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Article

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Article

Diagnosis of Teleworking in Argentina during the Pandemic: Application of the Telework Efficiency Index

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Abstract: Present the most significant findings that were obtained within the framework of the Support Program for Teaching Researchers “PROAPI2021” of the Secretariat of Research and Technological and Institutional Linkage of the National University of Avellaneda of Argentina. (1) Background: Investigate the strengths and weaknesses of companies when implementing teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue with the productive matrix; (2) Methods: The fieldwork focuses on the study of 19 companies from the five productive sectors with the greatest representation in the town of Avellaneda, Argentina, using a teleworking efficiency index as a measurement instrument; (3) Results: The main results in terms of efficiency occur with the possibility of combining work with family life at 97.05%, the enthusiasm and motivation to telework at 84.45%, and the assurance of optimal internet connection quality by 74.6%; (4) Conclusions: The study shows that the variables that present the greatest efficiency are those that are more related to the traditional work scheme, and not to the new modality offered by teleworking. We continue to think about a conventional work model.

Keywords: efficiency index; teleworking; pandemic; diagnosis; company



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1. Introduction

It takes as its starting point a phenomenon of growing global trend, which has emerged strongly in recent decades as a result of the great development provided by information and communication technologies in a productive context that is going through the beginnings of the fourth industrial revolution (Aguilar 2019), and where all business activity is intimately linked to sustainable development in terms of production/labour and products/services that aim to improve people’s quality of life and minimize environmental impact (Diniz et al. 2024), where the emergence of industry 4.0 is made visible from a sustainable development approach in production over the technological aspects driven by the new industrial revolution (Fernández 2020) and in particular, from the COVID-19 pandemic (Weinert and Weitzel 2023; Fontaneda et al. 2023; Masuda et al. 2017; Atoche Pacherrres et al. 2022) that has consolidated teleworking, where the psychological and emotional aspects experienced by people have a particular impact on their work performance. Teleworking has become the best productive alternative for companies to continue operating in times of pandemic. From this context, and under the framework of the Support Program for Teaching Researchers “PROAPI2021”, which obtained first place in the call, and a stimulus financing of \$70,000 (Argentine pesos) for its execution, the purpose of the study was to investigate the experience of companies and/or SMEs that implemented the teleworking modality for the first time during the most critical years of the pandemic in the town of Avellaneda of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The research project includes the conclusion of a collaborative agreement with the Industrial Union of Avellaneda, which facilitated obtaining a sufficiently representative sample of the most thriving sectors of the town of Avellaneda to analyze the experience of teleworking. The Industrial Union of Avellaneda is a civil association representing the different industrial and productive activities located in the jurisdiction of the district of Avellaneda. The town of Avellaneda is a historically

industrial city. From the first days of the founding of Buenos Aires in 1580, settlers settled on the shores of the Riachuelo where they established their farms to supply food to the nascent population. Urban growth took place without distinction of residential, industrial, commercial, or recreational areas, where we can appreciate, in a rare harmony, warehouses, and workshops, some recycled, commercial, banking, and public premises with clubs and stadiums and old neo-Renaissance fronts next to chalets and towers of consortiums; that continue to transform the urban physiognomy. Currently, the productive sectors that stand out in the town of Avellaneda are tannery, metallurgy, plastic, construction, paper, oilseed, and petrochemicals. The main objective of the research study was to analyze the behavior of the productive sector in the implementation of teleworking during the pandemic and to what extent it was articulated with the new Telework Law 27,555 enacted in Argentina in 2020. That is, to observe how the government policies adopted from teleworking towards a just transition of employment were deployed and to what extent the premise of a balance between business productivity and the well-being of workers has been guaranteed ([Government Secretariat of Labor and Employment 2019](#)). The study involved the analysis of the experiences of the productive sectors with the greatest representation in the Industrial Union of Avellaneda and in those companies and/or SMEs that had to implement teleworking for reasons of primary necessity and urgency so as not to stop their productive and commercial operations and preserve jobs.

The emergence of a new digital ecosystem that offers us innumerable challenges to investigate and navigate impacts all the variables of social and productive life ([Foster et al. 2019](#)). The academic, scientific, business, and political universe has been debating this problem for several years. There are various positions and opposing views on the advancement of technology and its impact on the lives of humanity and the environment. However, technology does not seem to leave much room for reflection and continues to advance rapidly without qualms ([Vieira and Rodrigues 2023](#)). A sleepy world occupied with more superficial issues than what has been brewing for some time. Current technology and its projection not only represent the medium that consolidates a fourth industrial revolution as we already know it but also gives rise to a new parallel world, such as the digital environment and artificial intelligence, in which there is not much awareness of its prospective dimension and impact. That is, we are in the presence of something much bigger than we ever imagined, and a first example of this was the unexpected appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent emergence of the teleworking modality ([Felstead and Henseke 2017](#)) as a solution device to continue working in the application of various social isolation programs. Beyond the tragedy of going through a new pandemic, this new scenario has forced us to react and provide some response as quickly as possible to survive. Humanity that was asleep until a while ago now seems to wake up and look at the world with different eyes. Our vulnerability and fragility as a society were evident once again, leaving aside some prejudices that were held about technological advancement over human life and its values. The example that best defines this transition is teleworking, which currently represents one of the most efficient work methodologies in terms of productivity. The new concepts of Industry 4.0, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and big data represent strategic and vital areas for the progressive and sustainable development of companies and industries ([Engberg et al. 2015](#)).

For the research project, the “teleworking efficiency index” was used as a diagnostic tool, an instrument presented to the scientific and academic community at the Argentine Engineering Congress—CADI 2018, and subsequently published in the book “Telework Today: Actuality and Challenges” ([Maresca 2018](#)). The Teleworking Efficiency Index tool allows you to observe the main difficulties that companies had to face, as well as the benefits achieved from the implemented teleworking experience. The teleworking efficiency index analyzes the most significant variables that affect teleworking activity through an approach oriented to the emotional aspect of people on the necessary conditions of the technological infrastructure for its development. The index addresses different areas of analysis through the composition of the variables that make it up, from psychological and emotional factors ([Moirano et al. 2021](#))

to the more technical and operational aspects that involve teleworking. In this way, a general diagnosis of the productive fabric during the pandemic is obtained, identifying the different problems that companies are addressing and pointing out the deployment opportunities that teleworking presents as a new modality of work organization.

