

Critical aspects of telework in a multinational company

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Abstract

Amidst the changes in the business world, companies are constantly forced to adapt by reviewing their policies, their processes and their practices and work routines. Among various working practices, teleworking is a controversial theme in management and worthy of more in-depth studies. Based on this premise, the following research question is proposed: What are the critical elements for telework programs' sustainability in a multinational company? This article aims to describe and characterize teleworkers' views regarding telework as a human resources practice, its advantages and disadvantages, as well as the challenge of making it a strategically oriented practice. A study was carried out in a telework program for interns of a multinational company. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with twelve trainees and examined through a content analysis with the aid of the software NVivo 9. The analysis provided seven categories regarding the perceptions of the program participants. Among advantages identified are the positive relationships between telework and academic activities, the flexibility provided, as well as professional development as a result of autonomous setting of individual working goals. On the other hand, the working hours, the difficulty of untying personal life from work and problems with visibility within the organization – which is important in terms of career advancement – were singled out as major difficulties of this work mode.

Keywords: Technology. Personnel Management. Human Resources Strategies. Teleworking. Content analysis.

Aspectos críticos do teletrabalho em uma companhia multinacional

Resumo

Em meio às transformações no mundo dos negócios, as empresas são constantemente forçadas a se adaptar, revisando suas políticas, seus processos e suas práticas e rotinas de trabalho. Dentre as diversas práticas de trabalho, o teletrabalho é um tema polêmico em administração e merecedor de estudos mais aprofundados. Baseando-se nessa premissa, propõe-se a seguinte pergunta de pesquisa: Quais são os elementos críticos para a sustentabilidade de um programa de teletrabalho no contexto de uma empresa multinacional?. Este artigo busca descrever e caracterizar as visões de teletrabalhadores em relação ao teletrabalho enquanto prática de recursos humanos (RH), suas vantagens e desvantagens, assim como o desafio de torná-lo uma prática estrategicamente orientada. Realizou-se estudo em um programa de teletrabalho para estagiários de uma empresa multinacional. Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas em profundidade com 12 estagiários e examinados por meio de análise de conteúdo no programa de computador *NVivo 9*. A análise forneceu 7 categorias acerca das percepções dos participantes do programa de teletrabalho. Dentre as vantagens identificadas estão a relação positiva entre teletrabalho e atividades acadêmicas, a flexibilidade proporcionada, assim como o amadurecimento profissional como resultado do estabelecimento autônomo de metas individuais de trabalho; por outro lado, a sobrecarga de horas de trabalho, a dificuldade de desvincular a vida pessoal do trabalho e os problemas com a visibilidade dentro da organização – o que é importante em termos de avanço na carreira – foram apontados como as principais dificuldades dessa modalidade de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Tecnologia. Gestão de Pessoas. Estratégias de Recursos Humanos. Teletrabalho. Análise de Conteúdo.

Aspectos críticos del teletrabajo en una compañía multinacional

Resumen

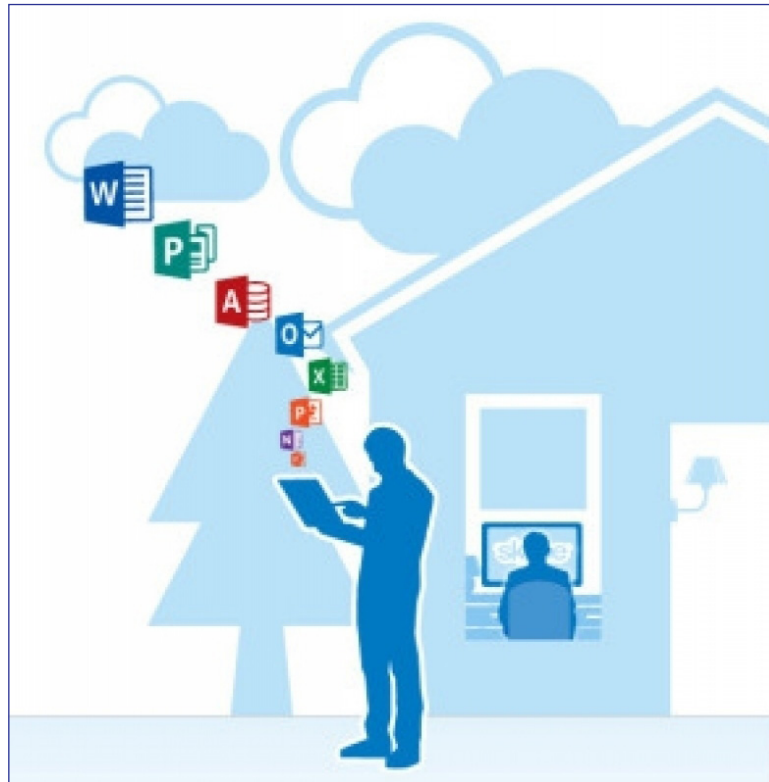
En medio a las transformaciones del mundo de los negocios, las empresas son forçadas a adaptarse constantemente, revisando sus políticas, sus procesos, sus prácticas y rutinas de trabajo. Entre las diversas prácticas de trabajo, el teletrabajo es un tema polémico en administración, y merecedor de estudios más profundos. Con base en esa premissa, se plantea la siguiente pregunta de investigación: “¿Cuáles son los elementos críticos para la sostenibilidad de un programa de teletrabajo en el contexto de una empresa multinacional?”. Así, el objetivo de este artículo es describir y caracterizar las opiniones de los teletrabajadores en relación al teletrabajo como práctica de recursos humanos (RH), sus ventajas y desventajas, así como el desafío de convertirlo en una práctica estratégicamente orientada. Se realizó un estudio en un programa de teletrabajo para pasantes de una empresa multinacional. Los datos se recolectaron mediante entrevistas en profundidad con 12 pasantes y se examinaron a través del análisis de contenido en el programa informático NVivo 9, que suministró 7 categorías acerca de las percepciones de los participantes del programa de teletrabajo. Entre las ventajas identificadas están la relación positiva entre teletrabajo y actividades académicas, la flexibilidad proporcionada, así como la madurez profesional resultante del establecimiento autónomo de metas individuales de trabajo. Por otro lado, la sobrecarga de horas de trabajo, la dificultad de desvincular la vida personal del trabajo y los problemas con la visibilidad se señalaron como las principales desventajas de esa modalidad de trabajo.

Palabras clave: Tecnología. Gestión de Personas. Estrategias de Recursos Humanos. Teletrabajo. Análisis de Contenido.

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INTRODUCTION

Constant changes in economic, social and political scenarios have demanded transformations in organizations. The growing diversity of work, the emphasis on developing technical and behavioral skills, the introduction of young people in the job market, efforts to retain talent and new ways of organizing work are some of the most important challenges that require new approaches and technologies in human resources management (DUTRA, 2013). In addition, competitiveness, globalization and managerial innovation processes have made the management of people even more complex. Parallel to this, there has been increased demand for more alignment between this area and the strategic areas of organizations, which has shifted focus away from traditional subsystems: selecting and recruiting, training and development, performance evaluations, and remuneration and benefit policies, among others. In this way, the mobilization of individual skills for organizational development, continual processes of innovation, and the use of technology to broaden communication and agility in activities have become the current demands and challenges of human resources management. In addition to this, the growing demands of various stakeholders have brought challenges that require a greater understanding of business to guarantee the desired sustainability. At the same time, the entrance of young workers in companies has introduced objectives that often differ from those that companies with rigid, traditional structures use in their management models.

It is in this sense that proposals for intervention are needed, to the extent that they contribute to the adaptation to changes in the organizational environment. Telework has thus appeared as an option to handle the challenges of work such as maintaining a company's physical space and fixed costs, work displacement, flexibility in management and accompanying the expected results (COENEN and KOK, 2014; BARROS and SILVA, 2010; SERRA, 2010). In addition, it can be argued that telework, depending on its operationalization, can be employed as a strategy to retain young workers who seek flexibility and, at the same time, the development of skills in organizations.

