



**Employees' fit to telework and work well-being:
(In)voluntariness in telework as a mediating variable?**

Journal:	<i>Employee Relations</i>
Manuscript ID	ER-10-2021-0441.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	employees' fit to telework, voluntariness, involuntariness, work well-being, work engagement, exhaustion

Employees' fit to telework and work well-being: (In)voluntariness in telework as a mediating variable?

Abstract

Purpose – The present study examines the mediating role of (in)voluntariness in teleworking in explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and work well-being (i.e., work engagement and exhaustion).

Design/methodology/approach – A cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. The sample comprised 222 individuals performing telework in Portugal. Statistical analyses employed were descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, confirmatory factor and structural equation analyses, and mediation analysis using Hayes Process macro.

Findings – The findings confirmed the hypothesis that employees' fit to telework raises the voluntariness in telework and decreases involuntariness in telework. However, contrary to expectations, no significant relationships were found between voluntariness in telework, work engagement, and exhaustion. Yet, involuntariness in telework showed a significant role in decreasing work engagement and increasing workers' exhaustion. The mediating role of involuntariness in telework was confirmed in explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and exhaustion.

Practical implications – Managers in global firms can draw from our results to understand how employees' fit to telework directly and/or indirectly contributes to work well-being and develop Human Resource (HR) management practices aiming to increase employees' fit to telework.

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3 **Originality** – Although teleworking is already studied, to the best of our knowledge, no
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5 studies have analyzed the same conceptual model employees' fit to telework,
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7 (in)voluntariness in teleworking and work well-being.
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10 **Keywords** employees' fit to telework, voluntariness, involuntariness, work well-being,
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12 work engagement, exhaustion
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14 **Paper type** Research paper
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Employee Relations

1. Introduction

Telework is an alternative work arrangement where work is performed from any location of employees' convenience, most frequently home-based, and includes the employees' using information and communication technology (ICT) to accomplish their work (Brunelle and Fortin, 2021; Kapoor *et al.*, 2021). Since the use of ICT intermediates the work, telework has brought new challenges to Human Resource (HR) management, among which the organizations and employees need to have the necessary adjustment to telework to present higher levels of performance (Abulibdeh, 2020; Biron *et al.*, 2020; Raišiene *et al.*, 2021; Raghuram *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, while some studies indicated many advantages of telework (e.g., improved productivity, greater work-life balance, reduction in commuting and an increase in job satisfaction), other studies observed negative effects of teleworking (e.g., higher social isolation, career stagnation, increased work-life conflict, and poor well-being) (Grant *et al.*, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2019). As such, the present study, drawing on the Person-Job (P-J) fit literature (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), hypothesizes that employees' well-being is the result of individuals' beliefs they have the necessary abilities and needs to perform in telework conditions. Concerning positive and negative results of telework, the present study focuses on work well-being by analyzing individuals' work engagement and exhaustion. Despite several constructs used in the literature to evaluate work-related well-being (Fisher, 2014), the current research focuses on a positive indicator – i.e., work engagement – and a negative indicator – i.e., exhaustion – to measure well-being at work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Work engagement concerns a cognitive and affective positive mindset related to work and includes vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Vigor is translated into high energy levels, mental resistance and capacity to invest effort in work. Dedication consists of a strong individual

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3 involvement, enthusiasm, pride and challenge in work. Absorption reflects an individual
4 full concentration on work in a way that the individual loses the notion of time. Exhaustion
5 at work consists of diminished emotional and physical energy at work (Bakker and
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10 Demerouti, 2007).

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12 Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the employees' well-being had already captured
13 the interest of many researchers (Cantante-Rodrigues *et al.*, 2021). For instance, in
14 Portugal, in 2018, The Portuguese Association of Health Psychology estimated that
15 approximately 18% of the Portuguese workers experienced burnout – an indicator of poor
16 well-being (Aon EMEA Health Survey, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic moved many
17 workers worldwide from offices to telework, in a home-based, due to the social distancing
18 measure (Raišiene *et al.*, 2021). This situation provides an unprecedented opportunity to
19 identify the factors contributing to employees' well-being in telework.
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31 Beyond predicting the individuals' subjective perception of being mismatched to work
32 as having a detrimental effect on the individuals' well-being (e.g., Wickrama and O'Neal,
33 2019), previous literature also highlighted the importance of individuals' engagement in
34 their work for more self-determined reasons (Fernet *et al.*, 2019). In other words, based on
35 Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a substantial body of literature has been showing the
36 importance of the quality of motivation to engage in a specific action (Ryan and Deci,
37 2019). Building on previous empirical studies conducted with non-teleworker samples
38 (e.g., Bernhard-Oettel *et al.*, 2012; Lopes and Chambel, 2017), the current research aims to
39 extend these findings and see the applicability of this reasoning to analyze the telework
40 context. To do so, the present study goals are: (1) to assess the associations among
41 employees' fit to telework and voluntariness in telework and involuntariness in telework;
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3 telework with work engagement and exhaustion; and (3) assess the mediating role of both
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5 involuntariness in telework and voluntariness in telework in contributing to explain the
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7 relationship between employees' fit to telework and engagement and exhaustion.
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10 The study of the relationships mentioned above has the potential to contribute to both
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12 theory and practice. First, this study innovates by analyzing the relationship between
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14 employees' fit to telework and involuntariness and voluntariness in telework. Up to date, to
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16 the best of our knowledge, most studies focus on the relationship between P-J fit and
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18 attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Biron *et al.*, 2020). However, it is widely recognized
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20 the importance of motivational outcomes to explain workers' attitudes and behaviours,
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22 since, as conceptualized in the self-determination theory (SDT), motivations are forces that
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24 move the person to act and energize behaviors (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In addition, despite
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26 the evidence on the relevance of voluntariness and involuntariness in explaining contingent
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28 workers' well-being (e.g., De Cuyper and De Witte, 2008; Sobral *et al.*, 2013), it is crucial
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30 to understand this relationship in another alternative work arrangements, such as telework.
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32 Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have analyzed the relationship between
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34 individuals' perception of fit to telework, teleworkers' voluntariness and involuntariness,
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36 and workers' well-being in the same conceptual model. Furthermore, we propose with the
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38 current study that teleworkers' voluntariness and involuntariness is a critical factor that
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40 contributes to explaining the relationship between individuals' perception of fit to telework
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42 and work well-being. Finally, studies such as this research, conducted in the particular
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44 context of teleworking, are fundamental to understanding the applicability of the theoretical
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46 background developed based on traditional forms of employment, such as permanent work
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48 and work on-site to alternative work arrangements, such as telework. Thus, this research
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50 has the potential to contribute to Organizational Behavior (OB) and Industrial and
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3 Organizational Psychology (IOP). Moreover, based on the results obtained, it will be
4 possible to point out a set of HR management policies that managers could implement.
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10 **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

