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On Confidence and the Marginalisation of Women Teleworkers in Social and Labour Recognition[1]

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Abstract. This article aims to analyse and highlight the tensions surrounding the demands and dynamics of legal and socio-labour recognition of teleworkers during and after their lockdown in Santiago, Chile. The results presented form part of doctoral research conducted between 2021 and 2024, which employed a qualitative design that included semi-structured interviews and focused observation. The findings reveal demands concerning both rights and socio-labour relations, embedded in dynamics that illustrate the invisibility and mistrust faced by female teleworkers.

Keywords: *Confidence; Care Work; Gender; Marginalisation; Teleworking; Recognition.*

1. Introduction

One of the positive aspects highlighted and promoted in the establishment of teleworking as a flexible work arrangement is its potential to include workers who have faced difficulties integrating into traditional forms of employment. In particular, it has been argued that teleworking facilitates the inclusion of women in the labour market (Allen et al., 2015; Eurofound-ILO, 2019; Lampert and Poblete, 2018; Morales

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& Rodrik, 2011; Moreno & Borrás, 2021). This argument has played a central role in the legislation of telecommuting and teleworking in Chile, which has evolved over time: first, in the context of the pandemic, through the introduction of the first law regulating telework (Law 21.220) in March 2020; then, with a new regulation in November 2021, which supported teleworkers with childcare responsibilities for children under 12 years of age during the restrictive measures imposed by COVID-19 (Law 21.391); and, finally, with the enactment of Law 21.645 in December 2023, titled "On the Protection of Maternity, Paternity, and Family Life," which regulates telecommuting and teleworking for workers caring for children under 14 years old, people with disabilities, or those in a state of severe or moderate dependence.

Both the context in which these laws were enacted and their content centre on the issue of care. First, telework was considered a viable solution for workers to retain their jobs during the health crisis while also enabling them to meet the care demands promoted by the government to reduce the risk of contagion. Second, the laws acknowledge the need for workers to reconcile the space and roles in which they can attend to family responsibilities, particularly those involving childcare.

However, these laws did not account for the findings of studies on teleworking that highlight some of its negative effects on workers, such as techno-stress, difficulties with disconnection, communication issues, isolation, and feelings of loneliness at work. A particularly salient concern is the overlap between private/family and work spaces, creating tensions when work and family demands, including those related to recognition, coexist in the same time and space (Allen et al., 2015; Fulton, 2000; Golden, 2007; Greer & Payne, 2014; Lenguita & Miano, 2005; Taskin, 2013; Taskin & Edwards, 2007; Vayré, 2019). Additionally, the unique challenges posed by the pandemic context include the loss of essential social support and assistance with caregiving tasks, an issue that disproportionately affects women teleworkers.

The objective of this article is to analyse and highlight the tensions arising from the demands and dynamics of legal and socio-labour recognition of teleworkers during and after their lockdown. This analysis draws on part of the results from doctoral research conducted between 2021 and 2022 in Santiago, Chile, a period when some pandemic-related restrictions and limitations were still in place.

2. Teleworking as a Tool for Work-Life Balance

Since the 1970s, various authors have highlighted significant transformations in the world of work, driven by the evolution of production relations, particularly their integration into flexible, global, and interconnected networks (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2018; Boltanski, 2017; Castells, 1996). Castells (1996) identifies the emergence of a new technological paradigm in the 1970s, originating in the United States, which spread rapidly due to the development of the globalised economy. Within this context, Castells examines the transformations that capitalism has undergone, progressively incorporating the principle of flexibility into its management. This flexibility characterises an increasingly decentralised and interdependent functioning at both intra-organisational and inter-organisational levels. It is also accompanied by a greater valorisation of capital over labour, the individualisation of relationships, intensified competition, and a significant opening of global markets, among other characteristics.

In this context, telework emerges as a particular expression of late capitalism, reflecting the attributes promoted by the modes of production of this economic stage. It is a form of work embedded in extensive communication networks, facilitated by technological mediation, which reduces the boundaries of time and space to a minimum. This enables a more efficient response to a complex, dynamic, and highly demanding context. The principle of work flexibility is central to the transformations introduced by organisations and, indeed, to the practice of teleworking. This flexibility impacts not only the planning and content of work but also how it is conceived and executed by workers, who are increasingly expected to demonstrate multifunctional and polyvalent performance (Antunes, 2009; Artigas et al., 2008; de la Garza, 2009; Richter, 2011).

Paradoxically, flexibility and autonomy are subject to both positive and negative evaluations (Allen et al., 2013; Hofäcker & Köning, 2020; Michel et al., 2011). On the one hand, the enrichment of work under the new production models is positively regarded, particularly in comparison to the tasks performed under Fordist-Taylorist production models, which are characterised by mechanical and serial practices. On the other hand, the vulnerability of workers is evident, leading to precariousness and the segmentation of the workforce (Maruani, 2000).