Image source: SERJUSMIG. Available at: <http://site.serjusmig.org.br/noticia/930/tjmg-publica-portaria-autorizando-participacao-de-servidores-no-teletrabalho-conheca-os-pros-e-contras>. Accessed on July 19, 2017

Given the above-mentioned aspects, the objective of this article is to analyze telework in terms of human resources management practices, addressing its advantages and disadvantages for workers as well as the challenge of making it a strategically oriented practice. To accomplish this, we've selected a specific telework program for interns in a multinational firm. We will examine the current human resources management challenges, telework and the intern integration model based on this form of work.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

In order for human resources management to become effectively strategic for an organization, the concept of the role of workers needs to be expanded. Thus, the nomenclature has changed: during the twentieth century the terminology changed from "labor" to "employees" and later "collaborators," even though often this last term creates a false sensation of constructive participation, which merely hides fragile work relationships. Even so, it represents a contrast with the vision of people as strictly resources, and the contemporary vision of managing people seeks integrated solutions that align their development with organizational strategy (MENESES, COELHO JÚNIOR, FERREIRA et al., 2014).

According to Meneses, Coelho Júnior, Ferreira et al. (2014), it has been common to find functionalist approaches in the literature which seek models capable of solving old problems, such as subsystems of human resources management and contemporary perspectives and challenges in this area; however, many articles do not make use of more current theoretical references or lack sufficient methodological rigor to further theoretical advances (MASCARENHAS and BARBOSA, 2013). In parallel to these functionalist approaches, other researchers have suggested qualitative methods such as cartography, which are capable of broadening our understanding of human resources management phenomena based on the registration of the transformation of territory, following researcher paths in terms of the researcher's relationship with his or her own field of research, breaking with positivist and Cartesian propositions (WEBER, GRISCI and PAULON, 2012).

The alignment of human resources management with organizational strategy in terms of vision, mission, values and objectives results in a partnership that aggregates value for both the organization and employee development. Barreto, Silva, Fischer et al. (2010) highlight emerging themes in human resources management that involve new challenges and the respective strategies to deal with them, bearing in mind technology, the strategic role of human resources and internationalization; in the context of internationalization strategy for a multinational firm, for example, human resources management is an area that offers a competitive advantage by occupying itself with the integration of people within organizational development (LEITE, LEITE and ALBUQUERQUE, 2013). Oliveira and Oliveira (2011) reinforce the idea of relating various human resource management studies and policies to organizational development, emphasizing those that integrate this area into strategy. This shows that increasing the sustainability of the business, through broadening and innovating human resources management processes, supports organizational development (VASCONCELOS, CYRINO, D'OLIVEIRA et al., 2015).

Besides possessing technical and HR knowledge as an element of change, professionals in this area also have a role as strategic partners (ULRICH, 2000). Thus, globalization, competitiveness, technology and the business's sector should be taken into account in implementing HR projects and activities. An example of this is aligning individual skills with organizational skills as a way of ensuring the company's competitiveness (FLEURY and FLEURY, 2004; DUTRA, 2013). Individual skills (and abilities) have been seen as dynamics for achieving expected business results (TEECE, PISANO and SHUEN, 1997). The training of an employee in terms of knowledge, abilities and attitudes also involves the concept of delivery in terms of how they contribute to the company's objectives (DUTRA, 2013). In this sense, individual skills should be aligned with the business's strategic goals and challenges. Thus, human resources management takes on a larger role in supporting the company's strategic objectives, including and employing strategic tools for the internal business analysis – resources, individual and business abilities and skills – and external analysis – of institutions and the sector (BARNEY, 1991; BARNEY and HESTERLY, 2007; PORTER, 1986; TEECE, PISANO and SHUEN, 1997).

The mobilization of people in terms of professional and organizational development implies the construction of a work environment which encourages exchanges of knowledge, learning and improvements in abilities which are broader than the

traditional formal training that has been conducted in these spaces (PANTOJA and BORGES-ANDRADE, 2009). Organizational learning, in this sense, is more than the sum of individual learning; shared experiences transform employees and the organization in a continual, productive process of adaptation which leads to changes in behavior and routines. Institutions that promote these exchanges are seen as organizations that learn, because they adapt to market needs in a continuous cycle of improvement and promote greater sustainability for the business (ARGYRIS and SCHÖN, 1996).

In a study of HR managers in terms of the professional challenges foreseen for the coming years (2010 to 2015) Barreto, Silva, Fischer et al. (2010) emphasize the challenge of promoting greater equilibrium between professional and personal life and the adaptation to policies that contemplate the needs of young professionals. This study exemplifies the challenge of human resources management in seeking to develop innovative policies that restructure the work day as well as the way young professionals enter companies in a creative manner. These efforts include internationalization, even though technological innovation in Brazilian multinational firms in general has not reached the stage of development that it has in multinational firms based in other countries (FLEURY, FLEURY and BORINI, 2013). Flexibility in the workday, as well as personnel retention policies that offer prospects for professional and personal development, is seen as an essential (or at least important) strategy in the contemporary landscape (WHITTLE and MUELLER, 2009).

On the other hand, we need to consider the way these strategies and practices are conducted within organizations. The new morphologies of work in Brazil use management technologies or models that make the established relationship between the individual and his or her work more precarious (ANTUNES, 2014). In this sense, we can observe terms such as telework and flexible work, among others, which are presented as innovations, but end up, in many cases, mainly benefitting organizations and harming workers (ROHM and LOPES, 2015). This conflict demands that human resources management professionals develop the ability to reflect ethically and question the functionalist character that this area has acquired with strategic discourses and models that only serve the interests of capital (ROHM and LOPES, 2015).

Thus telework arises as an alternative to organizations that seek to give their routines more flexibility. Organizations need to rethink the way in which they conduct and adapt to changes, such as technological advances, the reduction of fixed costs, and greater autonomy at work for interns entering the market, as well as the consequences of this model for the lives of these individuals. In the next section we will address the key issues related to telework such as its advantages and disadvantages as mentioned by the field literature.

TELEWORK IN ORGANIZATIONS

Telework or working in a home office as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) is “performed far from central offices or production workshops” in which workers “remain connected to some of their colleagues through new technologies.” It arises as a chance for an organization to broaden its presence and integrate workers that are in regions far from offices or workers whose functions require travel; another important aspect is the consideration of remote areas, which have traditionally been ignored by the market due to their geographic distance (RODRIGUES, 2011).

On the other hand, with telework, there is a process that dominates an individual’s time after the workday. Information technology and other new technologies have broadened non-material work, taking advantage of the worker’s abilities and mechanisms to control them (GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014). These aspects have been verified in the present study, and the discourses related to telework need to be analyzed from various points of view, considering organizational arguments in terms of the development of professional skills remotely and the consequences of this form of work for young teleworkers.

ORGANIZATIONS AND TELEWORK

In the literature there are different analytical approaches to telework. To authors such as Serra (2010), telework may become a solution for organizations that need to decentralize their operations in relation to their current offices and industries, or that are seeking direct or indirect savings in terms of space and electricity in their offices. From this same perspective, Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007) affirm that remote work also offers greater worker productivity and motivation, in addition to other benefits such as economizing office space, increasing employee productivity, lower indices of absenteeism and relative savings and flexibility in terms of work.

However, this same flexibility, supplied by the use of technology, increases the control that the organization exerts over the individual. Organizational rationales argue that the teleworker must be autonomous, disciplined, reliable and proactive, among other aspects that keep employees subject to company demands (COSTA, 2013) through the following process: once they are named by the organization as people with distinct skills and abilities, and thus have been differentiated from other workers at the institution, teleworkers end up being dominated by this positioning of the organization beyond the workday, which makes them more likely to dedicate even more time to work to merit the confidence placed in them by the organization (COSTA, 2013; GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014).

