

Mandatory Legal Teleworking: the AGU experience during the COVID-19 pandemic¹

Teletrabalho jurídico compulsório: a experiência da AGU durante a pandemia do Covid-19

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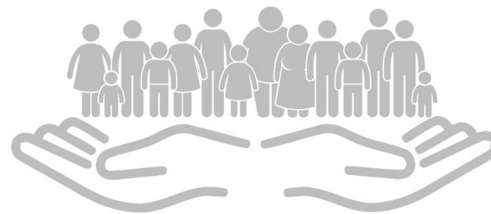
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ABSTRACT: In this article, qualitative research is reported on the experience of federal public lawyers in compulsory teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brasília, Federal District. The research aimed to analyze the perception of AGU members from March 2020 to March 2022 regarding efficiency, control, communication, and flexibility. The results pointed to an efficient adaptation of Public Advocacy with increased or maintained production without presenting problems concerning supervision and communication. In the findings, there is a majority preference for teleworking and, in many cases, for the hybrid work management model.

KEYWORDS: teleworking; Attorney General of the Union; Covid-19; flexibility; efficiency.

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RESUMO: Neste artigo, iremos trazer a experiência de membros da Advocacia-Geral da União em teletrabalho compulsório durante a pandemia do Covid-19 em Brasília, Distrito Federal. A pesquisa visou analisar a percepção de membros da AGU durante o período de março de 2020 a março de 2022, observando questões como eficiência, supervisão, comunicação e flexibilidade. Os resultados apontam para uma adaptação eficiente da Advocacia Pública com crescimento da produção sem apresentar problemas relativos à supervisão e à comunicação. Por fim, houve uma preferência maior pelo teletrabalho, e, em muitos casos, por um modelo híbrido de arranjo de trabalho do assessoramento jurídico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Teletrabalho; Advocacia-Geral da União; Covid-19; flexibilidade; eficiência.

1 INTRODUCTION

Although very common, legal teleworking is a topic that has still not been investigated. The interdisciplinarity of legal work (Asensi, 2010), combined with the use of electronic judicial and administrative processes, possibly facilitated the preparation of public lawyers for remote work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in the federal public service, in addition to electronic processes, the pace of legal advice meetings accelerated to the point in which several meetings were held daily, with the former *face-to-face* interactions now being held virtually (Lima; Mendes, 2023).

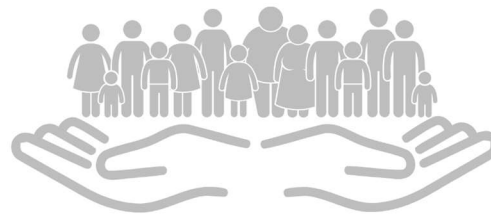
Issues such as increased efficiency, adequate supervision, care with communication, and the well-being of individuals denote the relevance of studying the potential of teleworking in the public sector (Tolentino; Oliveira; Castro, 2023).

In this article, we propose to analyze the experience of federal public lawyers in full teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic, in providing legal consultancy and assistance in teleworking, from March 2020 to March 2022, in 04 legal units of the AGU, in Brasília, Federal District.

To this end, this introduction addresses the contextualization of the topic and its relevance, given the acceleration in the adoption of teleworking by federal public lawyers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 2 deals with the theoretical background that raises the

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:2-23





main questions about teleworking, such as increased production, the issue of control, social isolation, working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, and a brief explanation of teleworking careers—Attorney General of the Union and the regulation of teleworking in this institution. Section 3 describes the methodological path that guided the obtaining of research data and the method adopted to analyze them. Section 4 analyzes the results of the field research and dialogues with previous research, interpreting the findings collected during the interview period. In the end, the author makes final considerations about the empirical study carried out, pointing to future developments of the research for academic purposes.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

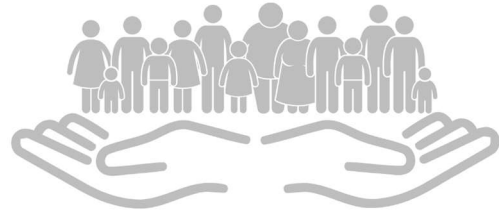
2.1 Contextualization

With social isolation and the closure of AGU units, the work underwent natural arrangements for such a critical period, as the COVID-19 pandemic was for humanity. On the other hand, the legal service did not undergo a continuity solution (Pantoja; Andrade; Oliveira, 2020).

Throughout the pandemic, public policies and State actions maintained a service consistent with the factual situation, which was very sensitive given the health chaos installed in the world—the functioning of the bureaucratic apparatus needed to adapt to serve society (Lima, 2023). Until the vaccination could curb the vírus, the provision of services in social isolation would be possible with teleworking (Wang et al., 2021). To understand the complexity of working remotely, a didactic path to start with the teleworking concept in scientific articles dealing with this subject.