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on policies promoting labour flexibility as a work modality, particularly under the argument that this organisational strategy benefits individuals. Studies have shown that

workers engaged in flexible work are better able to reconcile work responsibilities with personal life, potentially achieving a more balanced lifestyle (Allen et al., 2013; Hofäcker & Köning, 2013). Flexible work, therefore, appears to have positive effects, especially for those with family responsibilities, caregiving duties, or active social commitments outside the workplace. However, the fact that some individuals seem to benefit more from this form of work indicates that it is not a homogeneous experience or modality.

Telework, particularly when performed from home, has facilitated the inclusion of two important groups: women and individuals with diverse abilities (Allen et al., 2015; Eurofound-ILO, 2019; Lampert and Poblete, 2018; Morales & Rodrik, 2011; Moreno & Borràs, 2021). Research on women in telework has focused on the positive assessment of work-life reconciliation, particularly due to the flexibility and autonomy this form of work affords. Workers themselves are responsible for organising their tasks and meeting work objectives. This flexibility is especially important for those with caregiving responsibilities, as it allows them to participate in both work and family spheres, responding equally to commitments in both. Moreover, Hofäcker and Köning (2020) and Moreno and Borràs (2021) note that an important reason women choose telework is that it enables them to fulfil caregiving tasks from home while balancing both jobs.

However, the positive aspects of teleworking often obscure what is happening within the homes of teleworkers. Moreno and Borràs (2021) argue that telework can reinforce the unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities, to the detriment of women, invisibly increasing their availability and workload[2].

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[2] Telework is "[...] an organisational form that reproduces the sexual division of labour, increases the total female workload, and reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. From this perspective, it is argued that the initial attractiveness of the modality, in terms of the capacity for self-organisation and self-management, can become a trap for women. Under the false illusion of freedom to organise themselves, the absence of rigid schedules and the flexibility of time can lead to greater availability and work demands, thereby increasing, alongside domestic and care responsibilities, the total workload" (Moreno & Borràs, 2021, p. 29). The translation of this quote from the original, as well as the laws presented in the following section, is ours.

3. Telework in Chile

Chile has had a law regulating telework since March 2020, introduced rapidly as a measure to address the crisis caused by COVID-19 (Garcés et al., 2020). Law 21.220 amends the labour code with regard to telecommuting and defines telework as:

> [...] work in which the employee provides services, either fully or partially, from their home or another location, other than the company's establishments, facilities, or task sites. It is considered telework if services are provided through the use of technological, computer, or telecommunications means, or if such services must be reported using these means (Art. 142, Quarter G).

Regarding working hours under this modality, the law states that flexibility is permitted as long as the nature of the worker's duties allows it, specifying that:

> [...] the worker can freely distribute their working day within schedules that best suit their needs, always respecting the maximum daily and weekly working hours limits [...] (Art. 152, Quarter J).

Furthermore, the law introduces the possibility of hybrid work, where the employer must provide options from which the teleworker must choose:

> In cases where a combination of in-person work at the company's premises and teleworking is agreed, the worker may select from alternative combinations of these times, provided they communicate their chosen option at least one week in advance.

The law also ensures the right to disconnection, specifying that workers: "[...] shall not be obliged to respond to communications, orders, or other requirements during their designated rest period" (Art. 152, Quarter J), which must last at least twelve continuous hours within a 24-hour period. Another important issue concerns the material conditions under which teleworkers perform their duties. According to Art. 152:

> The employer must provide the equipment, tools, and materials necessary for telecommuting or teleworking, including personal protective equipment. The worker is not obligated to use their personal property for work purposes. Additionally, the employer is responsible for the operational costs, maintenance, and repair of the equipment (Quarter L).

In November 2021, Law 21.391 was enacted, establishing telework for the care of children and people with disabilities in the context of the health crisis, which had made care responsibilities a critical issue. This law stipulates:

> If the authorities declare a state of constitutional emergency due to public calamity or a health alert arising from an epidemic or pandemic caused by a contagious disease, and adopt measures that involve the closure of educational institutions or prevent attendance, the employer must offer telecommuting or teleworking to workers who have personal care responsibilities for at least one child under twelve years of age affected by such circumstances, provided that the nature of their duties allows it, without a reduction in remuneration. In this case, the worker must submit a sworn statement to the employer confirming that they are providing care without the assistance of another adult person. [...] The same provisions apply to workers who care for individuals with disabilities [or preschool-age children] [...] (Art. 206 bis).

Finally, in December 2023, Law 21,645 was enacted, which places emphasis on reconciliation between work and family life. This law changes the title from "Protection of Maternity, Paternity, and Family Life" to "Protection of Maternity and Paternity, and Reconciliation of Personal, Family, and Work Life." The heading "On the Right to Telecommuting or Teleworking for Workers Engaged in Unpaid Care Work" was also added (Art. 152, Quarter O). The law specifies that:

> The employer must offer telecommuting or teleworking to any worker who, during the course of their employment, has the personal care of a child under fourteen years of age or is responsible for the care of a person with disabilities or in a state of severe or moderate dependency, regardless of the age of the person being cared for, without receiving remuneration for such activity, to the extent that the nature of their duties allows it.