A direct result of this phenomenon is an increase in the productivity of the teleworker, which is touted as a benefit for the organization, given that teleworkers can just focus on their own tasks and avoid direct interruptions or interference on the part of colleagues at work. Another factor that contributes to this increase in individual productivity is the fact that workers who perform their activities outside of the office tend to make a greater effort to show that they are producing results for the organization (BARROS and SILVA, 2010; COENEN and KOK, 2014). In addition, a worker in the office represents an indirect expense in the form of costs such as water, coffee, electricity, etc. which also should be taken into account (BARROS and SILVA, 2010) and in the case of telework part of these costs are passed to the teleworker when work is performed at home (WHITTLE and MUELLER, 2009).

Coenen and Kok (2014) make broader arguments in analyzing the benefits of telework for companies. The authors suggest that just flexibility in working hours by itself, without having employees necessarily work far from the office, brings with it a lower turnover in personnel. For the organization, in addition to lower turnover, employees will increase their productivity, which will be beneficial to and expected by the company. On the other hand, the subjective costs of new management technologies need to be analyzed since, in some cases, they are presented as fashionable, but are in fact based on assembly line processes in the tradition of Taylor and Ford. This productivist posture leads to a decrease in autonomy and the worker's ability to act, and may lead to illness (ANTUNES, 2014).

Flexibility in work can be a great advantage for an organization: giving the worker greater autonomy in terms of working hours, increases the worker's commitment to the organization. Thus the worker is apt to dedicate extra time to deliver a recently assigned task with a deadline defined by the organization. This commitment occurs due to the need that employees feel to demonstrate their abilities and skills, as mentioned above, as well as the feeling that this time can be compensated for in the future by realizing personal activities during working hours, for example (BARROS and SILVA, 2010).

From an organizational point of view, areas like research and development (R & D) and the development of new products can achieve significant gains through telework. To Coenen and Kok (2014), depending on the type of work and the areas involved (production, marketing, trade marketing, etc.), greater levels of integration may be possible which can lead to greater agility. However, the authors emphasize the importance of meetings and contacts between the individuals involved; workers interviewed for this study stressed flexibility and confidence in the team as the factors that determine project success.

In contrast to the benefits that organizations reap, we should also remember the disadvantages that the institution will have to deal with in adopting telework: changes in organizational culture and structure, equipment costs, employee hiring, and the preparation that will be required in terms of leadership and incentives (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007).

Changes in organizational culture and structure are challenges for an organization, because it will have to deal with two distinct forms of work. It has to make sure that remote workers are integrated into the company, given that their work environments are different: space and interaction time are reduced for teleworkers and they become socially isolated within the organization (COSTA, 2013). To minimize this aspect, Whittle and Mueller (2009) point out that some companies have adopted measures to integrate their teleworkers more, both among themselves and with other workers, through meetings at the company, team lunches and happy hours after normal work hours.

In terms of implementing this work regime, the company will also need to make investments in technology and information: notebooks, cell phones, and 3G internet modems, as well as specialized computer programs can all support this work (BARROS and SILVA, 2010). These investments are related to improving worker communication and access with the company, as well as integration within the corporate environment. However, the dialogue between the company and the teleworker may not occur spontaneously; even with greater investment; it's possible that there will be some communication issues beyond the reach of the organization's will (BARROS and SILVA, 2010).

The ethnographic study conducted by Whittle and Mueller (2009) with a group of 10 teleworkers portrayed a difficult relationship between workers and company information and communication systems. Despite the investment made in necessary work equipment, workers are subject to bad weather which can make important activities impossible: these include damaging computers or worsening their performance, becoming isolated in a location, lack of internet access, and the compromising of telephone meetings, which are also subject to the precarious nature of telecommunications services. To Barros and Silva (2010), extra remuneration is important for the expenses of adapting the work environment as well as a monthly stipend to cover the costs of paper and the internet. In addition to these expenses, the company should cover habitual expenses like airline tickets, taxis and dinners, which are necessary to bring together the entire team.

The selection of the people who will perform telework is also difficult; you need to establish beforehand essential elements which involve the performance of tasks like methods, reports, deliverables, indicators, etc. as well as the need for specific skills and abilities. Human resources management rationales attribute a series of behavioral skills to these workers, however, during the selection process this position should also include critical reflection to make sure that the actions of these professionals do not become an instrument to make their work even more precarious (ROHM and LOPES, 2015).

Another critical aspect of telework is leadership's adaptation to this culture. If, on one hand, there are studies that point to greater productivity for teleworkers in terms of tasks over which they have control, autonomy and responsibility, there are others that point to greater productivity in repetitive tasks (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007). Thus there still is no consensus about the styles of leadership or management associated with this type of work.

To Ordoñez (2012), the adaptation and the difficulties of this type of work affect superiors as much as they do the workers themselves. For teleworkers, dividing the 24 hours of a day between work, rest and idle time can be quite complicated in practice: some teleworkers end up using symbolic objects to differentiate work time from idle time when they are at home. The supposed modernization of the work movement has eliminated gestures and styles of work considered unproductive, giving space to saving time and eliminating creative idle time in the mechanization of human activities (ROHM and LOPES, 2015).

It should be emphasized that disputes for power and informal communication are very important in relation to employees and their colleagues and the organization. Thus the organization has to be very attentive to subjective aspects of human existence: envy, internal disputes, vanities and other manifestations that can harm workers. The worker that has to go to the company every day when his colleague does not have to can feel disadvantaged and all organization employees should be aware of the characteristics pertinent to having a home office (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007).

In the context of the contemporary job market, in which companies face difficulties in selecting and retaining employees, telework can be a way to retain personnel. According to the Applied Economic Research Institute (IPEA), the high rate of turnover and instability related to work result in more unemployment than the lack of job openings for the young population. Therefore it is crucial for organizations to be attentive to what youths are seeking in terms of their first professional experiences and sometimes telework can be an effective response. More and more companies are offering

internship programs and in many companies these programs are essential to the entrance of college graduates into the company, and are considered a way to guarantee a future qualified employee for the organization. According to Noonan and Glass (2012), youths with higher education in administrative positions or management are more likely to like telework than other people their age.

Given our discussion from an organizational point of view, we also need to look at it from the perspective of teleworkers, based on a discussion of autonomy, flexibility and the confidence entrusted by the company in order to better understand how the teleworker experiences and balances work with personal demands.

WORKERS AND TELEWORK

Telework requires organizational tools and a culture that facilitates worker autonomy; it requires superiors to have the skills to ensure effective performance together with the teleworkers; and it requires teleworkers to have command and understanding of the company's information systems (BARROS and SILVA, 2010).

From the worker's point of view, we can initially consider telework to be capable of offering a specific group of benefits: the saving of financial resources (mainly fuel), flexibility in the location and time of work, as well as time savings and relative autonomy, which are factors which can contribute to a more comfortable and motivating work climate (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007; LENUZZA, 2007; SERRA, 2010; GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014).

Barros and Silva (2010), however, show that saving financial resources is not always satisfactory: even if the worker does not spend money to travel to work, there will be costs associated with work materials, such as furniture that provides the ergonomic conditions for work, various materials, electricity, etc. In addition, the conditions for performing work are not always appropriate (BARROS and SILVA, 2010), and thus it is important to have financial resources/materials available so that teleworkers have the full ability to perform their tasks without incurring personal expenses, establishing at the same time transparent mechanisms for controlling resources and recording spending.

In relation to the flexibility of work hours, this is referred to as one of the most important characteristics to teleworkers: they can order their priorities and get more out of their free time (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007). Tremblay (2012) stresses that telework is more attractive to married people with children, since it gives them the chance to spend more time with their family. On the other hand, Grisci and Cardoso (2014, p. 5) point out that technology increases non-material work, because "even for the most simple activities, the worker receives training intended to provide good customer service and must always be on call for occasional tasks." It should be noted that flexibility does not only refer to work hours; in general, the employee is given the preference of where to work. This choice of location can benefit workers who travel great distances. In the case of interns, for example, the university itself can be a place of work. In other cases, the company indicates telecommunications centers, locations with the resources that the individual needs to perform his or her job and share information. However, Noonan and Glass (2012) state that flexibility can induce the worker to not only work more than the 40 hours a week required by law, but also when sick; given the nature of remote work, the worker has more ways to access emails and respond to emergency requests.

