible working models

Remote work as known as teleworking or home office requires professionals to complete their duties outside conventional office environments by using information and communication technologies in order to maintain contact with their colleagues (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). It is one of several flexible work arrangements, alongside modalities such as adjustable schedules, part-time work, job sharing and leave adapted to family needs (Yen et al., 2024).

The literature highlights significant advantages, particularly the reduction in commuting, which saves time and lowers stress levels (Klerk et al., 2021). Teleworking also provides greater autonomy in managing schedules, an aspect highly valued by parents because it facilitates the reconciliation of professional demands with family responsibilities (Yen et al., 2024). These factors are consistently associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation (Obina et al., 2024).

Flexibility may translate into work intensification, longer working hours and the perception of permanent availability (Oakman et al., 2020). The pandemic revealed this issue most strongly because it caused work overload and destroyed personal boundaries and created more opportunities for burnout (Giorgia Bondanini et al. 2025). Remote work has been linked to social isolation and reduced collaboration and organizational belonging (Klerk et al., 2021).

In the specific context of parents, these challenges become even more visible. During confinement, the home was transformed into a multifunctional environment that operated simultaneously as office, school and family space. Research further shows that this overlap of roles during the pandemic intensified parental stress and undermined family well-being (Herbst et al., 2023). This situation revealed that teleworking is not only a technical arrangement but also a social process that reshapes roles and family dynamics (Yen et al., 2024).

The hybrid model is growing into a more prevalent means to deal with these tensions, and a majority see it as the best option. Splitting the week between remote and presential work

gives both flexibility and the chance to interact with people in person (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023). This model is especially beneficial to parents because it reduces on transport time and makes the lines between work and personal life clearer (Moller et al., 2024).

Access to flexible arrangements is still not equal, even though it has a lot of potential. Teleworking opportunities are predominantly found in knowledge and technologically driven sectors, while numerous professions in retail, healthcare, and manufacturing remain excluded. This brings up concerns about equity and social sustainability (Wattenberg et al., 2023).

In summary, flexible working models, and teleworking in particular, represent a structural transformation of the world of work. They combine the promise of greater autonomy and improved reconciliation with the risk of intensified demands and blurred boundaries. In parental contexts, their significance is amplified, since their effects extend beyond adults to shape family functioning and children's well-being.

2.3 Impact of teleworking on parents

Teleworking produces multiple impacts which extend to affect both the well-being and the operational structure of families. Research shows that fathers who find satisfaction in their work develop stronger socio-emotional abilities in their children because their parenting confidence grows and their stress decreases (Gong et al. 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these patterns because parents faced new challenges when they worked from home while taking care of their children and helping with their education (Alfano et al. 2024).

Teleworking offers clear benefits by reducing commuting time and increasing parents' presence in daily routines. This proximity can strengthen bonds and enhance parental involvement, enabling participation in school and leisure activities that would otherwise be difficult in traditional face-to-face settings (de Klerk et al., 2021). Even though teleworking provides multiple benefits it faces some obstacles as well. The combination of work and family responsibilities results in elevated parental stress according to Conservation of Resources theory

because parents with young children experience excessive workload from multiple time-consuming demands on their energy and attention (Mohd et al. 2023).

The most obvious manifestation of this paradox appears within the bond between parents and their children. The study by Herbst et al. (2023) found that children spent more time with their parents during confinement, but their parents remained emotionally distant because work demands took over their attention. Studies show that being physically close to your partner does not automatically lead to better relationship quality. Research studies show WLB affects various age groups because parents who achieve work-life harmony experience satisfaction which leads to better social conduct from their children who develop enhanced emotional competencies (Gong et al. 2024)

Finally, working from home is viewed as a common practice for parents. In a study with American parents, they recognize remote work benefits their families but they link these advantages to decreased job happiness and career advancement because of workplace flexibility prejudices (Moller et al. 2024). Some studies reveal that telework creates operational challenges which impact how employees view their professional development (Bhat et al. 2023).

In summary, the impact of teleworking on parents is defined by duality. It provides greater involvement and flexibility but also intensifies demands, creates role overlap and exposes persistent gender inequalities. Its effects transcend adults, shaping children's well-being and confirming the intergenerational relevance of WLB.

2.4 Challenges, strategies and self-care practices

Teleworking creates multiple difficulties which impact both family relationships and mental wellness of parents. While flexible arrangements and the reduction of commuting are frequently identified as advantages, research highlights that the overlap of professional tasks with childcare and household responsibilities often generates new pressures (de Klerk et al., 2021). The home environment that was solely for rest and family activities has transformed into

a multifunctional space, resulting in blurred separations between work and life that interfere with family time and contribute to emotional exhaustion (Herbst et al., 2023).

Another common problem is that stress levels rise, and the risk of burnout increases. The implementation of telework as a mandatory or extended practice is correlated with greater anxiety, fatigue, and work-related stress, which negatively affect personal health and familial relationships (Friedrich, 2022). Companies that demand their employees to be available create extra issues since they turn flexible work options into impossible work expectations.

Some parents develop different ways to deal with these problems in order to improve their WLB and remain well. Research indicates that individuals who create structured routines and time management systems, including work schedules, role definitions, family responsibility distribution, and family activity time allocation, experience more fulfillment with their work-life balance. These practices help people take charge of their lives and reduce the conflicts that come up between different areas of their lives (Piszczeck, 2017).

Self-care has been shown to be quite beneficial. Parents who take regular breaks, keep a focus on their physical and mental health, and set limits on when they are available feel less stressed and are more capable of meeting their family obligations. Telework intensity requires these practices as fundamental elements to enhance both health and relationship quality, as pointed out by Piszczeck (2017).

Family and social support networks are very important, in addition to individual efforts. Having supportive partners, extended family members, or community resources helps parents who are overwhelmed and makes it easier for them to balance their work and family responsibilities. Research indicates that supportive dynamics within families and communities enhance parents' perception of balance, highlighting that WLB is not only an individual process but also defined within greater social contexts (Herbst et al., 2023).

The perception of control and autonomy functions as a core factor which impacts this process. Teleworking enables parents to experience a positive and empowering work environment because they can maintain control over their work schedule and time management

(Mohd et al.,2023). Conversely, when flexibility is coupled with constant connectivity requirements, it undermines autonomy and increases emotional unavailability (Friedrich, 2022).

In summary, teleworking can make the situation harder for parents since it blurs the line between work and home life, may raise their stress levels, and can lead to ongoing discrimination based on gender. Research indicates that these challenges are addressed through consistent organizational practices, personal care activities, and social support systems (Wattenberg et al. 2023). The efficacy of these strategies is mainly dependent on the resources available at individual, family, and organizational level, which influence if teleworking is perceived as a source of stress or a means to enhance well-being and relationship with family (Santos et al., 2024; Thasipan et al., 2024; Williams & Shaw, 2024).