Workers must submit documentation proving their caregiving responsibilities, and the employer must respond with a proposal for the distribution of in-person and remote work time. The rejection of the worker's request can be based on the company's organisational needs, the requirement for the worker's physical presence, or the nature of their tasks, such as face-to-face public service, emergency services, on-call services, etc. This law is particularly interesting in how it attempts to align parental and work responsibilities, outlining the principles behind its formulation. The work-family reconciliation promoted by this law is grounded in three clearly stated principles:

[... the principle of *positive parenting*, which encompasses the practical capabilities and responsibilities of responsible adults to care for, protect, educate, and ensure the healthy development of their children; the principle of *social co-responsibility*, which promotes the societal reconciliation of personal, family, and work life, particularly for workers engaged in unpaid care work; and *the principle of protection of maternity and paternity³*, promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, while safeguarding the health and well-being of both children and parents [...] (Art. 194).

The principle of social co-responsibility is particularly significant in the context of care in Chile and the formulation of this law. Until now, care has been predominantly viewed as a private issue, largely the responsibility of women.

4. Telework in the Context of the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, telework had seen a slow but steady increase in implementation. A significant barrier to its adoption was the lack of knowledge and trust regarding work management and outcomes within organisations (Vayré, 2019). However, due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, telework emerged as a critical measure that allowed organisations to continue with their tasks and objectives, being implemented on a large, intensive, and accelerated scale (Kramer & Kramer, 2020; Spurka & Straub, 2020; Vasic, 2000; Weller, 2020).

Following the enactment of the telework law in Chile in 2020, the number of teleworkers increased significantly. In the March-April quarter, telework grew from 0.5% (32,850 workers) to 5% (Bravo, 2020, in Ibarra, 2020; Subsecretaría del Trabajo, 2023), with 95.3% of companies adopting this modality. This trend continued upward, as, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), in the June-August 2020 quarter, 20.3% of workers (1,105,391 people) worked remotely or teleworked. By March 2021, this figure had decreased slightly to 17.5%, a percentage that should be contextualised, considering that the estimate was made during the holiday period. However, following the lockdown exit process, teleworking saw a important decline: in the March-May quarter of 2023, teleworkers represented only 4.2% of the workforce (278,114 people) (Subsecretaría del Trabajo, 2023). This has led to questions about the long-term viability of telework in the national context, despite the

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³ Emphasis added.

introduction of a new law (21.645) in December of the same year, aimed at promoting telework as a tool for reconciling family and work responsibilities.

Mallet et al. (2020) criticised the overly optimistic initial evaluations of the mass implementation of telework during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the negative effects identified in previous studies, the pandemic further exacerbated the loss of traditional support systems for care work and domestic responsibilities. As a result, teleworkers experienced an increase in their tasks and responsibilities, a situation that disproportionately affected women. Indeed, research conducted in various countries has highlighted the reinforcement and intensification of gender inequalities that became apparent after the first months of lockdown and the widespread adoption of telework (Carli, 2020; Collins et al., 2021; Craig & Churchill, 2021; Farré et al., 2020; Hank & Steinbach, 2020; Moreno & Borràs, 2021; Moreno et al., 2023; Seiz, 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020).

Studies have identified significant challenges in defining and negotiating the boundaries between personal and professional life in telework, where workers struggle to establish physical, temporal, emotional, and symbolic boundaries in which they perform their duties. Vayré (2019) emphasises that this issue is particularly pronounced when telework is carried out from the worker's home, especially for female workers who must reconcile their professional responsibilities with caregiving and domestic duties (Carli, 2020; Fullton, 2000; Moreno et al., 2023).

Moreover, teleworking has been associated with a marked intensification of work (Mallet et al., 2020; Vayré, 2019). Research on work intensification highlights how workers attempt to increase their visibility by resorting to over-presence, overexposure, extending their working hours, intensifying their workload, and becoming hyperconnected (Côrrea, 2023; Golden, 2007; Taskin & Edwards, 2007; Greer & Payne, 2014; Vayré, 2019).

Finally, in addition to the results outlined in previous studies, it is important to consider the particularities of the lockdown and pandemic situation, which exacerbated the stress and difficulties faced by workers alongside their telework responsibilities. One significant issue was the limited or lack of training workers received when transitioning to telework (Mallet et al., 2020). In the Chilean context, it was evaluated that only 17.4% of jobs were suitable for conversion to telework, just months after its mass implementation (Perticará & Tejada, 2020).

5. Methodology

This article presents part of the results from a doctoral research project aimed at analysing the dynamics of socio-labour recognition in telework. The study employed a qualitative methodology with a descriptive-interpretative approach. A sample of 12 participants (8 women and 4 men), all of whom were teleworkers aged between 32 and 56 years and responsible for caregiving duties within their families, was selected. Additionally, the participants signed an informed consent form, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of Alberto Hurtado University (Chile). For the purposes of this article, only data obtained from the female participants will be considered.