11 *2.1. Employees' fit to telework and (in)voluntariness in telework*

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13 As Biron *et al.* (2020) noted, the organization's capacity to benefit from telework
14 depends on the employees' ability to adjust to telework characteristics. In other words,
15 more positive outcomes are expected from workers when there is an adequate P-J fit – i.e.,
16 a congruence between the workers' attributes and the job's characteristics (Hoffman and
17 Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). For instance, with a sample of nurses, Sikander
18 and Batool (2021) showed that P-J fit relates positively to job satisfaction and negatively to
19 turnover intentions.
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31 The conceptualization of P-J fit includes the demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit
32 perspectives (Edwards, 1991). The former concerns employees' abilities, such as having the
33 knowledge and skills aligned to the job demands (Lee *et al.*, 2021). The second refers to the
34 fit between the workers' needs and desires and what the job provides (Lee *et al.*, 2021). In
35 the current study, we followed these perspectives, which are reflected in the measure
36 developed by Saks and Ashforth (1997). In addition, previous studies showed that P–J fit
37 can be evaluated objectively or subjectively (Mensah and Bawole, 2020). Objective P–J fit
38 concerns how well workers acknowledged preferences or characteristics match the job's
39 characteristics, while subjective P–J fit relates to workers' perceptions concerning how well
40 they fit with their job (Mensah and Bawole, 2020). Despite both being important, this
41 research focuses on subjective P–J fit since individuals' evaluations of fit were shown as
42 being more proximal predictors of many attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (e.g.,
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3 Aboramadan *et al.*, 2020; Lim *et al.*, 2019). As such, it is expected the subjective P-J fit
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5 could be a better predictor of workers' voluntariness and involuntariness in telework than
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7 the objective P-J fit.
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10 As previously noted, the current research innovates by analysing the relationship
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12 between employees' fit to telework and involuntariness and voluntariness in telework. Most
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14 previous studies analyzed the relationship between P-J fit and attitudinal and behavioural
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16 outcomes (Biron *et al.*, 2020). However, Biron *et al.* (2020) recently showed the relevance
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18 of including the analyses of individual factors. More precisely, the authors found that the
19
20 optimism trait positively relates to telework adjustment. In addition, the subjective
21
22 individual evaluation of fit to their jobs may influence the individuals' motivations to
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24 initiate and maintain a specific course of action. For instance, Mensah and Bawole (2020)
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26 study showed that P-J fit is negatively related to intent to quit the job. The study of Tseng
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28 and Yu (2016) also observed that the salespeople's subjective person-job fit contributed to
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30 a decrease in the salespeople's intention to quit. Moreover, as observed by Bieńkowska and
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32 Tworek (2020), "It is a common view in the literature that adaptability is one of the key
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34 factors for an employee's success and, because of that, a prerequisite for their work
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36 motivation" (pp. 8).
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42 Concerning the concept of voluntariness and involuntariness in telework, the current
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44 study builds on the self-determination theory background (Deci and Ryan, 2000). One of
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46 the main contributions of the self-determination theory is the argument that positive results
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48 from individuals could be expected both when individuals behave due to a genuine desire to
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50 opt for teleworking or when the individuals fullest internalize the external reasons to opt for
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52 teleworking. The genuine desire to opt for teleworking reflects the individual's intrinsic
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54 motivation (e.g., Teleworking is a personal choice). The fullest internalization of external
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3 reasons to opt for teleworking refers to integrated and identified regulation (e.g., With
4 teleworking, I have more flexibility in managing my time” and “Teleworking gives me
5 more “freedom”). In fact, previous studies showed all these reasons reflect voluntariness or
6 autonomous motivation (e.g., Chambel *et al.*, 2015; Lopes and Chambel, 2014). In other
7 words, voluntariness implies that individuals have identified with an activity’s value and/or
8 integrated it into themselves (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Thus, the higher the individuals’
9 voluntariness in performing an activity, the higher their experience of being autonomously
10 motivated, volition, or a self-endorsement of their actions (Deci and Ryan, 2008). In
11 contrast, involuntariness concerns a less self-determined choice accompanied by an
12 individual’s feelings of being pressured to opt for telework (Delanoeije and Verbruggen,
13 2019; Ellingson *et al.*, 1998). For instance, individuals feel they have no other work
14 alternatives and feel “forced” to opt for teleworking”. In common, both voluntariness and
15 involuntariness in telework reflect reasons or motives for opting for telework. However, as
16 above mentioned, these reasons or motives differ in terms of their qualitative aspect
17 (Bernhard-Oettel *et al.*, 2013; Chambel *et al.*, 2021).