Regarding the concept of teleworking, the notion prevails in the literature that teleworking is work carried out predominantly at a distance from the physical location of the organization, at home or elsewhere, through the use of information and communication Technologies (Aderaldo; Aderaldo; Lima, 2017; Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Battisti; Alfiero; Leonidou, 2022)





Remote work, distance work, flexible work, telework, telecommuting, and home office are expressions that refer to the provision of work or services operated remotely, mostly far from the establishment or public office, through information technologies and communication (ICTs) and not necessarily at home (Rocha; Amador, 2018). Some authors advance to conceptualize teleworking as a method of managing people to cope “in crisis contexts” (Pantoja; Andrade; Oliveira, 2020, p. 83).

Some studies in public administration seek to understand how teleworking is implemented in this sector, what considerations must be taken into account for agency efficiency, and how public servants or employees experience this new modality of providing public services in the context of intense technology use (Oliveiro; Pantoja, 2018; Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Vilarinho, Paschoal; Demo, 2021).

This interest in implementing teleworking and monitoring performance when it is adopted in the public sector can be the subject of research to improve the productivity and well-being of employees of Union.

Despite this, the analysis by Oliveira and Pantoja (2018) highlights the fragility due to the lack of specific laws on the topic, with teleworking being regulated in instructions and decrees (Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018). Only labor legislation deals superficially with the remote work relationship. In fact, a survey carried out by these authors found that only 5.5% of research on teleworking addressed its implementation in public service (Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018).

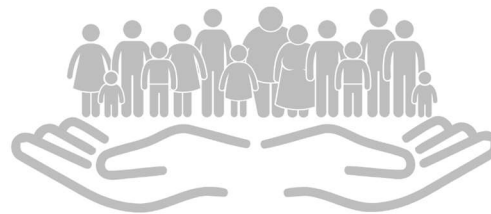
Despite the need for further study of this phenomenon in the public sector, there is no doubt that teleworking in public service promotes efficiency by increasing productivity and reducing operational costs.

2.2 The efficiency of AGU’s legal work in compulsory teleworking

The Federal Attorney General's Office, listed in the 1988 Constitution of the Republic as an essential function of Justice, is vital in legal advice on public policies (Leite, 2022). It gives the public lawyer essential technical autonomy for issuing an opinion. This autonomy enabled the functionality of compulsory legal teleworking during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:4-23





In general, the authors who study teleworking point to an increase in efficiency, with increased productivity and reduced costs in the planned implementation of teleworking (Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Leite; Lemos, 2021; Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018; Rocha; Amador, 2018; Sakuda; Vasconcelos, 2005).

Productivity increases when teleworking as long as there are ideal physical and technological structure conditions (Rocha; Amador, 2018). In general, as it is common for lawyers to work from home even before the pandemic, structuring at home did not experience any setbacks. Regarding the ICT structure, the AGU made laptops available to many public lawyers. With the pandemic, this availability increased significantly. Furthermore, during the pandemic, there was authorization to remove equipment and computers for professional practice at home. So, although it took a few days to prepare the structure, this happened within normal limits. AGU also provided efficient support with installing programs and systems to all public lawyers.

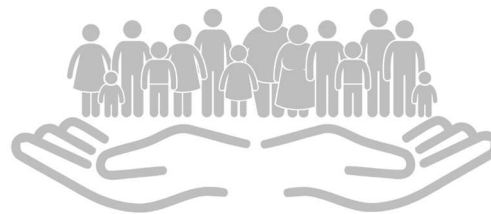
As efficiency can be expressed in the binomial increase in productivity and reduction of costs or the ability to perform better with less expenditure, the adoption of teleworking, which provides, for example, a reduction in costs with building rentals and increases production, fulfills the public sector the constitutional principle of efficiency (Tolentino; Oliveira; Castro, 2023).

It makes us think, as Oliveira and Pantoja (2018) state, about the need for public governance bodies to enable the implementation of teleworking and manage the issue of social support virtually. Thus, from a legal point of view, considering that the principle of efficiency is found in the Brazilian constitutional system, it can be stated that teleworking should be encouraged in public institutions (Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018). However, if efficiency recommends maximizing the use of remote work in public administration, supervising this work outside the public establishment's controlled environment can present challenges from the point of view of controlling teams and their activities.

2.3 The issue of control and supervision

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:5-23





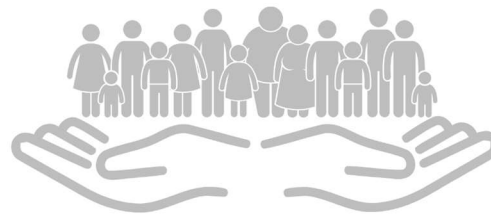
The team supervision system is the basis of scientific management (Vilarinho, Paschoal; Demo, 2021). The public administration had been controlling activities using a remote work system before the pandemic using electronic control resources. As Rosenfield and Alves (2011) explain: *“Teleworking, due to its distance and often solitary practice, could indicate more diluted forms of control over the process and product of work. However, this practice led to the development of other forms of external control over work, such as electronic and results-based monitoring.”* (Rosenfield; Alves, 2011, p. 217).