The saving of time in reference to traveling is listed as the second greatest benefit to the worker in the study conducted by Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007). Reducing the time it takes to get to work in offices or industries, workers save time that they can devote to their personal lives, and can even dedicate this time to their professional development. They can also use this time to resolve personal problems that can only be resolved during commercial hours (BARROS and SILVA, 2010).

Finally, in terms of autonomy at work, the fact that the worker is evaluated based on the quality of the work delivered requires a more proactive posture that is more active in terms of planning activities and tasks.

In relation to the disadvantages of telework, the literature lists social isolation, almost a total absence of legal protection, the chances of having less favorable working conditions – including the difficulty in identifying extra hours put in for their respective proper remuneration – the interference and overlapping of work with family life, which may weaken these

relationships, the overlapping of work and leisure time, greater difficulty in defending labor and professional interests, the “parceling” of work, the company’s ever-present control through technologies and systems, and fewer opportunities for promotion (SERRA, 2010; RODRIGUES, 2011; NOONAN and GLASS, 2014).

Social isolation is a clear problem in relation to telework; human beings are social animals and their well-being depends to a great extent on the interactions and bonds that are created in the work environment (TOSE, 2005). In a traditional work environment, people meet in groups according to their common interests, establishing friendly relationships. In telework, social integration is a problematic aspect, represented by difficulties in relating with others at work as well as at home. The individual’s isolation can make this person feel unmotivated by work; in addition, this individual’s opportunities for learning may diminish. The informal aspect of the organization contributes in a relevant manner to worker learning (PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICER, 2007; BARROS and SILVA, 2010; SERRA, 2010; ORDOÑEZ, 2012; DAHLSTROM, 2013). The sensation of isolation thus affects the worker’s productivity and quality of life, and it can lead to alienation in terms of organizational culture. Whittle and Mueller (2009) add that the sensation of solitude and tools used for control can lead the teleworker to develop problems associated with excessive stress, the sensation of being exploited, and insecurity.

Ordoñez (2012) emphasizes that work is part of the relationship of being an individual in society today. The telework initiative, considered by companies to be a solution for workers in large cities, is a form of abruptly reducing costs which takes away from the worker something fundamental to his or her existence, namely social relations. The spreading of telework goes against the social essence of the individual. Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007) and Tose (2005) suggest that workers can realize activities with colleagues that diminish this feeling of isolation, such as participating in lunches with other employees and going to work a few times a week to meet friends.

Currently telework is regulated by legislation that applies to people who are self-employed, whose work regime is distinguished from those who have a home office which is subordinate to an employer (LENUZZA, 2007). Thus there is no surveillance of the length of the teleworker’s workday by the company, and this person is equal to an external worker, and therefore risks not being able to charge for working extra hours (RODRIGUES, 2011).

Even though flexibility is seen as one of the great advantages of telework, this advantage is not consensual. Through a classification of types of flexibility, Whittle and Mueller (2009) clarify the bases for discussion: (1) functional flexibility, which permits the worker to switch areas within the organization in a temporary or definitive manner; (2) numerical flexibility, which permits the organization to modify its workforce quickly by hiring third party workers; (3) financial flexibility, which involves heterogeneous systems of paying workers; and (4) distance flexibility which is directly associated with people who work far from a company’s headquarters and offices. According to the authors, functional flexibility can lead a company to force a worker to switch areas, where that person will accumulate responsibilities without any increase in remuneration to show for it. The second form of flexibility makes it easy for companies to switch employees or subcontract them easily through third party firms, thus generating pressure to hire other employees at lower salaries. Financial flexibility generates payment systems that are unjust to workers.

The fourth category of flexibility criticized by the authors is the most relevant to this article: it involves the hiring of people from distant regions and freelancers in order to reduce the organization’s costs. From Whittle and Mueller’s point of view (2009), this practice is part of so-called “flexible capitalism,” in which companies sell an ideal which does not exist in practice, due to the negative aspects of flexibility: the increase in costs to individuals, the excessive working hours, the feeling of isolation, diminished career prospects, and the difficulty of reconciling one’s personal life with one’s professional life.

The parceling of work, cited by Serra (2010), refers to workers executing small portions of work, without necessarily terminating one job and beginning another. This type of multifunctionality not only harms the quality of the service requested by superiors, it also contributes to work overload in meeting the demands of scheduled activities (COSTA, 2013; GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014).

Even when teleworkers are far from the office and the physical presence of a boss, they can be monitored through information technology, ranging from calls to tracking the notebook provided by the firm. However, Barros and Silva (2010) stress that the basic premise of telework is the confidence that supervisors have placed in their subordinates.

Difficulty in climbing the career ladder is a phenomenon that faces workers who work outside the office. The lack of visibility within the company due to the teleworker's reduced time in the office, and the difficulty of establishing appropriate evaluation criteria for this type of work makes promotion difficult within the organization. There is also, in addition to the above mentioned factors, prejudice on the part of workers who put in their time in the office in terms of their impression of teleworkers: frequently the perception is "if you are not being observed, you are not working" (DAHLSTROM, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

To realize this study, we have employed a qualitative approach through the collection and analysis of perceptions, implicit relationships, motivations and ideas and their respective reflections to gain a greater understanding of these human and social activities (MILES and HUBERMAN, 1994; COLLIS and HUSSEY, 2005). In terms of its objectives, this study is descriptive in nature, and seeks to present the perceptions and reflections of a group of interns in a multinational firm in relation to the telework regime that they participate in. Descriptive studies "examine the characteristics of a given population or a given phenomenon," and can situate "correlations between variables and define their nature" and, even though they may not explain the phenomena and relationships being studied, they can also serve as initial efforts to explain them (VERGARA, 1998, p. 45).

The context of our study is the Brazilian subsidiary of a multinational firm with headquarters in the United States which operates in over 175 countries. With more than 140 years on the market, its stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange and in the first quarter of 2016 its revenues were over \$4.5 billion. In Brazil its subsidiary has been operating for two decades and employs more than five thousand people. The subsidiary headquarters are located in São Paulo, and include the following corporate areas: Corporate Management, Finance, Human Resources, Legal, Categories, Sales, Marketing and Trade Marketing. In addition to the central office, it has two factories in the State of São Paulo, two in the State of Rio Grande do Sul and one in the State of Bahia. With products distributed all over Brazil, its brands are concentrated in consumer goods, and it offers products for personal hygiene, baby care, and feminine protection. Besides its consumer product lines, this company offers a line of hospital products as well as another line for bars and restaurants.

In terms of human resources management, the company has a broad structured program of plans and benefits: health and dental plans, meal vouchers, subsidies for language and specialization courses, psychological and legal assistance, a private retirement plan and a car with unlimited mileage for employees in the commercial area. These benefits and plans indicate why this company is considered one of the ten best companies to work for in Brazil and one of the hundred best in Latin America (GREAT PLACE TO WORK, 2016).

In terms of the participants selected for this study, we have chosen to examine a group of 12 young current and former interns between the ages of 21 and 26 from all over the country (Chart 1); the selection process was based on the criterion of the participants having relevant experience with telework during their internship at the company; all of them worked in the commercial area in one or more of the following areas: sales, trade marketing and merchandising.