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19 Although both voluntary and involuntary reasons for opting for telework may appear
20 incompatible, previous studies conducted with non-teleworker samples have shown (e.g.,
21 Moran *et al.*, 2012; Sobral *et al.*, 2019; Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2013) that workers may
22 display both types of motivation. In fact, the studies conducted with temporary agency
23 workers showed that despite this work being connoted with less favourable job
24 characteristics, these workers might also present autonomous motivation (i.e., voluntary
25 reasons) for being temporary agency workers. More precisely, Lopes and Chambel (2017),
26 with a two-wave design study with temporary agency workers, showed that these
27 individuals attribute, on average, higher scores regarding controlled motivation for being in

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3 their employment arrangement (i.e., involuntary reasons) than for autonomous motivation
4 (i.e, voluntary reasons). However, these individuals also present voluntary reasons, and this
5 study's findings supported the importance of voluntary reasons for being temporary agency
6 work as they contributed to increasing work engagement over time. Building on this
7 argument, one could argue that although the telework situation is imposed on individuals
8 and they do not have an option (i.e., involuntary reasons), the individuals may also present
9 voluntary reasons for telework. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, several
10 individuals were pushed to telework, and thus the involuntary reasons for engaging in this
11 job could be higher. However, building on the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan,
12 2000), individuals may internalize the reasons for behaving, and although they feel
13 “forced” to do telework, they may also recognize the importance of this way of working as
14 being essential to fulfilling specific goals like have more flexibility in managing the time,
15 which encloses a feeling of more self-determined behaviour.

16 Referring to the relationship between employees’ fit to telework and voluntariness and
17 involuntariness in telework, bearing in mind previous studies showing P-J fit is associated
18 with better outcomes, such as job engagement and employees’ helping behaviour (Vila-
19 Vázquez *et al.*, 2021), we hypothesize that the higher the individuals’ perception of fit to
20 telework, the higher their voluntariness in telework, and the lower their involuntariness in
21 telework. Hence, we make the following hypothesis:

22 *Hypothesis 1:* Employees’ fit to telework has a positive relationship with (H1a)
23 voluntariness in telework, and a negative relationship with (H1b) involuntariness in
24 telework.

25 2.2. (In)Voluntariness in telework and work well-being

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3 When individuals opt for telework as a deliberate choice and preference (i.e., higher
4 voluntariness) and do not feel compelled to opt for this employment arrangement (i.e.,
5 lower involuntariness), it may increase individuals' work engagement and reducing
6 individuals' exhaustion at work. This reasoning is in line with the self-determination theory
7 (Deci and Ryan, 2000). More precisely, when individuals behave with a full sense of
8 volition, freedom and choice (i.e., higher voluntariness) they are more likely to experience
9 more positive states and show better outcomes than individuals who behave with a feeling
10 of pressure and control that arises from forces perceived to be external to the self (i.e.,
11 higher involuntariness) (Ryan and Deci, 2019). As such, when the behavior is based on
12 more voluntary reasons will foster greater well-being outcomes than when the behavior is
13 based on involuntary reasons (for a review, see Gagné *et al.*, 2018).

14
15 Previous studies using samples of permanent and contingent workers have shown a
16 positive relationship between voluntariness and work engagement (e.g., Haivas *et al.*, 2013;
17 Lopes *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, other studies showed a negative relationship between
18 voluntariness and burnout (e.g., Chambel *et al.*, 2015; Fernet *et al.*, 2015). Regarding
19 involuntariness, previous studies found a negative relationship with and observed a positive
20 relationship with negative indicators of well-being at work, such as burnout and
21 psychological strain (e.g., Chambel *et al.*, 2015; Fernet *et al.*, 2015).

22 Thus, we posit the following hypotheses:

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24 *Hypothesis 2:* Voluntariness in telework will be positively related to (H2a) work
25 engagement, and negatively related to (H2b) exhaustion at work.

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27 *Hypothesis 3:* Involuntariness in telework will be negatively related to (H3a) work
28 engagement, and positively related to (H3b) exhaustion at work.

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30 *2.3. Indirect effects: A proposal for the mediating role of (in)voluntariness in telework*

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3 The quality of motivation (i.e., voluntariness and involuntariness) can be seen as a
4 process that links P-J fit to various work outcomes, such as well-being variables (Deci *et*
5 *al.*, 2017). Consequently, it is possible to expect that employees' fit to telework has an
6 indirect effect on workers' well-being in such a way that employees' fit to telework relates
7 to voluntariness in telework and involuntariness in telework. In turn, voluntariness in
8 telework and involuntariness in telework relates to work well-being.
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12 Beyond an indirect effect, a direct effect of P-J fit on well-being is also supported in the
13 literature. For instance, Topa and Pra (2018) conducted a three-wave study design with a
14 sample of older Spanish workers, who were still working at time 1 and time 2 but who had
15 retired within the last 4 months at time 3. The study showed that successful adjustment
16 through the life course phases conducts to higher individuals' well-being. In addition,
17 Wickrama and O'Neal (2020) investigated how individuals' mismatch to work conduct to
18 poor mental health over the life course. The researchers observed that person-work
19 mismatch relates to depressive symptoms in middle-aged individuals, which will continue
20 across the years, supporting a cumulative pathway. More interestingly, the researchers
21 observed that person-work mismatch leads to the stressful pre-retirement work context.
22 This leads us to formulate the following hypotheses:
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42 *Hypothesis 4:* Voluntariness in telework will significantly mediate the relationship between
43 employees' fit to telework and (H4a) work engagement, and (H4b) exhaustion at work.
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45 *Hypothesis 5:* Involuntariness in telework will significantly mediate the relationship
46 between employees' fit to telework and (H5a) work engagement, and (H5b) exhaustion at
47 work.
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53 **3. Method**

54 *3.1. Sample and Procedure*

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3 Before collecting the data, the questionnaire was evaluated by a panel of five
4 researchers and five individuals performing telework to assess the adequacy of the applied
5 measures and the readability of the survey to the target population, respectively. We use the
6 convenience sampling method, a non-probabilistic sampling technique. The online
7 questionnaire was disseminated by e-mail list of companies that adopt telework and social
8 and professional networks of Portuguese teleworkers. A link to access the online
9 questionnaire was sent through these research dissemination mechanisms. The online
10 questionnaire was made available on the Qualtrics platform. The anonymity of the
11 respondents' answers and the opportunity to receive feedback were assured. There was no
12 incentive (cash or otherwise) for participating in this project.
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26 A sample of 222 individuals performing telework in Portugal, in different
27 organizations, was collected. The sample was composed mainly of women (64.9%). The
28 youngest participant was 22 years old and the oldest was 64 years old ($M = 37.72$; $SD =$
29 9.39). The participants' majority possess a bachelor's degree (51.4%), or a higher level of
30 education completed (30.6%). Most of the participants were married (56.3%) and had
31 children (50.9%). Additionally, most of the individuals had a permanent contract (75.7%),
32 and had a job tenure between 1 to 3 years (25.7%), between 4 to 5 years (14.9%) and
33 between 6 to 10 years (12.6%). The participants' majority (99.5%) had home-based
34 telework. The participants' characteristics seem to be in line with a recent report conducted
35 in Portugal about telework (see Moço *et al.*, 2020).
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49 3.2. Measures