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking has become the best solution for productive development and work continuity. Teleworking experiences indicate that the associated benefits far exceed the costs of implementing the modality. However, it is necessary to educate staff to properly carry out teleworking (El Kadri Filho and de Lucca 2022; Alsawafi et al. 2021) where the simplest are the operational tasks linked to work responsibilities, and the most complex is the adaptation to a new work culture that differs in many aspects from the traditional work pattern. This cultural change in habits and in the new skills that are required to be acquired to carry out teleworking is not clearly perceived until the moment of implementing the teleworking modality in business activities. Something similar occurs with the cultural change that workers experience when organizations resort to the digital transformation of their operational processes to generate greater competitive advantages. This pattern of change is reflected in the emotional states (Bossink and Blauw 2002) that workers experience to adapt to new project management practices and digital technologies in the business environment (Junior et al. 2024). This phenomenon of transition between a traditional work scheme and the new teleworking model requires a more in-depth study for its treatment and not superficial observations of some teleworking experiences. The proposal of the teleworking efficiency index as a diagnostic tool contributes to the study of the discipline and facilitates investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of the technical and human aspects necessary to optimally carry out teleworking. This work has been selected with first place in the call “Support Program for Teaching Researchers—PROAPI2021” of the Secretariat of Research and Technological and Institutional Linkage of the National University of Avellaneda, Argentina, within the framework of the resolution of the Superior Council of the University No. 0025-20 on 14 February 2020, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, through stimulus financing of \$70,000 Argentine pesos for its execution. The study raises the hypothesis that companies that implemented the teleworking modality, without considering their antecedents in the modality, continue to think strategically in a traditional work organization format and do not perceive the social and productive change that is taking place. Teleworking is identified as a simple way of working remotely and connected to the Internet, and not as the challenge of a new work organization scheme that presents the vital need to acquire new knowledge and skills for its development. Companies that quickly adapt to this new work scheme will greatly benefit in the productive sphere, and those that fail will disappear soon. The study provides a diagnosis of the current situation that highlights the lack of collective consciousness in the transition to a new productive era and the extensive path that must be followed.

2. Methodology

The objectives that were set for the research project were, as a general objective, to diagnose the implementation of teleworking in times of pandemic of the companies and/or SMEs with the greatest representation in the Industrial Union of Avellaneda, and referents of the productive matrix of the town of Avellaneda. In terms of specific objectives, on the one hand, to explore and identify the most significant problems for the implementation of teleworking towards a just transition between productivity and worker well-being and to contrast their results with the regulatory framework established by the Telework Law in Argentina. The research consisted of the study of companies and SMEs in the productive sectors with the greatest representation in the Industrial Union of Avellaneda that have implemented teleworking during the pandemic to sustain the productive and employment matrix. The study population was selected from the five productive sectors with the highest representation of companies and/or SMEs affiliated with the Industrial Union of Avellaneda. In this sense, the five sectors identified are configured as follows: Metallurgical industry: 90 companies/SMEs, Miscellaneous services industry: 35 compa-

nies/SMEs, Plastics industry: 21 companies/SMEs, Food industry: 16 companies/SMEs, and Graphic industry: 16 companies/SMEs. The observable population is made up of a total of 178 companies and/or SMEs that represent the five most thriving sectors of the Industrial Union of Avellaneda. For the study, a sample of around 10% of the population was formed, represented by 19 companies and/or SMEs from the five industrial sectors, of which a total of 98 in-depth surveys and/or interviews were carried out. The research methodology used was a descriptive and exploratory research design through two formats, surveys, and in-depth interviews, to investigate different responsibilities and work contexts when exercising the teleworking modality. A survey model focused on the employees of each company with operational functions without relevant responsibilities in decision-making, and another model of in-depth interviews, both to profiles with operational and executive functions at their different hierarchical levels in decision-making. The survey format and in-depth interview were implemented electronically. The surveys were carried out through an online form with closed questions, following the thematic guidelines set out in the analysis of each variable that formulates the teleworking efficiency index, and the in-depth interviews were carried out through videoconferences, which complemented the study, facilitating some revelations at an exploratory level. In summary, 86 surveys were carried out with workers with operational functions and 12 in-depth interviews, of which 4 were interviews with operational profiles and 8 were interviews with executive profiles. Appendix A (Table A1) details the 19 companies and/or SMEs that participated in the research study, the industrial sector, and the number of in-depth surveys and/or interviews that were carried out in each case.

For the study, the Telework Efficiency Index—TEi (Maresca 2018) has been used as a diagnostic instrument, which is constituted as a function of independent variables of primary and secondary (Table 1) order with different specific weights each, representing the thematic areas of analysis with the greatest incidence in the telework modality in order to measure its level of efficiency:

Table 1. Description of variables of the teleworking efficiency index.

Primary Variables	Secondary Variables
VP ₁ —Person willing to telework.	VS ₁ —Time management for family life and other interests.
VP ₂ —Technological infrastructure.	VS ₂ —Time management at work.
	VS ₃ —Hygiene and safety in teleworking.
	VS ₄ —Building infrastructure and physical spaces.
	VS ₅ —Interpersonal communications.
	VS ₆ —Residuals of other significant secondary variables.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Based on the data collected from the surveys and in-depth interviews, each primary and secondary variable that formulates the teleworking efficiency index is evaluated. Each primary and secondary variable presents a series of thematic items that are graded based on the data collected. Each item is rated on a scale between 0 and 2 points, where each variable consists of 5 thematic items, and the maximum possible score that each variable can obtain is 10 points. Below are the items to be assessed for each primary (Tables 2 and 3) and secondary (Tables 4–9) variable of the teleworking efficiency index:

Table 2. A person willing to telework—VP₁.

Items Surveyed
1- General psychological and physical aspects.
2- Degree of motivation and interest in the modality.
3- Level of openness and socialization with the outside world.
4- Degree of aspiration and professional/personal growth.
5- Level of creativity and imagination.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 3. Technological Infrastructure—VP₂.

Items Surveyed
1- Quality of technological platform used for teleworking.
2- Technological equipment appropriate for the tasks performed.
3- Quality of connection to networks.
4- Knowledge to operate technological means.
5- Quality of technical support provided.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 4. Time Management for Family Life and Other Interests—VS₁.

Items Surveyed
1- Level of interest in family life.
2- Time available for leisure activities and general amusement.
3- Time available for personal procedures.
4- Time available for study, training, and professional training.
5- Degree of interest in tourism and trips abroad.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 5. Time Management at Work—VS₂.

Items Surveyed
1- Level of planning and organization in work tasks.
2- Level of interest in the work tasks you perform.
3- Degree of responsibility and commitment in their work obligations.
4- Level of knowledge in general technological devices.
5- Degree of availability changes in the working day.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 6. Health and safety in teleworking—VS₃.

Items Surveyed
1- Level of security in technological systems and platforms.
2- Degree of confidentiality when handling the information.
3- Level of cleanliness and general order of the physical spaces used.
4- General aspects of hygiene and personal clothing.
5- General aspects of safety and physical integrity in the workplace and work-home journey.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 7. Building Infrastructure and Physical Spaces—VS₄.

Items Surveyed
1- Clean, bright, and airy physical space.
2- Accessibility to concentration to carry out tasks in the physical spaces used.
3- Elements, tools and furniture needed to telework.
4- Level of comfort in the physical spaces used.
5- Modern image look in physical spaces.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 8. Interpersonal Communications—VS₅.