2.5 Critical synthesis of the literature and identified gaps

The literature examined demonstrates that teleworking, when combined with the concept of WLB, represents an essential area of study for understanding modern family dynamics. Evidence consistently demonstrates that flexibility in time and space provides significant advantages for parents, including increased proximity to children, reduced transportation expenses, and enhanced autonomy (de Klerk et al., 2021). Simultaneously, this flexibility may produce negative consequences, such as increased workload, work-family conflict, and additional stress among parents (Piszczeck, 2017). Thus, the impact of teleworking is not unidirectional but ambivalent, depending on how personal, family and contextual resources are mobilized to manage its demands (Akinwande et al., 2024).

Despite these advances, literature remains marked by important limitations. The first gap concerns the predominance of studies conducted in pandemic contexts. These exceptional circumstances were characterized by school closures and the suspension of community support systems, which amplified family overload (Greer et al.,2023). Additionally, numerous studies focus on particular industries, especially knowledge workers, limiting the applicability of results to other fields (Chen et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a need for research to analyze parental teleworking in more stable post-pandemic environments, where families may adjust their routines under fewer restrictions (Wattenberg et al., 2023).

A second gap relates to gender disparities. Studies indicate that women mostly manage household duties and caregiving responsibilities, even while working from home (Yen et al., 2024). However, there has been limited comprehensive examination of how parents negotiate roles within households and the subsequent impact of these negotiations on family dynamics and children's well-being. Studies indicate that telework could result in the reemergence of traditional gender roles, reinforcing the dual responsibilities that women encounter in their professional and familial spheres (Wattenberg et al., 2023). To make progress in discussions regarding work and family equality, there is a need to deal with this issue.

Finally, the literature has not examined in detail the role of self-care strategies in the parental experience of teleworking. Recent research indicates that practices such as breaks, health maintenance, and deliberate time management can alleviate adverse effects (Giorgia Bondanini et al., 2025). Furthermore, evidence suggests that using breaks for non-work objectives and self-care can mitigate the otherwise harmful consequences of interruptions (Chen et al., 2023). Yet empirical studies on their effectiveness in families with young children or in dual-career households remain scarce.

In summary, research on teleworking and WLB has made significant progress but still presents gaps in relation to post-pandemic dynamics, gender negotiations, children's perspectives and the systematic study of self-care. By addressing these limitations, the present study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of parental teleworking, considering both its ambivalences and its intergenerational implications.

2.6 Research objectives and research questions

The main objective of this study is to understand how teleworking and remote working impact the WLB of parents, focusing on the analysis of the individual experiences of fathers and mothers and the direct implications that these experiences have on their relationship with their children. Rather than evaluating organizational or structural factors, the main interest in this research is to explore the perspective of parental caregivers, seeking to understand how working from home affects time management, emotional availability, and daily caregiving practices.

The research seeks to determine the essential advantages and obstacles which telework creates for household operations. Studies show that parents who work from home or have flexible work schedules can dedicate more time to their children which leads to improved supervision and stronger family relationships (de Klerk et al. 2021; Herbst et al.,2023).

The ongoing battle to maintain work-life separation leads to persistent work-related stress which disrupts family time and information overload that negatively affects parental life satisfaction and their ability to spend quality time with their children (Piszczeck, 2017)

Thus, one of the specific objectives of the study is to understand how these conditions influence the perception of quality of parenting, whether in terms of managing family routines, availability to support children in moments of learning and leisure, or the ability to maintain a consistent emotional presence. This focus is particularly relevant, as recent research shows that the balance or imbalance experienced by mothers and fathers has an impact on stress levels and, consequently, on children's social and emotional adjustment (Gong et al., 2024).

In addition, this research also seeks to explore the personal WLB and self-care strategies that parents develop to cope with the concurrent demands of remote work and family responsibilities. These strategies might include the establishment of routines, the negotiation of private spaces, or self-care practices that reduce stress and promote mental health (Giorgia Bondanini et al., 2025).

This research aims to achieve three main objectives, which include studying teleworking effects on daily parenting activities, both positive and negative impacts and examining how these effects affect educational quality and parent-child bonds, determining work-life balance methods for managing teleworking-related conflicts as well. The research aims to enhance knowledge about teleworking effects on work-life balance through parental perspectives.

Based on the general objective of this study, three specific research questions were defined:

1. How does teleworking affect parents' daily routines and time management?
The aim is to understand how fathers and mothers experience the balance (or imbalance)

between professional and family responsibilities when the home also becomes a workplace. In particular, the study examines how teleworking influences time management and parents' perception of their availability to accompany their children in their daily lives.

2. How does teleworking influence the quality of the parent–child relationship? This question explores parents' perceptions of how remote work affects their relationship with their children. It considers how fathers and mothers evaluate the time they are able to spend together, the quality of daily interactions, and how they believe their children experience these changes in availability and presence.

3. What strategies do parents adopt to reconcile remote work with family responsibilities? This question focuses on the individual strategies parents use to manage the demands of remote work alongside family responsibilities. It considers practices such as time management, self-care, and the redefinition of priorities that allow them to maintain a work–life balance and minimize negative impacts on themselves and their children.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Study design

This study adopts a qualitative design, considered the most appropriate when seeking to understand complex, multidimensional phenomena that are strongly influenced by the subjective experience of individual (Escudero-Guirado et al., 2024)

Unlike the quantitative approach, which favors the measurement of variables and statistical generalization, qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the meanings, perceptions, and interpretations attributed by participants to their daily lives (Williams & Shaw, 2024). In the specific case of parental teleworking and its impact on *work–life balance*, it is essential to capture the diversity of narratives and the richness of personal experiences, since the effects of remote work are not homogeneous, varying according to family context, age of children, gender, and strategies developed (Um et al., 2024).

In this sense, the use of semi-structured interviews was used as the main data collection technique. This format is a valuable way to get an understanding of how participants feel, think, and value the phenomenon under study. It combines a few guiding topics with the opportunity to explore new dimensions (de Klerk et al., 2021). Additionally, the interview facilitates participants in articulating their experiences in a contextualized approach, relating specific episodes and evaluating the significance given to their daily lives, which is challenging to accomplish with more rigid instruments, such as closed-ended questionnaires (Van den Eynde et al., 2020).

Qualitative interviews also have the benefit of being based on a close connection between the researcher and the person interviewed. It's important to create an atmosphere of trust during the conversation so that everyone feels comfortable talking about every topic. This relational aspect of the method facilitates the generation of comprehensive and genuine data, enabling interviewees to thoroughly contemplate the pros and cons faced in balancing remote work with familial obligations. (Escudero-Guirado et al., 2024)

Recent literature supports the significance of this methodological choice. For instance, Um et al. (2024) demonstrated that interviews facilitate the examination of various notions of work-family balance, highlighting the diverse perspectives expressed by mothers and fathers. Consequently, the selection of semi-structured interviews in this study aligns with recognized best practices in analogous research, proving their suitability for the subject of analysis.