Chart 1

Description of the Study Participants

Subject	Situation	Age	Sex	Major	Area	City	Interview
1	Inter	21	M	Production Engineering	Sales	Belém	In Person
2	Ex-Intern	23	F	Production Engineering	Sales	Belém	In Person
3	Ex-Intern	25	F	Communications	Sales	Belém	In Person
4	Ex-Intern	26	M	Administration	Sales	Fortaleza	In Person
5	Inter	21	F	Administration	Sales	Fortaleza	In Person
6	Ex-Intern	22	M	Administration	Sales	Fortaleza	In Person
7	Ex-Intern	26	M	Administration	Sales	Salvador	In Person
8	Inter	25	M	Communications	Sales	Salvador	In Person
9	Ex-Intern	23	F	Administration	Sales	Rio de Janeiro	Telephone
10	Ex-Intern	25	M	Administration	Sales	Salvador	Telephone
11	Inter	26	M	Administration	Sales	Manaus	Telephone
12	Ex-Intern	25	M	Administration	Sales	Porto Alegre	Telephone

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The data was collected through semistructured interviews, conducted in person as well as by telephone. According to Colli and Hussey (2005), interviews allow the researcher to perceive what the subjects think, do and feel in relation to a given topic; this is why interviews are an appropriate strategy for this study's data collection. Our 16 word script seeks to understand the relationship between the interns in the telework regime and their professional and personal lives, will all of them being recorded in their entirety and subsequently transcribed. Our script was constructed based on contributions from various authors including Barros and Silva (2010), Coenen and Kok (2014), Dahlstrom (2013), Noonan and Glass (2012), Ordoñez (2012), Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007), Rodrigues (2011), Serra (2010), Tose (2005) and Whittle and Mueller (2009), in relation to telework and internships. To perfect the script, the authors realized three preliminary interviews as a pre-test which were later consolidated.

The treatment and analysis of the interview data were conducted through content analysis with help from the computer program Nvivo 9, following the procedures suggested by Bardin (2011) and Vergara (1998). In this manner we employed a mixed group (previously defined categories as well as the inclusion of categories that arose during the process) and a mainly interpretive analysis of these categories (VERGARA, 1998). Based on the 12 interviews, 150 observations were registered which were condensed into 23 categories. These 23 categories were then grouped into 7 definitive categories. Based on the definition of these categories, the study objectives were revisited to ensure their consistency with the interpretive analyses. In the following section we will analyze and comment on the study results.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the frequency of observations and how they have been grouped by units of context and categories of analysis. The elements of greatest relevance for this group of interviewees were the relationship with the educational institution, the impact of longer work hours on the intern's life, flexibility, the difficulty in separating personal life from telework, the distant relationship with colleagues at work, the importance of the equipment, the distance from superiors, learning using this work model and concerns in regard to the visibility of the internship.

Table 1
Frequency analysis of the interviewees

Categories of Analysis	Units of Context	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Relationship with the educational institution	Positive relationship with the university	11	7.3%
Impact of longer work hours on the intern's life	Work hours beyond the permitted limits (overload)	15	10.0%
	Difficulty in managing time	2	1.3%
	Problems with trips	1	0.7%
Telework and personal life	Flexibility	18	12.0%
	Difficulty in separating work from home	16	10.7%
	Commuting	8	5.3%
	Quality of life	4	2.7%
	Difficulty in separating work from personal life	3	2.0%
	Comfort	3	2.0%
	Use of symbology	2	1.3%
	Difficulty of the routine	1	0.7%
Interpersonal relationships	Distant relationship with colleagues at work	12	8.0%
	Positive relationship with colleagues at work	4	2.7%
	Help from colleagues at work	3	2.0%
Closeness to superiors	Distance from superiors	9	6.0%
Learning and professional growth	Self-development and maturation	9	6.0%
	Working with priorities and discipline	4	2.7%
	Working in a multinational firm	4	2.7%
	Creating responsibility	2	1.3%
	Gains in productivity	3	2.0%
	Losses in productivity	2	1.3%
Visibility and career advancement	Problems with visibility	14	9.3%
Total	Total	100%	100%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

The interview responses revealed that autonomy and flexibility are conditions that are greatly valued by interns. The autonomous administration of work hours was perceived positively, even though the tasks and work hours overlapped with academic tasks and class hours, as represented by the comments of one of the respondents:

They were mixed, but it was not a hindrance. In the past they were very much separate when I was interning but not doing telework, and I had college and the internship, and I only had time to study at night [...] whereas now I was able to mix them a little, which I think is better. (Interviewee 6)

For interns they are complementary, because the flexibility of hours positively contributes to the organization of the activities and demands of college, which is an observation that is in keeping with Barros and Silva (2010), Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007) and Whittle and Mueller (2009). Another respondent offers a representative perception for this group that is unanimous in seeing flexibility as something positive:

[...] it's very good this way; when I am in the middle of exam week, I can organize myself... I prefer to begin working earlier and have more time to study... In administration, I always have work to do as part of a team, so the flexibility in terms of hours helps me a lot. (Interviewee 5)

In addition to flexibility in terms of hours, almost the entire group was emphatic in valuing the flexibility in terms of where they can complete their activities: performing their activities at home or in the academic environment helps interns, given that their travel time is reduced. To illustrate this argument it should be pointed out that interns have 6 hours of work a day and courses that occupy up to 6 hours a day. Questioned about the compatibility of an internship with academic activities, one respondent commented:

Yes, it's super-compatible; the flexibility helps a lot in relation to the home office itself, because I was at the university and did not need to leave it to perform my activities. It's very positive to be able to work anywhere, but mainly the university, which is a very interesting environment to work in. (Interviewee 11)

Even though the flexibility in terms of hours and location has a positive influence on reconciling academic activities and the internship, there are, on the other hand, negative factors that the group has perceived: the interruption of academic activities (classes in person, mainly) and professional activities mainly due to travel, even though they make it possible, in many cases, for telework interns to interact with other members of the organization. Even though this is not an obligation, since it gives the intern the choice of whether to travel or not, half of the subjects felt considerably insecure in this situation. The training courses designed for all workers are held in general at the headquarters, which requires some travel:

I had some trips for training courses, but I always thought carefully about it to make the best decision. When I was in Belém, I really did not miss a class. (Interviewee 2)

For two of the respondents, the trips caused them discomfort in their personal lives, harming the relationship between the intern and the company:

The negative part of the internship program is the trips to the meetings. I end up having to miss class, and miss some exams. [...] coming back can be somewhat complicated to get back into the flow of things depending on the period that you have missed. One negative effect that it had was my having to delay my graduation a little, I had to delay my courses a bit...but it was my decision, because I wanted to graduate only after completing the internship contract. (Interviewee 11)

Practically every month we had to travel because of meetings and training courses. Often we had to be far from home on important dates in our personal lives. I spent my birthday in a cycle meeting. (Interviewee 3)

Telework to interns is perceived positively in terms of the flexibility of hours and the reconciliation of work and study demands. However, the need for travel compromised the college activities of the students, and to a lesser extent their family lives. One aspect that was not found was the perception of these trips to the headquarters as a chance to integrate and spend time with

other colleagues; within this context, the leaders of the organization need to employ initiatives that will make the periodical meetings opportunities for learning, integration and structured discussions with other workers, etc.

IMPACT OF THE LONGER WORK HOURS ON THE INTERN'S LIFE

Rodrigues (2011) points out that, in some cases, teleworkers are not monitored during their work days by the company; in these cases the worker is equal to an external worker and can't charge for working extra hours. In the case of the teleworker interns under examination, the internship work hours are a problematic subject, because many worked more than the required 30 hours per week. If all the "parceled" hours of work during the day were summed up, they surpassed the established requirement in terms of work hours:

It was like this... I was very disciplined in relation to the beginning of work, that peak hour...it was very important that I was there, wasn't it? If I could choose between doing some work at 9 or 10 at night...I prioritized working during commercial hours to have access to other people and quicker information. But sometimes I had to choose to exceed the work hours, because I had to use my time to resolve personal things or complete certain tasks... Like I said, I thought that time was infinite; so if I arrived from college at 11 pm, I believed that I would be able to finish these tasks by 4 am. [...] I would estimate that I worked the same number of hours that I work today: 40 hours a week. (Interviewee 2)

The issues related to the number of work hours are in most cases associated with the "parceling" of work (SERRA, 2010). This practice can harm the realization of personal activities, and the quality of tasks and services requested by superiors, as well as the college education of the intern itself. In this way, the management of time becomes a critical aspect for teleworkers, something that is prioritized by the organization itself, that is, by its indicating best practices to its teleworkers and at the same time incorporating the chance to manage time within the task organization process.