Items Surveyed
1- Level of contact with colleagues in the same sector.
2- Level of interaction with staff from other sectors of the organization.
3- Quality of communications through technological platforms and means.
4- Quality of communication with your superior or responsible area.
5- Level of comprehension of the messages exchanged.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Table 9. Residual of other significant secondary variables—VS₆.

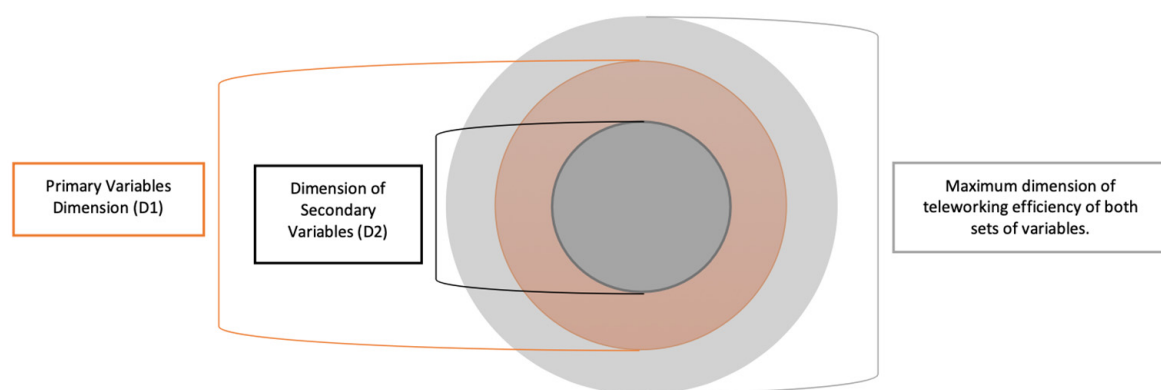
Items Surveyed
1- Quality of the work carried out and fulfilment of work objectives.
2- Employment contract for teleworking.
3- Legal and regulatory context of the activity to exercise teleworking.
4- Sector/company financial statements, accounting statements, and budgets.
5- Context of the macro and microenvironment for teleworking.

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

For the design of the surveys, closed questions were asked regarding each item of the primary and secondary variables of the telework efficiency index. Regarding the in-depth interviews, an exploratory design is presented to complement the assessment of the items obtained from the surveys and to give even more weight to those items that are most relevant in the teleworking day. Finally, the score obtained in each item and variable resulting from the index is quantified, and the results of each primary and secondary variable are used in the analytical expression that formulates the telework efficiency index (TEi):

$$TEi = VP1 \times 0.30 + VP2 \times 0.20 + [VS1 \times 0.15 + \left(\frac{VS2 + VS3 + VS4}{3} \right) \times 0.27 + VS5 \times 0.06 + VS6 \times 0.02] \quad (1)$$

The value obtained as the result of the teleworking efficiency index (TEi) is a value that varies on a scale between 0 and 10 points, with 10 points being the maximum possible efficiency exercising the teleworking modality. In certain contexts of uncertainty or risk where the research study is addressed, a correction factor (α) is applied to the result obtained from the index to smooth out possible estimation errors in data collection. The correction factor (α) varies on a scale from 0 to 1 and represents the level of quality that has been achieved throughout the data collection procedure, with a value closer to 0 being a pessimistic scenario assessment and closer to 1 an optimistic scenario assessment. It makes it easier to smooth out the variations presented in any data series according to the level of confidence obtained in the estimates obtained. In addition to the analytical expression of the teleworking efficiency index, the diagnostic instrument has its own graphical representation (Figure 1) that is shown in the following diagram:

**Figure 1.** Graphic representation of the teleworking efficiency index.

The graphical scheme (Figure 1) is broken down from the dimension of the results obtained from the analytic expression, which brings together, on the one hand, the primary variables (D1) with a maximum possible rating of 5 points and on the other hand, the results of the secondary variables (D2) also with a maximum score of 5 points. In such a way, in an ideal scenario, both results of variables are integrated, representing a single circumference that shows the maximum possible efficiency of implementation of the teleworking modality. The primary variables are necessary and sufficient variables to carry out teleworking, while

the secondary variables are supportive and complementary to the primary variables and necessary to strengthen the development of telework but not sufficient on their own. In short, the diagram can adopt different situational states: a state of convergence when the primary variables obtain a higher rating score with respect to the secondary variables and, conversely, a state of divergence when the secondary variables obtain a higher rating than the primary variables. This will depend, in turn, on the magnitude adopted by each set of variables near the dimension of 5 points as the maximum possible valuation in an ideal scenario. A third alternative can also be presented, which refers to a state of neutrality when both sets of variables coincide in their partial assessments. Of both situational states of convergence and divergence, it is always preferable in terms of teleworking efficiency, a state of convergence where the central to exercising telework is arranged, and it will be necessary to further strengthen the support conditions as secondary variables to improve the performance of the modality. On the contrary, a state of divergence is represented by a scheme where the secondary variables perform better than the primary variables, so there is a greater risk that teleworking will fail and cannot continue because the necessary and sufficient elements (primary variables) for teleworking are scarce and weak to sustain a possible growth and development deployment.

3. Results

The design of the surveys and in-depth interviews was adapted to a format that facilitates the weighting of each assessment table corresponding to the primary and secondary variables of the teleworking efficiency index. The final assessment of each primary and secondary variable is presented on a scale that varies between 0 and 10 points, with a maximum score of 2 points possible for each thematic item of the variable considered. A total of 86 surveys and 12 in-depth interviews were conducted on 19 companies and/or SMEs, referring to the five most thriving industrial sectors annexed by the Industrial Union of Avellaneda. The following are the results of the observed sample for each variable (Figures 2–9) of the teleworking efficiency index:

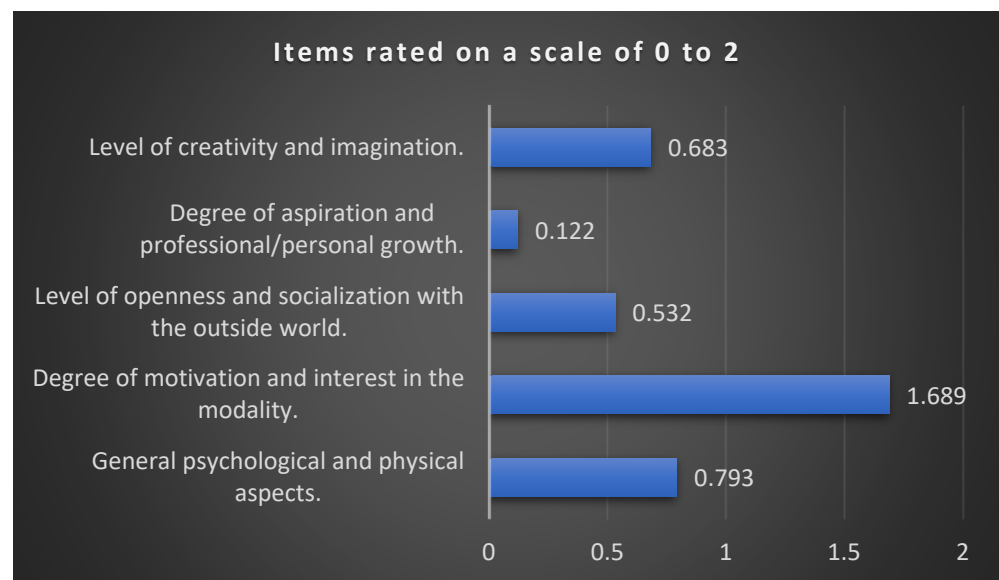


Figure 2. Results of person willing to telework—VP₁.

