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Tesis

**Teleworking effect on job burnout of higher education  
administrative personnel in the Junín region,  
Peru**

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## Teleworking effect on job burnout of higher education administrative personnel in the Junín region, Peru

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the effect of the adoption of teleworking on the development of job exhaustion of the higher education administrative staff in Junín during the crisis of COVID-19. The applied and correlational research was carried out with the participation of 300 administrative workers of higher education by applying a questionnaire of 40 questions. The results obtained show that having teleworking skills reduces emotional fatigue and depersonalization since the collaborator can self-regulate his behavior when faced with stressors. Likewise, these skills generate a positive effect on personal fulfillment, allowing the teleworker to achieve a satisfactory personal fulfillment of having said skills. On the other hand, telework conditions generate a hidden effect on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal fulfillment; therefore, this dimension does not contribute to the reduction or increase of the mentioned dimensions. The work-life balance dimension does not generate any effect on any of the factors. It is concluded that the development of skills for teleworking is a relevant factor to achieve personal fulfillment in teleworkers, while teleworking conditions do not reduce job burnout.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, many changes have been made in the macro environment. These changes affect the economic, social, and political aspects, among others. However, the work sector has not been the exception, since it has been evolving and generating new ways of labor performance. One of them is teleworking, a work arrangement that does not need the physical presence of the employee in a company working space (Thulin, Vilhelmson, & Martina, 2019). This work arrangement has been adopted by companies in Europe and the United States due to the multiple benefits it offers both to the employee and to the employer; such as increased productivity, reduced administrative expenses, flexible hours, greater family engagement, and better time management, among others. However, in Latin America, most companies do not implement it under the belief that an unsupervised employee would not work and it would lead to disorganization (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). In addition, this work arrangement requires discipline from the employee as well as ICT training from the employers. (Thulin, Vilhelmson, & Martina, 2019). In this respect, teleworking sounds appealing and interesting for many professionals, especially young and middle-age adults. However, the inappropriate adoption of teleworking can lead to multiple harmful consequences for both the employee and the employer like professional failures and frustrations, physical and emotional health problems (Belzunegui & Erro, 2020).

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In Peru, the arrival and rapid spread of COVID-19 has forced many companies to adopt teleworking to continue with their activities. Since it is not possible to leave home, this is the only way to avoid production stagnation. Nevertheless, organizations that carry out their activities through inadequate teleworking practices are prone to show a progressive deterioration or loss of communication, interpersonal relationships, low productivity, high labor cost, high absenteeism rates and staff resignation. Therefore, the purpose of this research seeks to recognize the effect of teleworking on the development of emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 crisis (Belzunegui & Erro, 2020)

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Teleworking

Teleworking is a work arrangement that does not require the physical attendance of employees, but his time, knowledge and commitment, as well as the information and communications technology (ICT) use. This type of work has been successfully applied in public and private institutions in different countries due to its advantages for teleworkers and companies. In Peru, it has been regulated and promoted by the Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion, since this modality allows those who cannot commute to their workplace without harming their productivity or limiting their functions (Valencia, 2018). Teleworking is characterized by two elements: (i) distance, because the teleworker provides a service in a different place than his employer's company and (ii) communication between the parties, whose relationship is based on the use of ICT, telephone calls, messages, video calls and corporative chats (Baruch, 2000). The introduction of teleworking in different private and public entities leads to harmonize family and work life, which benefits the teleworker who will also be able to spend more time with his family, save time and money on commuting. This modality also benefits the employer since he will not spend on office spaces for the worker, and if he performs a good management, he will obtain a greater worker's productivity. (Belzunegui & Erro, 2020)

**Table 1**  
Possible benefits and shortcomings of teleworking

	Possible benefits	Possible shortcomings
Individual	Performance and better productivity improvement Less commuting time Greater autonomy Less work-related stress More time to spend with the family Sole possibility to enter into the labor market (people with small children, disabled people, etc.)	Fewer opportunities for personal relationships More home-related stress Less job stability Fewer career line options
Organizational	Greater productivity Wider and more varied job offer Saving office spaces Reduction of labor costs Less absenteeism Flexible company image	Challenge to the possibility of control and motivation of teleworkers Less-committed employees Loss of teamwork
National	Less commuting, pollution, traffic congestion and accidents Less job discrimination	Individuals more isolated from social institutions (autistic society)