The fieldwork incorporated a research design that included two in-depth interviews with each participant, as well as one day of focused observation[4] (Canales, 2006; Flick, 2007). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for content analysis, while the observations were systematised through field diary entries. The data were analysed using discourse analysis. Finally, the results presented in this article reflect the translation of portions of the interviews, ensuring that the meaning of the participants' narratives is preserved as accurately as possible. The information was anonymised to protect the participants' identities.

6. Results

6.1. Demands for Recognition in the Context of Teleworking

The explicitness of the demands made by the participants varies, ranging from heterogeneous expressions of discomfort in their narratives to the articulation of demands that include proposals for negotiation aimed at achieving recognition. Part of this variation can be explained by the position or status that female workers occupy within the organisation, as those in more precarious roles lack the power to negotiate individually with their superiors.

The results presented below are divided in two main sections. Firstly, we address the demands for recognition as expressed in the participants' stories, which we have categorised into legal demands and socio-labour demands. Secondly, we examine the characteristics of the socio-labour

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[4] In total, the material recorded during the fieldwork amounted to more than 14 hours of interviews and 91 hours of observations.

recognition dynamics in which these demands for social valuation are situated, highlighting two key features. On the one hand, the lack of trust and, on the other hand, as a consequence of the above, the negotiation strategy used by the participants, even though this means a loss for them by giving up part of their rights.

6.1.1 Legal Claims

Many teleworkers were legally protected during the pandemic, particularly those who had to care for their children during lockdown. This was under the protection of Law 21,391, which safeguards teleworkers with minor children. However, these legal guarantees were not always sufficient, as, in some cases, employers claimed that workers were performing essential tasks when, in reality, this was not the case:

> [During the lockdown I was going to work] with a permit that he (the boss) had obtained from me through people management. And he lied on that permit because he said it was an essential, indispensable job. [...] After that, in June, I applied for Law 21,300 and its fractions, which is the law for small children, for those under 12 years of age, for teleworking. [... I have a daughter who is] 8 years old, and she is without school, with guides, but not attending school. I applied for the law, and he told the director that we could reverse the law if she asked me to return in person. And it is a law. Then the boss made me come back. [...Then, the central leadership] said that the law had to be respected and stopped the house again" (Interviewee 1).

In this case, not only were her rights as a worker violated during an exceptional situation when the government had imposed a lockdown on the population, but her rights were also not respected. Moreover, in the same narrative, we observe the precarious understanding of the law held by the participant —one in which the law is viewed as a benefit that can be applied for, rather than a universally recognised right—. This can be interpreted as a lack of respect for rights from a Honnethian perspective (1997), in which every individual must recognise both themselves and others as bearers of equal rights. The de-recognition (Klikauer, 2016) referred to in the participant's account highlights an experience of contempt, where "the moral imputability of a full legal entity is not granted" (Honneth, 2010, p. 26).

At the organisational level, companies were required to follow the guidelines of the preventive measures implemented by the government. Consequently, many organisations introduced measures to protect the health of their workers and to offer reconciliation opportunities to those

who had to assume increased care responsibilities. These measures generally provided greater flexibility to continue teleworking once lockdown ended, in line with the regulations of Law 21,391. However, the practice of this right was mediated by the interests expressed by leadership and their methods of exercising authority:

> My boss [...] has us all working four times a week. I spoke to her and told her 'I have minor children, I don't have any more domestic help. I have the possibility of going twice a week. So, I want to present an affidavit to come in person twice a week. I can come three times... I can't present the affidavit, but if you tell me you'll allow me to come three times a week and not the four you are forcing everyone to come. [...] If you tell me you'll understand when these things happen, I won't present the sworn statement, and I'll come on the three days I can.' She says, 'If they can't come, they must coordinate with another colleague to replace the day or change the day.' Look at the stupidity, when in the organisation, there are people who come for one day, two days maximum. So, there are differences within the same company because, in the end, they leave it to the boss's discretion, and those things annoy me" (Interviewee 4).

This illustrates the limited options provided by employers to workers seeking to exercise the rights granted to them by law, in addition to the de-recognition of their rights as teleworkers. Furthermore, it highlights the lack of recognition of the difficulties faced by workers in reconciling family needs, which hinders the proper fulfilment of work responsibilities. Additionally, the culture of presence is interpreted by workers in terms of control, where increased productivity, work quality, or labour relations are linked to the need for management to maintain direct or vigilant control over their subordinates. These measures are perceived as a lack of trust in how workers manage their time during the workday — an issue that will be explored in greater detail in the second part of the results — which diminishes their recognition as professionals capable of autonomously fulfilling their tasks.