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51 *Employees' fit to telework.* Four items from Saks and Ashforth (1997) were used to
52 measure employees' fit to telework. Those items were rephrased for the study's target
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3 population, namely: (1) *“My knowledge, skills and ability in using information and*
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6 *communication technologies are adequate for teleworking.”*; (2) *“Teleworking fits my*
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8 *personal characteristics.”*; (3) *“Teleworking allows me to do the job the way I want.”*; and
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10 (4) *“Teleworking suits my needs.”*. Respondents were asked to assess each item on a five-
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12 point scale ranging from 1 (*“to a very little extent”*) to 5 (*“To a very large extent”*), like the
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14 original scale developed by Saks and Ashforth (1997). The principal-components analysis
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16 was performed with the four items. In line with the results obtained by Saks and Ashforth
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18 (1997), this analysis showed a one-factor solution that contributes to explaining 67.70% of
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20 the variance. The factor loadings ranged between .56 and .90. Cronbach’s Alpha for the
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22 scale was .84.
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28 *Voluntariness and involuntariness in teleworking.* To measure voluntariness and
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30 involuntariness in telework we adopted the work of Ellingson, Gruys and Sackett (1998),
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32 and De Cuyper and De Witte (2008). Since these works used scales to capture the
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34 involuntariness and voluntariness in temporary work, we used the items assessed by a panel
35
36 of five experts on telework as being adequate for telework. Three statements concerned
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38 voluntariness in telework were as follows: (1) *“Teleworking gives me more “freedom”*; (2)
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40 *“Teleworking is a personal choice”*; and (3) *“With teleworking I have more flexibility in*
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42 *managing my time”*. Three statements concerned involuntariness in telework were as
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44 following: (1) *“I have no other work alternatives”*; (2) *“I am “forced” to opt for*
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46 *teleworking”*; and (3) *“Teleworking is the only way I have to be in the labour market”*.
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50 Respondents were asked to assess each item on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*“totally*
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52 *disagree”*) to 5 (*“totally agree”*). The principal-components analysis with a varimax
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54 rotation was performed with the six items. This analysis showed a two-factor solution that
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3 contributes to explaining 70.46% of the variance. The first factor included three items
4 reflecting the reasons to voluntarily telework (e.g., “freedom”, personal choice, and
5 flexibility). The factor loadings ranged between .67 and .90. The second factor included the
6 remaining three items reflecting involuntary reasons for teleworking (e.g., feeling of being
7 “forced”, having no other alternative, and considering telework as the only way to enter the
8 labor market). The factor loadings ranged between .82 and .88. Cronbach’s Alpha for the
9 scale was .76 and .80, for voluntariness in telework and involuntariness in telework,
10 respectively.
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22 *Work engagement.* It was measured by the Ultra-Short Measure for Work Engagement
23 (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2017), composed of 3 items. The items used in this study were the ones
24 used in the original scale of Schaufeli *et al.* (2017). Item example includes “*At my work, I*
25 *feel bursting with energy*”. The participants answered the items using a seven-point Likert
26 scale, ranging from 1 (“*never*”) to 7 (“*always, every day*”). The principal-components
27 analysis showed a one-factor solution that contributes to explaining 73.45% of the variance.
28 The factor loadings ranged between .73 and .92. Cronbach’s Alpha for the scale was .81.
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39 *Exhaustion.* It was assessed using a Portuguese translation of the Maslach Burnout
40 Inventory (Maslach *et al.*, 1996) that was also used in previous studies with Portuguese
41 samples (e.g., Lopes *et al.*, 2019; Lopes and Chambel, 2017). Item example includes “*I feel*
42 *used up at the end of a workday*”. The participants answered the five items using a seven-
43 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“*never*”) to 7 (“*always, every day*”). The principal-
44 components analysis showed a one-factor solution that contributes to explaining 74.76% of
45 the variance. The factor loadings ranged between .82 and .93. Cronbach’s Alpha for the
46 scale was .92.
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4. Results

4.1. Confirmatory factor analyses

Before conducting the confirmatory factor analysis, the sampling adequacy was tested by computing the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s sphericity test. In addition, an anti-image correlation matrix was also constructed. The KMO measure (KMO = .84) and Bartlett’s test ($\chi^2 (153) = 2377.55; p = 0.00$) indicated that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the anti-image correlation values ranged between .73 and .92, which exceeded the threshold value of .50 (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014). A test of the measurement model was conducted to control for common method variance and to establish discriminant validity (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The one-factor model (with all items, of each studied variable, loading into one latent factor) exhibited poor fit to the data [$\chi^2 (135) = 1415.51, p < .01, SRMR = .19; CFI = .44; IFI = .45; RMSEA = .21$]. However, the five-factor model, i.e., the theoretical model, obtained an acceptable fit [$\chi^2 (125) = 270.167, p < .01, SRMR = .07; CFI = .94; IFI = .94; RMSEA = .07$], significantly better than the one latent factor model [$\Delta\chi^2 (10) = 1145.34, p < .01$]. These analyses revealed that the factor structures of the research variables were consistent with the conceptual model and that the manifest variables loaded, as intended, on the latent variables. Concerning the factor loadings, the standardized coefficient of the five-factor model was between .41 to .94, which is above the acceptable level of .30 (< .30 shows unsatisfactory convergent validity) with a *p-value* < .001 (refer to Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