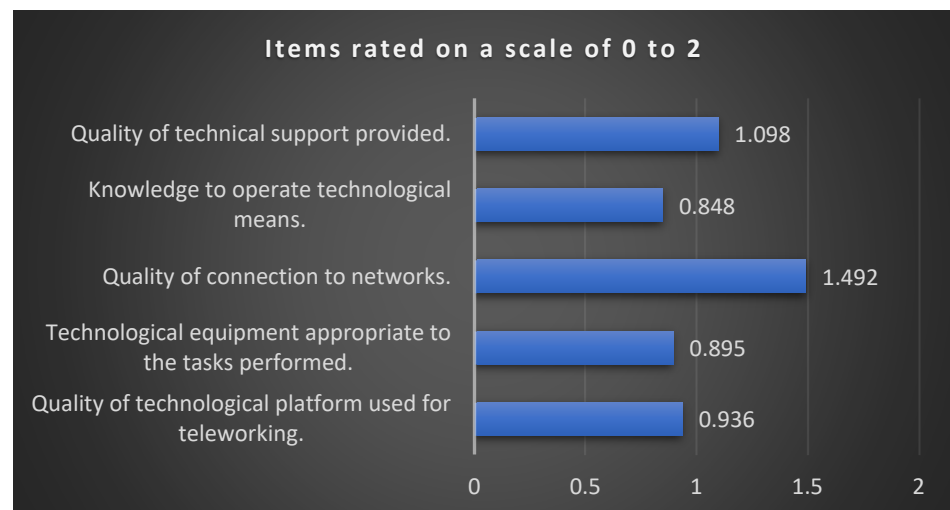


Figure 3. Results of technological infrastructure—VP₂.

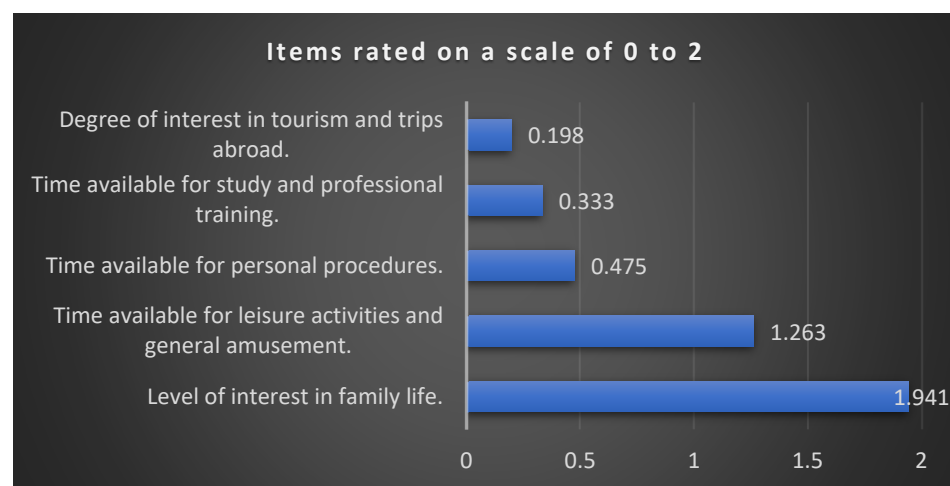


Figure 4. Results of Time Management for Family Life and Other Interests—VS₁.

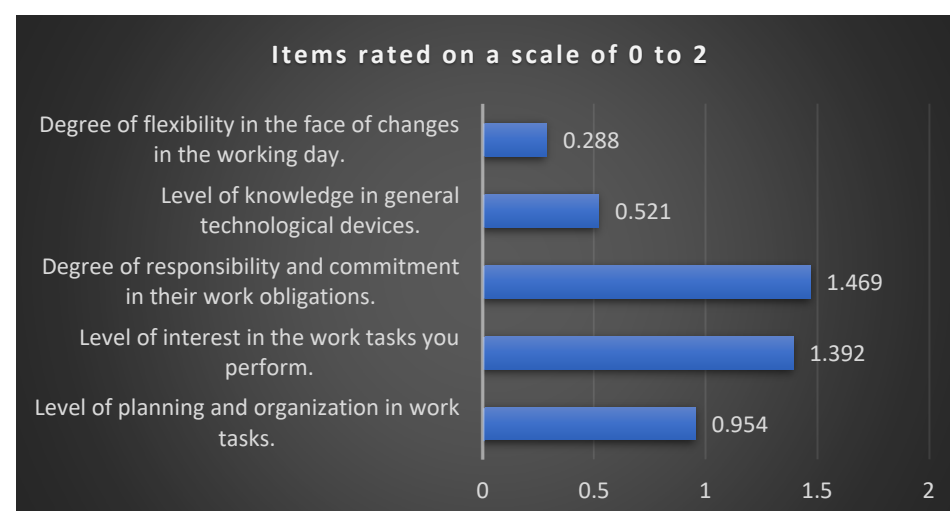


Figure 5. Results of Time Management at Work—VS₂.

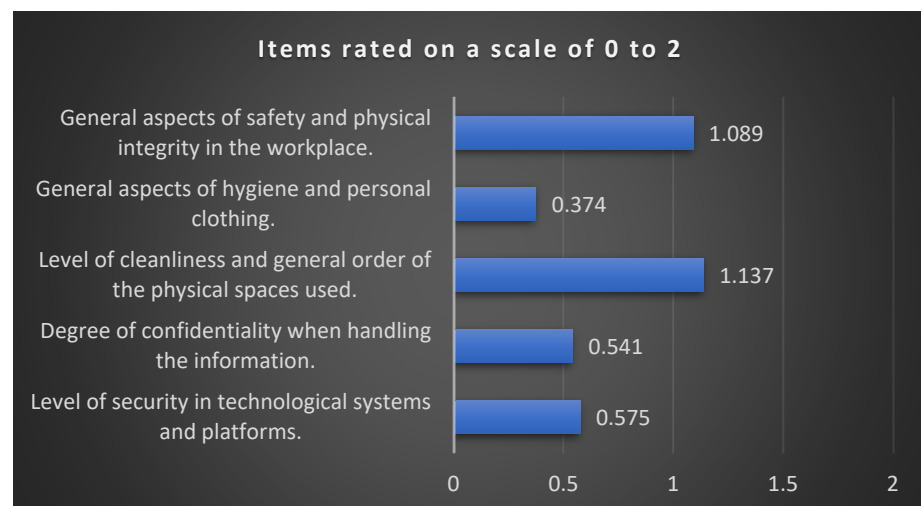


Figure 6. Results of health and safety in teleworking—VS₃.

