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**REMOTE WORK AS A DIFFERENTIATOR
RETENTION FACTOR**

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**HAS COVID-19 TURNED REMOTE WORK
INTO A DIFFERENTIATING RETENTION
FACTOR?**

Dissertation presented to the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Tecnologia of the Universidade Europeia, to fulfil the requirements to obtain the Master's degree in Human Resources Management, carried out under the scientific supervision of PhD Inês Carneiro Sousa, Invited Assistant Professor at the Universidade Europeia.

I dedicate this work to ...

To my husband, Paulo, who was always there for me even when my level of tiredness and stress was at the top. Thank you for being a dad and a mum for our kids when I was in classes, studying or doing my dissertation.

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Keywords

Remote Work, telecommuting, flexible work arrangements, retention

abstract

Remote Work (RW) is not new. Although, as of March 2020, due to the pandemic's first lockdown, this practice, until then implemented by a few organizations, was massively and obligatorily adopted. Nevertheless, two years passed and divergent opinions about RW remain. Inspired by the American concept of the 'Great Resignation', this study was focused on employees' perspectives about RW: how was the experience; how is the situation nowadays; how they perceive their levels of performance during RW and, above all, understand if RW became such an important retention factor that, some of these employees, might consider leaving their current companies in a search for a better RW reality.

Results show that RW is nowadays indeed a differentiating retention factor and the majority of the participants wish to have it in a hybrid model. This study was able to understand the evolution of RW perception from the first lockdown until current days, their challenges and also their gains with the RW situation. The biggest challenge referred to was the lack of social contact. On the opposite side, quality of life was the biggest gain.

This exploratory study contributes to a broader understanding of RW nowadays among the labour force, to the improvement of a work arrangement design for the present and the future, in a time where the employment rate is low, employees see work with different eyes and the lack of talents are at the top of companies' agenda.

palavras chave

Trabalho remoto, teletrabalho, novos regimes de trabalho, retenção

resumo

O trabalho remoto não é uma novidade. No entanto, a partir de março de 2020, devido ao primeiro confinamento derivado da pandemia, esta prática, até então implementada por poucas organizações, foi massiva e obrigatoriamente adotada. Ainda assim, decorridos dois anos, permanecem opiniões divergentes sobre o TR. Inspirado no conceito americano ‘Great Resignation’, este estudo focou-se na perspetiva dos colaboradores acerca do TR: como foi a sua experiência; qual o seu regime de trabalho atualmente; qual a sua perceção sobre os seus níveis de desempenho em contexto de TR e, acima de tudo, compreender se o TR se tornou num importante fator de retenção, ao ponto, de alguns destes colaboradores, considerarem deixar as suas atuais organizações em busca de uma realidade de TR melhor.

Os resultados mostraram que o TR é atualmente um fator diferenciador de retenção e a maioria dos participantes desejam o mesmo num modelo híbrido. Este estudo conseguiu ainda compreender a evolução da perceção acerca do TR desde o primeiro confinamento aos dias de hoje, os seus desafios e os seus ganhos. O maior desafio referido foi a falta de contato social. Por oposição, o maior ganho foi a qualidade de vida.

Este estudo exploratório contribui para uma compreensão mais alargada acerca da realidade atual do TR na força laboral, para uma melhoria no desenho deste regime de trabalho, para o presente e para o futuro, numa altura em que a taxa de desemprego é baixa, os colaboradores passaram aparentemente a ver o trabalho com outros olhos e a falta de talentos se encontra no topo das agendas das empresas.

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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

FWA - Flexible Work Arrangements

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

HR - Human Resources

HRM - Human Resources Management

ICT - Information and communication technologies

IR - Industrial Revolution

KSAO - Knowledge, skills, abilities and others

NWA - New Work Arrangements

RW - Remote Work

Sofo - Sense of Opportunity

Sofu - Sense of Urgency

USA - United States of America

WFH – Work from Home

WFO – Work from the Office

WHO -World Health Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

We are living the so-called International Revolution (IR) 4.0 in a BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible) world. The impact of such a reality on the labour force and Human Resource Management (HRM) is significant. HRM processes need to be updated and adapted to such a reality, so the organizations can benefit from their capacities in attraction, development, retention, talent management, and faster Human Resource (HR) operations (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2018). Schwab (2019) reminds us that, despite all these changes, organizations still have purposes and duties. He also said that a company should treat employees with respect and dignity, honour diversity, and strive for permanent improvements in working conditions and employees' well-being. The author also referred that in a world of fast change, the organizations must develop employees' employability through upskilling and reskilling strategies.

Finally, perhaps the most significant impact derives from digitalization and automation, which implies a relation between humans and machines. In fact, as a long-term evolutionary process, digitalization and automation will change and transform not only jobs, specifically those based on repetitive and routine tasks, but also employment forms (Sima et al., 2020). According to these authors, several HR processes will be highly affected. Still, the development of new skills, including digital skills, is one of the biggest pressure factors on organizations and also on education systems, is also enhanced. From this perspective, training is also a strategic process to help people, and organizations, deal with all BANI features.

In such a challenging world, and besides all the hurdles related, the 'war for talent' is also a reality and is an additional fact that is affecting HR processes, namely retention. Retention is understood as all the practices and measures developed by organizations for employees who want to stay longer, and cannot escape from HR hurdles in such a context (Singh, 2019). Nevertheless, retention challenges are not new and are not only connected with IR 4.0 and the BANI world. Eldridge and colleagues (2011) divided retention challenges into three types: (1) competition from other organizations; (2) loss of skills when employees leave; (3) the inability of organizations can predict retention and anticipate it with specific measures. Regarding this last challenge, in the last decade, big steps were taken, and nowadays the usage of people analytics is considered one of the big advantages of organizations, also predicting retention (Jalali & Singh, 2018).

As long as organizations consider their employees as an important, productive, and valuable asset, retention becomes one of the hardest challenges for all managers once they understand that

replacement has a significant impact also from a cost perspective. In this sense, organizations' awareness of this topic made appeared the urgent need of building retention policies that can mitigate such problems. Organizations are more and more conscient that employees leaving means impoverishing levels of experience, knowledge, values, and culture (Singh, 2019). Another idea brought up by this author refers that nowadays retention strategies include different generational approaches and also experiments connected with marketing strategies, such as treating employees as customers, understanding their journey, their expectations in different life stages, and so on.

Retention was also impacted by the COVID pandemic. The pandemic context under the scope of this project refers to the pandemic caused by the virus named SARS-COV2, which originated a disease called COVID-19. This virus was detected for the first time in Wuhan city, in the Hubei region, in China, at the end of 2019 (Ciotti et al., 2020). The real origins of the virus are still not clear, but in a world truly global, only a few weeks were needed until a pandemic was declared by World Health Organization (WHO), a declaration that is still in force.

One of the many consequences of COVID-19 in Portugal was the massive remote working practice between March 2020, which started on a mandatory basis and was ruled by article number 6 from Decree-Law 2-A/2020, until approximately September 2021, with several rotations between a mandatory or recommended remote work (RW). Until March 2020, RW was unknown, as a regular way of working, for a huge part of the Portuguese labour force (Eurostat, 2020). Being so, could it be that, in Portugal, the pandemic transformed RW into a differentiating retention factor among employees? This exploratory study directly enquired employees about their perception of RW experience, during the first pandemic lockdown, but also about their current perception of this alternative work arrangement (AWA). This study also explores the potential intentions to leave current organizations in search of RW friendly organizations, so we can understand if the current discussion around this topic is deep, with a potential short- or medium-term impact on retention, or if this is only an empty divergency that, in the end, won't bring any significant change about the impact of RW in retention in Portugal. In Portugal, RW is part of Portuguese labour law since 2003 and was kept in 2009 on Lei n.º 7/2009, - Diário da República n.º 30/2009, Série I de 2009-02-12.

The idea of RW is also part of the multidimensional phenomenon of so-called Great Resignation, the inspiration source of this exploratory project. As Jones and Hill (2021) found out, while companies are still discussing how the future of the labour force will look, the data are clear. In their studies, 83% of the enquired people want a hybrid work model and the purpose of such

will is flexibility. As both authors also said, the question about the future of work is more complex than defending that will be hybrid. It is important to define how the hybrid environment will be shaped by individuals and organizations.

‘Far’ from the United States of America and far from The Great Resignation, in Portugal, as of March 2020, the discussion between presential or RW started to gain its place. The discussion is still going on. According to Martins (2021), half of the companies consulted, in the survey carried out by Human Resources Magazine, referred that they are adopting a so-called hybrid model but with more days per week at the office and not in RW. This survey also states that most of the enquired employees (62%) preferred more days per week in RW than organizations are providing. Another interesting conclusion was that, on a previous survey, done by the same magazine in March 2021, none of the consulted organizations assumed the intention to return to a 100% presential work. Six months after, 13% of them adopted full-time presential work. This organizational behaviour did not happen only in Portugal. According to Eurofound (2021) at the beginning of 2021, work in companies’ premises increased in most of the EU countries when compared with early 2020, when the pandemic started.

The impact of the pandemic on the percentage of employees working from home was amazing as it went from less than one employee in twenty, working from home before 2020, to three in every ten employees, working remotely as of March 2020 (Fernandes, 2021). In Europe, there were approximately 5% of employees in RW before Covid-19. This percentage increased to approximately 12% in May 2021 (Eurostat, 2021). In this statistic publication, Portugal had 13.9% of employees working from home. Usage of RM, however, seems to be affected by gender. Statistics showed that women are more likely to stay at RW than men (Eurostat, 2021), 13.2% to 11.5%, respectively.

It is not questionable that the pandemic context brought this topic into the limelight in such a way that never has been seen before. In Portugal, between March 2020 and August 2021, RW was, most of the time, mandatory for specific situations (Decree-Law 94-A/2020 which has changed the previous Decree-Law 79-A/2020). The absence of power to choose whether to work from home or not will be considered under the scope of this project once being in RW as a result of an agreement seems to be different than being in RW as a mandatory situation. As of September 2021, mandatory RW was replaced by recommended RW, with the three weeks exception that occurred after the Christmas period, as a containment measure, and in February 2022, the

Portuguese Government decided to terminate also the recommendation of RW (Council of Ministers Resolution.º 25-A/2022). The theoretical discussion about the best RW practices to implement gave place to real RW practices or the absence of them. From a part-time to a full-time RW, different solutions are being implemented. In the XXXVIII HR Portugal Barometer, Martins (2021) found out that there were organizations that, although they can implement it, have decided not to do so, and those that adopted RW found different ways of putting it in practice, from a flexible employee's choice to an RW rules' rigid definition. Still, the discussion is far from an end. As Almeida (2021, p.8) said "RW topic and its implementation has occupied hours and hours of debate between HR professionals, in the last months, and it seems to be the great trend for the future of work after the pandemic. Still, there is a need to look at the topic more deeply."

In that sense, this study is aligned with nowadays challenges for organizational sustainability and it will focus on a topic that has been recently discussed by researchers and practitioners: RW as an emerging and differentiating retention factor, mainly after the pandemic. This study is an exploratory investigation based on a qualitative investigation method. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews due to our aim to explore in-depth the phenomenon of teleworking from an individual's perspective.

In the end, this project wants to reach conclusions on the main investigation question: did RW become a differentiating retention factor, in Portugal, after the pandemic?

This study is organized as follows: in chapter 2, the literature review is presented, addressing the Great Resignation phenomenon and the challenge of retention, Alternative Work Arrangements, specifically about RW, its advantages and disadvantages, and perceived Performance. In chapter 3, the method chosen for this investigation study will be described. In chapter 4, results are presented and also discussed. The theoretical and practical contributions of this study are reported in chapter 5. Limitations and future research guidelines can be found in chapter 6 and the Conclusions of this exploratory study can be found in chapter 7.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. RETENTION AND GREAT RESIGNATION

Born in the last decade of the past century, the expression ‘war for talent’ is again in the spotlight. To survive in this global and demanding world, organizations are struggling to attract and retain talent, reduce costs, improve collaboration and innovation, and increase employees’ commitment, among other challenges (Wiatr, 2021).