4.2. Descriptive analysis

Concerning the mean values, the results presented in Table 2 showed that employees presented a moderately elevated level in telework fit ($M = 4.16; SD = .78$;

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3 considering a 5-point Likert scale). In addition, regarding the average scores obtained both
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5 for voluntariness and involuntariness in telework ($M = 3.45$; $SD = 1.06$; $M = 2.00$; $SD =$
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7 1.06 ; respectively, considering a 5-point Likert scale), the participants showed a higher
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9 score for voluntariness than for involuntariness in telework, suggesting that telework was
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11 perceived more as volunteer option to individuals. Finally, the mean values obtained for
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13 work engagement ($M = 5.22$; $SD = 1.06$; considering a 7-point Likert scale) and for
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15 exhaustion ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 1.46$; considering a 7-point Likert scale) suggested that
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17 employees feel a moderate level of work engagement and report feeling some exhaustion at
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19 work.
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24 In general, the observed pattern of correlations (see Table 2) indicated that
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26 employees' fit to telework relates positively with voluntariness in telework ($r = .56$, $p <$
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28 $.01$), and negatively with involuntariness in telework ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$) and exhaustion ($r =$
29
30 $-.16$, $p < .05$). In addition, involuntariness in telework relates negatively with work
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32 engagement ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$) and positively with exhaustion ($r = .38$, $p < .01$).
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35 INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE
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37 4.3. Hypothesis testing 38

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40 Following the correlation results, it was possible to have a general idea of the
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42 pattern of the relationships among all the constructs. Before hypothesis testing, we first
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44 tested structural models using the AMOS 26.0 program. This previous step enables us to
45
46 see which model best fits the data – i.e., a fully mediated or partially mediated model. The
47
48 fully mediated model [$\chi^2 (126) = 220.40$, $p < .01$, SRMR = .07; CFI = .96; IFI = .96;
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50 RMSEA = .06] with indirect effects through voluntariness and involuntariness and no direct
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52 paths between employees' fit to telework and work well-being (i.e., work engagement and
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54 exhaustion) showed an acceptable fit. The partially mediated model also provided an
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3 acceptable fit [$\chi^2 (124) = 218.67, p < .01, SRMR = .07; CFI = .96; IFI = .96; RMSEA =$
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5 $.06$] and did not significantly differ from the fully mediated model [$\Delta\chi^2 (2) = 1.73, n.s.$].
6

7 By performing the PROCESS v3.5 macro in SPSS IBM Statistics 26.0 software, we
8
9 continued the data analysis to test the existence of mediation effects. The model used for
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11 performing the PROCESS macro was Model 4 (Hayes, 2013), which allows up to 10
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13 mediators to operate in parallel. For testing the mediation hypothesis, we used 5000
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15 bootstrap samples with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for all indirect
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17 effects.
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21 Before the mediating testing, we established a model where only the direct
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23 relationships from employees' fit to telework to work engagement, and from employees' fit
24
25 to telework to exhaustion were included. This model was tested without adding the
26
27 hypothesized mediating variables (i.e., voluntariness and involuntariness in telework).
28
29 Contrary to expected, the relationship between employees' fit to telework and work
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31 engagement, although positive, was not significant ($B = .15; n.s.$; refer to Figure 1).
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33 However, the relationship between employees' fit to telework and exhaustion was negative
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35 and significant ($B = -.30; p < .05$; refer to Figure 2).
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40 INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

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42 INSERT FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

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44 Proceeding with the hypotheses testing, a new model was tested with the
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46 hypothesized mediating variables (i.e., voluntariness and involuntariness in telework)
47
48 introduced. As can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2, regarding the relationship between
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50 employees' fit to telework and voluntariness in telework, we found a positive relationship
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52 ($B = .76; p < .01$). Furthermore, the relationship between employees' fit to telework and
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3 involuntariness in telework was also found as being negative ($B = -.47; p < .01$). Thus,
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5 Hypothesis 1a and 1b were supported by the data.
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8 Concerning the relationship between voluntariness in telework and work
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10 engagement and exhaustion, contrary to expected, none of these relationships were found to
11
12 be significant ($B = .06; n.s.$; $B = -.09; n.s.$), thereby refuting our hypotheses 2a and 2b.
13
14 However, and in line with the predicted, involuntariness in telework and work engagement
15
16 showed a negative relationship ($B = -.16; p < .05$), and involuntariness in telework and
17
18 exhaustion showed a positive relationship ($B = .51; p < .01$). As such, Hypothesis 3a and 3b
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20 were supported by the data.
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24 Regarding the mediating role of voluntariness in telework in contributing to
25
26 explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and work engagement (H4a)
27
28 and employees' fit to telework and exhaustion (H4b), the indirect effects were not
29
30 significant (indirect effect = $-.05$, SE = $.06$, CI: $-.17$ to $.07$; indirect effect = $.07$, SE = $.08$,
31
32 CI: $-.09$ to $.24$; respectively). Thus, refuting our hypotheses 4a and 4b. In addition,
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34 following the procedure recommended by Mathieu and Taylor (2006), some of the
35
36 conditions to test mediation were not previously satisfied, namely: a significant relationship
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38 between employees' fit to telework and work engagement ($B = .12; n.s.$), a significant
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40 relationship between voluntariness in telework and work engagement ($B = .06; n.s.$), and a
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42 relationship between voluntariness in telework and exhaustion ($B = -.09; n.s.$).
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47 Finally, concerning the mediating role of involuntariness in telework in contributing
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49 to explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and work engagement
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51 (H5a) and employees' fit to telework and exhaustion (H5b), hypothesis 5a was not
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53 supported by the data as the indirect effect from employees' fit to telework to work
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55 engagement was not significant (indirect effect = $.07$, SE = $.05$, CI: $-.01$ to $.17$). However,
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3 the indirect effect from employees' fit to telework to exhaustion was found as being
4 significant (indirect effect = -.24, SE = .06, CI: -.37 to -.12), confirming Hypothesis 5b.
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7 **5. Discussion**