On the other hand, there are also demands concerning the material conditions that accompany the practice of teleworking. Indeed, the degree of improvisation that marked the widespread implementation of teleworking meant that many organisations did not consider even the most basic elements required for workers to continue their duties from home:

> I don't have a pension fund, I don't have health insurance, I don't have a syndicate, I don't have a computer... In that sense, I find the organisation's treatment quite unkind. I bought my computer, and I'll probably ruin it in four years if I keep it on all day (Interviewee 3).

Law 21,220 states that the employing organisation must provide basic supplies to teleworkers so that they can perform their duties from home. However, due to the precariousness of work and the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, many workers were simply grateful for the opportunity to continue working and did not raise much resistance.

Others, however, sought collective organisation as a means to channel their demands, despite the challenges posed by isolation and the mediatization of relationships in teleworking. One participant, frustrated by the excessive workload faced by her and her team, as well as the lack of recognition from the organisation, initiated a process of collectivisation. She described her work situation as follows:

> My team is very busy. For example: a telephone assistant —who answers the call centre —earns the same salary as a back office, while a telephone operator answers 25 or 30 calls a day, and a back office has to manage 120 cases a day. The workload is very different; the pressure there is very different; the responsibility is very different, and it is not compensated financially. [...] Here, with my team, we work as systems analysts, none of us even being technical in accounting. So, it doesn't weigh the responsibility we have (Interviewee 2).

However, the efforts made by the interviewee and her team were unsuccessful, as the organisation disengaged the workers upon learning of their attempt to form a union before it was established.

6.1.2. Socio-labour demands

Before presenting the socio-labour demands explicitly expressed by the participants, it is necessary to describe some central aspects of the teleworking experience to contextualise the emergence of these demands. The teleworking experience shared by the participants reveals certain ambiguities arising from the poorly defined boundaries between domestic and work spaces, where the responsibilities and imperatives of both domains converge. Although highly stressful and over-demanding, teleworking serves as a response to both professional and familial demands within the context of great uncertainty, such as the pandemic and the months following the end of the measures to return to "normality." This duality results in the experience adopting both positive and negative evaluations within the same discourse:

> I remember the months following that milestone when I sat down to cry, at least April, May, and June. I felt very uncomfortable. Even with insomnia and everything, it was like a whirlwind of things I had to do, and I had to reschedule my entire routine. I had always been a worker and a mother, but now I was a worker, a mother, a teacher, and also a homeowner (Interviewee 3).

> Well, on the positive side, the first thing is that I was able to be a mother like that for the first time 24/7, and I liked it. I think that in my experiences before teleworking, I carried a lot of guilt, the same as all mothers in the world, and teleworking allowed me to live at home too, because this house is like a dormitory, that is, we hopefully get to sleep and we started to live it (Interviewee 3).

In addition to this ambiguity, the teleworking experience is associated with a level of exhaustion that arises as a consequence of what the workers themselves have previously identified as the great benefit of teleworking: the ability to coordinate home and work spaces, and thus, respond to both spheres in a more fluid manner. As they identify, this flexibility allows them to manage their time more effectively. However, teleworking also causes a level of physical and emotional wear and tear that many had not experienced before:

> […] because teleworking implies much more wear and tear, emotional wear and tear, visual wear, because you have to be connected to the screen all day. […] And apart from that, all the load you have to carry around the house, with the daughter in this case, and taking care of the same things […]. But I feel like it's exhausting, it's tiring (Interviewee 1).

Moreover, this overload experience is highly individualised. Women bear this excess workload alone, primarily due to the concentration of care tasks. The men mentioned in the participants' stories have minimal involvement, and their participation in care work is largely superficial. Women, on the other hand, almost completely assume care responsibilities, even when they have outsourced some tasks, such as hiring domestic help, as they are still responsible for the planning and management of care:

> When you are in the office, you are focusing 80% on your work. When you are teleworking, you are focused on your work and, apart from that, on taking care of things at home. And, in my case, my children: cleaning up, worrying about their homework, worrying about lunch […] For example, in the office, I work until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., and I'm not going to work when I get home. But when I'm working from home, I know that at the end of the day, when my children go to bed, if I can get work

done, I'll get it done. It is a heavy, important psychological pressure (Interviewee 2).

Teleworking, in this context, renders women "available" to deal with domestic issues (Torns & Carrasquer, 2002), challenging them to take on new responsibilities, resulting in a significant overload that is difficult to comprehend from a work-based perspective.

> I am the one who has to remind my boss (of my situation) many times. One day (the boss) said something like his wife had to do a procedure and he was left in charge of his children —who are 14, 18, and 21 years old—. And that he had to cook and that he was overwhelmed. I told him 'Oops! That's what I do every day.' I'm the one who has to bring everyday things like this to your attention. It's like I force him to see humanity: 'I am this, but I also have all these other circumstances' (Interviewee 3).