Source: (Baruch, 2000)

### 2.2 Dimensions of Teleworking

#### 2.2.1 Satisfaction Sources

The term satisfaction in the work environment is defined by many authors as the satisfaction of the agreement between the person and his position, and can be intrinsic and extrinsic. The first one refers to the nature of the job's tasks, as well as people's perception of the work they perform, and the extrinsic satisfaction is related to the work situation aspects, such as benefits and salary. For Newton and Keenan (1991), satisfaction can be an effect of both the individual's personality and the work environment, an ingredient that also stands out within the definitions is attitude, which is the result of the worker's experience in his interaction with the organizational environment. Thus, according to Blum (1990), job satisfaction is the result of various attitudes held by the employees. These attitudes are related to work and refer to specific factors such as wages, supervision, employment perseverance, working conditions, opportunities for promotion, ability recognition, fair job assessment, social relations in employment, quick resolution of complaints, fair treatment by employers and other similar concepts. Therefore, if the employer fulfills the ideal working conditions, the employee will be satisfied. (Haar, Marcello, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014).

### 2.2.2 Abilities

To achieve an efficient teleworking, teleworkers must have specific abilities, one of them is the ability to work and solve problems independently, besides of taking advantage of the digital skills training offered by the employer (Dima, Tuclea, Vrânceanu, & Tigu, 2019). Several researchers have associated burnout with a series of negative results such as increasing absenteeism, high employee turnover, illnesses, decreased job satisfaction and low performance, as a result of poor management skills. Therefore, reducing burnout could become a goal where teleworking could make a contribution. Consequently, an important asset for teleworkers should be the ability to handle burnout signs and distractions from work (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012).

### 2.2.3 Work-life Balance

A significant number of studies has revealed a strong connection between teleworking and personal-professional balance for people who work at home. From the beginning, teleworking has been associated with flexible working hours, as multiple studies emphasize that flexibility to decide when and where to work is often a key factor to choose an employer. Since this schedule allows them to organize their time more efficiently, studying postgraduate courses, specialization courses, spending more time with their family, having more leisure time, among others. (Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017)

### 2.3 Adoption of telework

In Sweden and in some Western countries, teleworking has become a considerable practice for a part of the population. After decades of slow growth, teleworkers increased, now representing a quarter of all paid employees (Ojala & Pyöriä, 2018). In the US, teleworkers increased from about 20% in 2003 to 25% percent in 2015 (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). Research explains that this recent “takeoff” was due to different factors. These factors are used to the ongoing digitization and rapid diffusion of advanced ICT as basic enablers of flexible working, and also include several other restructuring trends in society and the labor market (Tavares, 2017). In Peru, it has been regulated and promoted by the Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion since this modality allows those who cannot commute to their workplace without harming their productivity or limiting their functions (Valencia, 2018).

### 2.4 Job Burnout

Burnout is a special type of work-related stress clinically referred to as Burnout Syndrome. Burnout Syndrome was a term coined by Herbert J. Freudenberger in the 1970s. It is conceptualized as work-related exhaustion suffered by employees as a result of performing work activities that require a lot of social demand, such as customer service or social services (Polikandrioti, 2014). Organizational factors come into play for the development of Burnout Syndrome such as technological changes, increase or modifications of functions, unequal compensation, monitoring and greater control. That is why a psychological contract breach happens, thus losing the value of human capital in organizations. Teamwork is difficult due to personal factors such as extreme perfectionism and competitiveness (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014). Burnout process has five stages. Stage 1 - Enthusiasm: the employees do not mind extending the working hours in order to achieve good work results because they are excited. Stage 2 - Stagnation: the psychological contract breach is manifested, since the employees perceive that there is not an effort-reward balance. Stage 3 - Frustration: the employees are prone to get irritated very easily causing labor conflicts. Physical and emotional exhaustion are experienced. Stage 4 - Apathy: behavioral changes are manifested, as the employees tend to be apathetic with the users. Stage 5 - Burnout: the employees feel frustrated and experiences job dissatisfaction, causing an emotional collapse, forcing them to decide to step down from their job (UGT, 2006). Stress at work and Burnout Syndrome are different psychosocial risks. When the employees experience stress, they can still fulfill their work functions which can have positive effects since they achieve satisfactory results; therefore, the main damage is physical exhaustion. On the other hand, when they suffer Burnout Syndrome, they are not committed to work anymore, experiencing physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, causing only negative effects (UGT, 2006). As a consequence of this syndrome, employees display an apathetic attitude towards their work activities, showing an irritable behavior towards coworkers and clients. The problem gets worse when employees refuse to accept that they suffer from this syndrome and the coworkers are the ones who become aware of the chronic stress suffered by their colleagues (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014).