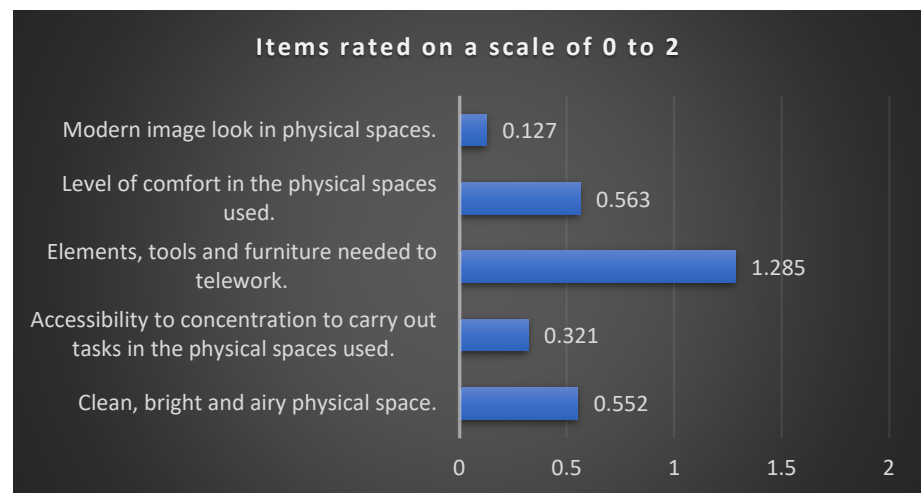


Figure 7. Results of Building Infrastructure and Physical Spaces—VS₄.

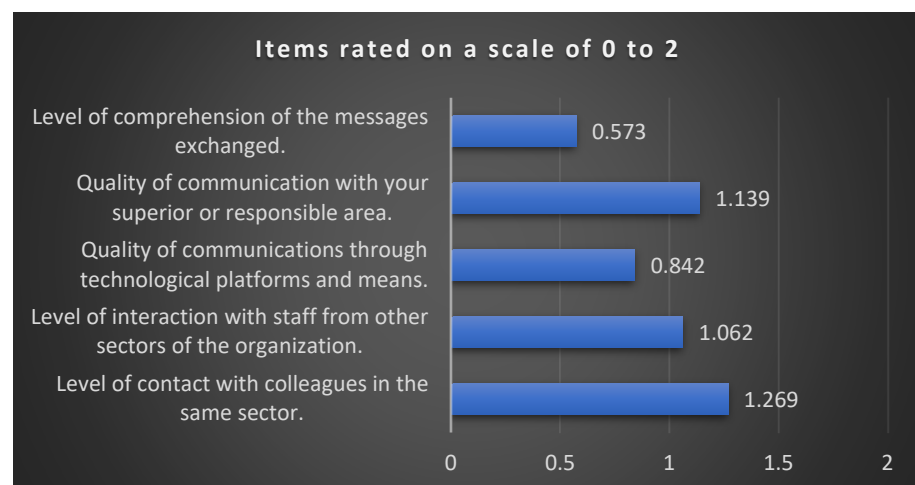


Figure 8. Results of interpersonal communications—VS₅.

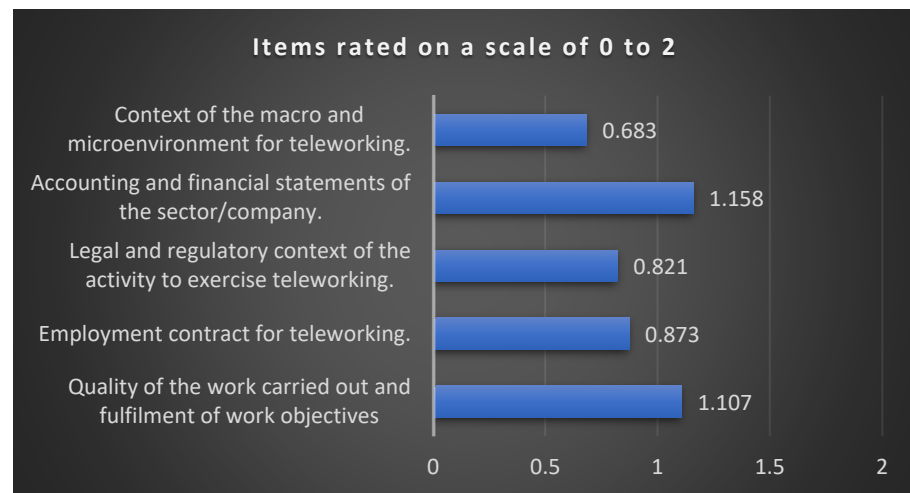


Figure 9. Results of residual of other significant secondary variables—VS₆.

The final values obtained in each primary and secondary (Table 10) variable of analysis of the observed sample are shown:

Table 10. Results for each primary and secondary variable.

Variables (Primary and Secondary)	Total Rating (Scale from 0 to 10 Points)
VP ₁	3.19
VP ₂	5.269
VS ₁	4.21
VS ₂	4.624
VS ₃	3.716
VS ₄	2.848
VS ₅	4.885
VS ₆	4.642
Total primary variables	2.1995
Total secondary variables	2.02436

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

Based on the results obtained from each primary and secondary variable, the teleworking efficiency index is calculated using the following analytical expression:

$$TEi = [VP1 \times 0.30 + VP2 \times 0.20] + [VS1 \times 0.15 + \left(\frac{VS2 + VS3 + VS4}{3} \right) \times 0.27 + VS5 \times 0.06 + VS6 \times 0.02]. \quad (2)$$

$$TEi = [1.1457 + 1.0538] + [0.6315 + 1.00692 + 0.2931 + 0.09284] = 4.22386 \text{ points} \quad (3)$$

Regarding the graphical representation of the results obtained, the specific weights occupied by the set of primary and secondary variables, respectively, are identified. It is observed that the resulting value of the primary variables is slightly higher than that of the secondary variables. In other words, we are in a state of convergence, where the primary variables are more efficient than the secondary ones in the exercise of teleworking, and the secondary variables fulfill the function of supporting the primary variables. It is also observed that both sets of primary and secondary variables are at a lower-than-average level based on their maximum efficiency possibilities. In our global study, we have obtained a total of 2.1995 points for the primary variables, 2.02436 points for the secondary or complementary variables, and finally, an assessment in the telework efficiency index of $\alpha = 0.75$. In that case, if we were to take a correction factor of $\alpha = 0.75$, i.e., in an optimistic scenario, we get the following $TEi = 4.22386 \text{ puntos}$. $TEi = 3.167895 \text{ point}$ result. If we were to apply the correction factor to the partial results of the primary and secondary

variables, we would obtain a value of 1.649625 points in the primary variables and a value of 1.51827 points in the secondary variables. Therefore, the difference between the set of variables with the highest incidence of teleworking activity according to the proposed scheme of the index is not modified, but we would be in a scenario with a lower valuation with respect to the result obtained without the estimation adjustment. In any case, in either situation, the efficiency index of teleworking, with or without adjustment, is below average. This implies that there are many issues that need to be improved in order to optimize the performance of the teleworking modality. In this case, we will not use the correction factor to smooth out the estimate obtained since, in both situations, it does not significantly infer from the analysis of the results.