3.2 Data collection

Data collection was planned to ensure methodological rigor, ethical respect, and adaptation to the participants' conditions. Before the interviews were conducted, each participant received an informed consent form, which explained the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of the process, and the guarantee that they could withdraw at any time without having to provide any justification. The consent form also included authorization for audio recording of the interviews, used exclusively for transcription and analysis purposes, ensuring that all data would be treated anonymously. The audio files were deleted after the transcription was completed.

Initial contact was made through social media, with several time options proposed in order to minimize constraints and facilitate participation. This flexibility was considered essential due to the nature of the subject under investigation: parental figures engaged in remote work, frequently managing busy schedules that balance professional and familial obligations (Simionescu, 2024).

The interviews were conducted in two formats: in person, at locations selected by the participant to guarantee privacy and comfort, or online, via the *Microsoft Teams* platform, when this was the preferred choice. This hybrid adaptation made it easier for everyone to participate by letting each interviewee choose the format that worked best for their daily life. *Microsoft Teams* was chosen due the fact that is easy to use, which is important for lowering technological barriers (Roberts et al., 2021).

The collection procedure was guided by a semi-structured script, prepared in advance, which included key topics such as the work routine when teleworking, the experience of balancing work and parental responsibilities, the benefits and challenges experienced, the strategies adopted to deal with demands, self-care measures, and the perceived impacts on the relationship with children. This script served as a guiding thread, ensuring consistency between interviews, but always left room to explore emerging themes that participants considered relevant. A semi-structured interview guide allowed consistent yet flexible data collection, a method well-supported in remote work studies (Adisa et al., 2021)

All interviews were audio recorded, with prior authorization, and subsequently transcribed in full, ensuring accuracy and quality in the subsequent analysis. Full transcription of audio-recorded interviews ensures data accuracy, in line with best practices in virtual qualitative research (Roberts et al., 2021).

3.3 Sampling process

In the present study, the sample was defined using a snowball collection, given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research. The choice of this methodological strategy is justified by the fact that the aim here is not to achieve statistical representativeness of the population, but rather to collect rich and diverse narratives that allow for an in-depth

understanding of the subjective experiences of parental figures in teleworking or hybrid work (Van den Eynde et al., 2020).

The selection of participants was guided by inclusion criteria, particularly fathers or mothers who resided permanently with their children, to facilitate daily engagement with parental responsibilities. Another key criteria was that only people who were doing remote or hybrid work at the time of data collection could be included. This was done to get current and contextualized experiences. Lastly, participants needed to have worked in this organization for at least a year. This was to keep answers from being influenced by the initial adaptation phase and to let participants think more deeply about the pros, cons and strategies.

Participants were identified through personal and professional networks, also using the *snowball sampling* technique, whereby initial participants recommended other potential interviewees who met the established criteria. This approach proved useful in accessing different parental profiles, with a diversity of children's ages, sectors of activity, and family contexts.

The number of interviews conducted was defined based on the principle of theoretical saturation. This criterion, widely used in qualitative research, refers to the moment when the collection of new data ceases to add substantively relevant dimensions to the object of study, rendering the information obtained redundant (Williams & Shaw, 2024). In the present study, saturation was achieved after the eleventh interview, since, from that point on, the narratives collected began to converge around the same categories of analysis, without introducing significant new elements.

The interviews included participants with diverse characteristics, enabling a range of perspectives. Fathers and mothers with children of different ages were included to see how parental teleworking might affect them differently depending on their child's stage of development and needs. This variety was especially helpful in looking into how the level of supervision needed and family routines affect the experience of WLB.

3.4 Characterization of the sample

The final sample consisted of a total of 11 participants, distributed relatively evenly between genders: 6 women and 5 men. This proportion ensured diversity of perspectives, allowing us to capture both the specificities of the maternal and paternal experience in the context of parental teleworking.

All participants were married or in a stable relationship, which made it possible to analyze family dynamics in dual-career and cohabiting contexts, a reality that is particularly relevant for understanding work-life balance. With regard to their area of residence, the majority lived in urban contexts, two participants were located in suburban areas, and only one in a rural area. This distribution reflects the predominance of metropolitan contexts in access to teleworking but also includes experiences of families in less densely populated areas, allowing for a more comprehensive reading.

In terms of educational qualifications, the sample is highly qualified: 10 participants held a master's or doctoral degree, and only one participant had a bachelor's degree. This profile is consistent with the literature, which points out that telework is more common in knowledge-intensive sectors, where academic, technical, or management functions predominate (Lyzwinski, 2024).

In terms of individual net monthly income, three participants were in the €1601–2000 bracket, five in the €2001–3000 bracket, and three reported incomes above €3000. These figures reveal a medium-high socioeconomic group, which may have implications for how teleworking is experienced, as higher incomes tend to be associated with greater access to material resources and more favorable working conditions, such as homes with adequate office space or access to family support services (Kim, 2018).

The average age of participants was 40.45 years ($SD = 3.93$), with extremes ranging from 36 to 48 years. This is, therefore, those who are at the prime of their careers and have children who still rely on them. This makes it even more important for them to find a balance between work and family (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2021).

Regarding family structure, all participants lived with their children, most of whom were of school or preschool age, age groups that require greater parental presence for monitoring routines and educational support (Herbst et al., 2023). This characteristic reinforces the viability of the sample for the object of study, which focuses on the experience of teleworking in families with dependent children.

In short, the sample consists of participants with a high level of academic qualification, mostly living in urban contexts, with medium to high incomes and at a stage in life characterized by the accumulation of professional and family responsibilities. This profile ensures the relevance of the contributions collected, while allowing for the analysis of the tensions and strategies developed by families who, despite having significant material and cultural resources, face the particular challenges of parental teleworking. For more details, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants (N = 11)

<i>Variable / category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	6	54.5
Male	5	45.5
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	11	100.0
<i>Area of residence</i>		
Urban	8	72.7
Suburban	2	18.2
Rural	1	9.1
<i>Educational qualifications</i>		
Bachelor's degree	1	9.1
Master's/Doctorate	10	90.9
<i>Monthly income (€)</i>		
1601–2000	3	27.3
2001–3001	5	45.5
>3000	3	27.3
<i>Age (M; SD)</i>	40.45; 3.95	-

3.5 Data analysis procedure

After completing the interviews, the entire verbal content of each one was transcribed. This allowed me to focus on the participants' discourse and ensure clear and straightforward material for analysis.

Once the transcription was complete, careful and repeated reading of all the interviews was carried out. This phase was essential to become deeply familiar with the content, grasp the overall meaning of the discourses, and mark particularly significant passages that could constitute relevant units of analysis.

Thematic analysis was then conducted with the support of NVivo software. This methodology proved to be the most appropriate, as it enabled the systematic organization of the dataset and the identification of patterns and recurrences of meaning, linking them to the research objectives.

In the first stage, initial codes were assigned to segments of text that reflected ideas, perceptions, or experiences. Subsequently, these codes were grouped into broader categories, which made it possible to structure the information more consistently and, from there, identify central themes that synthesized the experiences reported.

The entire process was iterative and reflective, involving constant comparison between the data collected and the scientific literature. This strategy allowed not only for the organization and description of the experiences reported, but also for the interpretation of more subtle meanings, relating them to evidence already documented on the subject.