#### 2.4.1 Emotional Exhaustion

It is a consequence of the psychological contract breach, employees feel physically and mentally exhausted because of the gradual loss of energy (Liu & Roloff, 2015); they feel extremely exhausted when solving the users' problems (UGT, 2006). These employees feel they cannot handle their work activities anymore; therefore, they experience gastrointestinal problems, headaches and sleep disorders (Liu & Roloff, 2015). According to the MBI measurement scale, the emotional exhaustion dimension had the highest score of burnout, it was more than one third of the research (34.5%), given that bureaucracy factors are present in all work processes and workload (McCormack, MacIntyre, O'Shea, Herring, & Campbell, 2018). Therefore, the workload and time pressure lead workers to show a progressive loss of energy, all this coupled with the fact that the employee has not strengthened their skills to perform the tasks assigned by their direct supervisor in less time; this entails a faster increase of emotional exhaustion in employees (McCormack, MacIntyre, O'Shea, Herring, & Campbell, 2018). For this reason, we highlight the importance of companies in strengthening their employees' skills, so that they can have better time management and can work faster.

2.4.2. *Depersonalization*

It serves as an escape strategy so that employees do not face conflictive situations. They are insensitive to others, increasing their irritability, their negative attitude and providing sharp responses to stakeholders. They show indifference to work activities and users' problems, blaming them for their own frustrations (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014). That is why depersonalization is shown through the following actions: employees are absent from work meetings; they do not want to serve the public; and if they do, they do it in a sharp way (UGT, 2006). On the one hand, the negative behaviors of clients and the excessive workload lead the employees to feel frustration, thus showing apathy towards the clients, since their constant complaints lead employees to show an irritable attitude ( McCormack, MacIntyre, O'Shea, Herring, & Campbell, 2018).

2.4.3. *Lack of Personal Accomplishment*

It is the negative response regarding the employees' environment and towards themselves, employees have low self-esteem, lose interest in the job, and experience a sense of job frustration (Polikandrioti , 2014), due to the fact that their tasks have not allowed them to obtain job growth and, therefore, professional success (Leeanne Lizano, 2015). This causes a drop in their productivity and ability to work under pressure, since the employees feel dissatisfied with themselves and with their work. That is why they express their lack of personal accomplishment with tardiness and absenteeism, leading them to decide to step down from their jobs (UGT, 2006). On the other hand, the lack of employees' skills development leads them to feel they are not truly fulfilled as professionals. Or if not, when the employee has the necessary skills, but they cannot develop their human potential in the company, it also leads to a poor professional fulfillment ( McCormack, MacIntyre, O'Shea, Herring, & Campbell, 2018). Therefore, it is important that companies strengthen their employees' skills, thus achieving their potential.

**3. Research Model and Hypotheses**

For the variable Teleworking, we considered the following conceptual constructs and their respective items:

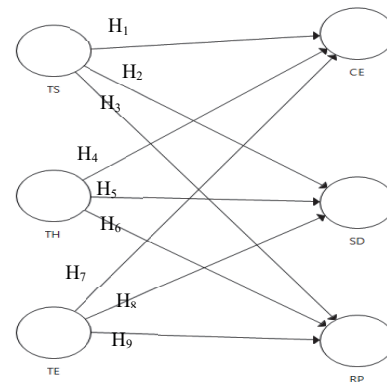
- a) Teleworking conditions (TS): the teleworking options are similar to the ones I used to have at my on-site work (TS1), I feel I have the same training opportunities (TS2), and I feel I have the same ergonomic working conditions (TS3).
- b) Teleworking abilities (TH): I solve my problems independently (TH1), I have digital tools skills (TH2), and I am able to handle work distractions (TH3).
- c) Work-life balance (TE): I feel I have more control in my activities (TE1), I have more flexibility to organize my non-working hours (TE2), and I can better cope with family responsibilities (TE3).