4. Discussion

The first observation indicates that the phenomenon of the pandemic has had a surprising impact on the entire world (Maritan et al. 2024) and on Argentina in particular, even more so if we consider that the vast majority of companies and/or SMEs had no experience in teleworking. Therefore, the study clearly shows that the local productive sector was not prepared to face a new work organization model, nor was it expected to implement teleworking in the medium or long term. Teleworking was only applied in certain very specific sectors, and many of them partially, such as the tourism, software, or telecommunications industries. Telecommuting was applied more as a benefit of labor flexibility to the worker by offering one day of the week remote work rather than the systemic idea of implementing a new model of work organization. In addition, in those years, Argentina did not make any progress in other sensitive areas that directly affected teleworking, such as a normative and regulatory framework that supported the activity. The results show that teleworking was implemented as an unexpected and extremely urgent measure. A spare wheel that served to survive in an extremely critical and complex environment such as the pandemic. During that period, a law on teleworking was passed with some improvisation, and companies implemented the modality as best they could with the scarce resources they had. The result reflected in the teleworking efficiency index (TEi), with a value of 4.22386 points on a scale between 0 and 10, clearly indicates that the implementation of the modality was complex and difficult in general terms and that most of the companies and/or SMEs that participated in the study are far from achieving considerable performance efficiency. However, Table 10 shows the small difference between the relative weight of the primary variables, with 2.1995 points, and the secondary variables, with 2.02436 points. The set of primary and secondary variables requires extensive improvements in several aspects, both emotionally and technically, to approach a moderate or above-average performance scenario. On the positive side, the primary and secondary variables appear to grow together and have a certain balance. It is also encouraging that the primary variables present a higher level of efficiency and development than the secondary variables, the latter being oriented to support and sustain the primary variables. According to (Table 10), we are in the presence of a state of convergence at a global level, where knowledge and learning of the modality are expanding in a still incipient state of development. In the primary variables that focus on the items referring to the skills and abilities of the person willing to telework and the items that evaluate the conditions of the available technological infrastructure, the greatest deficit is found in the degree of aspiration and professional growth when teleworking is exercised. In contrast to this, the feeling of well-being and motivation for the development of teleworking tasks presents the highest weight, at 84.45% (Elizalde 2021; Yoon and Thye 2002). This describes that teleworking is considered more as a work methodology that facilitates flexible working hours and reduces the stress that a conventional work scheme entails, and not as a new work methodology that offers greater openness of opportunities and professional growth linked to the socio-cultural and productive change that the world is experiencing with technological progress and the behavior of the new generations. In other words, teleworking continues to be maintained as a simple measure of flexibility under the same foundations of traditional work and not as a disruptive phenomenon that

transforms the work environment in all its forms. As for the level of creativity and imagination required for teleworking ([Álvarez Rivas and Parras 2022](#)) and the psychological and physical aspects in general, they are within the average with positive evaluations in this regard, indicating that teleworking inspires to be more creative in work tasks, and the feeling of being more motivated by teleworking is also highlighted. On the other hand, at the level of socialization with the outside world, 73.4% of the cases observed state that it is necessary to deepen the development of programs or work guidelines that facilitate a greater openness to socialize and avoid the state of isolation that teleworking commonly presents ([Wooldridge et al. 2008](#)). This is largely due to the lack of awareness of the cultural change and habits that society is going through, and that must be reflected in the new work routine that teleworking presents. Regarding the variable of technological infrastructure in particular, the evaluations of its items are more balanced than those referring to the variable of “the person willing to telework” ([Valcour and Hunter 2005](#)). The highest rating is obtained by the quality of connection to the internet and other networks, with 74.6%. This coincides with the advance of telecommunications, which has been evolving exponentially for some time now at a global level but is now the indispensable means of teleworking, unlike what was considered in traditional work. The same happens at a lower level, with everything related to technological equipment and the quality of the technological platforms available for teleworking at 44.75% and 46.8%, respectively. In addition, the technical support required for the proper development of activities amounts to 54.9% in a positive way. On the other hand, the greatest weakness continues to be the lack of technical knowledge in technological matters, with 42.4% facilitating the improvement of the productive performance of the company’s human capital. In other words, the need to invest more resources in training and professional training to achieve better performance in teleworking is identified. In this first section of primary variables, we can observe that the most profound sociocultural change is not yet reflected in the productive community through teleworking ([Alles 2020](#)) and continues to be thought from a traditional approach to work. The most significant of the set of primary variables refers to the fact that the most relevant for all the cases observed is the motivation and enthusiasm generated by the teleworking modality, followed by the quality of connection to the internet and other networks. Then, at a lower level, other aspects, such as those related to the quality of computer tools, the available technological infrastructure, the knowledge to operate the technological means, and adequate technical support, above psychological factors ([Fotiadis et al. 2019](#)), socialization with the outside, and the development of creativity and imagination with a total of 33.43% of positive evaluation. In other words, more importance is given to connectivity and technological infrastructure than to the level of soft skills for the development of teleworking activities. On the other hand, according to the secondary variables, all the cases observed significantly value the possibility of combining work with family life in 97.05% ([Vida Fernández and Durán Bernardino 2022](#); [Dempsey and Sanders 2010](#)) and; secondly, a greater interest in having time available for leisure activities and general amusement in 63.15%. However, only 16.65% consider the time available for study, training, and professional development to be relevant. However, what is contradictory is that in 73.45% of the cases, the responsibility and commitment to the fulfillment of work activities are relevant, and in 69.6%, the interest in the activities they carry out. In other words, there is more interest in complying with work obligations than the level of quality in the tasks themselves that are carried out. At the same time, only 14.4% mentioned being willing or having a flexible stance in the face of structural changes in the working day. 56.85% consider order and cleanliness important in the area where they telework, and 54.45% highlight with a positive assessment of the general aspect of safety and physical integrity in the teleworking environment and the need for adequate travel from home to work facilities in those cases that partially telework. However, only 18.7% of cases concern personal hygiene and clothing issues when teleworking. 64.25% of the cases observed highlight the arrangement and proper use of furniture for teleworking, while a mere 6.35% prefer to telework in spaces with a modern and contemporary aesthetic design, and only