Thus, the analysis was not limited to the description of the data, but enabled a more critical and contextualized understanding, highlighting the benefits, challenges, and work–life balance strategies identified in the interviews with teleworking parents.

Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of results

From the analysis of the participants' testimonies, a set of categories emerged that reflect the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding teleworking in a parental context. As can be seen in Table 1, the category with the highest number of records was *Recommendations from participants to other parents* (Ur=321), highlighting the strong predisposition of the interviewees to share practical advice based on their experiences. This is followed by the categories *Challenges of teleworking* (Ur=251) and *Main benefits of teleworking* (Ur=212), which reveal a polarity between the dichotomy: difficulties faced and positive aspects recognized in this work regime. Other relevant categories also emerged, such as *Typical teleworking day* (Ur = 189) and *Strategies for dealing with challenges* (Ur=141), which illustrate how participants structure their routine and seek to adapt to the demands of the context. Finally, more specific categories related to parenting emerged, such as *Impact of teleworking on parenting* (Ur=92) and *Contributions of teleworking to the parental role* (Ur=59), which, although less frequent, contribute relevant experiences to the understanding of family dynamics in this work regime. Below are the thematic categories that emerged from the content analysis of each participant's testimony, accompanied by their respective subcategories and illustrative recording units (RU).

Table 2

Emerging categories from the participants' testimonies

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total number of record units (RU)</i>
Participants' recommendations for other parents	321
Challenges of teleworking	251
Main benefits of teleworking	212
A typical day of teleworking	189
Strategies for dealing with challenges	141
Impact of teleworking on parenting	92

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total number of record units (RU)</i>
Contributions of teleworking to parenting	59

These illustrate, in concrete terms, the perceptions, strategies, and experiences reported by the participants, enabling a deeper understanding of the experience of teleworking in a parental context.

The categories and subcategories resulting from the participants' discourses are presented according to the respective frequency of occurrence of the Ur, identified in the individual reports that allow access to the meaning attributed to the experiences described, which are organized into subcategories illustrated by the corresponding Ur.

4.2 Benefits of teleworking

The analysis of the participants' testimonies identified a set of perceived benefits of teleworking in a parental context, which are central to the way they experience this work regime. In total, this category gathered 212 recording units (UR), reflecting the interviewees' widespread appreciation of this model, especially in terms of the articulation between the professional and family spheres.

The results are summarized in Table 2, which presents the emerging subcategories and their frequency of occurrence. The most frequently mentioned benefits were being more present for their children (Ur = 86) and work-family balance (Ur = 65), followed by greater flexibility in working hours (Ur = 28), more time for themselves (Ur = 16), avoiding commuting (Ur = 9), better organization of tasks (Ur = 5), and, although less frequently mentioned, a perceived increase in productivity (Ur = 3).

Table 3

Main benefits of teleworking reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Main benefits of teleworking	Being more present for children	86
	Work–life balance	65
	Greater flexibility in working hours	28
	More time for yourself	16
	Avoiding commuting	9
	Better organization	5
	Increased productivity	3

The most salient subcategory relates to the possibility of being more present for one's children, something described by participants as a unique opportunity to follow their children's growth and development more closely:

"I can balance my personal life and work much better. [...] The hybrid model allows me, for example, to be closer to my daughters. If they are at school 10 minutes away, I can pick them up at lunchtime and we have lunch together. When I was in the office, that wasn't possible." (E1, Luís)

"I can see my children grow day after day, which is priceless." (E5, Inês)

"I have breakfast with them [my children] and then take them to school." (E4, Catarina)

"I follow my children's development more closely." (E6, Eduardo)

"I share more moments of the day with my children." (E9, Cláudia)

The work-life balance was also highly valued, with participants highlighting that teleworking allows them to better integrate the two areas:

"I gain a lot from not having to choose between working and being with my family." (E1, Luís)

"I feel that my life is more balanced now." (E3, João)

"Breaks are spent with the family, even if they are brief." (E7, Teresa)

Another aspect that was valued was the greater flexibility of schedules, which makes it easier to adapt professional tasks to the family rhythm:

“At first, it improved, I had more time, more flexibility.” (E2, Rui)
“I organize my work blocks according to the children’s rhythm.” (E6, Eduardo)

Several participants also pointed out that teleworking allowed them to have more time for themselves, promoting personal and family well-being:

“More time for myself, for my family, to be able to do sports...” (E4, Catarina)
“I started doing yoga again at the end of the day.” (E7, Teresa)

Among the benefits mentioned was the fact that it avoided commuting between home and work, freeing up time and reducing the stress associated with traffic:

“Depending on traffic, I only get home around 7:30 p.m.” (E5, Inês)
“I gained at least two hours a day without commuting to work.” (E9, Cláudia)

Some participants also mentioned the possibility of better organizing their tasks:

“I try to organize the week at the weekend.” (E1, Luís)
“I try to tidy my room before I start, but sometimes I’m too lazy.” (E2, Rui)

And, although less frequently, there were reports of greater productivity when working from home:

“I get more done at home than at the office, without so many interruptions.” (E7, Teresa)
“I can concentrate better at my own pace.” (E8, Sofia)

These results are consistent with the findings of Ivasciuc et al. (2022), who, in a study with 1,098 participants (mostly from Generation Y), identified precisely these benefits—greater presence for children, better work-family balance, and greater flexibility in working hours—as the most valued aspects of teleworking. Similarly, studies by Jamal et al. (2017) and González

Ramos & García-de-Diego (2022) show that teleworking contributes significantly to improving work-life balance, with flexibility being one of the factors most valued by different generations.

In addition, more recent studies (Marhadi & Hendarman, 2023; Tremblay, 2019) associate teleworking with improvements in time management, reduced stress, and increased individual and organizational well-being. Thus, the reports of the participants in this study corroborate the international literature, reinforcing the perception of telework as a modality that offers tangible benefits on both a personal and professional level.

4.3 A typical teleworking day

The description of daily life in a teleworking regime revealed relatively stable routine patterns, but also a wide diversity of experiences, reflecting the coexistence of moments of productive concentration with multiple interruptions and daily readjustments. The reports show that the structure of the day, the presence of distractions, and the time devoted to family are aspects that profoundly mark the experiences of participants in this work regime.

The analysis in Table 3 shows that the main challenges associated with a typical teleworking day focus mainly on time and task management (Ur = 115) and distractions at home (Ur = 82). These two factors stand out in relation to the other subcategories, suggesting that the autonomy provided by teleworking does not always translate into efficient management of the working day, especially when the home environment is not conducive to concentration or a clear separation between the professional and personal spheres. Other aspects that influence daily teleworking were also mentioned, albeit less frequently, namely the impact on mental health (Ur = 18), lack of support from the employer (Ur = 13), technological problems (Ur = 12), difficulty in setting boundaries (Ur = 9), and social isolation (Ur = 2), which, although less frequent, have significant effects on the well-being and productivity of workers.