Thus, before the pandemic, the simplification of control occurred through a mechanism for verifying a greater quantity of production, with the collection of targets plus a percentage that increased this production. In the public service, it is common to require proof of an increase in delivery to remain in a teleworking situation. With the digitalization of all processes and the use of systems to carry out acts and decisions in a certain way, managing the fulfillment of tasks by servers has become greatly facilitated.

However, how control is exercised can negatively influence organizational motivation and productivity (Contreras; Bayal; Abid, 2020). Thus, the dilemma of adopting teleworking for organizations centers on how control mechanisms are implemented. Thus, with compulsory teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all traditional supervision mechanisms were tested. Electronic forms of control or supervision are emerging to face the challenge of working outside the public office (Rosenfield; Alves, 2011; Costa, 2013; Pereira; Barbosa; Saraiva, 2021).

The more autonomous character of the legal category of AGU members reduces the influence of control over intellectual production, which tends to be more qualitative. However, according to Rocha and Amador (2018): *“Even highly qualified freelance professionals, who would theoretically gain a high degree of autonomy through teleworking, may be situated in a certain logic of submission since they have to manage their performance guided by the logic of the market, even self-employed professionals”* (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 157). Even so, there is no doubt that federal public lawyers have, to some extent, a submission. However, the submission to which they are predominantly disciplined is submission to the law and to





constitutional and infra-constitutional principles rather than the hierarchy scale in which they are inserted.

2.4 Compulsory teleworking communication in the Federal Attorney General's Office

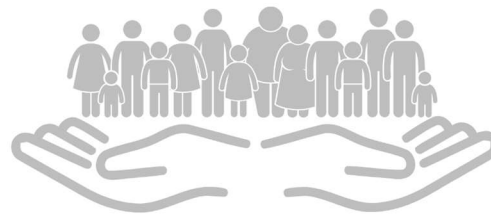
The literature points to communication as a challenge of teleworking (Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Leite; Lemos, 2021; Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018; Santos; Reis, 2021). Research highlights communication problems as a potential risk in adopting teleworking (Leite; Lemos, 2020). Efficient communication is essential for the excellent performance of the legal service, as untimely or problematic communication can generate stress in teams (Van Wart *et al.*, 2019).

The communication process encompasses not only the exchange of information or immediate commands but in a transversal way, it affects the entire knowledge management process in organizations. In collective interaction in a face-to-face situation, motivation, leadership, and the transmission of knowledge tend to be enhanced (Duguid; Brown, 2008). During the pandemic, nothing could have been planned in time to organize, for example, new forms of strategic knowledge management in compulsorily virtual legal teleworking.

All the advantages of face-to-face interactions were suddenly suppressed with the closure of public institutions. In the field of law, as legal institutions interact in a permanent dialogue between the Public Ministry, Public Defender's Office, and Public Advocacy (Asensi, 2010), all members of this system communicate procedurally with the Judiciary in a telematic way, without iteration in relation face to face. Therefore, the complexity of these interactions had to face the challenge of being carried out through online communication systems without the possibility of face-to-face audiences.

At AGU, communication that was carried out in meeting rooms or in a quick visit to a teammate's office migrated to an intense use of messaging applications. However, messaging tools pose the challenge of accurately measuring production due to informalities that are not subject to official process systems, such as verbal advice via phone calls and meetings via video calls.





Likewise, studies are concerned with information security in services provided remotely (Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018), in the case of AGU, there is a lot of knowledge and data protected by legal secrecy. Although the communication process has undergone adaptations to the pressing circumstances of the pandemic, there are no reports in the literature of serious problems for the State.

In this way, communication was not an obstacle to the functioning of the federal public service due to compulsory teleworking. However, the flexibility of the working day can create a challenge about the asynchronicity of interactions, especially in the exchange of electronic messages.

2.5 The flexibility of the working hours of federal public lawyers

The flexibility of federal public lawyers' working hours existed before the COVID-19 pandemic but gained amplification during the health crisis. Thus, flexible working hours allowed many workers who had never worked remotely to take advantage of the opportunity to work from home for the first time.

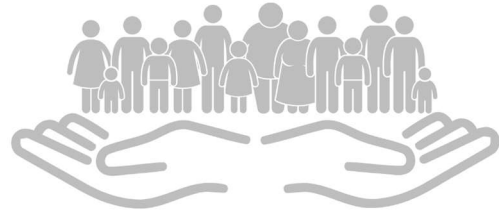
The literature points to an interest in the quality of life that the flexibility of teleworking can provide to the individual, increasing contact with family (Aguilar *et al.*, 2022) or allowing to separate the best times to perform tasks (Filardi, Catro; Zanini, 2020). So, from the public server's point of view, teleworking generates a feeling of well-being and quality of life by having a journey that allows the choice of production moments adaptable to life circumstances (Aderaldo; Aderaldo; Lima, 2017; Barros; Silva, 2010; Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Leite; Lemos, 2020; Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018; Santos; Reis, 2021).