All of these aspects contribute to teleworking becoming an overloaded and often invisible experience, in which various discomforts coexist, more or less explicitly expressed in the participants' accounts. Some of these discomforts take the form of more or less articulated demands for recognition. As highlighted in the quote, the content of these demands does not point to changes in the work itself, but rather to a better understanding of the difficulties posed by the new conditions accompanying the work. Given the overload workers experience, they seek understanding and, at times, flexibility. This is to say, there is a call for a moderate understanding of the effects that the implementation of teleworking has had, particularly in a scenario such as the pandemic, where the challenges of maintaining traditional face-to-face work practices are exacerbated, especially in relation to control mechanisms.

In addition, greater autonomy is demanded, as this was essential for workers to organise and respond to both the new work context and the different commitments they had acquired. This demand was particularly difficult in highly prescribed precarious jobs, which saw a conversion process to teleworking that was limited to simply transferring ordinary tasks to workers' homes. In other words, the only change was the location of the work, without significantly altering the content of the tasks or the control mechanisms traditionally used by the organisation.

> […] Teleworking has the virtue of allowing you to organise yourself based on the number of hours you work or the products you make. Never in my life have I gone to sleep in the middle of the afternoon after lunch, because work has to be done… It wouldn't even cross my mind; I don't know if anyone else does it. Now, if someone is eventually very

> tired and feels unwell, they could also lie down… It kind of allows you
> some flexibility and you manage it (Interviewee 4).

Beyond the vigilant control inherent in in-person work, various bureaucratic controls have been added to the work process. These controls reduce workers' autonomy while questioning their ability to organise effectively. The constant submission of documents, with a focus on formal aspects, shifts the attention from the content of the work to the delivery itself, thereby adding new tasks to the already overloaded workday:

> Where I have not been well valued or evaluated is in the delivery of
> certain documents that they wanted, but because it is difficult for me to
> sit down without interruptions to develop them. I'm not going to tell you
> that I have three, four, or five hours to do it. Normally when I do it, I do
> it at night, and I'm dying of sleep (Interviewee 4).

This claim is significant, as it concerns their recognition as qualified workers and their ability to competently carry out their tasks. High control is interpreted precisely in the opposite sense, as evidence that they are not valued as such by management, and therefore require greater supervision. This creates a dissonance between what is expected of them (high responsibility) and what is given to them (high control, limited autonomy). On the other hand, the lifting of health restrictions led to the gradual return to in-person work and/or the implementation of hybrid teleworking systems. In some cases, participants faced fear regarding the prospect of returning to the office, concerned that they might lose the benefits they had gained from working from home. In other cases, the return to in-person work was seen negatively due to the challenges it posed in an unstable context, as well as discriminatory treatment:

> One can also do everything… I did classes with my son and I also
> worked. All together, and it is possible. It's kind of crazy and all, but it's
> possible. Stopping teleworking would be a disadvantage in my future
> because the only negative thing that could happen would be that for me
> (Interviewee 5).

At the same time, differences in treatment within the same department were highlighted, along with a demand for equal treatment as workers within the same organisation:

> When we looked at the issue of schedules, and teleworking schedules,
> my colleagues had a teleworking contract, but we did not. They could go

> once a week, but we did not. That is, why if we all work here […] They
> are now completely teleworking and do not go in-person. And if they go
> in person, they go once a week. But why was it possible for them and
> not for us? (Interviewee 1).

Many of the dynamics established in the social work environment persisted during the pandemic and the development of teleworking, though they took on particularities due to technological mediation. In some cases, this was viewed positively, as it distanced workers from more hostile contexts, while in other cases, it led to dynamics in which the invisibility of some workers became more pronounced. This was particularly noticeable when workers did not receive feedback for their work or when their emails went unanswered, making it difficult for them to participate in tasks or communicate with others:

> My boss was angry with me for a month. A month when he didn't
> answer my emails, he didn't answer my calls, he didn't give me work, like
> that among the things we had to do together, he didn't give me work,
> anything, because he was angry. After all, I had accused him (Interviewee
> 1).

The mediation of relationships also made communication between parties difficult, both because of the timing of interactions and the content transmitted, as well as the interpretations made:

> (Talking via WhatsApp with my boss). Once he asked me a question, and
> I told him 'It's 5:30 p.m., and I can't send a question to the technical
> secretaries on a Friday at 5:30 p.m., and even less so on WhatsApp. I'm
> going to send them to you by email because, in fact, legally, WhatsApp is
> not a formal way to request information or give orders.' She thought I
> was telling her something else. I told him 'No, I'm not telling you that.
> You know how I am. It doesn't matter to me. They can call me after
> hours, at night, during the day, on the weekend... I have no problems.
> […]' So, she now sent me a letter... And even more so now, because she
> is angry. So how does her anger colour all relationships (Interviewee 4).

The convergence of the different difficulties and needs that emerged in the context of teleworking facilitated the emergence of recognition dynamics with certain particularities. For the purposes of this analysis, two main issues stand out: distrust towards teleworkers, particularly women teleworkers, and the invisibility of their work.