Table 4

Challenges of teleworking reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Challenges of teleworking	Time and task management	115
	Distractions at home	82
	Impact on mental health	18
	Lack of support from employer	13
	Technological problems	12
	Difficulty in setting boundaries	9
	Social isolation	2

Time and task management proved to be the most recurring and cross-cutting challenge. Participants described difficulties in structuring their day in a balanced way. Participants reported a tendency to unintentionally extend their working hours. They also described difficulties in maintaining consistent routines throughout the day.

“I stop working later, I only wake up earlier when I have calls or meetings.” (E2, Rui)
 “Sometimes it’s hard to switch off.” (E7, Teresa)
 “I end up going back [to the office] even after hours.” (E8, Sofia)
 “I think about the problem a lot until the next day.” (E4, Catarina)
 “I always feel connected, even after hours.” (E10, Ana)

Distractions in the home environment emerge as the second major source of disruption in a typical teleworking day. The presence of children, domestic responsibilities, and other sources of noise compromise work continuity and productivity:

“When my son is sick, it’s hard to separate things.” (E2, Rui)
 “If they are entertained, I can still work a little longer.” (E7, Teresa)
 “With the children at home, it’s impossible to stay focused.” (E6, Eduardo)
 “There is always something that distracts me.” (E9, Cláudia)

In addition to these two central subcategories, participants also mentioned the impact of teleworking on mental health, describing feelings of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and, in some cases, loneliness:

“My mental availability is lower.” (E2, Rui)
“I felt anxious about being stuck at home for so long.” (E5, Inês)
“It always brings joy after a long day at work.” (E4, Catarina)

The lack of support from employers was mentioned as an additional obstacle to the smooth functioning of teleworking, with a particular emphasis on the absence of adequate monitoring, training, or institutional support:

“The company expects the same performance without providing support.” (E3, João)
“There was no training or monitoring.” (E11, José)
“It is difficult to build interpersonal relationships, as all communication is via video calls or telephone.” (E4, Catarina)

Technological problems were also pointed out as a significant obstacle in the participants' daily lives, causing frustration and making it difficult to manage tasks:

“The internet often fails and I don't always have technical support.” (E10, Ana)
“I was unable to access the system for an entire day.” (E3, João)
“Sudden calls and deadlines complicate time management.” (E2, Rui)

Several interviewees also highlighted the difficulty of establishing boundaries between their professional and personal lives, noting that the absence of clear boundaries makes them feel like they are permanently in work mode:

“My personal space is also my workplace.” (E8, Sofia)
“Even when there is nothing to do, I remain on alert.” (E2, Rui)
“Even at dinner, I keep my laptop next to me.” (E9, Cláudia)

Finally, although less frequently mentioned, social isolation also emerged, associated with the lack of face-to-face contact and informal exchanges with colleagues:

“It becomes a lonelier life, with fewer personal interactions.” (E2, Rui)
“Sometimes I feel isolated, with no one to exchange ideas with.” (E6, Eduardo)

Overall, the data show that, although teleworking provides flexibility and allows for the reorganization of family routines, it also entails significant structural and emotional challenges, especially due to the overlapping of roles and difficulty in separating professional and personal contexts.

This interpretation is in line with international literature: Mahesh (2024) points out that, despite the advantages of teleworking, it can lead to high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, especially when there are no clear routines or physical separation between contexts. The systematic review by Figueiredo et al. (2024) reinforces this evidence, identifying the difficulty in setting boundaries and the lack of organizational support as risk factors for professional exhaustion and burnout. Thus, the testimonies collected in this study confirm that a typical day of parental teleworking requires strong self-management, planning, and self-regulation skills to maintain productivity and mental health.

4.4 Challenges of teleworking

The analysis of data on the challenges of teleworking revealed a set of structural and emotional difficulties that participants face in their daily lives when working remotely. These obstacles appear as a direct counterpoint to the previously identified benefits, showing that, despite the recognized advantages, parental teleworking also entails significant costs to well-being and productivity.

Table 5 summarizes the subcategories and their respective frequencies. The most prominent challenges relate to time and task management ($Ur = 115$) and distractions in the home environment ($Ur = 82$), which clearly stand out from the other categories, proving to be the most widespread and persistent issues. Other challenges mentioned include the impact on

mental health (Ur = 18), lack of support from employers (Ur = 13), technological problems (Ur = 12), difficulty in setting boundaries (Ur = 9), and social isolation (Ur = 2), which, although less frequent, reinforce the multifaceted nature of the constraints experienced by respondents.

Table 5

Challenges of teleworking reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Challenges of teleworking	Time and task management	115
	Distractions at home	82
	Impact on mental health	18
	Lack of support from employer	13
	Technological problems	12
	Difficulty in setting boundaries	9
	Social isolation	2

Participants reported difficulties in maintaining a consistent routine and separating work and family time, which often leads to unintentional overtime:

“I stop working later, I only wake up earlier when I have calls or meetings.” (E2, Rui)
 “Sometimes it’s hard to switch off.” (E7, Teresa)
 “I end up going back [to the office] even after hours.” (E8, Sofia)
 “I think about the problem a lot until the next day.” (E4, Catarina)
 “I always feel connected, even after hours.” (E10, Ana)

Distractions in the home environment emerge as the second major challenge. The presence of children, household chores, and other family stimuli were described as elements that fragment concentration and make it difficult to complete tasks:

“When my son is sick, it’s hard to separate things.” (E2, Rui)
 “If they are entertained, I can still work a little longer.” (E7, Teresa)
 “With the children at home, it is impossible to stay focused.” (E6, Eduardo)
 “There is always something that takes my focus away.” (E9, Cláudia)

These two axes—time management and distractions—reflect the constant overlap between personal and professional contexts, often exacerbated by the lack of clear physical boundaries, which leads to disorganization, stress, and exhaustion.

Another challenge identified was the impact of teleworking on mental health, with reports of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and isolation:

“My mental availability is lower.” (E2, Rui)
“I felt anxious about being stuck at home for so long.” (E5, Inês)
“It always brings joy after a long day at work.” (E4, Catarina)

The lack of support from employers was pointed out as an obstacle to the success of teleworking, reflecting the absence of institutional support, training, and continuous monitoring:

“The company expects the same performance without providing support.” (E3, João)
“There was no training or monitoring.” (E11, José)
“It is difficult to build interpersonal relationships, as all communication is via video calls or telephone.” (E4, Catarina)

Technological problems were also mentioned as a frequent constraint, compromising productivity and daily balance:

“The internet often fails, and I don’t always have technical support.” (E10, Ana)
“I was unable to access the system for an entire day.” (E3, João)
“Sudden calls and deadlines complicate time management.” (E2, Rui)

The difficulty in establishing boundaries between professional and personal life emerged as another recurring challenge, associated with the feeling of constant availability and the impossibility of “switching off” from work:

“My personal space is also my workplace.” (E8, Sofia)
“Even when there is nothing to do, I remain on alert.” (E2, Rui)
“Even at dinner, I keep my laptop next to me.” (E9, Cláudia)

Finally, some participants mentioned social isolation, linked to the absence of face-to-face contact with colleagues and the lack of informal moments of sharing:

“It becomes a lonelier life, with fewer personal interactions.” (E2, Rui)
“Sometimes I feel isolated, with no one to exchange ideas with.” (E6, Eduardo)

Overall, the data show that parental teleworking, while providing autonomy and flexibility, also involves multifaceted challenges that require strong self-management skills, adequate institutional support, and the reconfiguration of family and professional dynamics.