In the scope of this war for talent, employees with high levels of skills tend to create their working conditions, and the decision about where to work is included in this customized working environment design (Spreitzer et al., 2017). Therefore, RW can be a strong argument when organizations want to attract, nevertheless retention forces organizations to include other variables at the discussion table. Employees want to live differently and RW is one, but not the only option. Organizations also start to understand that for an RW practice to be effective they also need to consider leadership models in a very serious way (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). Those authors defend that retention, after the pandemic, is beyond salary and benefits and highlight that the intention of staying will be influenced mostly by leaders’ capabilities of driving and developing social interaction. Hopkins and Figaro (2021) propose that leading people, in remote work, involves developing new knowledge, skills, abilities and other (KSAO) at leadership and management levels, such as a higher ability to communicate interdependently, either face-to-face or remotely, higher organizational skills, analytical abilities and the most critical, according to those authors, cognitive ability.

Leadership is directly connected with the Great Resignation phenomenon. As stated by Microsoft and cited by Jones and Hill (2021, p.17) in their book, “leaders are out of touch with employees and need a wake-up call”. One of the reasons that support The Great Resignation concept relates to the lack of leaders’ ability to manage organizational culture and improve employee engagement. The concept of the Great Resignation has been firstly introduced by Professor Anthony Klotz, Professor of Management at Texas A&M University, when he was referring to the phenomenon that has been happening in the United States of America (USA), in the last year, which is characterized by massive resignation levels, in a permanent and monthly basis (Jones & Hill, 2021).

The mandatory RW in most countries, and the USA were no exception, putting millions of people working remotely. As referred to before, The Great Resignation phenomenon has a wider

scope and still was a source of inspiration to this investigation study once it is also connected with RW. According to Jones and Jill (2021), professor Klotz also proposes that organizations need to be more flexible and provide flexibility to their employees and fully remote work, or hybrid work, will be measures that need to become a reality to avoid higher levels of resignations. However, RW has been already boosted before in the USA. When the terrorist attacks happened in September 2001, the USA government and organizations deeply thought of a way to decrease their vulnerability to these events and RW was thought of as a good course of action.

In a pandemic context for approximately eighteen months, employees made serious reflections on their work and their lives and evaluated, or re-evaluated, their priorities (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021). Many of these employees are no longer willing to return to a nine to five office schedule, associated to commute time and expenses, facing inflexible timetables and also inflexible leaders. As Hopkins and Figaro (2021, p.394) said “(...) Now that the pandora’s box of working arrangements has been opened, it may be a mistake for organizations to assume that workers will be content to return to a pre-pandemic work state. The great resignation suggests otherwise and so the argument leaning heavily towards the hybrid environment and the need for leaders who can lead a hybrid workforce ensues”.

In McKinsey Quarterly Report, from September 2021, Smet and their colleagues stated that approximately 19 million American employees have quit their jobs since April 2021. In this research, these authors found out that a high percentage of employees, who quit their previous jobs, did not need to move from their current location once they move into companies where remote work was allowed. Around 40% of the respondents who did not quite yet, because some of them said they are happy to be where they are and living where they live, are now discovering the so-called location-agnostic positions” (Smet et al., 2021, p. 5) and start to think about it. Being so, great attrition is far from disappearing.

2.2. ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

In a world facing IR 4.0, with all challenges associated, HRM is always searching for new ways to attract, motivate and retain employees, especially when facing the challenges brought by The Great Resignation. The concept of Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) refers to the best concept to capture the variety of different manifestations of work seen in today’s workplace—from high-skill freelancers who chose not to be employed to have greater work-life flexibility, to low-

wage service workers who are on call for unpredictable work hours and barely able to make a living, to workers with long-term employment contracts but who work where they want when they want. All of these different kinds of work arrangements—and more—can be better captured with our term “alternative work arrangements” (Spreitzer et al., 2017, p.474), AWA can also be known as Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) or New Work Arrangements (NWA), still, those authors do not consider them as perfect synonyms.

AWA require flexibility, that can be addressed through three dimensions: a) flexibility in the employment relationship – the how; b) flexibility in the scheduling of work – the when and c) flexibility in the place – the where. AWA appeared not as an opposition but rather as a complement to the regular work arrangements that have marked the image of work in the latest century. Kalleberg and colleagues (2003) defined regular work as a full-time job performed under a perfectly defined schedule and on the organization’s premises and under its control as cited in Spreitzer and colleagues (2017).

Although most of these AWA was, in the beginning, only applied to a contingent or temporary workforce, developed countries started to attend, in this century, to a gradual change originated by globalization and the desire for a better work-life balance. Nevertheless, there is a long way to go when talking about the promotion and regulation of AWA and yet very little is known about how employees value these different arrangements (Mas & Pallais, 2017). One of the conclusions reached by the experimental project carried out by Mas and Pallais (2017) was that employees value most working from home, regardless they do not consider that much flexibility and choosing the number of hours they must work per week, and they do not like that the employer can settle schedule with short notice. From this conclusion, and in a different approach when compared with Spreitzer and colleagues (2017) RW does not bring with it flexibility even though this was one of AWA’s goals.

Uncertainty, and some inexperience, in these AWA, can cause some delay in their diffusion even when organizations are concerned with hot topics such as work-life balance (Bloom et al., 2015). There are three major trends in literature when analysing RW. One of them is connected with the relation between RW and turnover and absenteeism reduction and also the increase in profitability and performance.

In Portugal, nowadays, talking about AWA is mainly talking about RW, as if it was something new, and this can be explained by the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce and also in

the workplace. However, by analysing the Portuguese Labour Law, Lei nº7/2009 from February 12th 2009, is easy to confirm that the major part of AWA are framed in our labour law for more than a decade. From part-time to gradual retirements, including RW, most of the AWA is part of Portuguese national labour law and still, they seem somehow new. Despite the legal framework's existence, for more than one decade, meaning that Portugal has been one of the European countries that first introduced AWA in labour law and that at the same time developed technological investments, so RW could be a reality, our country slowed down this first boost, to the point that Portugal becomes one of the slowest European countries to implement the AWA (Boavida & Brandão Moniz, 2020).

However, when Portugal is mentioned as one of the European slowest countries, does not mean that the other European countries are faster. Although pandemic has increased the usage of RW policies, in European Union the progress towards real implementation of AWA is quite slow (Wiatr, 2021).

As written by Florêncio (2021), with the pandemic, the vision of the future workplace has changed, and the majority of the studies are now mainly focused on RW. In the XXI Human Resources Conference, held on August 2021, in Portugal, whose main interventions are related to Human Resources Portugal magazine (2021), it is quite easy to check diverse opinions, between the speakers, around RW. Even so, there is nothing new here. And supported by all these statements, our investigation study gains its sense of urgency (SOFU) and its sense of opportunity (SOFO).

2.3. REMOTE WORK

The term RW firstly appeared in 1976 by Nilles (Choi, 2020). According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, 2022) “Telework is a work arrangement in which work is performed outside a default place of work, normally the employer’s premises, using information and communication technologies (ICT)”. RW is also a form of work organization and performance, based on the usage of information technology, in a dependent working relationship between employer and employee, considering that the work that can be accomplished at the employers’ premises, can also be carried out away from those premises regularly (Gabaglio & Jacobs, 2002).

The expression RW was chosen to indicate all working practices outside of organizations' premises. Nevertheless, different designations for the same concept can be found such as telecommuting, telework, virtual work and working from home. From a conceptual perspective, RW is working from home or another alternative location (Mayo et al., 2009), which is only possible due to technology evolution. Still, there is a kind of paradox. The technology that allows nowadays RW and also decreases the feeling of distance is at the same time the technology that creates the expectation of permanent and unstoppable connectivity from employees, which endangers the expected flexibility associated with RW (Leonardi et al., 2010). This technological innovation allows people to work anytime and anywhere (Spreitzer et al., 2017). It is amazing to see the amount of work (quantity and diversity) that nowadays can be performed anywhere and anytime. Regardless of the technology paradox, and according to Mayo and colleagues (2019), RW also implies the usage of information technology because communication between co-workers, peers, supervisors or customers, is still a critical point.

RW seems to be one of the most attractive AWA as it is referred to in the experimental study carried out by Mas and Pallais (2017), in such a way that the attraction and the willingness for RW do not disappear if people are asked if they are available to decrease their payment, in a kind of exchange for RW, by 8%. Again, gender differences were also confirmed in this project. In this investigation, they have concluded that women value the RW arrangement, in comparison with flexible time practices, which are more valuable to men. Having young children is pointed out by the conclusions as one of the reasons to justify this preference by women. Still, the gender differences that were found in this project were considered not significant. Yet RW raises some other challenges. Bloom and colleagues (2015) emphasized profitability and performance topics, while Brügger and colleagues (2020) highlighted personality characteristics when approaching RW challenges.

The effort performed by employees is not different whether working from home or in the office, nevertheless, employees might be more dishonest when working from home. This apparent dishonesty is, according to Brügger and colleagues, related to opportunistic behaviour that remote workers might have once they are not under control and this is one of the reasons why these authors also connect RW with the need for organizations to adapt their control systems. Although, these authors also stated the effects of RW on employees' behaviour are still very unclear. There is no such thing as black or white when talking about RW. On one side, RW is being promoted as an

attraction and retention tool, but on the other side, organizations tend to associate RW with disadvantages and lazy employees (Brüggen et al., 2020).

Despite all of these different opinions and perceptions, RW has been seen by American and European governments as a way to improve the so-called work-life balance (Bloom et al., 2015). Work-life balance is commonly conceptualized as opposed to work-life conflict, which is defined as the interference dimension of work in employees' life and vice-versa (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

For these and many other reasons, RW has its advantages and disadvantages from employers' and also employees' perspectives.

Regardless RW is accessible to the majority of countries and companies, its applications vary from one country to another. According to Messenger (2019), in the EU northern countries, RW driver factors are much more string than in countries such as Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain.

2.3.1. ADVANTAGES OF RW

In this literature review, different conclusions about the same factors will be stated. Different investigations can show opposite results, considering the same factor as an advantage or a disadvantage of RM. This reinforces the need for future investigation once the context is indeed an important variable to consider.

Fonner and Roloff (2010) defend that RW practices can be linked to less stress exposure. The lower stress is justified by the decrease or absence of meetings, fewer interruptions, and less awareness of organizational politics. In their investigation, they reached the conclusion that a part-time RW, 50%, still meant flexibility and could help to decrease work-life conflict as well as increase job satisfaction.

Flexibility is in diverse investigations about RW, considered, by employees, as a strong advantage and as a privilege. Employees appreciate attending family-related appointments while working remotely and they feel they can finish their tasks easily. There are other advantages such as cost reduction on telecommuting, less stress due to traffic jams or public transportation issues, movement freedom, once employees are freer from bosses' calls and working anytime and anywhere. As an important added value, they highlight the reduction of environmental impacts caused by commuting, which is a more and more present concern (Jalagat, 2019).

Connections between RW and other HR topics do not end here. According to Monteiro and colleagues (2019) when it comes to remote workers there are different outcomes such as a decrease

in turnover, absenteeism and work-family conflict, and an increase in job autonomy, commitment and job satisfaction. These conclusions were also reached by other authors such as Toscano and Zappalà (2020), and Fonner and Roloff (2010).

Ferreira and his colleagues (2021) enhance several more advantages of RW. But they are also very clear referring that some of these advantages can only exist once some disadvantages are mitigated: job satisfaction increase, reduced burnout, worker autonomy, leverage of remote expertise, which is important in a dynamic market, increase availability of problem-solving without traditional requirements, accelerated growth, etc.

Interesting to see that in Japan, public authorities promote RW as a way of decreasing the decline of women's participation in the labour force (Messenger, 2019). The practical effect of such an impact is indeed an important advantage in Japanese society and perhaps in several others.

2.3.2. *DISADVANTAGES OF RM*

Besides the advantages of RW, disadvantages should also be pointed out. Despite technological evolution, the decrease in communication is reported as one of the main disadvantages of RW (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). This is a very interesting statement that should be understood from a broader perspective. Considering technology as it is today, there are no apparent reasons for communication problems. Reality indeed shows different facts and different perceptions. According to Leonardi and colleagues (2010), employees who are working at the office usually see remote workers as inaccessible, disconnected, unreliable and not effective, as if they were working at the office. As soon as remote workers become aware of those perceptions, they create some strategies to mitigate them and they tend to be connected over time, feeling that it is impossible to achieve the work-life balance they expected for. Moreover, the negative communication effects of RW, despite all available technology, continue. After a while, remote workers feel they cannot access important information once they are not, somehow, present. Another, perhaps unexpected, the disadvantage is related to the fact that remote workers spend more time than desirable, to create strategies so their colleagues at the office do not feel they are disconnected. Being so, the decrease in performance might become an issue to deal with.