Managing time was identified as something almost impossible by five of the interns; the main reason for this was the anxiety of the teleworker in wanting to demonstrate performance and the possibility of working more hours, as one respondent pointed out:

[...] there was a time to begin, but not a time to end. (Interviewee 10)

Dahlstrom (2013) emphasizes this troubled relationship between the teleworker and time: when working remotely, interns are strongly seduced by or influenced by the idea of "demonstrating service" and end up exceeding their allotted work hours to be closer to management and one step closer to the realization of getting a position with the organization:

You end up adjusting your work hours to your boss, so the boss had a time to start work, but no time to end. We began at 8 am, but it was not uncommon for us to stay until 2 or 3 am discussing something. Since I prepared the presentations and the data analysis, it was very common for me to stay until 2 or 3 am explaining what I had done. [...] I worked more than 30 hours a week; it was "easy" for me to end up working on the weekend. On average, summing up the days I worked on weekends and the time during weekdays, I worked 50 hours a week... easily and that's no exaggeration. (Interviewee 10)

Their functions, which took more than 30 hours a week to complete, were performed in their residences and the absence of organizational monitoring or the intern's own personal records in this context, compromised the fulfillment of the applicable laws for internships (CHEN and SHEN, 2012). However, it may be seen that the long working hours can be established as an implicit rule among these participants, that is, as a code of conduct even when the bosses respected the internship hours and there were no mandatory tasks solicited outside normal working hours, and in terms of whether they were really mandatory, the respondent that mentioned working 50 hours a week makes it clear that this was a personal desire:

*No. No it is not that you field obliged to do it. But this was aggregate work and these were aggregate functions, so they did not appear to be an obligation, but rather a team need. They asked for lots of help, but they always approached it as “oh **** is doing something extra.” (Interviewee 10)*

In addition, there are cases in which the extra hours put in are personal choices on the part of the interns, even though this is not the general rule.

My bosses respected my hours, but I put myself at their disposition to be available at certain times. This is the profile of working in a multinational firm. Certain demands, certain presentations, certain things had to be done outside of working hours or they would not be done. My bosses said they had to be done and, if it was necessary, I worked late... (Interviewee 2)

The discourse of Interviewee 10 carries with it a preconceived notion of self-discipline, self-management and self-motivation in the process of turning teleworkers into “entrepreneurs themselves” (COSTA, 2013). However, even though this appears voluntary, adhesion to these longer work hours, motivated by the need to show oneself to be competent, has been internalized by these interns who reproduce organizational arguments linked to productivity in an entirely unselfconscious manner. The main motive behind working excessive hours comes from the posture of the worker of wanting to “demonstrate service,” given the difficulty that telework presents in terms of visibility. During the internship, these youths sought to externalize desirable behavior and qualities from the organizational point of view in order to be hired by the end of the internship; they thus tried to adapt rapidly to the guidelines and norms of the company (FERRAZ, OLTRAMARI and PONCHIROLI, 2011). The preoccupation with visibility within the company in comparison with people in the office is one of the main reasons for apprehension on the part of teleworkers. This apprehension in terms of showing their work and results makes them exceed their normal work hours without any additional remuneration for this (DAHLSTROM, 2013; NOONAN and GLASS, 2012; RODRIGUES, 2011).

Even though the notion of controlling time comes from the interns themselves, some factors contribute to their not being able to manage their time in a correct manner. The work hours of their bosses and colleagues, who these interns work for, are usually 40 hours a week in the same way that interns usually work 30 hours a week. Thus there naturally is an incompatibility between the hours worked and the boundaries between these internships and their personal lives:

They asked for work to be done outside of work hours, because they worked 40 hours a week and I only worked 30 hours, but we responded to many different people, so each one would call at a different time. (Interviewee 4)

The responses we obtained reinforce the position of Rohm and Lopes (2015), in which new technologies employed at work benefit the organization and make it more difficult for workers to act when faced with organizational demands.

Whittle and Mueller (2009) stress that work flexibility can lead to work overload for workers and the management of time is something critical for teleworkers. Responses related to this category also reverberate for the next category in terms of an analysis of the boundaries between telework and the intern’s personal life.

TELEWORK AND PERSONAL LIFE

One of the most relevant aspects for a study of telework is the impact that it has on the worker’s personal life. Flexibility, autonomy, quality of life and saving time in traffic are pointed out as motivational factors for teleworkers. However, the difficulty of managing time, isolation, the relationship with company management and visibility (which will be addressed in the next sections) appear to be the aspects of greatest concern (BARROS and SILVA, 2010; DAHLSTROM, 2013; NOONAN and GLASS, 2012; PÉREZ, SÁNCHEZ and CARNICIER, 2007; RODRIGUES, 2011; TOSE, 2005).

The flexibility of working hours is pointed out as the characteristic of greatest importance to the worker according to Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007), in their study of Spanish teleworkers in industry, manufacturing and the service sector. These

flexible hours allow the worker to order priorities and get more out of their free time. When questioned about the positive aspects, the first word mentioned by the respondents was flexibility:

Number 1, flexibility; I think it is very important and it works well for me. I think it's horrible to have to punch the clock, arrive at 1 pm and leave exactly at 6 pm. It's very complicated to maintain this routine of 1 pm to 6 pm... Flexibility is incredible. Today, for example, I have a doctor's appointment at 5 pm: I can wake up at 7 am, adjust my time and do what I need to get done by 5 pm. You end up with more autonomy. (Interviewee 5)

As in Barros and Silva (2010), the flexibility to be able to resolve day to day tasks during commercial hours is perceived by interns as an advantage of telework. To Whittle and Mueller (2009), there are different ways of looking at flexibility. The first is the clothing that the intern uses at home, seen as a positive aspect by 2 of our subjects:

[...] comfort as well, to be at home and not in a work environment, to be more at ease, dressed however you want. (Interviewee 1)

According to Lenuzza (2007), being able to work at home in more comfortable clothes than if you were at the office is a motivational factor for certain groups. A second way of looking at flexibility involves the scope of a teleworker's work. In the firm under examination, the intern acts as a sales analyst using a computer and the internet to provide executives and managers with analyses. In regard to this case, one of the interns comments that freedom helps creativity:

[...] in relation to the professional part, the positive points, I would say that we manage to have the comfort of being at home, don't we? We get to have some creative idle time to develop certain things. (Interviewee 2)

The third aspect related to flexibility, which involves autonomy, has to do with the choice of where to work. This mobility is praised by the interviewees.