For the dependent variable Burnout, we considered the following conceptual constructs and their respective items:

- a) Emotional exhaustion (CE): I feel that working all day with people involves a great effort and it tires me out (CE4), I feel that my work is wearing myself out (CE5), I feel frustrated at work (CE6), working directly with people causes me stress (CE8), and I feel exhausted at work to the limit of my possibilities (CE9).
- b) Depersonalization (SD): I think I treat some people as if they were impersonal objects (SD1), I feel I have become more insensitive towards people since I have been practicing this profession (SD2), I feel this job is inuring myself emotionally (SD3), I feel like I do not care what happens to people (SD4) and I feel like people blame me for some of their problems (SD5).
- c) Personal accomplishment (RP): I feel very energetic at work (RP4), I perceive I can easily create a pleasant working environment (RP5), I feel motivated after working in contact with people (RP6), I have achieved many valuable things in this job (RP7) and I handle emotional problems very calmly at work (RP8).

From this information, the following conceptual model and hypothesis are established.

- H1: Teleworking conditions (TS) have a positive effect on emotional exhaustion (CE).
- H2: Teleworking conditions (TS) have a positive effect on depersonalization (SD).
- H3: Teleworking conditions (TS) have a negative effect on personal accomplishment (PR).
- H4: Teleworking abilities (TH) have a negative effect on emotional exhaustion (CE).
- H5: Teleworking abilities (TH) have a negative effect on depersonalization (SD).
- H6: Teleworking abilities (TH) have a positive effect on personal accomplishment (PR).
- H7: Work-life balance (TE) has a negative effect on emotional exhaustion (CE).
- H8: Work-life balance (TE) has a positive effect on depersonalization (SD).
- H9: Work-life balance (TE) has a positive effect on personal accomplishment (PR).



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual model and hypotheses

### 4. Method

A deductive, correlational and cross-sectional study was conducted between March and July 2020.

#### 4.1 Population and Sample

The study population comprised the total number of administrative staff from the higher education sector of the Junin region, within the range of 18 to 65 years of age, who are the subject of study. The sample size (300 employees) was obtained with a margin of error allowed of 5 %, a factor "p" of 0.5 and "q" of 0.5, confidence level of 95 %.

#### 4.2 Data Collection Instrument

The Delphi methodology was used to validate the instrument. Using that technique, 3 experts in Administration and Human Resources performed the substantive validation; and in order to validate the form, a survey was conducted among 50 administrative staff of the higher education sector from the Junin region, who participated simultaneously in the pilot. After the first correction of the observations performed by the experts, the instrument underwent a second validation by 5 experts in Administration and Human Resources. During the substantive validation steps, gaps were identified in the triggers, therefore they were eliminated and some questions that refined the data collection mechanism were corrected. Finally, we conducted a 9-question survey for the teleworking variable (3 questions about teleworking conditions, 3 about teleworking abilities and 3 about work-life balance) and for the dependent variable burnout 15 questions were asked (5 questions about emotional exhaustion, 5 about depersonalization and 5 about personal accomplishment).

### 5. Results

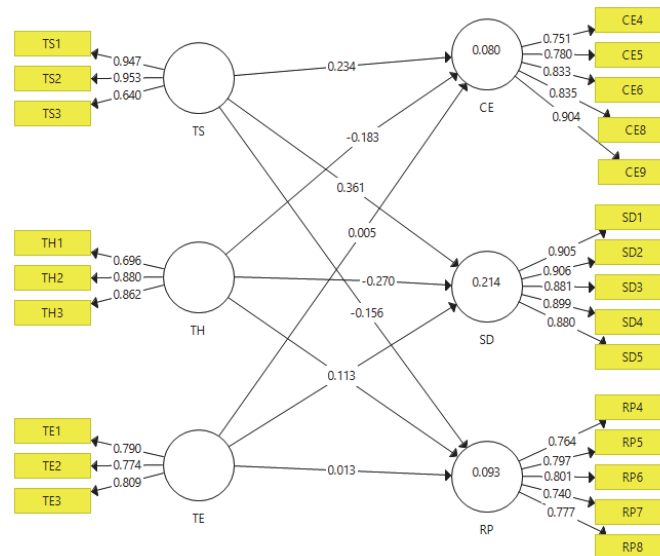
#### 5.1. Assessment of the Measurement Model