Promotion access can also be endangered, for remote workers, despite employees' performance (Jalagat, 2019).

Pandemic brought up the awareness about another type of disadvantage of RW. Social isolation has become one of the biggest disadvantages once, during mandatory remote work, employees were not able to alternate some days at the office with some days working at home (Toscano & Zappalà, 2020). Several hypotheses were analysed by Toscano and Zappalà (2020). The major conclusions achieved stated that a) social isolation impairs job satisfaction; b) social isolation, in a pandemic context, has also a negative impact on the perception of RW itself; c) employees less worried about the virus do not feel the same level of negative impact in job satisfaction and remote work, as employees with higher levels of concern; d) social isolation has a deep impact in stress; e) for those employees with less job satisfaction and more stress, social isolation decreased their perceived productivity while working remotely.

Eurofound, in one of their several articles related to the impact of Covid-19 in people's lives, states that some respondents reported well-being problems such as "feeling emotionally drained or feeling isolated"(Llave & Oscarpredotova, 2021, p.8). In this survey, it was also established a relation between the levels of such feelings and the huge number of hours that those respondents have been working, per week, when working remotely. Europe is living a master moment and trying to make this transition as smooth as possible once several Eurofound studies report that RW is here to stay even though in a hybrid model. Still, critical issues are addressed: proper regulation and legislation, working time organization, isolation prevention, appropriate work equipment, and work-life balance policies, among others. Communication, between employers and employees, is indicated as a best practice to achieve the best solutions possible for these challenges.

Despite all these disadvantages, there is one that is quite new and deeply connected with the pandemic, the video-conference fatigue, a construct that was absent until March 2020 (Bennett et al., 2021). Video-conference fatigue can be defined as "the degree to which people feel exhausted, tired, or worn out attributed to engaging in a videoconference" (Bennett et al., 2021, p. 336). One of the conclusions reached was that video-conference fatigue occurs as closer to the experience timing, meaning that is not the sum of several repetitive episodes, as usually happens with work fatigue, but rather an immediate consequence during or after the video conference itself. Connected with communication technology, as a promoter and a driver of RW, this video-conference fatigue needs to be addressed once can be affecting not only performance but also RW perception.

2.4. PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE

As already noticed before, performance is frequently related to RW and its practices once is one of the employers' concerns when considering RW.

In the last decades, diverse literature was developed, but the results are mixed and confusing. According to Allen and colleagues (2015), previous research showed positive relations, negative relations, and the absence of relations. One of the reasons pointed out for this, are the weak methodologies used in these investigations. Leonardi and colleagues (2010) denoted that when employees decided to work remotely, some of them create the expectation of decreasing the time they spend at the office with no added value tasks. There are also employees referring, their levels of performance, at the office, from nine to five, were quite low, and they need to stay overtime to work. From this perspective, RW seemed to be perfect. The reality was indeed quite different, though. Due to management and leadership reasons, the time they spend at home doing tasks that were created to somehow control their work, blocked the increase of performance they aimed for.

One of the fewest experimental investigations related to RW and performance is a quite well-known experimental study done by a Chinese travel organization, specifically with their call-centre team (Bloom et al., 2015). This experimental investigation found that employees who were working from home increased their performance by 13% during the nine-month experience. An increase of minutes that employees were logged answering calls was measured, which meant an increase in the calls attended per person. Employees working from home explained that they took less time to get a tea, coffee, toilet, etc, so they could produce more in the same working time. This experiment also explored attrition and the benefits of working from home were quite positive here too. However, context is always important in experimental investigations and this one was based on a call-centre function, where RW is doable and no face-to-face or teamwork is deeply needed. This means that is questionable that with different jobs, with different tasks associated, RW challenges might be different, as well as the impact on performance.

Even though, empirical evidence on the effects of RW is less conclusive (Monteiro et al., 2019). Empirical studies carried out by Dickinson and Villeval (2008), Mas and Moretti (2009), Dutcher (2012), Brüggén and colleagues (2019), cited in Monteiro and colleagues (2019), found different conclusions if compared to Bloom and colleagues (2015). The differences are related to non-positive impacts of RW on performance, due to different factors such as: a) less control over remote workers, b) the lack of face-to-face connection decreased the synergies that come up when

people are at the office, c) type of tasks, considering that performance in RW depend also on the type of tasks that remote workers need to deliver. For tasks that depend on creativity, RW can increase performance, on the other hand, repetitive and somehow boring tasks are delivered with higher performance levels if employees are at the organization's premises. Although, there are some projects that when isolating those practices, put RW on the list of the analysis. According to these authors, the sector of the organization and other factors such as the level of skills might affect the positive impact of RW in performance, as well (Monteiro et al., 2019).

In this investigation, the focus is on perceived performance once the aim is to study employees' perspectives on RW.

The main objectives of this study are to: a) explore the overall RW experience as of March 2020; b) identify the advantages and disadvantages of RW from employees' perspectives; c) understand how employees evaluate their perceived performance while they are/were working remotely and d) identify RW as a differentiating retention factor, assessing if RW is perceived as a non-negotiable condition for employees' permanency in their current organizations.

In the end, after answering our investigation objectives, and based on the results and conclusions, the purpose is to add value to the ongoing debate about this topic and bring it up into a more factual approach.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. SAMPLE

Thirteen interviewees participated in this study. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample. About 62% of the respondents were women. From an age perspective, our sample covered people until 51 years old and the majority of respondents were below 40 years old. Respondents were aged between 24 and 51 years old ($M = 39.7$, $SD = 8,5$).

Concerning household composition, our sample has an average number of two people per household. There are four elements, out of a total of 30, under 12 years old.

Around 23% of respondents usually take more than 60 minutes per day on commuting and the average commuting time is 52 minutes per day. More than 75% of respondents usually commute using their vehicle but only 23% pay for parking. Nevertheless, commuting costs, for 56% of the respondents, are above 56€ per month.

About 62% of the respondents have management/leadership functions. Tenure distribution is directly connected with age distribution. The tenure average is 7,1 years with a minimum tenure of 0,33 years and a maximum of 21 years. About 77% have a permanent contract.

Approximately 62% of the respondents work for local/national companies and the same 62% work in companies with and headcount of fewer than 250 employees.

Table 1*Sample demographic description*

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	N° of people/ household	Age of household members	Commuting Time / Day (minutes)	Commuting Costs	Position	Management Position	Tenure (years)
P1	Female	44	Married or equivalent (2 members)	4	49; 44; 16; 13	40,0	100€	Superior Technician	No	21,0
P2	Female	51	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	1	51; 18	120,0	120€	Experienced Senior Technician	No	5,0
P3	Female	35	Married or equivalent (2 members)	3	36; 6; 1	90,0	40€	Customer Service Coordinator	Yes	10,0
P4	Female	48	Married or equivalent (2 members)	3	22; 15	30,0	50€	HR Manager	Yes	21,0
P5	Female	35	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	2	35; 5	30,0	70€	HR Manager	Yes	2,1
P6	Male	40	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	1	40	30,0	50€	Operations Director EMEA	Yes	0,7

P7	Female	47	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	2	12; 47	30,0	30€	Receptionist	No	8,0
P8	Male	27	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	2	24	30,0	30 €	Inbound Contact Center Agent	No	2,5
P9	Male	47	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	1	47	20,0	50€	Consulting Business Unit Director	Yes	5,0
P10	Male	36	Married or equivalent (2 members)	2	36; 41	60,0	60€	Team Supervisor	Yes	15,0
P11	Female	33	Married or equivalent (2 members)	3	33; 36; 16 months	60,0	60€	People experience generalist	Yes	0,3
P12	Female	46	Married or equivalent (2 members)	3	47; 46; 11	45,0	125€	Quality Control Technique	No	1,0
P13	Male	24	Single; Widow(er); Divorced or equivalent (1 member)	3	24; 57; 56	90,0	From 50€ up to 100€	Business Development Consultant	Yes	1,0

3.2. PROCEDURE

This study is an exploratory investigation based on a qualitative method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This form of interview was chosen due to the study goal of exploring the phenomenon of RW, in Portugal, from the employee's perspective.

The sample inclusion criteria were: respondents must have 18 years old or more; being, or have been, a full-time or a part-time dependent employee, and being, or have been, in RW, partially or fully, for at least one month, as of March 2020. The participants were contacted for convenience, by WhatsApp, through a message with an invitation attached (Annex 1), which explained the purpose of the study as well as inclusion criteria. Therefore, this study uses a convenience sample.

The schedule of interviews was defined through a shared link, on the Doodle platform, in which every participant could choose the most appropriate time for being interviewed.

Demographic data were collected through a Google Form survey (Annex 2) before the interview. In this survey, participants also gave their informed consent, under the rules of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), about interview recording.

Interviews were done through the Zoom platform. Of the 13 participations, only one did not allow the image recording but only voice recording. The interviews were conducted between February 8th 2022 and March 4th 2022.

Interviews' content was described, read, and codified into categories that were also named according to the literature review.

3.3. INSTRUMENT

The interview script, available in Annex 3, was divided into three different themes. In the first theme, our goal was to explore interviewees' RW reality, or the absence of it, before March 2020. At this stage of the interview questions focused on participants' thoughts and will to experiment with this AWA and about their eventual companies' practices of RW. In theme 2, the purpose was to understand, in a detailed way, the interviewees' RW experience as of March 2020, assessing the time of the experience, the positive points and also the constraints. Questions such as the following were done: a) What are the main advantages/disadvantages for you while working remotely?; b) After your workweek, how did you perceive your level of tiredness comparing office work and remote work: higher, lower, equal?; c) How do you describe your level of perceived performance while working remotely (Increased, decreased, the same)? Finally, in the third theme,

interviewees were asked about their future perspectives referring to their wishes of RW and also gathering their reflections about the RW phenomenon in Portugal. The two most important questions were: 1) Are you considering looking for a new job opportunity that allows you to work remotely, in a way you consider appropriate, in the next twelve months if your current company does not provide you with such an arrangement?; 2) In your opinion, why do you think that organizations do not implement RW more broadly?

Qualitative data analysis was performed through content analysis using the MAXQDA software. A Categories Dictionary was created and can be found in Annex 4.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, there are five dimensions of analysis, seventeen categories and thirty-seven sub-categories (Annex 5). The five dimensions are: RW until March 2020, RW experience since March 2020, Current Situation, Future Expectations and Intentions, and Portugal Restricted RW.

Around 77% of our respondents' sentences reflect their thoughts about RW before March 2020. In table 2, there are some parts of their answers about RW thoughts and their will to try it. The reasons behind thoughts were not the object of interview exploration. Regardless, the lack of objective reasons to justify these thoughts or willingness might be connected to the fact that RW was something quite theoretical with no or insignificant practice for the majority of participants. Nevertheless, only three interviewees said they never thought about it (P3, P7 and P10).

Table 2

Thoughts and Will

Participant	Thoughts and will
1	<i>"(...) because I have always been adept of RW and I have always pushed a little bit and tried, to stay not permanently, (...), but to stay in RW even if it was a few days a week or a few days a month (...)"</i>
5	<i>"Yes, no doubt. Oh, by the way, it would be... It was almost a goal of mine to have a job that would allow me to work from home because due to the advantages I see in this regard."</i>

About respondents' RW experiences until March 2020, answers vary from no practice at all, around 62%, and 38% referring to irregular practices (e.g., RW is practised when participants' children are ill and they can stay home working instead of not working at all) and/or practices just for a few employees (no clear information was given by the participants to indicate how the 'few' employees were chosen or covered). In some respondents' answers, it was referred that even irregular, RW practices were not seen positively by top management. The existence of RW practices without specific rules can create feelings of unfairness and discrimination. Some of the participants referred to the existence of people, in their companies, who were allowed to be working from home (WFH) enhancing that this was some kind of a privilege for a few employees.