28.15% pay attention to comfort in the teleworking environment. In other words, there is a certain preference for having the right furniture and equipment for teleworking, not for hygiene issues, and for spacious, comfortable, and bright spaces for teleworking. Meanwhile, 63.45% of the cases state that there has been a significant improvement in interpersonal treatment and bonds, but only 28.65% have highlighted that the messages exchanged with their colleagues mediated by technologies are interpreted in a better way, while most cases present difficulties in understanding and interpreting the messages exchanged. There is evidence that there is some distortion in sending messages remotely as opposed to traditional communication without being mediated by technologies (Špoljarić and Verčič 2021). 57.9% stated that the optimization of costs and business budgets has improved with the implementation of teleworking, and 55.35% stated that the fulfillment of work objectives is more important than economic or financial issues for this new modality. 57.65% of the cases indicate that, in practice, they have not had significant modifications in the design of their employment contract and that they have not identified any significant change in terms of obligations and rights in their working hours with the new teleworking law enacted in 2020 that regulates the activity. Likewise, 34.15% clearly identify positive changes or significant benefits for both the company and the employees in the activities they carry out, given the variations in the political, legal, economic, and environmental dimensions of the company's macroenvironment. Below is the final assessment of each of the items of the primary and secondary variables that have been analyzed:

Table 11 shows that the three items with the highest rating are the possibility of combining work with family life in 97.05% (Standen et al. 1999; Allen et al. 2014), the enthusiasm and motivation generated by the possibility of teleworking in 84.45%, and the assurance of an optimal quality of internet connection and networks in 74.6%. On the other hand, the three items with the lowest rating were the possibility of sightseeing or traveling abroad during a teleworking scheme (9.9%), having a modern design in the space where teleworking is carried out (6.35%), and the aspiration towards personal and professional growth with this new way of working (6.1%). Regarding the level of efficiency resulting from each primary and secondary variable, the study indicates that the primary variable of the person willing to telework is in the last position in terms of efficiency, which further ratifies the hypothesis that companies try to solve the operational aspects of their functions in the best possible way and they do not worry about developing the capacities and skills of people who telework as a guiding element of the new modality (Núñez-Cortés Contreras and de Simón 2021). However, all variables are at below-average levels of efficiency, except for the primary variable of technological infrastructure, with 5.269 points. This indicates that there is no comprehensive teleworking plan, and it is necessary to implement improvements in all the incidence variables for teleworking. Fundamentally, those are linked to the person who teleworks since it turns out to be the main variable, according to the design of the index to implement teleworking. On the other hand, the variables linked to interpersonal communications and other significant variables of the macroenvironment suggest that the variables that present greater efficiency are those that are more related to the traditional work scheme than to the new modality offered by teleworking. In other words, we continue to think of a conventional model and not of a new form of work organization, a product of the socio-cultural change that is taking place.

Table 11. Ranking of ratings of each item according to variable.

Ranking	Variable	Type	Score
1	Level of interest in family life.	VS ₁	1.941
2	Degree of motivation and interest in the modality.	VP ₁	1.689
3	Quality of connection to networks.	VP ₂	1.492
4	Degree of responsibility and commitment in their work obligations.	VS ₂	1.469
5	Level of interest in the work tasks you perform.	VS ₂	1.392
6	Elements, tools, and furniture needed to telework.	VS ₄	1.285

Table 11. Cont.

Ranking	Variable	Type	Score
7	Level of contact with colleagues in the same sector.	VS ₅	1.269
8	Time available for leisure activities and general amusement.	VS ₁	1.263
9	Sector/company financial statements, accounting statements, and budgets.	VS ₆	1.158
10	Quality of communication with your superior or responsible area.	VS ₅	1.139
11	Level of cleanliness and general order of the physical spaces used.	VS ₃	1.137
12	Quality of the work carried out and fulfilment of work objectives	VS ₆	1.107
13	Quality of technical support provided.	VP ₂	1.098
14	General aspects of safety and physical integrity in the workplace.	VS ₃	1.089
15	Level of interaction with staff from other sectors of the organization.	VS ₅	1.062
16	Level of planning and organization in work tasks.	VS ₂	0.954
17	Quality of technological platform used for teleworking.	VP ₂	0.936
18	Technological equipment appropriates to the tasks performed.	VP ₂	0.895
19	Employment contract for teleworking.	VS ₆	0.873
20	Knowledge to operate technological means.	VP ₂	0.848
21	Quality of communications through technological platforms and means.	VS ₅	0.842
22	Legal and regulatory context of the activity to exercise teleworking.	VS ₆	0.821
23	General psychological and physical aspects.	VP ₁	0.793
24	Level of creativity and imagination.	VP ₁	0.683
25	Context of the macro and microenvironment for teleworking.	VS ₆	0.683
26	Level of security in technological systems and platforms.	VS ₃	0.575
27	Level of comprehension of the messages exchanged.	VS ₅	0.573
28	Level of comfort in the physical spaces used.	VS ₄	0.563
29	Clean, bright, and airy physical space.	VS ₄	0.552
30	Degree of confidentiality when handling the information.	VS ₃	0.541
31	Level of openness and socialization with the outside world.	VP ₁	0.532
32	Level of knowledge in general technological devices.	VS ₂	0.521
33	Time available for personal procedures.	VS ₁	0.475
34	General aspects of hygiene and personal clothing.	VS ₃	0.374
35	Time available for study, training, and professional training.	VS ₁	0.333
36	Accessibility to concentration to carry out tasks in the physical spaces used.	VS ₄	0.321
37	Degree of availability changes in the working day.	VS ₂	0.288
38	Degree of interest in tourism and trips abroad.	VS ₁	0.198
39	Modern images look in physical spaces.	VS ₄	0.127
40	Degree of aspiration and professional/personal growth.	VP ₁	0.122

Source: Teleworking Efficiency Index (2018).

5. Conclusions

The global analysis indicated by the Telework Efficiency Index allows us to clearly identify how the set of primary variables obtains a slightly higher score than the set of secondary variables. However, the items of the set of primary variables are more disparate than the items of the set of secondary variables. In other words, there is a more balanced development in the secondary variables than in the primary variables since, in the index, the primary variables are the brain and heart of the teleworking modality. This situation is evidenced by the result of the index and its representative graph, where most companies and/or SMEs did not have or had very little previous experience in the teleworking modality. To develop teleworking in optimal conditions, a well-designed work plan and, above all, continuous training are required. And precisely, the latter was one of the least valued or little implemented items in practice. The results also indicate that, of the items assessed for each variable, the greater interest and degree of efficiency on the part of the respondents is a secondary variable that refers to the level of interest in family life, followed by two items of primary variables on motivation and quality of internet connection. In order 13, there is just another primary variable item: the quality of the technical support available. This scheme of priorities indicates that there is a generalized weariness with the routine of traditional work, the office, or the industrial plant. It is no coincidence that the most valued items that are exercised most efficiently are those items linked to the need to “escape” from