Mobility is being able to work wherever we like. The positive side is that a lot happens on the street, especially in the area that we work in. So it's better to be on the street than in the office, because it's easier to focus on the problem than if you're in the office. (Interviewee 12)

To Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicier (2007), autonomy at work is referred to as the third major benefit perceived by teleworkers, with saving time commuting to work being referred to as the second major benefit, since this makes it easier for workers to incorporate personal activities in their routines. The time lost in traffic is mentioned by at least 3 interviewees and is directly related to the quality of life of the intern:

Most of the colleagues see this as a good thing, because you're very conscious of being able to work at home and not having to get stuck in traffic. (Interviewee 1)

Driving every day is horrible, isn't it? At that time it was pretty quiet you see. You didn't get much traffic... I believe that telework gives you greater quality of life, because even though you have to visit a client by getting the car to drive, it's not something that you do all the time. You don't need to face traffic, rush hour, because you don't have a set time to arrive and leave from work. (Interviewee 3)

Even though autonomy in terms of working hours contributes positively to academic obligations and activities, and promises quality of life to interns who are teleworking, managing time becomes very complicated, interfering in one's personal life and making it difficult to separate your telework activities from your personal life:

I think in terms of the hours themselves, we end up not having a time to begin and a time to finish things. You always have the feeling that when you arrive at home you'll be able to get a lot done, when in truth you need time to sleep and do other things. So I think one of the negative aspects of remote

work is that we think we're going to have time to do everything, but we really don't have all this time available. (Interviewee 2)

Another respondent also confirmed the difficulty of dealing with the flexibility of the hours:

Since you don't have fixed hours, you often get stuck waiting for something to be ready, besides working at night sometimes or overnight to deliver some request. (Interviewee 6)

In this sense, Noonan and Glass (2012) emphasize that the separation between work and personal life for teleworkers is getting more and more difficult and that frequently they end up working more than they would if they were in the office. The separation between home and work is more difficult for this group of teleworkers:

During the internship, it was very difficult to separate one's personal life from telework. Today it's a bit easier. My personal life occurred when I wasn't at home. Because at home... my entire home was oriented towards work, I'd arrive at home and it was that anxiety, I'd turn on my computer to see if there were any emails. My personal life was outside of home, I couldn't manage to let go. Having company emails on your cell phone that arrive quickly means that you definitely never turn it off. Because if you use your cell phone, it could be 11 at night and you receive an email and you don't have the excuse of saying that you didn't see it. (Interviewee 2)

New labor morphologies are seen as technological and managerial innovations, but what one perceives is the continued domination of the worker ever since the models of Taylor and Ford (ANTUNES, 2014). Noonan and Glass (2012) also stress that telework, even though it offers flexibility, makes the worker work beyond the number of work hours required by law. Technology and remote connections contribute to an intern's work day frequently being marked by extra hours, with the worker sometimes even working during vacation. Thus the statements of these interviewees confirm the views of Rodrigues (2011), since telework can force the worker to work longer, even without extra remuneration. In this sense, the maximum is extracted in terms of the capacity of teleworkers to work even outside of normal working hours (GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014).

Another aspect of telework in relation to one's personal life has to do with the influence of the family, whose role is important in this process. Some interviewees, for example, had difficulties at first with family interruptions during work:

It was complicated [laughs], I took a long time to be able to get them used to the idea that I was working and wasn't there. My mother would tell me to buy bread, walk the dog, do something around the house while I was there focused. It took a long time for them to understand. (Interviewee 7)

The respondents revealed that they used practical symbols to show that they were at work:

In the beginning, during the first 3 months, I dressed for work with a dress shirt and jeans. (Interviewee 7)

Another interviewee went further to signal her family that she was working:

Yes, I ended up creating a little plaque that I put up on my bedroom door [...] I put the plaque up so that people would begin to create a routine in which I was not to be disturbed. (Interviewee 3)

Together with the impacts on one's social life, it's important to analyze the coexistence of these subjects with other teleworkers, bearing in mind that social isolation is common in this type of work (COSTA, 2013). Paradoxically in terms of the structure of telework, spending time with other professionals is fundamental to a youth's development at work, because the internship, since its creation in 1977, envisions supervision in a location close to the company.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Accompanying interns is a critical part of their professional development. Contact with other workers will directly influence their career development (OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012). However, with telework the intern is alone most of the time.

So at the time that I was an intern, I mentioned to the other interns that we were missing a little more contact for us to ask questions...and create that organizational climate of friends or colleagues at work. I missed having that. (Interviewee 3)

Even with a more favorable organizational climate, distance and rare meetings present a big problem for young interns:

The team was very united and friendly, we were all friends really, but our meetings were very brief. There were monthly meetings... so we saw each other ten times a year. (Interviewee 7)

The problems related to integrating the worker into society and the company are cited by Barros and Silva (2010), Ordoñez (2012), Pérez, Sánchez and Carnicer (2007), and Serra (2010) and Costa (2013), among others. All of them relate the difficulty that workers have in relating with people in the office and colleagues, and point out that this isolation can make them feel unmotivated by their work.

I think I missed it a lot; sometimes I even scheduled lunch with the executives... just because I felt the lack of having a team... (Interviewee 5)

The small number of meetings with the entire team was a factor that diminished the motivation of the respondents:

It's complicated, because you miss spending time together. You're very alone sometimes. Sometimes this personal coexistence with people at work is good, because you talk, listen, trade experiences, this time together helps a lot. (Interviewee 4)

Social isolation is also mentioned:

I think that the main negative aspect is the lack of spending time with the team. When you're in the office, you inevitably end up interacting with everyone, even if they're not in your area and this is what helps you grow... for example, I had an opportunity to spend a week in Recife in a mini-integration event at the office, and there was one day that I arrived early and I chatted with a manager and a person from merchandising, and just from this conversation I could tell that this was learning that I wouldn't get if I were at home. (Interviewee 8)

Together with social isolation, the self-motivation preached by organizations gives the individual the responsibility of seeking self-development in face of the difficulties, flexibility and barriers of teleworking (COSTA, 2013). The subjective costs of this activity are footed by the intern, who needs space for the exchange of dilemmas and challenges that, even though they are part of everyday life, need to be overcome by young professionals to fully develop their self-management abilities. This isolation can also compromise their learning, because the inability to exchange professional experiences makes it more difficult for these teleworkers to develop. It should be remembered that trips to headquarters, as found in this study, can harm academic activities, but they also can be opportunities for spending time with others as well as learning and developing. In this sense, how are superiors perceived by these youths and what role should they play in the organization to act in terms of these negative aspects? In what way has the relationship with corporate superiors furthered the development that these interns seek?

CLOSENESS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERIORS

Teleworking internships require care on the part of superiors as well as the teleworker. While a worker in the traditional work regime has full knowledge of his or her attributes, the intern is going through a period of learning and professional maturation. Contact with superiors is a fundamental factor in this development (OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012).

Our study results indicate that personal contact with superiors is insufficient, with four of the interviewees emphasizing that they had few encounters with superiors:

I practically didn't see my direct boss, and I didn't have contact with other people in our area. And I had more contact with him, even though there were months that I didn't see him. (Interviewee 2)

However, these subjects do not feel that they have no help; others mention that this fact is not a problem. The calls, conferences or contacts with sales executives compensate for the absence of direct superiors:

The people that most helped me were my work colleagues, the sales executives; my boss helped me develop, of course, but not as much as the executives that I interacted with almost every day. (Interviewee 6)

And as a complement:

My boss isn't with me every day, but she makes sure to keep close watch on my routine and this is very important. (Interviewee 8)

Coexistence with direct supervisors, however, is fundamental: Swanson and Tomkovick (2012), for example, emphasize that this coexistence accelerates the interns' learning process.

The main concern of most of the interviewees has to do with professional learning during the internship and the chances for advancement within the organization, or in other words, career development. Silva (2011) relates that many college interns are willing to enter the job market even at a position below one in keeping with their education if they have good prospects for growth.

LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

In terms of learning through telework, if on one hand interns relate that they learn in terms of focusing, prioritizing and productivity, on the other they allege that it takes them more time to learn tasks:

I think that when we work remotely or externally, development is very much compromised in the sense of exposure to work: you're not being exposed to the work of anyone. When you're working in a home office, you're alone. You take some time to learn things; sometimes it's "Control C and V," clicking on an option that does something that you took a long time to do, and if you were in the office you'd turn to the person next to you and would receive help quickly. (Interviewee 7)

The "Control C and V" mentioned by this interviewee corroborates the perspective of Rohm and Lopes (2015), in that the mechanization of work has changed the educative process and social existence through work, resulting in the transmission of knowledge without social significance just as a mere human obligation. Thus the individual loses the meaning of tasks themselves due to this process of social isolation, which leads to a fragmentation of the subject's activities and identity (SENNETT, 2007).