Such kind of perceived favouritism is easy to happen if organizations do not anticipate it and create conditions to avoid it. The absence of policies in RW is somehow the result of the learning curve related to the first stages of something, as RW was before March 2020, in Portugal.

Regardless, the unspoken rules can result in negative consequences (Bayern, 2020). From all the insights given by the author, productivity measurements are also connected with this study's scope as it will be shown forward.

On the opposite, creating and publishing an RW policy that causes the perception of existing only on paper, without the real sponsorship from management, can derive in frustration and a decrease in reliability. In the participants' companies, a remote work policy was published, before the pandemic, but never placed into practice once the company had no conditions (e.g., for a department that worked a lot with paper, with low or no digitalization implemented, RW was a utopia). Another participant referred that a policy was in place but when employees asked WFH, management was not in an acceptance mode. Some of them did not allow and others were forced to. On table 3 there are some excerpts from interviews regarding this topic.

Table 3

Experience

Participant	Experience until March 2020
1	<i>"(...) Ah... it existed in the institution, but limited to some (...) And even then when it was asked ah... it was never seen openly, it was seen with many obstacles."</i>
2	<i>"Because often, despite policies coming from the top (...) sometimes is difficult to move policies from paper to practice."</i>

4.1. RW EXPERIENCE SINCE MARCH 2020

The results related to RW Experience since March 2020 dimension are organized into seven categories: Number of months in RW (between March 2020 and September 2021), Overall Experience, RW Location, RW Advantages, RW Disadvantages, Perceived Tiredness and Perceived Performance.

The sample of this study is very experienced in RW once, as from March 2020 up to September 2021, more than 46% of the respondents were in RW for more than 12 months, approximately 15% were in RW from 7 up to 12 months and only 15% were in RW less than 3 months. Being so, the overall experience with RW among respondents gave this study different information about their perceptions.

In this study, participants reported that the RW experience in the first weeks or months was a different experience from the last period. The locking down that marked the first three months, between March and June 2020, cannot be ignored as an extremely important factor to determine respondents' opinions about RW. The limited circulation and no movement freedom are important factors that need to be considered in this analysis besides the fact that RW was mandatory and not an option.

Remote work, until March 2020, was always studied and approached assuming its non-mandatory character as taken for granted. As it was already referred to, the Decree-Law 2-A/2020 transformed this regime into a mandatory situation for all positions that could be performed under this AWA. From March 2020 until June 2020, and also after, although in shorter interim periods, this was not the only mandatory situation that the participants were under. This was accompanied by rigid freedom of movement that conditioned a large part of the population to an almost exclusive presence at their residence. This context should not be ignored due to its influence on the opinion expressed by some of the participants who report mixed feelings about RW.

This also explains why some of the participants divided their answers into two periods and related that, for most of them, the first weeks and/or months were quite challenging. According to Sandoval-Reyes and colleagues (2021), millions of people around the globe were forced to start WFH, adapting their lives, their work, and their homes and still kept their work and personal responsibilities, perhaps not at the same level but even a higher demanding level. Those authors also enhance the fact that both companies and employees, were unprepared, physically and emotionally, for this situation. This lack of preparation impacted the way they began to see RW.

RW as of March 2020 had different specifications justified by an extraordinary situation. It was not voluntary, it did not imply an agreement, and individual traits and organizational culture were not considered. The focus was on employees' need to keep performing their tasks, at home, regardless of the existence of RW skills and the ability to deal with the lack of social contact and with the distance from the company, its culture and its people. RW was the reality, for millions of people, for several uninterrupted months without the possibility of interleaving WFH with working from the office (WFO) (Sandoval-Reyes et al, 2021).

Table 4 presents some relevant statements reported and related to the RW overall experience. In this study, statements connected with the period of schools' lockdown were not considered in

the analysis as only four of 30 participants' household members were less than 12 years old. Yet the negative impact on those participants was reported.

Table 4

Overall experience description

Participant	Experience since March 2020
10	<i>“And, therefore, it was here a mixture of sensations. At an early stage, it was good. (...) and almost final phase, therefore, when I was here working from home, already with some anxiety of... of returning here to the office to normal life.”</i>
11	<i>“It was a very enriching experience (...), but the truth is that after two weeks spent, realizing the time I gained for myself, the... the quality of life that it brought me, ah... I thought about it - now I don't want to go back”;</i>

4.1.1. RW LOCATION

From a conceptual perspective, as already explored in this study, namely in the literature review, remote work does not mean mandatory work from home. When questioned about the place where participants were able to work, answers were very balanced between home mandatory, no mandatory location and “don’t know” answers. Some of the participants surprisingly took conscientiousness that they never ask if they were able to work remotely in a different place than home. Perhaps this can be explained due to the Covid-19 restraints, once, in the first three months, there was no other possibility. However, a different explanation is that RW was indeed new for the majority of them and, as they have mentioned before, when they thought about RW before March 2020, the home appeared in their answers as their only location thought.

From the companies' perspective, the RW location is critical due to security issues. Home has been defined, by some of the participants' companies, as the only place where they could work. There was only one example of a company of Participant 13, where a digital nomad situation is in place, not for all employees, but as a kind of experiment. A digital nomad worker is someone who performs their work from any place in the globe and usually moves frequently from one place to another taking advantage of technology (Prester et al., 2019). According to these authors, digital nomads are similar to remote workers because they do not perform on companies' premises.

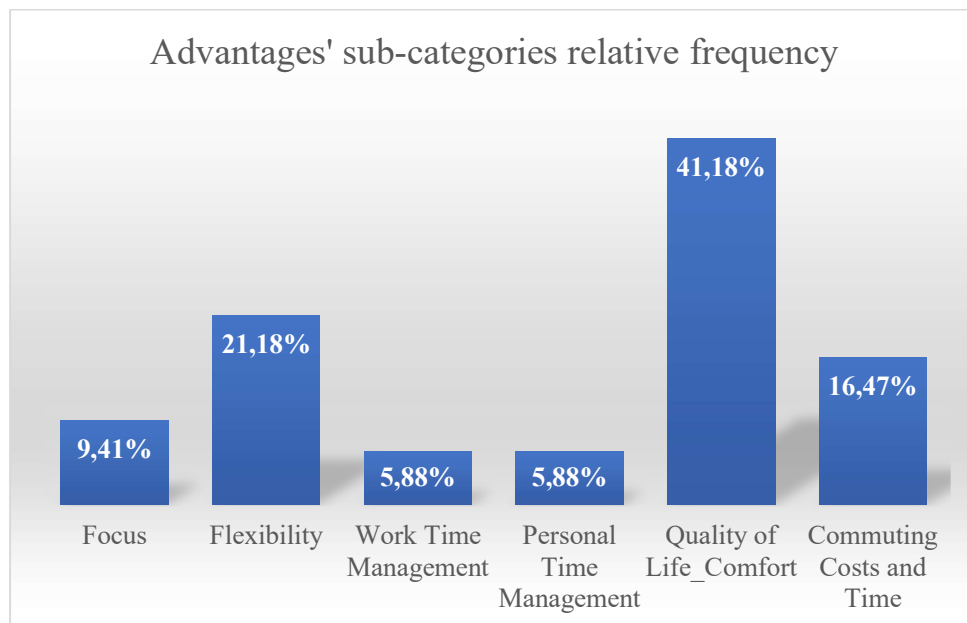
4.1.2. RW ADVANTAGES

This category is divided into six sub-categories: Focus, Flexibility, Work Time Management, Personal Time Management, Quality of Life/Comfort and Commuting Time and Costs.

In Figure 1, all sub-categories are represented. Quality of Life/Comfort was indeed the most explored sub-category with around 41% of the statements of the participants, followed by the Flexibility sub-category with about 21%. Commuting Costs and Time was also important from the perspective of the advantages, with approximately 16%.

Figure 1

Advantages' sub-categories relative frequency graphic



Focus, meaning concentration on work, reached almost 10% of interviews' content and appears to be related to perceived performance sub-category analysis.

Quality of Life is the sub-category more explored by interviewees. Words such as quality of life and comfort were regularly used to answer about the advantages of RW.

Quality of Life perspective can vary according to gender, according to Messenger (2019). In his research, in the EU women reported quality of life as a main advantage of RW as men stated efficiency, for example. According to this author, from a well-being perspective, associated with the quality of life, the absence of the stress caused by commuting is also important to consider.

Quality of Life can also derive from the positive feelings that RW creates in employees concerning, for example, their job satisfaction and the increased of their commitment to the organization (Rodríguez-Modroño & López-Igual, 2021).

Participants considered that being WFH allows them to be in a more comfortable situation once they are at their homes and this means to conciliate work, in a very easy way, with specific domestic tasks, such as laundry they have said, enjoy much better food comparing when they have lunch nearby the office, and save money, once they do not commute. The absence of commuting is also enhanced from two different perspectives: at the beginning of the day, a major part of the interviewees said they enjoy this usual commuting time to sleep. Even during lunchtime, some participants took the chance to do some physical activity. At the end of the day, some of the participants refer to spending time with their families, and having dinner earlier and in all of the statements the denominator calm was a common ground. Participant 4 shares this opinion. In her words: *"I took the opportunity to take 15,20 minutes for myself, to relax. And then start on to shift b, the mother's shift, to pick up the kids, to deal with all the logistics that I currently do on my knee, as they say, because of the time I get home, and that, in RW reality, I have much more time to enjoy and to do other things than dealings, dinners, baths, etc. I took the opportunity to have quality time."*

Flexibility is another sub-category that was strongly reported by participants. The major idea behind it is the conciliation of work with personal, most of them domestic, tasks. Quality-of-Life and Flexibility are sub-categories that appear to be associated once the participants' justifications for one sub-category are sometimes used for the other.

Being at home allowed participants to do the laundry, have their meals, especially dinner, at a proper time, pick up children to school, go to the supermarket and so on. Some of these tasks were done during the former commuting time and others during lunchtime. Remote workers feel they can carry out their tasks where and when they want or need and this has a positive impact in job satisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2021).

According to Rodríguez-Modroño & López-Igual (2021), this sense of flexibility is also technology-related once remote workers usually feel that technology provides them with flexibility, agility and a bigger autonomy not only connected with when and where but also with the how. The authors also made a relation, based on the social exchange theory, between this sense of higher flexibility and the greater effort employees dedicate to their work. The major part of the

participants considered that the possibility of working remotely in a different place than the home is also very motivating.

Nevertheless, in the study carried out by these authors, they were able to find some gender issues also in flexibility relating that a higher percentage of men can take some time during the working period to do domestic and personal tasks. The percentage of women who stated this possibility was lower.

In this study, gender topics were not under the scope and were not stated in any interviewees' statements. Participants' words are displayed in table 5.

Table 5

RW Advantages – Flexibility

Participant	Flexibility
P2	<i>“I can even go to the supermarket or the butcher, for example, before starting work. The supermarkets open at eight, and by nine I'm here, I've done the shopping and I'm ready to go to work.”</i>
P9	<i>“We manage to have time for the family and at the same time also make time for work and not only that, if we can't make it for some reason during the day, we can make up for it at night, on the weekend that's done, maybe a little”</i>

On Commuting Time and Costs, participants refer to both aspects: money and time. As already mentioned before, the participants' commuting costs vary from 30€ up to 125€ per month. It is also important to remember that the interviews were done before the huge impact that the Russian / Ukraine conflict had on prices, mainly fuel. Ten of our participants use their vehicles to commute so, could be that this topic has nowadays different importance than it had some weeks ago. Regardless, commuting and food cost reduction have been referred to as positive consequences by the participants. In table 6, there are some affirmations confirming the importance of this topic.

Table 6

RW Advantages – Commuting Costs and Time

Participant	Commuting costs and time
P7	<i>“The advantage of saving money with commuting costs either public transportation or own vehicle”</i>
P5	<i>“Because only by the fact... I always say this: leaving home is spending money”</i>

As already mentioned, the sub-category Focus is related to all kinds of affirmations related to the higher concentration capability of respondents when they were working at home. Noise, permanent interruptions, some of them considered unnecessary, and some kind of bureaucratic time-consuming procedures, are some of the examples given by some of the participants. This sub-category is also related to the dimension Perceived Performance once participants reported that when they were or are WFH they have fewer interruptions and that this affects their performance. Regardless, it was chosen to be a sub-category of the advantages because does not have a direct impact on perceived performance in all of the participants. In table 7, concrete examples are given.