This interpretation is supported by international literature: Mahesh (2024) points out that time and task management is one of the main obstacles to teleworking, and the systematic review by Figueiredo et al. (2024) points to social isolation, lack of organizational support, and difficulty in setting boundaries as risk factors for stress and burnout. The absence of a clear physical structure and overlapping roles make it difficult to create boundaries between contexts, leading to feelings of overload and exhaustion—exactly as described by the participants in this study.

4.5 Strategies for coping with challenges

The analysis of the interviews identified a set of strategies developed by the participants to deal with the challenges of teleworking, highlighting the active adaptation efforts they implement to maintain a balance between professional and family demands. This category gathered a total of 141 recording units (RU), distributed across several subcategories, as shown in Table 5.

The most frequently mentioned strategies were establishing routines and schedules (Ur = 53) and creating a physical space dedicated to work (Ur = 36). Less frequently mentioned were

advance planning of tasks (Ur = 22), setting boundaries between professional and personal time (Ur = 17), using breaks for personal and family activities (Ur = 8), and seeking external support (Ur = 5). These strategies are essential for mitigating the negative effects of teleworking and ensuring productivity and well-being.

Table 6

Strategies for dealing with challenges reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Strategies for dealing with challenges	Establishing routines	51
	Separate work and leisure spaces	24
	Engage in physical activity	19
	Ask colleagues or supervisors for support	18
	Talk to family	17
	Take regular breaks	11
	Seek psychological support	1

Establishing routines and schedules emerged as the most common strategy, serving as a mechanism for structuring the day and preventing overlap between professional and family tasks. Many participants stated that this organization helps reduce stress and maintain productivity:

“I try to keep a fixed schedule, as if I were at the office.” (E3, João)
 “I wake up early and get dressed as if I were leaving the house, to get into work mode.” (E4, Catarina)

“A disciplined schedule is what saves me.” (E8, Sofia)

The creation of a physical space dedicated exclusively to work was also highlighted as essential for defining the professional environment and avoiding distractions:

“I work in a separate office, I don’t stay in the living room or bedroom.” (E1, Luís)
 “Having my own space helps me concentrate.” (E9, Cláudia)
 “When I close the office door, I disconnect from everything else.” (E7, Teresa)

Another relevant strategy is to plan tasks in advance, allowing participants to anticipate unforeseen events and better manage periods of increased workload:

“On Sunday evenings, I organize the whole week.” (E2, Rui)
“I set my priorities for the day first thing in the morning.” (E5, Inês)

Setting boundaries between professional and personal time was mentioned as a way to preserve mental health and family time:

“I turn off my computer at 6 p.m. and put it away.” (E6, Eduardo)
“When I’m with my children, I leave my cell phone in another room.” (E10, Ana)

There were also references to using breaks for personal and family activities as a means of emotional recovery and burnout prevention:

“At lunchtime, I go for a bike ride.” (E4, Catarina)
“I take breaks to play with the kids for a while.” (E7, Teresa)

Finally, some participants mentioned seeking external support (such as family or colleagues) as a way to lighten the load of responsibilities during the most demanding periods:

“When I have a lot of meetings, I ask the grandparents to help me pick up the kids.” (E3, João)
“I exchange ideas with colleagues to understand how they do it.” (E11, José)

These strategies reveal a clear attempt to rebuild the boundaries between the professional and family spheres, which tend to blur in the context of teleworking. According to Tremblay (2019), the implementation of structured routines, the setting of boundaries, and the creation of differentiated physical spaces are factors that protect well-being and productivity in remote working. Similarly, Figueiredo et al. (2024) note that individual self-management and planning strategies are essential to prevent exhaustion and maintain motivation when working remotely.

The results of this study thus confirm that, faced with the challenges identified, participants resort to multiple mechanisms of self-regulation and proactive management of their daily work, seeking to preserve both professional performance and family balance.

4.6 Impact on parenting

The analysis of the interviews revealed that teleworking has a direct impact on parenting, influencing both caregiving dynamics and family routines and the perception of the parental role. This category gathered a total of 92 recording units (RU), organized into several subcategories, presented in Table 6.

The most prominent aspects were increased availability to spend time with children (Ur = 41) and greater participation in daily routines and parental tasks (Ur = 27). Less frequently, references were made to a greater understanding of children's needs (Ur = 14), the strengthening of the emotional bond (Ur = 7), and greater involvement in school education (Ur = 3). These data reveal that, for many participants, teleworking represents an opportunity to reconnect with their children's daily lives, with positive effects on their perception of their parental role.

Table 6

Impact of teleworking on parenting reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Impact of teleworking on parenting	Change in family routines	41
	Difficulty balancing work and children	33
	Greater closeness with children	14
	More active participation in children's lives	2
	Improved family communication	2

Greater availability to spend time with children was highlighted as a significant change brought about by teleworking, allowing participants to be more present in their children's daily lives:

"Now I can pick them up from school and spend the afternoon with them." (E1, Luís)
"I can help them with their homework and activities." (E5, Inês)
"I am more attentive to their daily lives." (E7, Teresa)

Similarly, several participants mentioned greater involvement in daily routines and parental tasks, describing how they began to take on responsibilities more actively that were previously delegated to other family members:

"I can share the tasks of taking and picking up the kids with my wife." (E3, João)
"Now I can make meals with them and help them organize their day." (E9, Cláudia)

They also mentioned a greater understanding of their children's needs, resulting from more frequent and prolonged contact:

"I understand better when they are tired or need attention." (E6, Eduardo)
"I have learned to understand their rhythms and adapt my work to them." (E2, Rui)

Some participants also mentioned a strengthening of the emotional bond with their children, reporting an increase in emotional closeness:

"I feel that we are closer and that we have created more complicity." (E4, Catarina)
"Now we have more moments to ourselves." (E8, Sofia)

Finally, although less frequently, some pointed to greater participation in school activities, taking advantage of the flexibility of teleworking to support their children in their academic journey:

"I have more time to go to school meetings and keep up with what's going on." (E10, Ana)

The results suggest that teleworking, by allowing parents to be more physically and temporally present at home, promotes greater parental involvement and improves the quality of family interactions. This perception is in line with that of González Ramos & García-de-Diego (2022), who highlight the importance of daily closeness for strengthening family ties and child development. Similarly, Ivasciuc et al. (2022) emphasize that more consistent parental presence,

made possible by teleworking, contributes to increased satisfaction with the parental role and reduces feelings of guilt associated with physical absence.