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10 Using P–J fit theory (Saks and Ashforth, 1997) and self-determination theory (Ryan and
11 Deci, 2019), this study investigated the role of voluntariness and involuntariness in
12 telework as a mechanism linking the employees' fit to telework and the work well-being in
13 a sample of teleworkers. By empirically testing these relationships, this study contributed to
14 the literature and allowed to set out practical implications on telework. Next, we will
15 approach each of the theoretical and practical implications. In addition, the limitations of
16 the current research and suggestions for future research will be detached.
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26 *5.1. Theoretical implications*

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28 The current study investigated the relationship between employees' fit to telework and
29 voluntariness and involuntariness in telework. Drawing on P–J fit theory, a significant
30 relationship among these variables would be expected (Vila-Vásquez *et al.*, 2021). Overall,
31 as expected, the current study contributed to the literature by suggesting that a higher P–J fit
32 contributes to the individuals' reasons/motives in telework besides contributing to the
33 individual's attitudes and behaviours (Hoffman and Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown *et al.*,
34 2005).
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44 In the present study, employees' fit to telework showed a positive relationship with
45 voluntariness in telework. As such, when teleworkers subjective evaluate their job as
46 adequately fitting to them, they increase their enjoyment or better internalize the reasons for
47 having telework such as seeing it as giving more flexibility in managing their time
48 (Bieńkowska and Tworek, 2020). As such, the P–J fit may contribute to increasing the
49 individuals' experience of being autonomously motivated and self-endorsed in their job.
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3 However, as previously noted, to date, to the best of our knowledge, the literature on the
4 relationship between P-J fit and voluntariness is scarce, and most studies focus on the
5 relationship between P-J fit and attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Biron *et al.*, 2020).
6
7 Thus, future studies need to continue analyzing this relationship to see if these findings are
8 replicated.
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15 Moreover, employees' fit to telework was negatively related to involuntariness in
16 telework. This finding seems to be in line with previous studies suggesting that P-J fit
17 relates to better outcomes, and thus may contribute to decreasing less favourable ones, such
18 as involuntary reasons for being teleworkers (Vila-Vázquez *et al.*, 2021). In fact, according
19 to the self-determination theory, while voluntary reasons are seen as high quality and
20 sustained motivations, involuntary reasons are associated with short-term gains on targeted
21 outcomes (Deci *et al.*, 2017). However, future studies should continue studying this
22 relationship to inspect if this finding is replicated. In addition, although the current study
23 showed a significant negative relationship between P-J fit and involuntariness, it should be
24 noted this relationship is not strong. As such, it will be interesting that future studies
25 include other variables that may have a stronger contribution to decreasing teleworkers'
26 involuntariness, such as leadership, technostress, work challenge (e.g., ineffective
27 communication, work-home interference, loneliness, and procrastination), and work
28 characteristics (e.g., job autonomy, social support, monitoring, and workload) (Spagnoli *et*
29 *al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021)
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49 Concerning the relationship between voluntariness in telework, involuntariness in
50 telework, work engagement and exhaustion, the current study's findings only partially
51 supported the hypotheses. More precisely, while involuntariness in telework seems to
52 contribute to decreasing individuals' work engagement and increasing individuals'
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3 exhaustion, voluntariness in telework was not observed as having a significant relationship
4 with individuals' work engagement and burnout. Some alternative explanations for these
5 findings can be advanced. The study of De Cuyper and De Witte (2008) with a sample of
6 temporary agency workers showed that volition has a negative relationship with affective
7 organizational commitment. As an alternative explanation, the researchers argue that
8 «possibly, voluntary temporary agency workers may have another target of commitment;
9 namely, commitment to the agency rather than to the user firm» (pp. 379-380). In the same
10 way, teleworkers with higher levels of voluntary reasons may have other resources that
11 significantly contribute to their work well-being. For instance, other resources than their
12 voluntariness in telework, such as work autonomy. Future studies are needed to test this
13 alternative explanation.
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28 Regarding the mediating role of both voluntariness in telework and voluntariness in
29 telework in explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and work well-
30 being, the data obtained partially support this hypothesis. In the literature, there are already
31 previous studies suggesting that individuals' reasons/motives for involvement in a specific
32 course of action may mediate the relationship among different contextual and individual
33 variables. For instance, the study of Chambel *et al.* (2021), with a sample of contact centre
34 operators, showed that both autonomous and controlled motivation (i.e., voluntary and
35 involuntary reasons, respectively) partially mediates the relationship between workers'
36 perceived overqualification and burnout. In addition, Gkorezis *et al.* (2021) demonstrated
37 the mediating role of intrinsic motivation (i.e., voluntary motivation) in explaining the
38 relationship between harmonious work passion and work-related internet information
39 seeking in a sample of nurses. Thus, the current study adds to the body of the literature by
40 providing empirical support for the mediating role of involuntariness teleworking in
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3 contributing to explaining the relationship between employees' fit to telework and
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5 exhaustion.

6 7 8 *5.2. Practical implications*

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10 The findings suggest some practical and managerial implications. First, the present
11 study's findings seem to highlight the relevance of employees' fit to telework in
12 contributing to explaining individuals' voluntariness and involuntariness in teleworking.
13 Building on these results, it is essential for organizations to ensure adequate training for
14 employees on the necessary digital skills to telework (Nunes, 2005; Wilson and Greenhill,
15 2004). In addition, organizations need to promote diversity management by creating an
16 environment that serves diverse employees. Bearing in mind the workforce diversity,
17 individuals may differ in how telework fits their personal characteristics and needs, which
18 may interfere with their motivation for telework (Bae *et al.*, 2019).
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31 The current research suggests the involuntariness in telework is detrimental to the
32 individual's well-being. More precisely, the higher the involuntariness in telework, the
33 lower the work engagement and the higher the individuals' exhaustion. These findings have
34 practical implications and are in line with the predicted in the Self-Determination Theory
35 (Ryan and Deci, 2019). More precisely, given these findings, organizations need to develop
36 policies and practices to contribute to decreasing teleworkers' involuntariness. From a
37 practical point of view, the current research showed organizations will be able to decrease
38 teleworkers' involuntariness if organizations develop policies and practices that contribute
39 to increasing employees' fit to telework.
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50 51 *5.3. Limitations and future research*