6.2. Recognition Dynamics at Work

Within this section, three relevant elements accompanying the dynamics of socio-labour recognition were identified: invisibility, lack of trust in female workers, and the renunciation of work benefits/rights as a strategy to negotiate desired recognition.

Invisibilization is experienced as a non-recognition of the situation in which teleworkers must carry out their work. If their managers seek a swift return to the in-person system, alluding to a "normality" that does not exist, the workers feel that they alone must bear the responsibility for the costs associated with both the difficulties inherent in the pandemic context and the measures implemented by the organisations:

> [...] They ask you for normal work or presence at work when those of us who have children… [...] It's as if our children don't matter as much [...] (Interviewee 4).

Related to the suffering of invisibility is the experience of discrimination, to the extent that not all workers have the possibility of teleworking, or even if there is a law granting them the right to negotiate it with their organisation, they are not afforded the opportunity.

> [...] Regarding the demand to return, it is still a scare. At least now that my daughter's father is working, I have to think about who I'm going to leave her with, how I'm going to leave her, whether she wants to or not because that's another matter. [...] And the pressure that you have to return. (Interviewee 1).

The invisibility and injustice experienced lead to management and/or organisations being perceived as distant and incapable of understanding the demanding conditions of the work context in which the workers operate.

Along with the incomprehension and lack of flexibility shown, particularly by leadership, which undermines the trust previously placed in these figures, emerges the perception of distrust. This refers to the feeling that they are not viewed as trustworthy by others because they are working from home. In other words, the strong in-person work culture that dominates workers' references makes it difficult to understand that those working from home do so with the same dedication. This distrust was also identified in the stories of male workers; however, it predominantly affects women due to the domestic responsibilities they face in the home.

> [...] There is mistrust, and that is the big problem with teleworking in Chile: that your bosses understand that they have to mature; that they have to change the concept; that this has to do with the fact that now (the evaluation) is not based on presence, but on the delivery of work [...] (Interviewee 9).

The criticisms and demands articulated by the participants regarding the control mechanisms implemented in the teleworking system stress that, given the different conditions under which teleworking occurs compared to in-person work, which implies greater autonomy and responsibility for some workers, the logic behind supervision and control mechanisms should also change in response to these new demands. Consequently, control should not focus on work processes and actions, which are the responsibility of the workers, but on the results they commit to.

On the other hand, the persistence of elements from traditional work culture that reinforce presenteeism is criticised, with those who do not physically present themselves being viewed with a certain level of distrust. This makes women more vulnerable to experiencing this mistrust because, if the traditional logic of task division is followed, they are the ones who could be attending to extra-work responsibilities at home during working hours. This is how some workers doubt the possibility of continuing to perform remotely:

> [Finally, it will return to in-person] for a bit of conservatism, resistance to change, also for a bit of classism, knowing exactly who you are working with, and also for a matter of, at least in the most traditional jobs, control. In other words, I think my boss dreams of seeing me work those 40 hours (Interviewee 3).

As a way to compensate for the lack of physical presence, workers turn to other channels to demonstrate their availability, such as through technological means —using WhatsApp or email— often outside of working hours. This impacts workers differently, as some, in addition to their professional responsibilities, have other duties to fulfil, meaning they do not have the same opportunities, even though the demands on them are the same. Consequently, this adds to the pressure they already experience. This pressure to prove that "they are working" is an additional burden.

Given the lack of better opportunities and the fear of job loss in a context of high uncertainty, some participants decided to give in to the pressures from their bosses, forfeiting some benefits that the law or organisational regulations would normally afford them. These issues ranged from material conditions in which they must perform their work, as

demonstrated by the following participant, to the loss of acquired or legal rights. Their recognition as committed workers within their teams or organisations was also at stake. However, beyond the specific losses observed in the cases reviewed, there is a constant sense of self-responsibility for the tasks and processes they carry out, leading to over-involvement in work.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The exceptional context of the pandemic made the unequal distribution of care tasks within homes more critical and evident, with women being particularly affected as they had to assume roles and responsibilities that they had not previously had —or at least not entirely— since these tasks were typically handled by outsourced education and care services. When these services were closed due to health measures prohibiting their operation, families had to find solutions to fill this gap. According to the traditional logic of the sexual division of labour, it became clear that women took on the majority of reproductive tasks.

The stories shared by the participants often refer to their previous experiences as traditional workers. This indicates that their teleworking experiences are not constructed as a "blank slate," but rather are shaped by prior experiences, with elements that either reinforce or serve as a counterpoint to the new narratives. Nevertheless, the participants' accounts align in identifying teleworking as a viable way to develop both professionally and personally, as it allowed them to approach motherhood differently and take ownership of caregiving tasks that had previously been externalised. This shift reduced the feelings of frustration and guilt they had about their limited availability to care for their children.