Table 1 shows the model measurement analysis based on the reliability and validity of the measurement scales. Regarding reliability, the internal consistency of the scales is evidenced through the Cronbach Alpha value (between 0.743 to 0.938) and the composite reliability (between 0.834 to 0.952). With respect to convergent validity, all factor loads are above 0.700. Likewise, all the scales have percentages of average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 50 %. The discriminant validity of the construct was tested by the Fornell Larcker criterion, which verifies the independence of each of the scales, considering that the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlations with the rest of the scales. In all cases, the hypothesis was met.

**Table 1**  
Model Measurement Analysis Results

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Factor Loads (Range)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Discriminant Validity
TS	0.810	0.891	0.640 – 0.953	0.738	0.859
TH	0.747	0.856	0.696 – 0.862	0.667	0.817
TE	0.743	0.834	0.774 – 0.809	0.626	0.791
CE	0.885	0.912	0.780 – 0.904	0.677	0.823
SD	0.938	0.952	0.880 – 0.906	0.800	0.894
RP	0.835	0.883	0.740 – 0.801	0.602	0.776

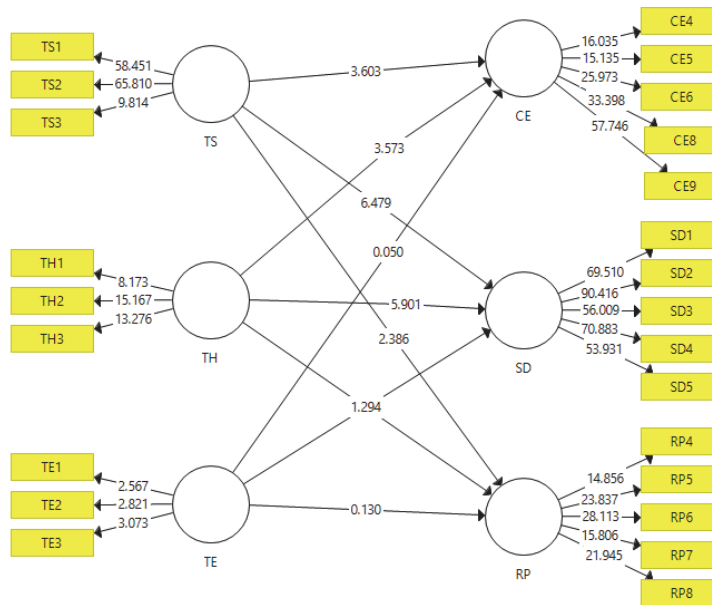
As shown in Fig. 2, in all cases an R2 greater than 0.100 was obtained, which is a very significant value. Therefore, it shows that the model significantly explains the variance of the conceptual constructs of the dependent variable.



**Fig. 2.** Results for the hypothesized model with structural equations

## 5.2. Assessment of the Structural Model

After verifying the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the relationships of the constructs were tested (Cordova, et. al 2020). The hypotheses were tested by examining the path coefficients and their significance levels. Bootstrapping was performed with 6000 subsamples to verify the statistical significance of each of the path coefficients.



**Fig. 3.** Teleworking and Burnout Modeling

Fig. 3 shows the estimated trajectory of the PLS analysis. Considering that 6 specific relationships have  $p < 0.05$ , the proposed hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 & H6 are accepted as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Model Structure Analysis Results**

Hypotheses	Mean Sample	Standard Deviation	Beta	p Value	Decision
TS → CE	0.239	0.065	3.603	0.000	Accepts H1
TS → SD	0.371	0.056	6.479	0.000	Accepts H2
TS → RP	-0.161	0.065	2.386	0.017	Accepts H3
TH → CE	-0.185	0.051	3.573	0.000	Accepts H4
TH → SD	-0.267	0.046	5.901	0.000	Accepts H5
TH → RP	0.281	0.057	4.883	0.000	Accepts H6
TE → CE	-0.001	0.106	0.050	0.960	Denies H7
TE → SD	0.099	0.088	1.294	0.196	Denies H8
TE → RP	0.021	0.097	0.130	0.897	Denies H9