The legal activity of public lawyers, whether in the AGU or State public lawyers' offices, has a character of functional autonomy, whose intellectual essence is incompatible with British point control. It does not mean that public lawyers work fewer hours per day. When faced with a relevant issue, they often spend days and nights dedicated to the case, which would not fit within the limit of 40 hours of work per week.

However, the chaotic scenario of the pandemic brought social isolation, which reduced public lawyers' contact with their colleagues daily. Thus, the pandemic tested human

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:8-23





resilience to isolation. This isolation in turn exacerbated the flexibility of the journey, without it being able to be exercised to its fullest in practice, as gyms, stores, and most socializing places were closed.

Before March 2020, there was intense interpersonal contact in face-to-face work in public service; with the lockdown, this contact changed to virtual meetings only through ICT tools such as Zoom and Teams, among others.

Thus, the lack of social interaction, almost completely suppressed during the COVID-19 pandemic, deprived work relationships of the face-to-face social interaction component.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 General description of the research

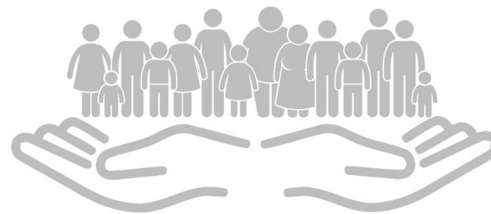
The research presented in this article predominantly adopts qualitative methodology, with semi-structured interviews, to explore and understand the interviewees' perception of the object studied: compulsory teleworking in AGU legal units. In a subsidiary way, about the efficiency category, triangulation was carried out with secondary data from the AGU electronic process system, data presented publicly at the National Management Meeting in 2020 in Brasília.

3.2 Data production

Data production occurred through in-depth semi-structured interviews after ethical authorization from the higher education institution to which the author was linked. The recording took place with audio and video recording, using the Zoom tool, or recording only in audio when requested by the participant.

The interviews were carried out from October to December 2022 with 13 Federal Attorney General's Office members based or working in Brasília, Federal District, who experienced teleworking from March 2020 to March 2022. The participants are not identified,





with his statements being mentioned as those of Interviewee 1 (I1), (I2), [...] up to Interviewee 13 (I13).

All research participants have worked at the Attorney General's Office for over ten years and less than 26 years. The average interview time was 32 minutes, with the shortest being 21 minutes and the longest being 57 minutes. Upon completion of the 13th interview, saturation was confirmed, and the field research was discontinued on December 7, 2022.

The semi-structured interviews sought to elicit speech categories: efficiency, control, communication, and flexibility of the working day in the compulsory teleworking regime.

3.3 Research limitations

In addition to the limitations previously reported, such as the fact that the researcher belongs to the same category of public lawyers, who are the research participants, it is noted that of the 13 interviewees, only 3 are female.

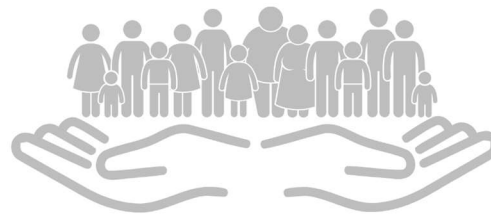
3.4 Data analysis method

The primary data collected through interviews was digitally transcribed into Word text. After the transcription corrections were made, all the material was inserted into the Atlas.ti software, version 22, is used after the organizational phase of content analysis, according to Bardin (2022).

All interviews carried out were part of the data analysis for interpretation purposes. Using Atlas.ti, the researcher began the inductive thematic coding process, which resulted in specific thematic codes. After that, these different thematic codes were categorized into more general categories: efficiency, control, communication, and flexibility of the journey.

Having described the data organization and categorization phase, the researcher entered the composition process to present the research results (Yin, 2016). From the narratives gathered into main categories, we proceeded, using inference, to interpret the statements and report the research results.





Still, regarding the interpretation of qualitative data, Yin's (2016) recommendations were observed to try to carry out triangulations with at least 03 statements to initiate any inference on the subject and always try to oppose this inference to a rival idea or a statement that could deconstruct this inference.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Teleworking at AGU

Before the pandemic, teleworking was predominantly implemented in the Federal Attorney General's Office as part of a process of decentralization of activities called deterritorialization in the institution.

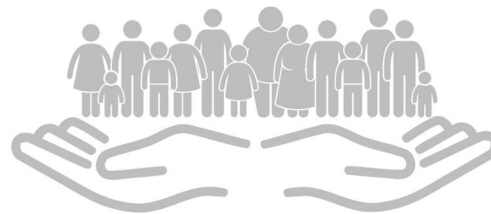
This process, through which national teams specialized in a given subject are formed to serve a wider area beyond the limits of the AGU member's territorial unit, has efficiently allocated professionals to serve the growing judicial and consultative demands.

Thus, it is noted that from the beginning, innovatively, AGU, through deterritorialization, promotes the effort to bring together resources in order to comply with the principle of efficiency, using distance work as a tool.