Thus, participants' testimonies reveal that teleworking not only facilitates work-family reconciliation but also transforms the very experience of parenthood, allowing for greater alignment between professional demands and the emotional and educational needs of children.

4.7 Parental role in teleworking environment

In addition to directly influencing daily routines and availability, participants described several contributions of teleworking to the development of their parental role, particularly with regard to building skills, strengthening relationships with their children, and redefining their own identity as fathers and mothers. This category gathered a total of 59 recording units (RU), organized into the subcategories presented in Table 7.

The most highlighted aspects were the strengthening of parental efficacy and self-confidence (Ur = 21) and the development of parenting skills (Ur = 17), with a lower frequency of increased feelings of fulfillment in the role of father/mother (Ur = 11), greater satisfaction with parenthood (Ur = 6), and the perception of a balance between the roles of worker and parent (Ur = 4).

Table 8

Contributions of teleworking to the parental role reported by participants

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Impact of teleworking on parenting	Change in family routines	41
	Difficulty balancing work and children	33
	Greater closeness with children	14
	More active participation in children's lives	2
	Improved family communication	2

The reinforcement of parental efficacy and self-confidence emerged as the most frequently mentioned contribution. Participants described how closer and more continuous

contact with their children allowed them to gain confidence in their abilities as parents and feel more competent in performing that role:

"I feel that I can respond better to their needs." (E5, Inês)
"I learned that I am capable of managing everything—work and children." (E1, Luís)
"I realized that I can handle situations that used to scare me." (E8, Sofia)

Similarly, several participants pointed to the development of specific parenting skills, particularly those related to time management, communication with their children, and solving everyday problems:

"I became more patient and more organized." (E3, João)
"I learned to explain things more simply and calmly." (E7, Teresa)

Another important contribution was an increased sense of fulfillment as a parent, associated with the possibility of playing a more active parental role:

"I feel more complete as a father." (E6, Eduardo)
"I am proud to be present and follow everything." (E2, Rui)

Some participants also reported greater satisfaction with parenting in general, describing a more positive experience of their role:

"Now I see parenting in a lighter and happier way." (E9, Cláudia)

Finally, some pointed out that teleworking contributed to a better integration between their professional and parental roles, allowing them to feel less divided between the two spheres:

"I no longer feel like I have to choose between being a mother and working." (E4, Catarina)

These testimonials indicate that teleworking, while facilitating increased physical presence with children, fosters a process of identity reinforcement and appreciation of the parental role, consequently enhancing skills and feelings of effectiveness that contribute to family functioning. This perception is in line with that advocated by González Ramos & García-de-Diego (2022), who note that increased parental involvement in daily life, provided by teleworking, is associated with higher levels of self-confidence and parental satisfaction.

Similarly, Ivasciuc et al. (2022) identified a strengthening of the feeling of competence and well-being associated with parenthood among remote workers.

Thus, the data from the present study suggest that teleworking not only changes family routines but also contributes to strengthening the sense of identity and fulfillment of fathers and mothers, reinforcing their parental role and promoting a better balance between professional demands and family needs.

4.8 Participants' recommendations

The last category identified in the analysis refers to the recommendations that participants would give to other parents who telework, gathering a total of 321 record units (RU) — the highest value among all categories in the study. This data highlights the strong predisposition of respondents to share lessons learned and practical advice.

The recommendations were grouped into several subcategories, presented in Table 8. The most prominent were the importance of establishing consistent routines and schedules (Ur = 96), setting clear boundaries between work and family life (Ur = 71), and planning and organizing tasks in advance (Ur = 54). Less frequently mentioned were prioritizing family time (Ur = 43), caring for well-being and mental health (Ur = 34), maintaining moments of rest and leisure (Ur = 15), and seeking support and sharing responsibilities with other adults (Ur = 8).

Table 9
Participants' recommendations for other parents

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>	<i>n (RU)</i>
Participants' recommendations for other parents	Prioritize time with your children	192
	Set clear boundaries between work and family	50
	Maintain a consistent routine	42
	Ask for help when needed	18
	Take care of your mental health	18
	Communicate openly with your family	1

Establishing consistent routines and schedules was the most emphasized recommendation, reflecting the perception that time structuring is essential to ensure balance and productivity in remote working:

“Having a clear routine makes all the difference.” (E2, Rui)
“It is important to maintain fixed schedules, as if we were in the office.” (E8, Sofia)
“Without a disciplined schedule, everything gets mixed up.” (E5, Inês)

The second most frequent recommendation was to set clear boundaries between work and family life, preventing the overlapping of roles and protecting moments of family togetherness:

“Defining the workspace helps prevent it from invading the whole house.” (E1, Luís)
“After 6 p.m., really switch off and just be with the family.” (E3, João)

Participants also highlighted the importance of planning and organizing tasks in advance as a way to reduce stress and deal with the unexpected:

“Organizing the week on Sunday helps a lot.” (E4, Catarina)
“Having a plan for the day prevents work from dragging on into the night.” (E9, Cláudia)

Another recurring aspect was the need to consciously prioritize family time, taking advantage of the flexibility of teleworking to strengthen emotional bonds:

“Being with your children can’t just be whatever time is left over.” (E7, Teresa)
“It is important to set aside time just for them.” (E6, Eduardo)

Many participants also recommended paying attention to well-being and mental health, emphasizing the importance of self-care strategies:

“Don’t forget to take care of ourselves too.” (E10, Ana)
“We need to respect breaks and limits.” (E11, José)

It was also suggested that we should take breaks and enjoy leisure time for physical and emotional recovery, and seek support from other adults, such as family members, partners, or colleagues, to share responsibilities when necessary:

“Breaks are essential to avoid burnout.” (E4, Catarina)
“Ask for help when it’s too much, don’t try to do everything yourself.” (E3, João)

These recommendations reveal a clear awareness on the part of participants that parental teleworking requires active management of the boundaries between professional and family life, as well as the implementation of self-care and mutual support practices.

According to Tremblay (2019), setting boundaries, planning, and structured routines are protective factors for well-being in a remote work context. Similarly, Figueiredo et al. (2024) highlight the importance of individual and family organization strategies to prevent exhaustion and ensure the quality of parental relationships.

Thus, the recommendations presented by the interviewees confirm the idea that successful adaptation to parental teleworking is based on the creation of structures, boundaries, and support that allow for balancing work demands with family and personal needs.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Limitations

5.1 Conclusions

This study sought to understand how teleworking and remote work impact the work-life balance of parents in Portugal. The results showed that remote work enabled employees to handle their time more effectively while being closer to their children yet introduced new challenges related to work-life balance and mental strain, establishing clear work boundaries.

The ability to work at flexible times enabled participants to cut down on their commute and dedicate more time to family, which they believed improved their relationship with their children. The study validates existing research which shows that working from home allows parents to develop better emotional bonds with their children (Gong et al.,2024).

The research showed that extended family time creates new stress points which primarily affect mothers since the fact that research shows domestic work remains unevenly distributed between parents (Wattenberg et al.,2023).