the daily routine of work and to be able to combine it with other interests that relax people and envelop them in a fictitious ecosystem where they pretend in some way that they do not work because they do it from another physical space than the conventional one. but they are still working and taking on job responsibilities. It is necessary, according to the scheme proposed by the efficiency index, that the set of primary variables is more efficient than the set of secondary variables and that both sets of variables grow in a balanced way. However, the study clearly identifies that the items of the primary variables are in a very incipient state of development and efficiency. In fact, the index scores below average in terms of efficiency on a scale of 0 to 10 points. Similarly, the same is true for the set of secondary variables, but the development of each item is more balanced in general terms. It is evident that this magnitude of results could be obtained when the initiative to implement teleworking emerged due to force majeure as a spare wheel. The pandemic has surprised the world, and in particular, Argentina had no previous relevant experience in the new modality. The most significant aspect of this study is that teleworking is still considered in the collective consciousness of the production system, only as a simple measure of benefits for employers and employees. Another data to highlight from the study is the low degree of aspiration to professional/personal growth presented by the cases observed, which is a fundamental aspect that motivates people in their field of work. The most common mistake is to leave aside promotion and promotion strategies when implementing teleworking. The teleworking modality itself is associated as if it were a reward for work performance. On the other hand, most recognize the need to exchange teleworking with external activities, both work and non-work activities, to encourage socialization with the outside world. This initiative makes it easier to renew energy and maintain a link outside the virtual and technological environment. In terms of psychological and physical aspects in general, the most experienced companies in teleworking usually carry out periodic performance evaluation tests through playful, entertainment, and experimentation activities. That is, non-invasive activities to evaluate work performance and, in turn, stimulate enthusiasm for teleworking and appeal to the development of creativity and imagination of staff. A few cases have maintained an offer of continuous professional training programs to enhance the human and technical knowledge required for teleworking. On the other hand, most companies do not provide adequate computer equipment to carry out teleworking tasks. In general, they minimize this aspect and usually provide the standard type of IT equipment to staff to optimize costs. In other words, what seems to be savings on the part of companies at first is later paid for with a lower productive performance. Another aspect is the need to have a quality technological platform for teleworking. Companies typically prioritize this item and invest a lot of money in hiring a good technological infrastructure service since they consider it a central element of the business. On the other hand, the degree of interest in leisure activities, general entertainment, tourism or travel, personal procedures, and external training also obtained a low rating in the study. These are activities that generally arise from the interest of the person who teleworks and not so much from the employer. In any case, it is healthy for the company itself to promote initiatives linked to this type of leisure activities and other interests that considerably motivate the employee, and it is also a way of educating the employee to develop the ability to self-manage their working day and master new emotional sensations that the teleworking modality imposes on us. The degree of availability to changes in the working day by the employee also obtains a low value, and in general, this materializes when the person who teleworks does not become aware that teleworking is another mode of work that requires greater mastery in self-discipline and self-management of time to develop their work. Under a teleworking scheme, there is a significant share of loss of control on the part of the company, and it affects both parties, either on the side of the company that decreases its surveillance of the employee and can only assess the fulfillment of its objectives and results achieved, and on the side of the employee who must learn other skills to maintain an optimal level of responsibility at least equal to a face-to-face job. Anyone's performance in terms of effort always tends to diminish when they do not feel observed. But at the same time, when she feels more liberated, it

makes it possible to generate innovative actions that significantly improve her results. Companies must ensure a balance and avoid both extremes, whether it is exhaustive control or absolute freedom without any control at all. In short, teleworking is a new disruptive model that requires new rules, strategies, and capabilities for its development. This is in theory, but it is not concretely reflected in practice, according to the measurements that have been obtained. This study clearly shows that there is not much overlap between what the telework law says and the practice itself. On the one hand, the telework law has several aspects that are not detailed, such as questions about the need for a new model of employment contract, the need for assistance to health and safety at work under a new model, and the conditions in terms of investment by the employer to pay for some of the supplies required for teleworking, such as the internet, energy, furniture, equipment, and the guarantee of an adequate physical space to carry out teleworking in a healthy way. Some of these issues are listed in the law, but they are not specified and are not largely implemented in practice. This is mainly because implementing many of these measures implies deepening a process of negotiation with other sectors of power, such as trade unions, business chambers, government entities, and other social organizations that have an impact on the productive apparatus. And like any negotiation process, there always comes a cost, and not all parties seem to be very willing to take on and take that risk. The study reflects a certain lack of commitment on the part of all parties to implement specific action plans that promote adequate implementation of telework in the productive sector and the need to adapt and update the current telework law through proposals for improvement and new regulations based on the experiences that already exist in the productive framework on telework. In addition, there is a need to implement control and monitoring mechanisms at both the state and private levels and to provide support and training through the dissemination of various programs that guarantee a healthy development and deployment of teleworking. Any socio-cultural change implies the initiative of awareness-raising and training programs for the development of new knowledge and means of work. Increasingly, work activities and teaching and learning processes in all subject areas are linked through digital technologies, where hyper-connectivity and easy access to information encourage people to self-manage the development of knowledge, unlike what happened in previous generations. Adaptation has become a person's main virtue in gaining easier access to the new employment scheme. The need for a much broader and more specific knowledge arises at the same time, which is totally opposite to what happened just a few decades ago, where the logic of computer algorithms, data processing, and skill in the handling of artificial intelligence are the fundamental pillars that, together with the development of emotional intelligence, they mark the necessary path to properly exercise teleworking and accompany their own evolution. In short, telecommuting is not a work tool. Telecommuting is not a benefit for both the employer and the employee. Teleworking is not a flexibility measure that apparently violates labor rights. Nor is teleworking the representation of a socio-cultural change. Teleworking is a new disruptive model of work organization, with new rules and capabilities to address the model efficiently. Truly understanding its conception will be the main challenge that the productive network must assume and face to accompany the evolution proposed by a new work ecosystem.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Description of companies and/or SMEs in the case study.

Q	Enterprise	Sector/Industry	Survey	Interview
1	Aluminio Della Croce S.A.	Metallurgical	4	1
2	Equipamiento Didáctico Insur S.A.	Metallurgical	5	
3	Envases Hacer S.A.	Metallurgical	5	2
4	Industrializadora de Metales S.A.	Metallurgical	4	
5	Industrias Delgado S.A.	Metallurgical	6	1
6	Establecimiento Metalúrgico SAM S.A.I.C.	Metallurgical	3	
7	Exolgan S.A.	Services	4	1
8	Oscos Salud	Services	5	
9	Lombardi y Grondona S.A.	Services	6	2
10	Megatom S.A.	Services	4	
11	Plasti-Cont S.A.	Plastic	5	1
12	Polter Argentina S.R.L.	Plastic	4	
13	Reciclar S.A.	Plastic	3	
14	Argall S.R.L.	Food	6	1
15	Pans Company S.A.	Food	3	
16	Emezeta	Food	4	2
17	Grupo Impresor S.A.	Graphic	5	
18	Kollor Press	Graphic	4	1
19	Fotomecánica S.A.	Graphic	6	
	TOTAL		86	12

Source: own elaboration of the study (2022).

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