Table 7

RW Advantages – Focus

Participant	Focus
P6	<i>“In organizations with a lot of people where the phone is constantly ringing etc, it is much more satisfying to perform a certain number of tasks at home than in the workplace.”</i>
P5	<i>“Sorry to interrupt, it's just that we are thinking, in a way, however, there is an interruption and we have to go back to the beginning. And this is something that irritates me deeply.”</i>

To conclude the results' analysis of this dimension, Work Time Management and Personal Time Management sub-categories are connected with the perception of the participants that when they are WFH they can do more work or personal tasks in the same period. These are sub-categories that appear to be associated once the participants' justifications for one sub-category are sometimes used for the other.

4.1.3. RW DISADVANTAGES

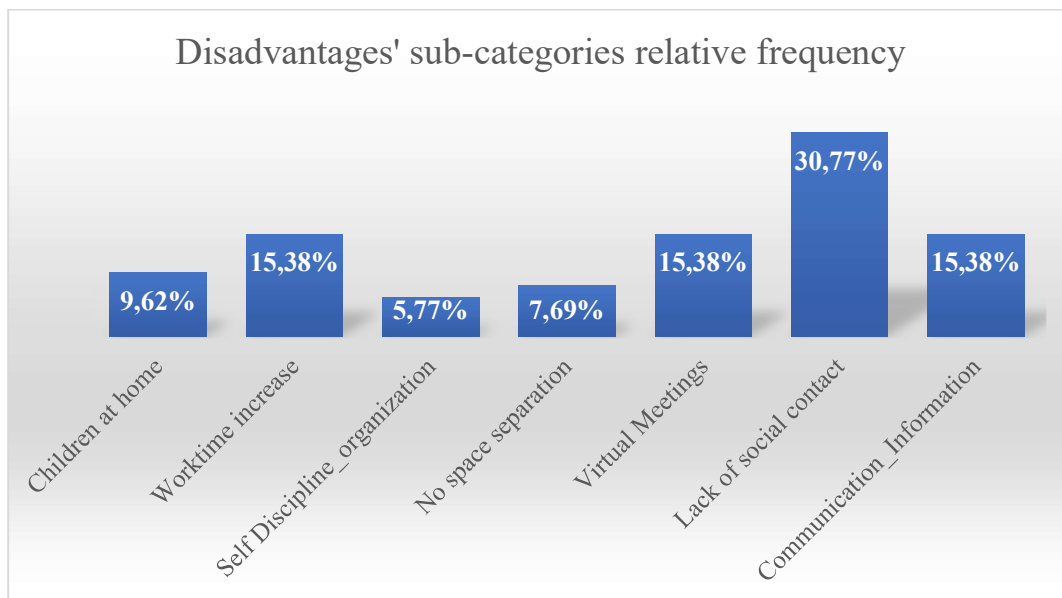
This category is divided into seven sub-categories: Children at home, Worktime Increase, Self-Discipline/Organization, No Space separation, Virtual Meetings, Lack of Social Contact and Communication/Information.

The sub-category with more related information is Lack of social contact, with approximately 31% of the interviewees' statements. The three next sub-categories more referred, with around 15%, were Worktime Increase, Virtual Meetings and Communication/Information. Despite only about 5% of the statements being connected with Self-Discipline and Organization, understood as

RW crucial skills for employees to achieve a good performance, this must receive the best of HR Management Teams attention. Further on, on the conclusions, the development of RW skills will be briefly approached. The sub-category Children at Home incorporates all RW disadvantages connected with a particular context of the RW, the pandemic one when schools were closed and classes were taught through online platforms. Regardless, and because this was an exemption situation, it won't be under the scope of this study. Nevertheless, if similar circumstances happened, it is an important fact to be under consideration.

Figure 2

Disadvantages' sub-categories relative frequency graphic



In the sub-category of Lack of Social Contact, isolation and loneliness feeling statements are included. About this sub-category, it is misleading to reduce its causes to lockdown and pandemic context. Regardless, the pandemic context worsened the feelings connected with this sub-category. Eurostat (2021) states that during the spring of 2021, an increase in negative feelings where loneliness and isolation were inserted, occurred. Eurostat data also refers that this increase, namely in loneliness feelings, was particularly higher in women above 50 years old.

In a time when a relevant number of companies prepares to implement hybrid models, this topic acquires particular relevancy.

Around 15% of disadvantages identification was related to the sub-category Communication/Information. Still, it is quite interesting to check that all participants who refer to this, also mentioned virtual meetings as something in which they participate regularly.

Virtual meetings should be used as, among other purposes, a channel for decreasing the lack of social contact. Moreover, virtual meetings are one of the most important, if not the most important tool for improving communication and sharing information in a remote work environment. Being so, it would be interesting to assess the usage that companies have done to their virtual meeting. As some of our participants hinted at, their perception was that virtual meetings also worked as a control tool.

The inexistence of a specific space, in the major part of our participant's houses, was not specially approached but should be under the scope of companies when RW policies will be designed.

In tables 8, 9 and 10 excerpts are highlighted.

Table 8

RW Disadvantages – Lack of social contact

Participant	Lack of Social Contact
P13	<i>"It was very difficult to get... there were days of thinking that we are getting dizzy, because there was no contact other than that virtual contact."</i>
P2	<i>"Because in practice you end up being here all day, I, for example, am here all day...all closed, my desk is even facing the wall and therefore I don't see a human being or talk to a human being in some days"</i>

Table 9

RW Disadvantages – Communication/Information

Participant	Communication/Information
P10	<i>"Eh... and in the organization where I am now, it is totally different, but at the time obviously yes that was reflected and that, and that I would have some doubts here, some questions, and that for... ... which inhibited me a little bit from... questioning."</i>
P1	<i>"At a professional level, because while we are working on-site, we will always rely on the opinions of others, we ask questions, we hear answers that are not for us, it is not, but that we hear them and hum... and a lot is lost and a lot is lost information"</i>

Table 10*RW Disadvantages – Virtual Meetings*

Participant	Virtual Meetings
P12	<i>“I have a lot of meetings, hum... you just forget that, like, between one meeting and another that the person has to exist. It's the second after the person has to be in another meeting. And meetings are like that all day long. There is a bit of a lag here, ... what does the structure of being in remote work mean?”</i>
P2	<i>“...meetings and calls even overlap each other, people schedule meetings on top of other meetings, it is very complicated to manage. We no longer have time to work because we take the time in calls. Here the great difficulty that exists is letting you work. Because the calls don't let us work.”</i>

Concerning the Worktime Increase sub-category, which was relevantly referred on the interviews, some participants related a considerable workload increase. With a single exemption, who refers this increase was restricted to the first weeks and due to the unknown of pandemic and extra work-related, other participants refer that sometimes, an already existing overtime situation at the office, got worse when they were WFH. Reasons such as the computer are “always there”, excess of virtual meetings that do not respect lunchtime and others are pointed out by participants. Participant 13 even makes an interesting analysis that relates the perception of higher performance, which can be related to the situation of RW, with the increase of the number of working hours in RW. About perceived performance, information will be analysed later on.

Table 11*RW Disadvantages – Worktime Increase*

Participant	Virtual Meetings
P2	<i>“Ah, then we have the other side of the coin: you no longer have schedules, hum, because from the moment you start working, mealtimes are no longer respected, ah, calls and meetings for everything, you spend the whole day in meetings, so you start working later of working hours”</i>
P13	<i>“We work more hours. Ah... maybe, maybe that means that maybe I am... we can be less productive ah... or even that sometimes we present more results it's not because we're better, it's because we really work longer hours.”</i>

4.1.4. PERCEIVED TIREDNESS

One of the questions of the interview was related to the level of energy of participants. Regardless, from Participant 5 forward, the question has been reformulated and tiredness perception was the focus. Participants were able to answer accordingly their perception of tiredness level when they compare the end of the day or the week when they were at the office and in RW. The majority of their answers, more than 61%, stated that participants felt less tired in RW when compared with working in the office. Besides the time spent commuting, either using public transport or their vehicle, some participants explained their level of tiredness with office permanent interruptions. In table 12 there are some excerpts of answers that confirm these results.

Table 12

Tiredness Perception – Lower in RW

Participant	Tiredness Perception – lower in RW
P4	<i>“It is not easy... because I arrive very late at home ... and the weeks seem to have double of size... weeks are very long to me... I feel much more tired at the end of the week when I am working at the office”</i>
P5	<i>“My humour was awful and every time I went to the office, I came back in a very bad shape, very tired”</i>
P12	<i>“I feel that tiredness level is higher in presential work, much higher”</i>

Nevertheless, although the majority of respondents think that they were less tired in RW, others felt exactly the opposite and it is also important to understand why because there are causes that are not RW-related such as working overtime and virtual meetings frequency.

From the RW perspective, tiredness level was caused by the total number of hours dedicated to one task that was higher, by Participant 3, for example, than in the office. In the office, this participant referred, although concentration is interrupted several times, these interruptions help employees to disconnect from work and also relax. Interruptions can indeed be seen from totally different perspectives: as time consumers but also as relaxing moments.

On another side, Participant 7 referred that the level of tiredness in RW was higher in the first lock-down once the uncertainty was so high that, connected with extraordinary work, for example, the administration management of layoff processes, the level of tiredness was immense. And there was also a statement, from Participant 13, connected to space limitation, besides virtual

meetings excess. Working and living in the same space, without physical boundaries between the two spheres, did not allow the disconnection that when employees are WFO can do.

Table 13

Tiredness Perception – Higher in RW

Participant	Tiredness Perception – higher in RW
P7	<i>“We extend our working time, we didn’t know what will happen and I think in the first month I went to sleep very late and slept less”</i>
P13	<i>“We spend much more time in meetings ... teams... zoom... one after the other and the tiredness of a virtual meeting is much higher than a physical one. Another thing is the space, we are always in the same space, a home-specific division”</i>

4.1.5. PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE

Performance is an unavoidable topic when talking about RW and the literature review has highlighted it. Regardless, different opinions emerge from different authors and also from our interviewee’s answers. Performance was questioned under self-perception analysis meaning that we considered participants’ opinions about how they perceived their performance without considering any objective measurement. About 62% of our respondent’s statements confirmed that they perceived that their performance is higher in RW. Permanent interruptions, small talks, noise and other sorts of distractions are frequently mentioned as the reasons for this perception. Table 14 includes two of these observations.

Table 14

Category Analysis: Performance – Perceived Performance

Participant	Performance – perceived performance – higher in RW
P5	<i>“I was a person who, for example, in terms of handling emails, made, for example, 20 or 25 emails per hour and when I got at the office and I made around 30 in 1 day.”</i>
P11	<i>“There are a lot fewer interruptions, there are a lot fewer interruptions that are often unnecessary. I absolutely think telecommuting has come to show how much time we waste on frivolous things, in everyday life, in the office.”</i>

Perceived performance is such a critical point that in table 15, statements about the opposite are also reported.

Table 15*Category Analysis: Performance – Perceived Performance*

Participant	Performance – perceived performance – lower in RW
P7	<i>“maybe also because of the materials, the fact that I work with 2 screens makes my life a lot easier ah, in the office, (...) in those 8 hours (...) whatever it is, we can concentrate, we can work at home, but for me, it's more difficult, honestly.</i>
P10	<i>“I can even say in my specific case, that in the office, my productivity is usually a little higher”</i>

One of the participants highlighted an interesting question that needs to be deeply understood. Participant 13 said that the majority of people who usually refers to higher productivity when WFH have a wrong idea once they indeed produce more because they spend more time working: at lunch, after the usual exit time, when these employees are in the office. From this perspective, feelings of higher productivity can be endangered by the increase in working time.

Performance can assume, or assumes already, a critical factor when companies are deciding whether to have a fully remote or a hybrid work regime. In the sample of this study, positive, negative and somehow neutral opinions about the level of perceived performance can be found. Except for Participants 5 and 8, whose activity seems to have clear indicators, meaning tangible measures, other participants did not refer to any kind of indicator when answering questions related to perceived performance. This is quite intriguing but not totally a surprise. Considering that most of the participants did not refer to the existence of indicators of performance, associated with the fact that, at the same time, participants reported a lack of goals orientations, perhaps a more accurate judgement can be done, despite all investigation due.