In 2017, the Federal Attorney General's Office, which is linked to the Federal Attorney General's Office, pioneered this process of deterritorialization.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the rule that regulated the provision of teleworking was Ordinance AGU nº 03 (Brasil, 2021), whose guidelines established the premises for increasing productivity, searching for the AGU's financial sustainability, and valuing people (Lima, 2023). So, during 2020, Normative Instruction No. 65 (Brasil, 2020) authorized remote work for the entire federal public service until AGU Ordinance No. 03 was issued. When concerned with the quality of life and well-being, AGU Ordinance No. 03 (Brasil, 2021) finds constitutional support in ensuring dignity for the human person. This fact is important to highlight, given the predominance of instrumental rationality in the rules on teleworking (Lima; Mendes, 2023).





Currently, teleworking arrangements have suffered some restrictions with the publication of AGU Ordinance No. 125, dated January 30, 2024. Although there has been a reduction in the percentage of members teleworking, from a conceptual point of view there are not many differences in the new regulation.

Before AGU Ordinance No. 125, according to data released at the 2022 National Management Meeting, of the 4,294 members belonging to the AGU, considering the units in the AGU and the PGFN, excluding the units of the Attorney General's Office—PGU, 34% of the staff are teleworking, that is, 1,459 federal public lawyers teleworking. This functional situation requires a selection process with a fixed term of 2 years.

In the consultancy area, a hybrid model is often adopted, except for senior commissioned positions, with, for others, face-to-face travel whenever the manager needs more excellent proximity or when the secrecy of State matters requires it. Having made this contextualization of how remote work presents itself in structural terms at AGU, we will now analyze how the categories of efficiency, control, communication, and flexibility are perceived by public lawyers interviewed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Efficiency in legal advice with teleworking.

Increased efficiency is reported as one of the main features that support the adoption of teleworking in institutions as a management strategy (Aderaldo; Aderaldo; Lima, 2017; Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Vilarinho, Paschoal; Demo, 2021).

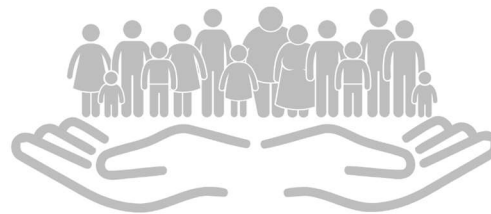
In general, in the research that is the subject of this article, participants reported having the perception that there was an increase in productivity as a result of working from home during social isolation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic:

So, AGU has so many lawyers, 50% of whom are teleworking. And what happened? No... More is being raised; the average consultancy time has fallen, the success rate has gone up, and the satisfaction rate of the bodies being advised has increased, great. It is working. Moreover, we monitored this during the pandemic (I13).

This perception is in line with the findings of Vilarinho, Paschoal, and Demo (2021) who identified, among the positive points of teleworking from the perspective of workers, increased productivity as the most representative theme (34.40%). The increase in productivity

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:12-23





is also reported in the research by Leite and Lemos (2020, p. 15) in 78 occurrences, however, more than half of the sample, in this last research, did not notice an increase in productivity (Leite; Lemos, 2020, p. 16).

The increase in productivity is also found in the research by Filardi, Castro, and Zanini (2020), which indicates that 85.07% of respondents (workers category) agree in part or entirely with the increase in productivity. Moreover, only 14.2% of managers supervising teleworkers felt no increase in productivity (Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020, p. 40).

This perception of increased productivity, in reports, is due to two leading causes: more time available to meet work demands and less travel and preparation time to go to the office:

So, the result was positive; in most cases, and one or another analysis carried out, the information was that the fact that you did not have to prepare, take public transport, take the subway or bus, or even put a car on the street to get to work, you would gain on a productivity scale with that time you wasted in traffic or wasted getting ready to get ready in any way, right? to come to work (I7).

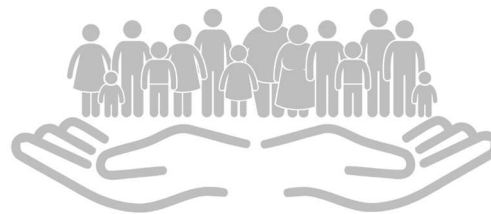
Efficiency can be indicated by the increase in production and the reduction in costs provided by the implementation of teleworking for appropriate activities (Battisti; Alfiero; Leonidou, 2022; Limab), and specifically in the case of this article: for activities related to the public consultancy service and legal advice (Santos; Reis, 2021).

ICT structures also influence teleworking efficiency. According to most participants, there was no lack of ICT resources to provide legal advice at home: *"I remember that at the time the administration provided a computer and a screen, so at the time I started using work tools at home."* (I1). That was a very relevant care that AGU had with its lawyers and bodies.

The literature, whether in the environment of private corporations or public institutions, indicates that the support of ICTs is essential for maintaining the productivity and viability of teleworking, as shown in the research findings and studies by Vilarinho, Paschoal, and Demo (2021) and Oliveira and Pantoja (2018) describe the need for this structure as one of the main challenges.