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3 Although this research has important strengths, certain limitations should be considered
4 when interpreting this study's findings. First, this study has a cross-sectional design;
5 therefore, causality cannot be established. Future studies with
6
7 longitudinal designs are welcomed to overcome this constraint. However, as Spector (2019)
8 noted «*there seems to be a universal condemnation of the cross-sectional design and at the*
9 *same time acceptance of the superiority of the longitudinal design in allowing conclusions*
10 *about temporal precedence and even causality. Often overlooked is that the cross-sectional*
11 *design can tell us much that is of value and that the longitudinal design is not necessarily*
12 *superior in providing evidence for causation» (pp. 125). Second, this research relies on
13 self-report measures raising common method bias concerns. However, since all the
14 variables concern individuals' perceptions and were focused on individuals' personal
15 experiences, the self-reported measures seemed to better fit the main research goals. Third,
16 this research was conducted in a Portuguese context. Future research is needed with
17 employees from other countries to replicate, broaden and generalize the present results.
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35 **6. Conclusions**

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37 The current study provides support for the relationship between employees' fit to
38 telework and voluntariness and involuntariness in teleworking. As such, this study
39 contributed to demonstrating that the subjective perception of fit to telework can be one key
40 factor contributing to increasing workers' voluntariness and decreasing workers'
41 involuntariness. It also demonstrates that involuntariness in teleworking could be
42 detrimental to workers' well-being. Overall, the current study highlights the need for future
43 research to continue examining the relationships among P-J fit, voluntariness and
44 involuntariness and work well-being in teleworkers.
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Table 1. Standardized estimates of the measurement model

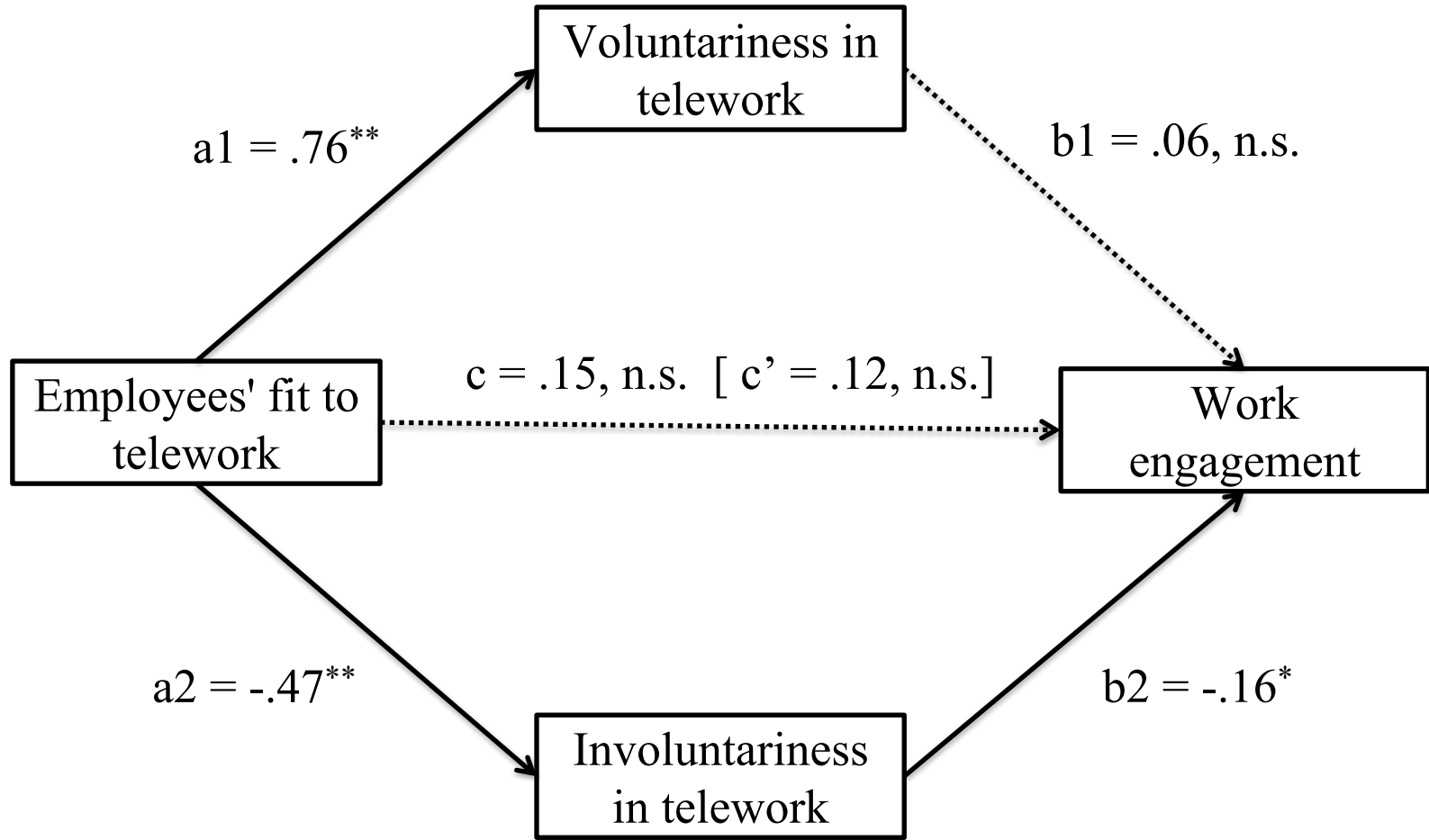
			Estimate
fit1	<---	FIT	.41
fit2	<---	FIT	.84
fit3	<---	FIT	.84
fit4	<---	FIT	.91
vol1	<---	VOL	.93
vol2	<---	VOL	.48
vol3	<---	VOL	.78
inv1	<---	INV	.71
inv2	<---	INV	.88
inv3	<---	INV	.70
eng1	<---	Eng	.89
eng2	<---	Eng	.92
eng3	<---	Eng	.51
ex1	<---	Exhau	.80
ex2	<---	Exhau	.75
ex3	<---	Exhau	.84
ex4	<---	Exhau	.81
ex5	<---	Exhau	.94

Note. FIT = Employees' fit to telework; VOL = Voluntariness in teleworking; INV = Involuntariness in teleworking; Eng = Work Engagement; Exhau = Exhaustion.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix.