As already mentioned in the literature review, Leonardi and colleagues (2010) expectations that RW would provide time that was not used for the no-added value office tasks were not always accomplished due to management and leadership reasons once additional control tasks were created for remote workers. As Participant 2 referred several times, performance would be higher in RW if the virtual meetings did not happen in the quantity, they did during RW.

Arguments around the perceived performance increase, reported by the participants, and related to fewer interruptions and fewer need to make breaks were also reported by Bloom and colleagues (2015) when explaining the increase in productivity in their experimental research.

4.2. CURRENT SITUATION

This dimension is organized into two categories: Work Arrangements and Expectations. Both have sub-categories. The purpose of this dimension is to organize the interviewees' statements about what is their current reality in terms of work arrangement, and if this reality meets or not their expectations. By asking if reality meets their expectations, the majority answered with information about what they expect.

Concerning current work arrangements, five participants are 100% working from the office but mostly due to some restrictions caused by the pandemic, not as a work arrangement to persist over time. Three participants are 100% working from home and the other five are in a hybrid regime. Among these five hybrid workers, three are more days working from home and the other two are more days working from the office. This might anticipate that companies are still searching for the best work arrangement. Despite most of the participants related that their companies do not have a final decision about the 'new' work arrangement after the pandemic, none mentioned that an employee consultation has been done letting anticipate that organizations are deciding without assessing employees' needs. Organizations tend to decide on topics that directly impact employees' lives without embracing and engaging them in the decision process. And this can perhaps explain why around 70% of answers reveal that current work arrangements do not meet interviewees' expectations. More interesting to check that for these participants, a hybrid model is what they expect and, for some of them, is already what they have but expectations are not fulfilled.

4.3. FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AND INTENTIONS

Dimension Future Expectations and Intentions congregates information about participants' expectations towards RW and potential resignation intentions, in the next twelve months, if their current company does not provide them with an appropriate RW arrangement, which can fulfil their expectations. In this dimension, there is only one category: Resignation Intentions.

4.3.1. RESIGNATION INTENTIONS

All participants were asked, "if their current company abolish RW or does not create a work arrangement that fulfils their expectations, if they consider resigning, in the next twelve months, and search for a company that does that".

Of all 13 participants, four said they have no intention of leaving their current company if resignation is only triggered by RW maintenance. Two participants answered that they have clear intentions of resigning if something like that might happened and five of the participants consider reflecting on resigning if RW won't continue to be part of their work-life at their current companies.

Table 17

Resignation Intentions

Participant	Resignation Intentions
P11	<i>"Yes, yes, yes, yes I would consider..."</i>
P4	<i>"Honestly, it was already something that I couldn't deny, with which I struggled on a personal and family basis... but the fact that I have already thought about it, I think that answers, answers the question."</i>

4.4. PORTUGAL RESTRICTED RW PRACTICES - REASONS

In this dimension, there are five categories: Traditional Organizational Culture and Management, Apprehensiveness, Lack of Trust, No Results and Goals Orientation, and Other Reasons. The purpose of this dimension is to compile participants given information about how they explain the existence of restricted RW practices in Portugal.

4.4.1. TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT AND APPREHENSIVENESS

The three major categories, with about 32% of the information reported, in which the most of participants' statements were classified, are Apprehensiveness / Lack of RW knowledge (from management), Lack of Trust and No Results / Goals Orientation.

Traditional Organizational Culture and Management, and Apprehensiveness are related to our participants' perception of leadership and management styles and also the company's organizational culture.

In these categories reasons related to a still considered new reality, which creates some fear at the management level, can be found. The word 'fear' is indeed used several times and in some statements also connected to the lack of knowledge of companies about RW advantages for themselves and not only for the employees.

Fear was mainly related to the perceptions of management towards employees, meaning that, to some of our respondents, management is afraid that employees do not deliver, as expected, once they are WFH. But, as some of the interviewees also said, this reason for fear was somehow acceptable before the pandemic and before the majority of employees have been WFH for several weeks and/or months and always delivering results.

There are also other comments related to the lack of skills and competencies in Portuguese companies that are, in the majority, the so-called PME (SME - small and medium-size companies). In tables 18 and 19, both categories are represented through participants' interview excerpts.

Peretz and colleagues (2017) refer that organizations with specific characteristics, such as tech level, the proportion of females, size, industry, sector and proportion of unionised employees, tend to promote and implement AWA in an intensive and deliberated way. This research also compared local and global companies and stated that global companies showed higher usage of flexible time among employees.

According to March 2022 updated information in PORDATA, in Portugal, the percentage of big companies was 0,09%. If some association with Peretz and colleagues' study can be done, our participants' statements can partially be understood.

Table 18

Category Analysis: Traditional Organizational Culture and Management

Participant	Traditional Organizational Culture and Management
P9	<i>"I think it has to do with the mindset of the entrepreneur, sorry, the Portuguese entrepreneur"</i>
P10	<i>"We are basically... all companies are all SMEs, therefore, they are small and medium-sized companies, in most cases, therefore, still with hierarchical structures, at the management level, quite old-fashioned without training, some of them, without higher education and that are they the decision-makers"</i>

Table 19

Category Analysis: Apprehensiveness

Participant	Apprehensiveness
P6	<i>"At the moment, what seems to me is that there is some lack of knowledge on the part of the managers, perhaps because... as a rule they are not so connected with this type, at least in the case of my organization"</i>

P8	<i>“and it's the fear of... of what it is that is not observable”</i>
P12	<i>“One factor is the lack of knowledge of... the long-term lack of knowledge... of what the consequences are of having people working remotely.”</i>

4.4.2. LACK OF TRUST

The third major reason appointed by the participants was the Lack of Trust of the management towards employees, with around 25% of the information. Most of these statements have the command-and-control leadership style associated, meaning that management thoughts and actions are connected with the idea of controlling people through their own (leadership) presence. This is also connected with the fourth major category: no results/goals orientation. In table 20, statements referring to this lack of trust are highlighted.

Table 20

Category Analysis: Lack of Trust

Participant	Lack of trust
P6	<i>“but sometimes it seems that there is some mistrust in the sense that they go home and do nothing”</i>
P11	<i>“There is a lot... a lot of lack of trust in employees”</i>

According to Parker and colleagues (2020), due to the lack of training on remote management skills and the fastness that RW needed to be implemented, due to the pandemic, some managers were increasing the levels of stress in their teams while they were WFH. These authors also refer to studies that reported the fact that when managers do not see their employees, they struggle to trust them and believe they are working. The perception that management does not believe in what they do not see was reported by several of the participants. The relation with this management trust issue can result in micromanagement practices and therefore a decrease in employees' motivation, which probably leads to performance issues, which somehow gave the proof of evidence that some managers are looking to block RW.

Trust is a basic principle that manages the relations between two parties, considered, at the same time, a cause and an effect on organizational cultures. The level of trust among employees and employers defined the way both relate to each other, and the way they work (Microsoft, 2012). When employees feel they are trusted by their organizations, specifically by their management,

they are more responsible and feel more accountable, once they perceived the relationship as strong and are willing to dedicate more.

According to Kashivirta (2011) cited by Karunaratne (2021), trust is an enabler of high-level performance that allows companies to overachieve.

In the participants' statements connected with their feelings of lack of trust, a different concept has been approached, the concept of 'felt trust' (Kim et al., 2016), referring to employees' feelings of being trusted by their managers.

This study considered the pandemic as a critical context factor to understand RW before the pandemic as well as during and after the most critical pandemic periods. Being so, there are connections that have been made between the level of stress caused by this context and the increase in anxiety and diminishing levels of trust among management and leadership positions (Veith et al., 2021). RW is not new. This statement has been repeated in this study several times. The purpose is to create and reinforce consciousness that there were already companies practising RW before the pandemic and that their knowledge and experience can be used. Organizations, which were already practising RW knew, or found out, that this way of working implies introducing new variables in the organizations beyond technology. As Veith and colleagues reported, these new variables introduced into organizational culture are related to employees' responsibilities, results, trust, processes of control as well as empathy and different management styles.

4.4.3. NO RESULTS AND GOALS ORIENTATION

About 7% of our participants' content in this question was related to the absence of goals and results orientation from the management in their companies. Our participants said that managers want to see people instead of being concerned with their deliveries. This presence orientation came up also associated with Traditional Organizational Culture and Management.

The presenteeism practice is very often discussed in Portugal as a regular practice among SMEs. As Silva (2021) said presenteeism is the phenomenon in which the employee is present in the workplace but due to diverse reasons cannot perform as expected even if overtime is done. Presenteeism is somehow installed in organizational cultures and to be abolished, performance must have its recognition. Companies must understand that creativity, for example, is not a consequence of the number of working hours.

According to Vicente (2019), Portugal is one of the countries where people work more hours and more and more employees admit that they are not able to conciliate their work-life with their

personal life. Regardless of the high number of hours spent in the workplace, Portugal has low rates of productivity and this is connected with the wrong idea that being present in the office means work.

In table 21, some excerpts justify some of our participants' opinions.

Table 21

Category Analysis: No results/goals orientation

Participant	No results / goals orientation
P1	<i>"They don't see at the level of accomplished objectives or the level of goals, nothing, they only come at the level of the person being on the spot, at those times, which is mandatory."</i>
P9	<i>"... we can be sitting there at the desk pretending to be working and not doing anything way but that's just a detail."</i>
P13	<i>"the way we also work is not so much for deliverables, is it? We are not very used to working so, I think the hours we are in front of the computer count more than what we are delivering"</i>

5. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study intends to contribute to deep knowledge and understanding of the impact of the pandemic, as an accelerator context, in RW as a differentiating retention factor, nowadays in Portugal.

From a theoretical perspective, contributions rely on the time framework, which was adopted and allowed to understand the reality of the participants towards RW before March 2020. This part of the study confirmed other studies and research such as Eurostat (2022) that stated that RW was practised only for a few companies. In Portugal, between 2012 and 2019, the average number of employees WFH was approximately 6%. Regardless, employees were already thinking about RW and desiring to try it.

The exploratory approach was also an added value to understanding, in some specific topics, how the RW experience during the hardest pandemic periods. The majority of the participants experienced different realities during this time, either from a personal perspective but also from the professional one, which extends previous research on the topic by showing the interindividual variability in understanding RW during the pandemic

Finally, this study also contributes to the HRM literature by assessing individuals' expectations towards RW from now on. An important contribution of the present study is that RW is appreciated, valued and desired not full-time perspective but in a hybrid model.

From an organizational and also business perspective, in a time when the 'war for talent' is at its peak, organizations can take advantage of some of the study's findings to rethink the way they intend to define their work environment from now on, but also organizations can take into consideration diverse information that can impact the success of such a working arrangement. Coping with the idea that 'one size does not fit all', future work arrangements should consider employees' needs, expectations, and desires but also management and leadership skills under a major umbrella, which involves strategy, market, competition and future (or present) trends.

Organizations can define a strategic approach to this topic. From the first approach through surveys, to the creation of diverse focus groups, with specific internal stakeholders, highlighting management and leadership positions, employees must be involved in the design and definition process of their future work arrangement. The involvement of employees can work in two ways: engaging people in the definition of their future workplace will raise the feelings of connection and

importance but also might directly increase their level of accountability towards the solutions that might be found.

As companies were/are focused on customizing their flexible benefits plan, why do not create some flexible RW plans, with different specificities, and allow employees to move from one plan to another if they need to change?

Creating a RW environment can not be disconnected from an assertive training and development plan for management and leadership teams, but also for employees. As already referred, RW means specific skills.

For bolder organizations, organizational culture can be the common denominator for all processes and this can be the opportunity for a truly deep transformational process. And in such an ambitious process, management by objectives can be the trigger to increase the level of trust and channel management and leadership energies to results delivered instead of the ‘famous but old-fashioned’ presenteeism.