Considering all units that provide legal advice, the calculation of the AGU's average advisory response time indicated an increase in 2020. Only in 2021 is there an indication of an increase in the faster delivery of legal opinions, reaching the lowest average time level,





presented at a national Management Meeting at the end of 2022 as just eight days. There is little time for complex advice, such as resolving legal doubts.

This measurement, based on data extracted from the AGU's electronic process system, the Sapiens system, takes into account the date of entry of the consultation into the legal unit and the date of return of the process with the opinion or legal note. Therefore, the delivery or return time of the legal document does not precisely measure the time in which the public lawyer who writes the opinion effectively produced the legal document, given that it may take a few days for the case to reach the public lawyer, as well as does not discriminate the time in which the higher hierarchical levels are analyzing the opinion submitted for approval, which can take several days. Therefore, it is impossible to measure the production time of the legal document at home individually; only the delivery or return time of the AGU's legal response to the advised manager.

Analyzing productivity from the perspective of the intensification of deterritorialization since 2017, an increase in productivity in quantitative terms of 55% can be noted, with no hiring in this period and a reduction in staff due to retirements and death pensions granted.

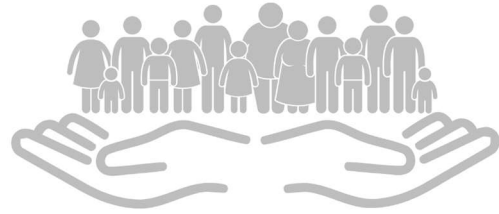
So, the efficiency was detected during the hard time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3 The issue of control

In general, the activity of the federal public lawyer can be verified in reports from the AGU computerized system. In judicial litigation, as there is a peremptory deadline in the process, in practice, the public lawyer has to meet the demand within this deadline.

The AGU member's career autonomy and responsibility make supervision much more specific: in judicial litigation, the Judiciary demands that public lawyers comply with deadlines; in consultancy, managers and managers ask for feedback on the consultation, which means that the opinion has to be produced. Despite these traditional forms of controlling legal activity, the production of federal public lawyers can be measured via an electronic system:





Technological means allow us to formally measure numbers, productivity, number of processes, number of activities that the colleague carried out at Sapiens, and which dates; if you go deeper, ask Sapiens managers until you check how long the colleague keeps that process open (I2).

In federal public law, in our research, the impression was portrayed that, in the compulsory teleworking regime during the Covid-19 pandemic, some lawyers in management positions expressed a perception that control was undermined, even though it appears that this happened due to the more traditional or visual concept of team control, with some indicating the need to physically see the public lawyer to monitor the activity:

For better or worse, when working in person, I see the person sitting there, even if they are there on the computer; they could be on the internet, shopping, yes, but at least the person is there in person; it is assumed that they are working (I2).

This concern with control, as a challenge in implementing teleworking, is confirmed in data collected in research by Barros e Silva (2010), who studied the phenomenon in a multinational corporation. Pereira, Barbosa, and Saraiva (2021) also address the different forms of supervision, finding theoretical criticisms based on the Frankfurt School. Excessive control can cause stress and a decrease in productivity, as highlighted by Battisti, Alfiero, and Leonidou (2022).

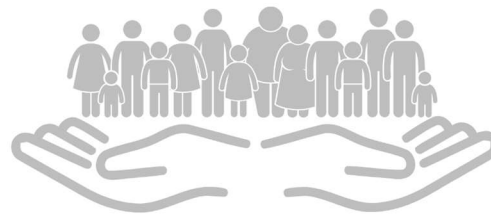
In this sense, given the setbacks that are occurring about teleworking after vaccination, even during the pandemic, it is interesting to hear the following statement:

I do not know if you have noticed how scared managers are of teleworking. However, you know that the fear that people have, especially when you see a body like justice even signaling some level of regression, the current bosses are like this: - "Ah, I am not going to release everyone because then I will not bring them back". I fear it will prove fruitless in the future because just as the concept is evolutionary, the execution of the work itself is evolutionary. If you said in the past that we would work the way we work today, they would say you were crazy. (I13).

In a way, this fear is often evident in the speech of managers in legal units:

When you did not get a response, there was nothing you could do. So you would send a WhatsApp message to someone, or they would not respond. I called, but the person did not answer. I did not have anything to do. It is different from me taking it and saying: -"Wow! What is happening?" I go here in the hallway, into my colleague's office, and I ask: "What is happening? You did not see my message there, did you?" Moreover, I have experienced this a few times, like sending a message to someone at two in the afternoon, at four, there is no response, and then, at seven o'clock at night, nothing, and then the person answers at eight-thirty at night. Well, eight-thirty at night, I am not even working (I2).





Despite being less frequent in the research *corpus*, this type of statement points to concerns in the literature about the issue of supervision, as shown in the research by Vilarinho, Paschoal, and Demo (2021).