When questioned about the influence of telework on their careers, 11 of the 12 interviewees alleged that it was positive, because it made them more mature, independent, proactive and disciplined:

I learned how to take responsibility, because you don't have direct supervision... developing this sense of responsibility, self-management...when you manage to control yourself you become a more independent professional and develop more quickly. (Interviewee 10)

“Self-management” appears once again in the interviews, since the intern when faced with difficulties, assumes responsibility for self-motivation and productivity in telework (COSTA, 2013). Professional growth was identified by interns as fundamental, because they had to learn many things on their own and this made them find new solutions:

So, the fact is that telework forces you to be more proactive. This was very valuable for my professional posture; I had to find out things for myself instead of waiting around passively. (Interviewee 8)

Also from this perspective:

There's all this talk about maturity and self-management, being productive when no one's watching over you. You hear people say: “ah, I'd like to do teleworking,” but then the person would say: “ah, let's go to the beach, because no one's watching you.” And I'd say: “no, I won't go!” This makes you responsible, because you're measured by your results, if you goof off, you won't be able to produce these results. (Interviewee 5)

In this interview, we can perceive this “self-management,” derived from the way telework is seen by the interviewee, which corroborates the special attributes associated with this type of work (COSTA, 2013). As a consequence, there is an argument that those workers whose careers are more grounded in autonomy and independence are better adapted for this type of scenario, given that these people prefer to work at their own pace (ABRAHIM, 2008).

It made me mature a lot... like working with priorities and discipline. Telework demands a kind of productivity from you that fixed work, in the office and all the rest, doesn't. So if you use it in a productive manner, you can achieve much greater productivity. (Interviewee 2)

Two of the subjects placed importance on entering a multinational firm which, in a certain way, helped them in their development:

I think telework in and of itself didn't have an active influence. I think the location where I performed this work had an influence for sure, because whether you like it or not, having a multinational firm on your resume is very important. (Interviewee 3)

For the young intern, this experience is a factor of great importance in getting opportunities to progress in the job market (OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012).

VISIBILITY AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The last aspect addressed by this study involves visibility and career advancement within the company, two fundamental aspects for the group, given that interns essentially seek learning and realization (CHEN and SHEN, 2012). This study shows that the interns are very concerned about their visibility within the organization; work is perceived by their direct superiors and some colleagues, but not by the organization as a whole. In terms of visibility, one of the interviewees revealed concern in relation to colleagues in the traditional work regime who have the support of the office.

I did get recognition, not on the level of São Paulo and the other regions, but the people who were there with me could see, yes, could perceive the things that I did, but only on a regional level.. I think the people in the office had much more visibility than we did, mainly when we're talking about the North and the Northeast. (Interviewee 3)

The office intern did something good and she celebrated with her boss and with another area that she was perhaps interested in going to. Here I have contact with the sales area; in the office I can have contact with people from HR, the guy from IT... those who work in the office have the same professional visibility as I do, but since they're there, they have interpersonal relationships with other people, they have more visibility... so those who are in the office have more visibility. (Interviewee 5)

For interns, this aspect of visibility can make them very inclined to overload themselves with work, even though they are not paid for it (DAHLSTROM, 2013; GRISCI and CARDOSO, 2014; NOONAN and GLASS, 2012; RODRIGUES, 2011). The lack of visibility mentioned by these young people also leads them to exercise individual skills, such as personal marketing. Even though not everyone showed this tendency, this practice of self-promotion was identified in most of the cases:

I think that in remote work you have to learn how to do more personal marketing. It's very easy for you to do something that remains unseen, and it's very easy to go too far in promoting yourself... in the desire to show your work, you become repetitive... (Interviewee 10)

Serra (2010) confirms this sensation cited by the interviewees in terms of visibility; to the author, the remote worker has greater difficulty in receiving a promotion. However, this situation is directly influenced by the way in which superiors and managers integrate teleworkers with workers in the traditional regime. In some interviews, we can observe that advancement within the organization depends on support from bosses in order to give their work exposure and establish themselves.

[...] so you need to have a relationship with people, because it's through day to day conversations that you talk about your attributes and achievements, and when you're outside the office that makes it more difficult: you're not having lunch with the team, having a beer with your boss or with your boss's boss, and this is the type of relationship which plants the seeds of the idea in this guy like: "this guy's good, talking with him is very good, the results that he's told me about over coffee have been good..." and this creates an image for you and promotes you, and when you're working at a home office it's much more difficult. (Interviewee 4)

Based on this discussion, some of the most relevant concerns in terms of their careers and professional lives are related to visibility and their proximity to their direct superiors. Even if it takes longer to learn, interns emphasize that this is part of the maturation process and this type of work has made them more proactive and independent. In order to make this happen, in their anxiety to demonstrate results, most of them work more than 30 hours a week.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Human resources management has taken on a more and more strategic role, providing development in terms of individual and organizational skills and a greater retention of workers in organizations. Besides the challenges of human resources management, the traditional model of work in organizations has changed, and within this context, telework has grown to become a reality in the job market as part of organizational strategy (geographic expansion, broadening its presence in other regions, etc.), as well as the offering of promises of challenges, autonomy and flexibility for teleworkers.

Flexibility and autonomy appear to be the most relevant aspects for teleworkers. However, the number of hours worked under this regime is often above the quantity permitted by law, and this is a weak point of this type of work which requires more attention on the part of the organization, its leaders and the teleworkers themselves. In this sense, it's valuable to observe the way in which telework is aligned with the quality of life of these individuals. If on one hand the organizational argument supports flexibility, on the other hand we have young workers operating in precarious work conditions, with little power to act given the situation. This precarious situation is mainly characterized by social isolation in addition to the self-management, self-motivation, reliability and other virtues that are extolled by the organization, but these virtues do not always play a part in the worker's experience. The subjective cost of these practices is borne by the intern, who has reduced time for a personal life due to longer working hours.

Even so, in counterpoint to these considerations, these interviews have also revealed that these youths perceive telework as an opportunity to develop individual skills such as greater professional maturity, responsibility, agility and proactiveness. Even though some of the interviewees reproduce the company emphasis on “self-management,” we cannot ignore the pleasurable experiences of telework that have been mentioned, making this contemporary form of work a dichotomy of pleasure and pain.

With this in mind, we can observe that there are means to minimize the problems derived from telework that are available to both the organization and the individual. In order for this to happen in terms of the development strategy for these people and the organization, tasks, practices, processes and communications within the telework regime need to be integrated into the organizational culture and the offered technological structure. Demands for training from superiors and closer supervision for these youths, as well as the meeting of their learning needs and the stimulation of their professional growth, especially during unique moments such as company trips, are the main points that have been highlighted by the interviewees.

The fact that teleworkers are autonomous in the execution of their tasks diminishes their contact with colleagues at work, creating a sense of isolation. This sensation makes it more difficult to integrate the individual into the company, which may lead to a fragmentation of individual identity and a distancing from organizational culture. The distance from offices and superiors is of great relevance to interns: if on one hand this is a way of entering a multinational firm in regions where the company has no office, on the other, this type of internship can compromise the intern’s visibility, career advancement and realization. The remoteness of bosses can also bring with it difficulties in learning, because direct superiors can help promote professional development.

This study of telework has sought to consolidate fundamental issues from the point of view of three different prisms: a) the organization, b) its leadership and c) teleworkers in the furthering of competitive advantages for organizations. However, certain limitations need to be mentioned. Because this is a study of a single organization, the results cannot be generalized. In addition, other aspects, such as the role of, and interaction with, society have not been contemplated. Even so, this article addresses points that have received little attention in the field literature (internships and telework), and thus constitutes a point of departure for future studies, whether they employ a functionalist point of view to test or discuss hypotheses that have been derived here, or whether they take a critical perspective by delving deeper into the issues of pleasure/pain and precarious working conditions. In relation to the latter topic, studies about the precarious nature of work for young people in telework can help clarify the collective effects of telework, which is a theme outside the scope of this work. Vivid transformations in society, in terms of work, technology and the entrance of young people in the job market, merit broad discussion based on various theoretical perspectives.

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