RW also impacts society more broadly. Government can consider some of this study information to rethink the Portuguese Labour Code. Despite some ‘shy’ changes that have been implemented, RW impacts society more greatly with strong implications on the environment, economy, health, territorial population distribution, etc. Creating proper legislation and incentives can help in a way that this study does not aim to explain or explore, but that can be an inspirational kick-off for larger ones that may impact all stakeholders differently. Companies that are part of employers’ associations, that connect permanently with unions or workers’ commissions, can work together with all of these stakeholders to find solutions for a situation that should not be limited to the organizations’ board team to unilaterally decide.

6. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

RW is not new as this study already stated and confirmed through Portuguese labour law but it is indeed somehow new considering that the majority of the Portuguese labour force only experimented with RW, for the first time and in a more lasting experience, after March 2020. However, only a few studies had focused on RW as a potential retention factor for organizations, after the COVID-19 pandemic and the boom of the Great Resignation phenomenon.

Despite the contributions of this exploratory study, it has several limitations that can be tackled by future research. One of the limitations is related to the fact that this study deliberately focuses only on employees' perspectives. Despite 62% of the participants performing management positions, the fact is organizations' perspective was not under the scope of this study. Future research should include both perspectives and confront possibilities so different perspectives, employees' vs companies', can be profoundly analysed and discussed. RW won't disappear and as soon as companies understand this reality that was sped up by the pandemic, soon they can successfully join the War for Talent that is already in place.

Another interesting future research guideline is to assess employees with management positions, at all critical levels, to understand their double perspective: as employees and as managers. Future research wins if leadership is also included. It would be interesting to see if there are different approaches of RW according to different leadership styles but also to explore which skills should be developed on leadership teams to make them successful in leading remote teams.

Also, the generalization of this study's results is reduced. A wider sample, representing the population that needs to be studied, complemented with a quantitative approach is an added value to the discussion.

Future research guidelines can also introduce performance, turnover, engagement, commitment, as analysis variables, and organizational culture as a variable of context. From the performance perspective, it will be important to transform this concept into a more operational and objective one allowing organizations (employees and management) to measure it and connect performance with productivity, which can result in a much more powerful approach to organizations and the country's economy. Those tools will not only add an even more reliable image of those studies as well as can help to check performance perceived perception of employees among other variables.

In the end, employees and companies are part of the same ecosystem meaning that one's success is also the others.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative and exploratory study was able to reach its investigation objectives. The investigations objectives were: a) explore the overall RW experience as of March 2020; b) Identify the advantages and disadvantages of RW from employees' perspectives; c) Understand how employees evaluate their perceived performance while they are/were working remotely and d) Confirm RW as a differentiating retention factor, assessing if RW is perceived as a non-negotiable condition for employees' permanency in their current organizations.

Concerning the overall RW experience, our participants related different stages. This kind of evolutionary perception cannot be disconnected from the pandemic situation caused by SARS-COV2. Between March 2020 and June 2020, Portugal was in an emergency status declared by our President of the Republic through the Decree of the President of The Republic 14-A/2020 and fortnightly extended. For approximately three months Portugal was in a lockdown, which meant that freedom of movement was very limited. This was the context in which our participants, most of them for the first time, experimented with RW. Four of our interviewees were working at home at the same time their children, under 12 years old, were at home with them. And despite this study did not focus on their reality, this cannot be ignored. The remaining participants did not deal with this circumstance but dealt with others and context conditioned their RW perception. After some weeks, new routines were created and respondents started to take some advantage of being home working. Depending on the time participants were in RW, only three of them clearly stated that disadvantages are bigger than advantages. Of these three participants, only one does not care about keeping RW for the future. The other two participants defend a hybrid regime with more days at the office than at home.

From the advantages point of view, the most enhanced ones were: quality of life; flexibility; fewer commuting time and costs; focus; work and personal time management.

From a quality-of-life perspective, commuting time was used to rest, mainly at the beginning of the working day, but also to manage some domestic tasks that usually are done at the night or on weekends. It was also interesting to see that some of the participants used commuting time to slow down. Things like tasting breakfast, and being more patient with children in the morning were an added value when mentioned. But the quality of life is much wider than the usage of commuting

time. Participants underlined they felt more flexible to manage their work during the time. Making breaks during the day, even if for domestic purposes, gave them the feeling of satisfaction and afterwards more freedom to choose a time when they prefer to do specific working tasks.

Quality of life meant, for some, not feeling the pressure of dealing with traffic or public transportation, for example. Activities such as walking the dog, meditating, jogging, relaxing, at lunchtime, or even the possibility of eating a healthier meal were all positive aspects of RW. More, the possibility of conciliating domestic tasks during the day saves them time from night and weekend to be with their families. Saving money due to the decrease in commuting costs is also connected with this quality of life. Being at home was associated with comfort, for the majority. Being in your own space was somehow important.

Finally, and about perceived performance, working from home, for most of our participants, meant fewer interruptions, less noise, and less unproductive talks. But also meant to have the chance of working in periods when they usually cannot such as after dinner or at the weekends. And this does not mandatory mean, working overtime, means working at the best time according to each individual.

Flexibility was somehow a common denominator in the advantages equation.

From the disadvantages approach, the isolation, loneliness and lack of social contact was the biggest one. A human being, as some of the participants reinforced, is a social being by nature and the RW experience, for a large part of them, lasted for months. Months without personal contact with their managers, department colleagues and other co-workers meant somehow loneliness, isolation, communication decrease and also loss of a kind information that being unofficial is somehow considered important in an organization's world.

Virtual Meetings were referred mainly by two participants, both in a very negative way, which creates some kind of fallacy: virtual meetings instead of decreasing RW distance created a kind of exhaustion source that was counterproductive for the companies of these participants. Saw as some kind of control method, virtual meetings, if not managed properly, create some fatigue status that can be harmful to employees regardless of the positions they occupy.

From the retention analysis, this study was able to confirm that RW is a retention factor for most of the participants to an extent that, if their current companies do not provide them with a hybrid and appropriate work arrangement, the majority consider searching for a new job where this will can be a reality, in the next twelve months.

Interesting to understand that the majority of the participants do not consider that their companies are proving them with the best work arrangement they can either because they do not implement a hybrid regime yet or because the hybrid regime, implemented or to be implemented, has not a balanced distribution of working days at home and the office. It is important to remember that the majority of participants defend and hybrid work with more days at home.

After around two years of intense discussion about RW, do companies know that a large part of the employees does not want a full RW?

Are companies questioning employees' will about their future work arrangements?

Did companies take advantage of this period to improve their digitalization, their management RW skills, virtual communication processes, and virtual engagement strategies? Are companies already on track for a goal orientation leadership approach or presence is still an added value when the productivity mindset is still a utopia?

Answering our main investigation question: from this study perspective, the affirmation of RW being a retention factor nowadays can be done. This was indeed an indirect consequence of the pandemic once until March 2020 the major part of our participants thought about experiment RW but not to a point of thinking to leave their organizations because RW was somehow irregular and not for all employees. After around two years, the reality is quite different. Only four of our thirteen participants said they do not intend to quit even if RW won't be a practice in their current company.

Now that the use of masks has been abolished, Decree-Law 30-E/2022, of April 21st 2022, companies can finally, and with no specific limitations, decide how they want to design their future workplaces. Let's see how organizations adapt to this (not that new) reality. We are now living what can be seen as an unrepeatable opportunity. Remembering and creating parallelism with Charles Darwin, are not the strongest organizations that survive, nor the most intelligent, but those who are most adaptable to change. And reality, as we knew until March 2020, won't come back, no matter how hard we try. It is the past, not the present and neither the future.

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APPENDICES

Annexe 1

Interview Invitation

TELETRABALHO

Ou se ama ou se odeia? Será mesmo assim?

Gostaria de poder contar com a tua preciosa colaboração no meu projeto de dissertação, no âmbito do Mestrado de GRH, que estou a terminar na Universidade Europeia.

Desafiei-me a contribuir para a elevação da discussão do tema do teletrabalho em Portugal, querendo saber se o mesmo é hoje em dia, de facto, um fator importante na decisão de permanência de um colaborador na sua empresa.

Para poderes participar tens de preencher os seguintes requisitos:

1. ter estado em teletrabalho, pelo menos 1 mês, desde março de 2020;
2. ser trabalhador por conta de outrem (a tempo inteiro ou parcial);
3. caso estejas sem trabalhar, neste momento, também podes participar desde que cumpras o requisito no nº1 e nesse período tenhas sido trabalhador por conta de outrem;
4. ter mais de 18 anos;
5. tanto podes ter adorado como odiado estar em teletrabalho. Preciso de todas as perspetivas;

O que vais fazer:

Vais ser entrevistad@ por mim, num ambiente descontraído, e responder a algumas perguntas que criei para atingir o objetivo de estudo a que me propus.

Como vai decorrer a Entrevista:

- A entrevista será feita à distância, por via de plataformas como zoom, teams, etc.
- A entrevista será gravada, imagem e som ou apenas som.
- Terá a duração aproximada de 30 minutos.
- Serão cumpridos os requisitos previstos no Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados, nomeadamente, mas não exclusivamente, no que à garantia da confidencialidade dizem respeito.

E em que Horários poderei fazer as Entrevistas

Serão sempre agendadas nos horários que te forem mais confortáveis, incluindo e preferencialmente em pós-laboral e fim-de-semana.

Para confirmares a tua participação:

Manda-me um email (50050065@europaia.pt, colocando em cc o meu email pessoal: helenamoraissantos@gmail.com) ou responde ao meu whatsapp, indicando que queres fazer parte e indicando:

- nome completo
- nº de telemóvel
- endereço de email

Depois é só aguardares o meu contato.

**Preciso da tua ajuda.
Fico a aguardar o teu
contato.
Obrigada!!**



Annexe 2

Demographic Data Collection – Google Forms

28/03/22, 21:03

Dissertação M-GRH: Trabalho Remoto

Dissertação M-GRH: Trabalho Remoto

***Obrigatório**

1. Cumpre todos os requisitos apresentados para participar neste estudo (ter mais de 18 anos; ter estado pelo menos 1 mês em teletrabalho, após março de 2020, em situação de trabalhador por conta de outrem)? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

☐ Sim

CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de um projeto de investigação a decorrer na Universidade Europeia. Este estudo incide sobre o trabalho remoto (teletrabalho) e pretende aferir se o mesmo é, hoje em dia e em contexto pós-pandemia, um fator diferenciador na retenção, em Portugal.

O estudo é realizado por Helena Santos (50050045@europaia.pt ou helena.moraisantos@gmail.com), sob coordenação da Professora Dra Inês C. Sousa, que poderá contactar caso deseje colocar uma dúvida ou partilhar algum comentário.

A sua participação, que será muito valorizada, consiste em participar numa entrevista que poderá durar cerca de 30 minutos. Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo. Ainda que possa não beneficiar diretamente com a participação no estudo, as suas respostas vão contribuir para adicionar conhecimento científico a esta discussão com vista a apoiar a tomada de decisão nas organizações acerca deste tema.

A participação neste estudo é estritamente voluntária; pode escolher participar ou não participar. Se escolher participar, pode interromper a participação, no decorrer da entrevista, em qualquer momento sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. Para além de voluntária, a participação é também confidencial. Os dados destinam-se apenas a tratamento estatístico e nenhuma resposta será analisada ou reportada individualmente.

Antes da entrevista ser realizada, serão recolhidos dados sociodemográficos, através do presente formulário, onde será solicitado o seu nome de forma a garantir que a sua resposta é, em si mesma prova da autorização para a participação no próprio estudo, garantindo assim o cumprimento dos requisitos definidos no Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados. Em momento algum, o seu nome será divulgado no presente estudo ou em qualquer outro momento.

Face a estas informações, queira responder à seguinte pergunta:

2. Declaro que tomei conhecimento e compreendi o âmbito do presente estudo, bem como a utilização que será feita dos meus dados. Declaro ainda que estou de acordo com a referida utilização para a qual dou a minha autorização expressa, através da resposta à presente pergunta. *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

☐ Sim

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1tlcw6O_H4Q8Fz8WIElPkwMP7wGGuTfubzACMS2jpkal/edit

1/6

3. Indique o seu nome completo (o seu nome é apenas recolhido para efeitos de relacionar a autorização dada anteriormente com a pessoa que a deu, cumprindo os requisitos do Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados): *

Notas adicionais: 1) Se está desempregado no presente momento, deverá responder às perguntas seguintes, de acordo com o contexto laboral que tinha aquando da realização do seu trabalho em regime de trabalho remoto. 2) A palavra empresa pode também ser entendida como 'instituição', 'organismo', todo o tipo de entidade empregadora da qual possa fazer parte.