	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Gender	0,65	0,48												
2. Age	37,72	9,39					-.03							
3. Education	3,21	0,75					.11	-.25**						
4. Job tenure	3,43	1,94					-.06	.69**	-.36**					
5. Employees' fit	4,16	0,78	.85	.60	.43	.91	-.00	-.12	.03	-.18**				
6. Voluntariness	3,45	1,06	.78	.56	.43	.89	.05	-.04	.09	-.12	.56**			
7. Involuntariness	2,00	1,06	.81	.59	.17	.85	.12	.20**	.01	.18**	-.35**	-.25**		
8. Work engagement	5,22	1,06	.92	.69	.35	.94	-.10	.19**	-.02	.13	.11	.02	-.17*	
9. Exhaustion	3,73	1,46	.83	.63	.35	.91	.07	.01	-.04	.13	-.16*	-.06	.38**	-.42**

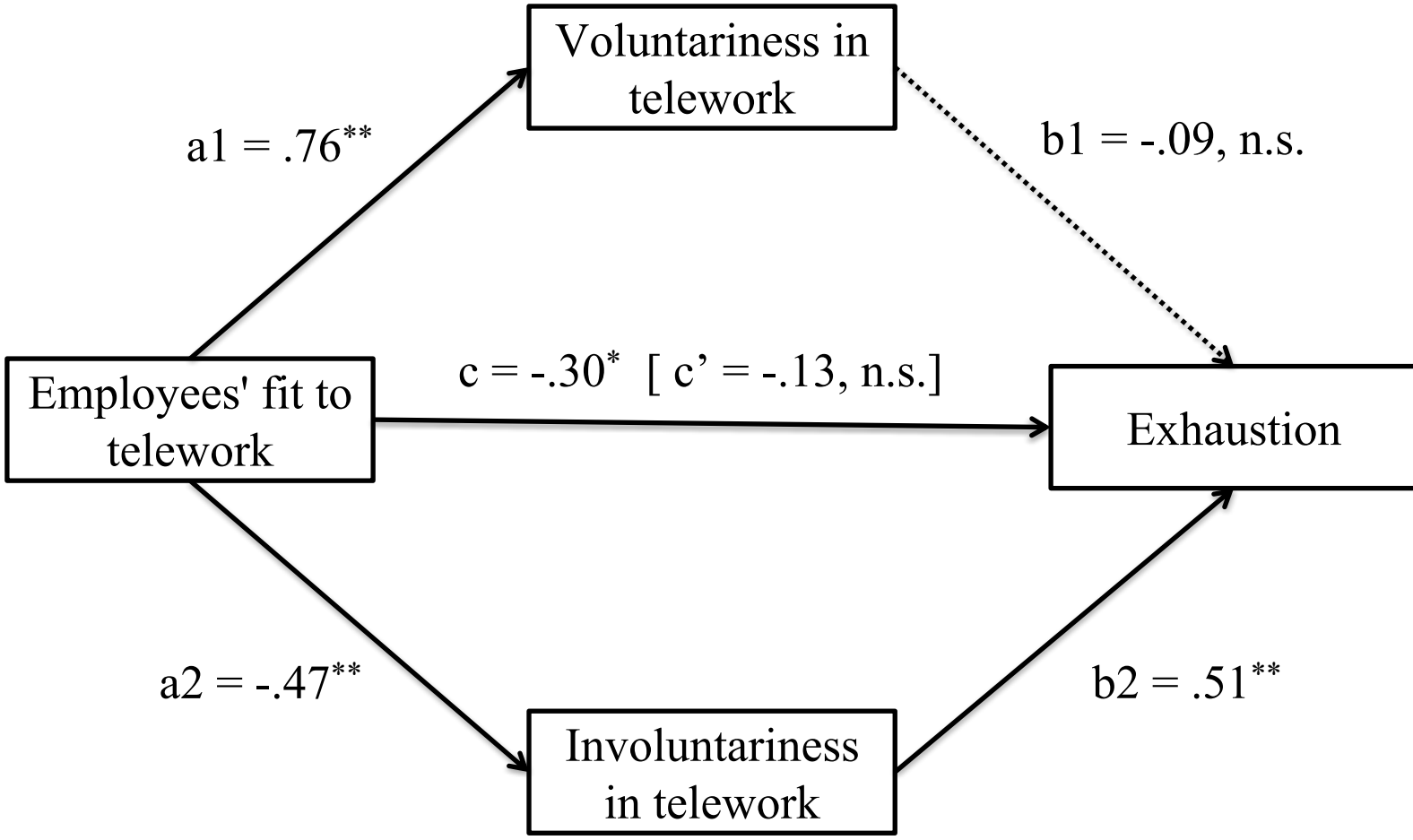
Notes. SD = Standard deviation; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; MSV = maximum shared variance; MaxR(H) = maximum reliability; ** p < .01; * < .05



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Note. c is the total direct effect of the predictive variable on the criterion variable; c' is the direct effect of the predictive variable on the criterion variable after controlling for the mediators. ** : $p < .01$; * : $p < .05$.

Figure 1. Unstandardized Coefficients for the proposed mediational model with work engagement as the dependent variable.



Notes. c is the total direct effect of the predictive variable on the criterion variable; c' is the direct effect of the predictive variable on the criterion variable after controlling for the mediators. $**$: $p < .01$; $*$: $p < .05$.

Figure 2. Unstandardized Coefficients for the proposed mediational model with exhaustion as the dependent variable.