The autonomy of the career member in the Federal Attorney General's Office means that the issue of control is not as intensely discussed, given the nature of their functions. However, as reported above, some of the research participants demonstrated concern about control, especially visual control.

Although the majority did not report any problems concerning control, these findings may corroborate the studies of some authors who consider that teleworking can suffer from fluid or diluted forms of control that harm the work's well-being and the worker (Costa, 2013; Rosenfield; Alves, 2011).

One cannot fail to mention the fact that excess control due to excessive work demands or increased workload can cause psychological problems and even harm productivity (Leite; Lemos, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021).

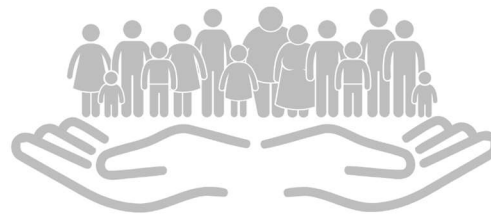
The answers given to the question of work supervision confirm the autonomous nature of federal public lawyers' work, for this reason supervision was not a significant concern in management. Due to the nature of the work of the federal public lawyer, which has a prominent autonomous character to provide the public administration with legal security, no problems were identified in this category of data analysis. However, regarding producing the opinion, as there are no significant problems in the supervisory sphere, interpersonal communication through exclusively digital means can bring challenges to productivity.

4.4 Communication when teleworking

Communication did not suffer any problems during the adoption of full teleworking at AGU during the COVID-19 pandemic. This fact may be related to the autonomous nature of public law careers. In addition, judicial processes have been processed electronically for some time, and at the federal level, all administrative processes have been processed electronically since 2016.

Revista ANPPREV de Seguridade Social – RASS – v. 1, n.1 ,2024, pp:16-23





However, some participants report experiencing difficulties with communication, expressing an unavoidable delay in electronic contact at a disadvantage to face-to-face contact or in the traditional space of the office:

[...] Sometimes I demanded my subordinate anyway, and I demanded in what way: a WhatsApp, sometimes a call, and then I demanded, and it took a while to receive this feedback, right? And then it ends up that you are involved there, and you create a certain irritation; it happened a few times that I needed immediate information there, that if I were in a physical environment there immediately, I would turn to the side and say: -"so and so like this, like this, like this..." isn't it? Not here... Here I had to send a message, sometimes I called, but the person did not answer. So, for me, there was this problem (I1).

I felt many communication problems in the sense that people teleworking, on the one hand, would be online and available all the time; on the other hand, when you did not get a response, there was nothing you could do. So you sent a WhatsApp message to someone, or the person did not respond, you called, the person did not answer, and I had nothing to do (I2).

It is important to note that, among the communication tools most cited in the interviews, communication via the WhatsApp application dominated the teleworking environment in public administration. There was an immediate transfer of the use of WhatsApp from private life to the work domain to compensate for the immediate absence caused by the pandemic:

Moreover, as I mentioned before, having interactivity with colleagues, we talk a lot via WhatsApp, too, right? There is this ease of always exchanging ideas. Then, when I have something like this, to talk to my coordinator too, we are in contact daily and throughout the day via WhatsApp. So, I think the work has not lost its quality; it has even improved (I8).

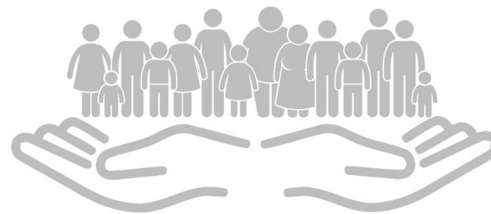
Therefore, the public administration needs to find tools that are as agile as private applications but provide information security management, given that many bodies work with legal secrecy. Oliveira and Pantoja (2018) report on this information security challenge.

The research results are presented at this point, focusing more on public servants.

4.5 The flexibility of teleworking from the individual's point of view

When investigating the benefits of teleworking in an individual's life, the first thing that comes to mind for the researcher is to elicit the participant's opinion about the type of work they prefer and investigate the reasons for this position. In this research, as a rule, informants





reported that they were in favor of teleworking, with only 3 of the interviewees declaring that they were against its implementation.

Interestingly, most participants, even though they are currently unable to telework, declared themselves enthusiastic about working remotely. Many research subjects point to a preference for systematization around the hybrid model. Seven stated that the more flexible hybrid model would be ideal:

Without prejudice to you having your moments of teleworking, I advocate for hybrid work, which can include the advancement of teleworking and the reference to physical work, which I think is important (I1).

My perception is that it is inevitable, but I think some hybrid path will have to be built (I6).

Therefore, the flexibility of teleworking can result, from the individual's point of view, in a better quality of life and coexistence with family, which is predominantly found in this research's findings. From the individual's point of view, the implementation of teleworking indicates efficiency and good public management.