The demands for socio-labour recognition from women include non-labour aspects, where they incorporate the caregiving responsibilities they bear, especially the difficulties and sacrifices they must make to meet labour demands, considering the exceptional context in which they are teleworking. In this sense, excessive work inextricably accompanies their experience, which is why their evaluation is being requested. This does not mean that women are demanding to perform fewer tasks, but rather that the scope for assessing their performance should be expanded to consider the context and conditions in which they operate as teleworkers. Since this context is the domestic-family space, they cannot detach themselves from their role as mothers.

In this way, the potential return to in-person work was identified as a source of constant stress. This issue was perceived negatively not only

because of the legal tensions revealed in their stories but also due to the two needs they must attend to: the need to care for their children and the need to earn a salary to support their households. Similarly, the problem of mistrust emerged as one of the main reasons why their managers seek a return to in-person work.

Finally, it should be noted that Chilean legislation on teleworking has made significant progress in recognising the context surrounding remote work. However, this research has highlighted the tensions between the general regulations imposed by law and the specific implementation of these practices, particularly by those in positions of authority at work. The discrepancies in the application and non-compliance with regulations should be further examined. Studies that explore the experiences of workers provide valuable insights, revealing the particularities, tensions, and variability in their implementation, along with the corresponding impact on workers' situations.

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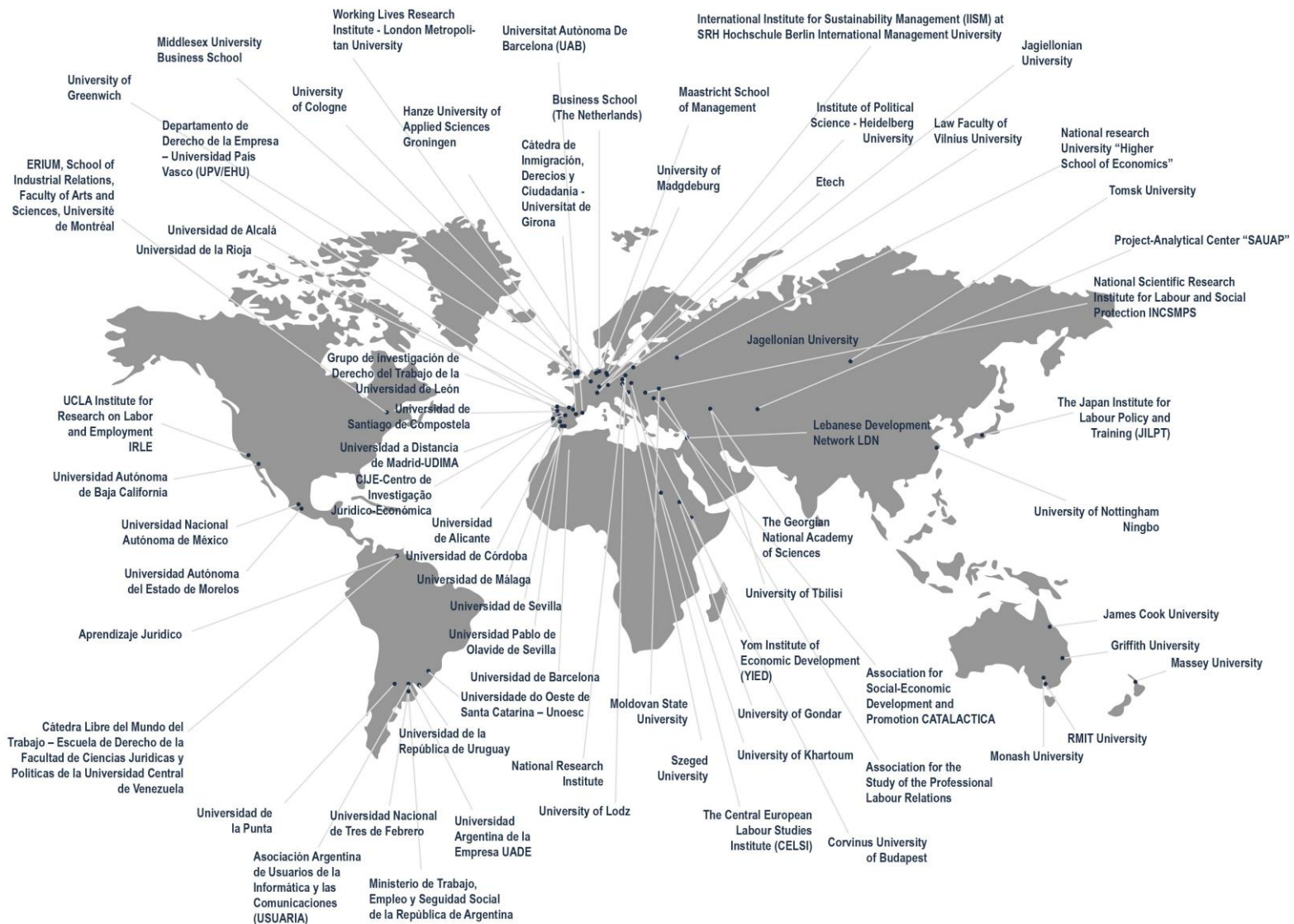
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