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

### 6.1 Effect of Teleworking on Emotional Exhaustion

The teleworking abilities dimension has a negative effect on emotional exhaustion ( $p < 0.05$ ) and it is more relevant, as teleworking abilities help reducing emotional exhaustion. The teleworking conditions dimension has a hidden effect on emotional exhaustion ( $p < 0.05$ ), therefore, it was possible to identify that teleworking conditions may not contribute to reducing emotional exhaustion in employees. The work-life balance dimension does not have any effect on emotional exhaustion ( $p > 0.05$ ). Since social and institutional factors are agents that determine the level of emotional exhaustion in teleworking; they are proposed as strategies for reducing it, including structural changes in the organization where the employee's autonomy is developed, skills strengthening and social integration of the staff and among areas. (Bracco Bruce, Valdez Oyague, Wakeham Nieri, & Velázquez, 2018). Therefore, we could determine that teleworking abilities are a relevant factor to reduce emotional exhaustion (Bracco Bruce, Valdez Oyague, Wakeham Nieri, & Velázquez, 2018), as well as strengthening intrapersonal skills since it helps the employee to self-regulate their behavior when facing with stressors (Bährer, 2013). Ultimately, if employers do not strengthen the employees' skills, it can cause stressors since the employee experiences a qualitative overload, where the excessive workload increases even more and they have not yet strengthened their skills to develop the assigned tasks. (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007).



### 6.2 Effect of Teleworking on Depersonalization

The teleworking conditions dimension has a hidden effect on depersonalization ( $p < 0.05$ ), therefore, it was possible to identify that teleworking conditions may or may not contribute to reducing depersonalization. The work-life balance dimension has no effect on the teleworker depersonalization ( $P > 0.05$ ). Since teleworking is a source of personal dignity, family stability, peace in the community, democracies that act for the benefit of all and a source of economic growth that increases opportunities for productive work and business development, it could not cause depersonalization in teleworkers. (Baruch, 2000)

The teleworking abilities dimension has a negative effect on depersonalization ( $p < 0.05$ ) and it is more relevant, as teleworking abilities do help to reduce teleworker depersonalization. So, if a teleworker has more abilities, they have less chance of suffering from depersonalization in this regard, it is considered that abilities prevent higher levels of stress and depersonalization. In addition, the employees, who have lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, are those who are not exposed to a specific organizational structure. (Thulin, Vilhelmson, & Martina, 2019)

The implementation of techniques and activities support programs to face and manage chronic work-related stress, all of this according to the environment where employees perform their tasks, allows them to have greater control of their emotions that lead to depersonalization. (Felstead & Henseke, 2017) This program was used by California attorneys to describe the gradual process of loss of responsibility and clinical disinterest among co-workers.

### 6.3 Effect of Teleworking on Personal Achievement

Teleworking abilities have a positive effect on personal achievement ( $p < 0.05$ ) and it is more relevant, as it determines the employee's personal achievement level. Teleworking conditions have a hidden effect on personal achievement ( $p < 0.05$ ), as it may not contribute to the employee's personal achievement. Work-life balance does not have any effect on personal achievement ( $p > 0.05$ ). Since professional factors such as job satisfaction, a positive self-concept, meaningful work, skill development, and professional achievements determine, mainly, the personal achievement level (Martela & Pessi, 2018). Therefore, it was possible to determine that the development of skills is a relevant factor for teleworkers to achieve personal fulfillment (Bajzikova, Sajgalikova, Wojcak, & Polakova, 2013), since companies contribute to developing good teleworking when they strengthen their employees' skills. On the other hand, some of the advantages of teleworking is the employee's solid personal achievement, which increases when the teleworker acquires or strengthens their interpersonal and communication skills (Bracco Bruce, Valdez Oyague, Wakeham Nieri, & Velázquez, 2018). It must be taken into account that the employee gets frustrated when the work expectations are not met by companies, (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014) which leads to a lack of personal achievement; that is why it is important for companies to strengthen their employees' skills by helping them to progress in their workplace, since it is complex to identify and properly treat the lack of personal development of a teleworker (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003).

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