4. Género: *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Feminino
☐ Masculino
☐ Outro
☐ Prefiro não responder

5. Idade: *

6. Estado Civil *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Casado(a); União de Facto
☐ Solteiro(a); Viúvo(a); Separado(a); Divorciado(a)

7. Nº elementos do agregado familiar: *

8. Idade dos elementos do agregado familiar (indicar idades separadas por vírgulas) *

9. Tempo de deslocação casa-trabalho-casa (tempo total ida e volta) quando não está em regime de trabalho remoto. (referir se o tempo indicado é em horas ou minutos) *

10. Como se desloca para o seu local de trabalho? (se utiliza mais que um meio de transporte, escolha o meio utilizado com mais frequência) *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Viatura própria (carro ou mota)
☐ Viatura partilhada com colegas / amigos / familiares
☐ Transportes Públicos
☐ Bicicleta / Trotinete
☐ A pé

11. Tem necessidade de pagar estacionamento quando vai trabalhar para o escritório? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Sim
☐ Não
☐ Às vezes
☐ Não me desloco de viatura.

12. Em média, quanto gasta por mês, nas deslocações casa-trabalho-casa (valor em euros e incluir estacionamento caso o pagamento do mesmo exista): *

13. A localização das suas estruturas de apoio familiar e/ou escolar situa-se: *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Junto ao seu local de trabalho
☐ Na sua área de residência
☐ Na área de residência de familiares (ex: avós)
☐ Não aplicável

14. A empresa onde trabalha é *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Nacional
☐ Multinacional

15. A sua empresa é: *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Pública
☐ Privada
☐ Outra

16. Quantos colaboradores tem a sua empresa (pode ser o nº aproximado caso não saiba o nº exato)? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Menos de 10
☐ Entre 11 a 50
☐ Entre 51 a 250
☐ Entre 251 a 1000
☐ Mais de 1000

17. Qual a área de atuação / negócio da sua empresa? *

18. Qual a função que desempenha atualmente? *

19. Esta é uma função de gestão e/ou liderança? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Sim
☐ Não

20. Há quanto tempo trabalha nesta empresa (indicar se resposta está em meses ou anos)? *

21. Qual o seu tipo de contrato de trabalho? *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Contrato Por Tempo Indeterminado (Efetivo)
☐ Contrato a Termo (Certo ou Incerto)
☐ Contrato a Termo (especificamente de Trabalho Temporário)

22. Relativamente à entrevista que se vai realizar, declaro que presto o meu consentimento para que a mesma possa ser gravada. *

Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.

- ☐ Autorizo gravação da entrevista com recolha de imagem e som
- ☐ Autorizo a gravação da entrevista com recolha de som

Muito obrigada pelas suas respostas. Em breve agendaremos a nossa entrevista.

Este conteúdo não foi criado nem aprovado pela Google.

Google Formulários

Annexe 3

Interview Script

Demographic data collection:	Gender; Age; Marital status; household members and their age; commuting time (before RW); type of transport used in commuting; offices location vs. facilities such as gym, kinder garden, children's school, parents' home location; type of organization (national/international; public/private); economic sector; organization size; job, tenure, management position, type of labour contract.
Questions (before RW): Q1 – Before March 2020, did your organization have an RW policy? Q2 – (If yes) In your opinion, how this policy was translated into practice? Q3 – (If no) Before March 2020 did you ever really consider working remotely?	
Questions (context during mandatory RW): Q1 – For how long have you been working remotely since March 2020? Q2 – In general, how do you describe your RW experience? Q3 – What are the main advantages for you while working remotely? Q4 – What are the main disadvantages for you while working remotely? Q5 – After your workweek, how did you perceive your level of tiredness comparing office work and remote work: higher, lower, equal? Q6 – What have you done during the time that usually you took to commute? Q7 - How do you describe your level of perceived performance while working remotely? (Increased, decreased, the same) Q8 – During that period, were you allowed to work from a different place than your home?	
Questions (context after mandatory RW): Q1 – What is your work regime at the moment? RW; Partially RW; Totally at the office? Q2 – If hybrid, under which conditions?	

Q2.1. – Are you allowed to work from a different place than your home? (like a garden, a coffee shop, the beach)

Q2.2. – (if no) If you could choose any location to work remotely, how did you feel about it?

Q3 – Does this regime fit your expectations and needs?

Q3.1. – (if not the proper one or a throwback is expected) – Are you considering looking for a new job opportunity that allows you to work remotely, in a way you consider appropriate, in the next twelve months?

Q4 – If you could choose and work remotely permanently, would you consider living in a different region?

Q5 – In your opinion, why do you think that organizations do not implement RW more broadly?

Annexe 4

Dictionary of Categories

<u>Dimension</u>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Category Description</i>	<i>Sub-category</i>
<u>RW until March 2020</u>	<i>Thoughts and Will</i>	Respondents' existence of thoughts about RW and/or will to experiment with RW or the complete absence of these thoughts/will.	n.a.
	<i>Experience</i>	Respondents' reality at their current or past companies about the existence of RW policies and/or practices.	Irregular / just for a few people
			No practice
<u>RW experience since March 2020</u>	Overall experience description	Global RW experience analysis	n.a.
	Nr. of months in RW	Classification of participants' answers according to the time each of them spent on RW between March 2020 and September 2021	Less than 3 months
			From 3 up to 6 months
			From 7 up to 12 months
			More than 12 months
	RW Location	Place where participants could work remotely	No information
			No mandatory location
			Home - Mandatory
	Advantages	Perceptions of respondents according to advantages found in RW	Focus
			Flexibility
			Work Time Management
			Personal Time Management
			Quality of Life - Comfort

			Commuting Costs and Time
	Disadvantages	Perceptions of respondents according to disadvantages found in RW	Children at home
			Worktime increase
			Self discipline-Organization
			No space separation
			Virtual Meetings
			Lack of social contact
			Communication-Information
	Perceived Tiredness	Perceived level of respondents' tiredness, at the end of the day or week, when comparing working from home and working from the office	Equal
			Lower-RW
			Higher-RW
	Perceived Performance	Perceived level of respondents' performance when comparing working from home and working from the office	Equal
			Lower-RW
			Higher-RW
<u>Current Situation</u>	<u>Work Arrangement</u>	Identification of the current situation, concerning current work arrangement, at participants' companies	100% RW
			100% Office
			Hybrid-more days at the office
			Hybrid-more days at home

	<u>Expectations</u>	Confirmation of whether this work arrangement meets respondents' expectations or not	Does not meet the expectations
			Meets the expectations
<u>Future Intentions</u>	Resignation Intentions	Answers connected with the possibility of an eventual resignation if future work in their companies does not fulfil their need in RW.	n.a.
			On reflection process
			Clear intention
			No intention
<u>Restricted RW practices in Portugal</u>	Traditional' Organizational Culture and Management	Respondents' reasons directly reported as cultural or managerial seen as 'old fashioned'	n.a.
	Apprehensiveness / Lack of RW knowledge	Diverse reasons pointed out by respondents are connected with managers' and employers' apprehension and also the lack of knowledge about RW advantages.	n.a.
	Lack of Trust	Respondents' perceptions about lack of trust from managers and employers towards them when working remotely.	n.a.
	No results/goals orientation	Respondents' answers related to leadership and management styles in practice.	n.a.
	Other Reasons	Diverse reasons uncovered by previous categories	n.a.

Annexe 5

Frequency of Categories and Sub-Categories

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Sub-Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Absolute Frequency</i>	<i>Relative Frequency</i>
			308		
RW UNTIL MARCH 2020					
	<i>Thoughts and/or Will</i>		0		
		<i>Existence of thoughts and/or Will</i>	10	3,25%	76,92%
		<i>Absence of thoughts and/or Will</i>	3	0,97%	23,08%
	<i>Thoughts and/or Will</i>		13	4,22%	50,00%
	<i>Experience</i>		0		
		<i>Absence policies or practices</i>	8	2,60%	61,54%
		<i>Irregular and/or Just for a few practices</i>	5	1,62%	38,46%
	<i>Experience</i>		13	4,22%	50,00%
RW UNTIL MARCH 2020			26	8,44%	
RW EXPERIENCE SINCE MARCH 2020					
	<i>Overall experience description</i>		11	3,57%	5,50%
	<i>Nr. of Months in RW (2020-03 until 2021-09)</i>				
		<i>Less than 3 months</i>	3	0,97%	23,08%
		<i>From 3 up to 6 months</i>	2	0,65%	15,38%
		<i>From 7 up to 12 months</i>	2	0,65%	15,38%

		<i>More than 12 months</i>	6	1,95%	46,15%
	<i>N° of Months in RW (2020-03 until 2021-09)</i>		13	4,22%	6,50%
	<i>RW Location</i>		0		
		<i>No information</i>	6	1,95%	46,15%
		<i>No mandatory location</i>	4	1,30%	30,77%
		<i>Home - Mandatory</i>	3	0,97%	23,08%
	<i>RW experience since March 2020\RW Location</i>		13	4,22%	6,50%
	<i>Advantages</i>		0		
		<i>Focus</i>	8	2,60%	9,41%
		<i>Flexibility</i>	18	5,84%	21,18%
		<i>Work Time Management</i>	5	1,62%	5,88%
		<i>Personal Time Management</i>	5	1,62%	5,88%
		<i>Quality of Life - Comfort</i>	35	11,36%	41,18%
		<i>Commuting Costs and Time</i>	14	4,55%	16,47%
	<i>Advantages</i>		85	27,60%	42,50%
	<i>Disadvantages</i>		0		
		<i>Children at home</i>	5	1,62%	9,62%
		<i>Worktime increase</i>	8	2,60%	15,38%
		<i>Self-Discipline - Organization</i>	3	0,97%	5,77%
		<i>No space separation</i>	4	1,30%	7,69%
		<i>Virtual Meetings</i>	8	2,60%	15,38%
		<i>Lack of social contact</i>	16	5,19%	30,77%
		<i>Communication - Information</i>	8	2,60%	15,38%
	<i>Disadvantages</i>		52	16,88%	26,00%
	<i>Perceived Tiredness</i>		0		
		<i>Equal</i>	1	0,32%	7,69%
		<i>Lower in RW</i>	8	2,60%	61,54%
		<i>Higher in RW</i>	4	1,30%	30,77%

	<i>Perceived Tiredness</i>		13	4,22%	6,50%
	<i>Perceived Performance</i>		0		
		<i>Cannot assess</i>	1	0,32%	7,69%
		<i>Equal</i>	2	0,65%	15,38%
		<i>Lower in RW</i>	2	0,65%	15,38%
		<i>Higher in RW</i>	8	2,60%	61,54%
	<i>Perceived Performance</i>		13	4,22%	6,50%
RW EXPERIENCE SINCE MARCH 2020			200	64,94%	
CURRENT SITUATION					
	Expectations		0		
		Does not meet the expectations	9	2,92%	69,23%
		Meet the expectations	4	1,30%	30,77%
	Expectations		12	4,22%	50,00%
	Work Arrangement		0		
		100% RW	3	0,97%	23,08%
		100% Office	5	1,62%	38,46%
		Hybrid: more days at the office	2	0,65%	15,38%
		Hybrid: more days at home	3	0,97%	23,08%
	Work Arrangement		13	4,25%	50,00%
CURRENT SITUATION			26	8,44%	
FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AND INTENTIONS					
	Resignation Intentions		0		
		No resignation intention	4	1,30%	36,36%
		Clear resignation intention	2	0,65%	18,18%
		On reflection process	5	1,62%	45,45%
FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AND INTENTIONS			11	3,57%	
PORTUGAL RW RESTRICTED PRACTICES REASONS					

	Traditional' Organizational Culture Management		14	4,55%	31,82%
	Apprehensiveness		14	4,55%	31,82%
	Lack of Trust		11	3,57%	25,00%
	No results / goals orientation		3	0,97%	6,82%
	Other Reasons		2	0,65%	4,55%
PORTUGAL RW RESTRICTED PRACTICES REASONS			44	14,29%	