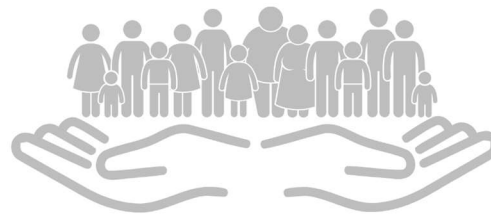
This fact corroborates the findings of Filardi, Castro, and Zanini (2020), in which, when asked about the reduction in stress due to travel, 4.1% completely agree, and 85.7% partially agree, with 91.8% of respondents indicating agreement with the reduction in stress due to being able to work from their homes. Vilarinho, Paschoal, and Demo (2021) in their research confirm this finding.

Individual flexibility is also reported as positive as it allows for more significant interaction with the family:

I will be sincere. I think it helped in some contexts, for example, the issue of routine and family; I think I could stay home more, and it was good. I have a 7-year-old son, and when the pandemic started, he was four years old so we could spend much more time with him. So that was a positive point. We must always try to find something positive amid all this madness, right? It was. So, that was a positive point [...] (I11).

These results are corroborated by the literature on teleworking. In the survey by Filardi, Castro, and Zanini (2020), responding to the questionnaire, *"I have greater interaction with my family,"* 86.7% of respondents agreed that teleworking provides more excellent family life.





Finally, flexibility for the individual was manifested in the research by the comfort of choosing production hours and adapting to their routine:

It allows professionals to produce when they feel most able to. So, that guy who has production early in the morning, more in the morning, so he can adapt and stay connected with the idea of being a management tool, but also a tool for the well-being of his colleague. So I am in favor (I13).

The fact of saving time, the possibility of taking care of children and family and producing from home, of being able to go to a gym without having to get to the office, there are so many factors that point to the flexibility of teleworking for the worker, that these reasons are elicited all the time in interviews, even when not asked directly about each of the topics per se. Quality of life as a perception is mentioned in research (Aderaldo; Aderaldo; Lima, 2017; Barros; Silva, 2010; Filardi; Castro; Zanini, 2020; Leite; Lemos, 2020; Oliveira; Pantoja, 2018; Santos; Reis, 2021).

Thus, labor flexibility is considered one of the most important characteristic of teleworking, providing the well-being of the workers.

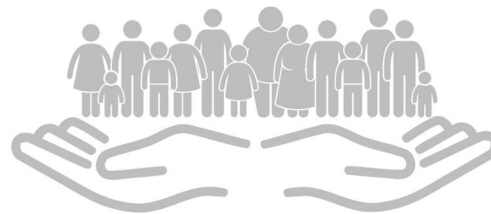
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we sought to gather the perception of federal public lawyers on how the experience of compulsory teleworking developed in Brasília, Federal District, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, from March 2020 to March 2022, about the categories of efficiency, control, communication, and flexibility of the journey.

To this end, the reader was contextualized on compulsory legal teleworking at AGU during the pandemic. Then, in section 2, the theoretical discussion on the main conceptual categories of teleworking in the literature was incorporated. Section 3 describes the methodological path for data collection and analysis of the data produced. In section 4, the results were presented, and the convergences, divergences, and gaps were discussed compared to the literature.

The main limitations of the research were the author's reflexivity, who belongs to the AGU staff, and the smaller number of female interviewees.





As developments for future research, we can investigate how the return occurred in the post-COVID-19 period, the perception of cognitive errors in strategic interaction through telematic means, and how strategic knowledge management can be ensured in a virtual work environment.

The conclusions about the efficiency of legal advice in teleworking during the period studied can be interpreted as enhancing productivity, resulting from the worker's greater availability for professional tasks, the individual pleasure of working from home, and flexible working hours. These two last factors are perceived by research participants as providing them with a better quality of life.

Concerning the individual aspect, this research found the predominance of the opinion of federal public lawyers for a hybrid work system, which can reconcile the flexibility of teleworking to produce better, without losing at the same time the possibility of socializing with colleagues at the distribution and maintaining contact with the advised public manager, which justifies the general preference for the hybrid system between in-person and teleworking.

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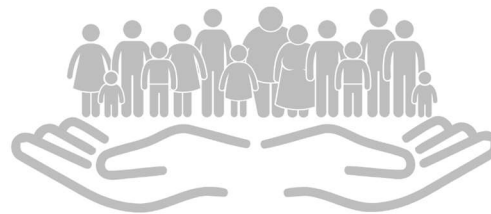
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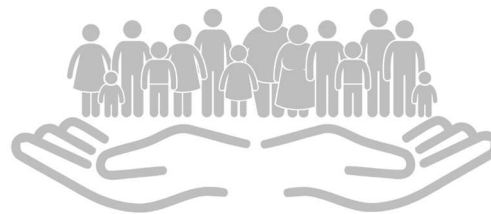
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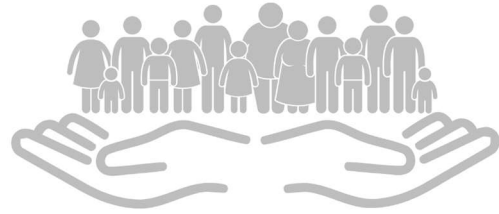
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