Another central aspect of the results was the perception of more work-life overlaps. The majority of participants experienced problems disconnecting from work because they always remained available through digital means. The study by Piszczek (2017) shows that this situation leads to higher levels of stress and fatigue and increases the risk of work-family conflict

however, as a protective factor, parents who created structured routines and handled their resources well achieved better work-life balance (Mohd et al. 2023).

The interviews showed that most employees wanted to work from home at least one day a week but still preferred to spend some time in the office: employees wanted a combination of office days and remote workdays.

The combination of different work environments appeals to people because they think it will produce an ideal balance between remote work flexibility and in-person team collaboration. The research supports existing studies which indicate hybrid work will establish itself as the standard business operational model after the pandemic (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023).

The circumstances of boundary establishment and family duty allocation and workplace backing determine how these elements will impact the organization. The participants show that remote work does not provide a solution that benefits all employees, but rather as a practice that requires contextual adjustments, support policies, and greater sensitivity to family dynamics in order to effectively promote a healthy work–life balance (de Klerk et al., 2021).

5.2 Limitations

As in any qualitative and exploratory study, there are some aspects that should be recognized as potential limitations. The sample was intentionally small (11 participants), which allowed for an in-depth analysis of individual experiences but naturally does not allow for the generalization of results. Although diversity in the participants' profiles was ensured, it was not possible to guarantee a complete balance in terms of gender, professional sector, socioeconomic status, and age of children.

In addition, the study had a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for capturing the evolution of parental experiences associated with teleworking over time or in the face of organizational changes. These limitations do not diminish the relevance of the results obtained but should only be taken into account in their interpretation and encourage the conduct of future studies to deepen and broaden the conclusions reached here.

Based on these considerations, it is recommended that future research include mixed methodologies, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, may also allow for representativeness of the trends identified and reinforce the robustness of the conclusions.

In addition, longitudinal studies tracking changes in parental perceptions and strategies over time would be relevant, especially in a context where hybrid and remote models continue to evolve.

Finally, it may be pertinent to include the perspective of other household members, such as partners or children, to obtain a more comprehensive view of the effects of teleworking on family dynamics and overall well-being.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Informed Consent

O estudo para o qual peço a sua colaboração faz parte da tese desenvolvida na Universidade Católica Portuguesa, conduzida por Vera Henriques, sob a orientação do Prof. Doutor Carlos Barros, com o tema “Impacto do trabalho híbrido no equilíbrio entre vida profissional e familiar de figuras parentais”.

O objetivo principal deste projeto é analisar o equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e pessoal de figuras paternas que trabalham em regime híbrido/remoto/presencial.

A participação neste estudo implica uma breve entrevista, podendo em qualquer momento desistir de participar ou não responder a alguma questão, não havendo qualquer consequência.

Para uma mais adequada análise de dados, será gravado áudio da entrevista, sendo os dados tratados por rígidas regras de ética na investigação. A gravação será destruída assim que transcrita, no período máximo de 1 (um) ano, à qual só terá acesso a investigadora. A sua participação é anónima, sendo retirados todos os dados que o/a identifiquem e serão divulgados os resultados conjuntos de todos/as os/as participantes, sem possibilidade de identificação individual.

Os dados recolhidos serão armazenados num repositório de dados de investigação confiável e registado no R3DATA (Zenodo), onde serão geridos os acessos.

Se, em algum momento, tiver questões sobre este estudo ou os seus procedimentos, por favor contacte-me através do seguinte endereço de e-mail: s-vbhenriques@ucp.pt.

De acordo com o Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados (RGPD), poderá consultar os direitos do titular dos dados no seguinte link: <https://www.ucp.pt/pt-pt/direitos-do-titular-dos-dados>.

Agradecemos desde já a disponibilidade.

Annex 2: Interview guide

Table 10

Guião Entrevista Semiestruturada

<i>Blocos Temáticos</i>	<i>Objetivos</i>	<i>Questões</i>
<i>Introdução</i>	1. Breve enquadramento do estudo.2. Reforçar as questões de sigilo e participação voluntária.3. Apresentar os procedimentos para a recolha de dados.	—
<i>Caracterização do participante</i>	1. Entender a estrutura familiar e a dinâmica de trabalho.2. Identificar o papel parental no cenário do teletrabalho.	- Defina o seu agregado familiar (quantos elementos e idades). - Qual a sua ocupação e como está organizada a sua rotina trabalho-casa? - Há quanto tempo trabalha com um regime híbrido/remoto?
<i>Rotinas e desafios</i>	1. Identificar desafios e benefícios do teletrabalho.2. Entender o cruzamento das responsabilidades profissionais e familiares.	- Quais os principais benefícios que encontra no teletrabalho/trabalho híbrido? - Quais os maiores desafios? - Como é um dia típico de teletrabalho? (Caso aplicável) – Como é um dia típico de trabalho presencial?
<i>Autocuidado</i>	1. Explorar o impacto do teletrabalho nos hábitos de autocuidado do entrevistado.2. Compreender a relação entre o teletrabalho e o equilíbrio emocional.3. Avaliar a perceção do entrevistado sobre a sua capacidade de cuidar de si mesmo enquanto trabalha remotamente.	- Quais práticas ou atividades de autocuidado incorporou na sua rotina de trabalho remoto/híbrido? - Sente que tem mais ou menos tempo para atividades físicas ou hobbies pessoais desde que começou com esse regime de trabalho? - Como lida com a saúde mental enquanto trabalha de casa ou em regime híbrido? Há algo que faz

<i>Blocos Temáticos</i>	<i>Objetivos</i>	<i>Questões</i>
		para aliviar o stress ou manter o equilíbrio emocional?
<i>Impacto do teletrabalho e Work-Life Balance</i>	1. Explorar o impacto do teletrabalho no bem-estar e nas relações familiares. 2. Compreender mudanças na percepção de equilíbrio entre vida pessoal e profissional com o teletrabalho/trabalho remoto.	- Considera que este modelo de trabalho melhorou ou prejudicou o seu equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal? Porquê? - Sente dificuldade em “desligar-se” do trabalho por estar em casa? - Que estratégias usa para manter um Work-Life Balance?
<i>Papel parental</i>	1. Entender a influência do teletrabalho no papel parental e nas dinâmicas familiares. 2. Identificar a percepção dos filhos sobre este modelo de trabalho.	- Como é que o teletrabalho impactou a relação com os seus filhos? - Acha que a sua presença em casa alterou as expectativas dos seus filhos em relação ao seu papel como pai/mãe?
<i>Sugestões finais</i>	1. Recolher sugestões para melhorar a experiência do teletrabalho. 2. Fazer uma súmula dos temas em foco, situando o participante numa construção positiva da sua narrativa.	- Que conselho daria a outras figuras parentais que estejam a adaptar-se a este modelo de trabalho remoto, de forma que tenham uma experiência positiva? - Qual foi o maior ganho na sua vida após adotar este modelo de trabalho?
<i>Conclusão</i>	1. Verificar se o participante tem algo a acrescentar ao que já foi dialogado.	—